Remodelling the school workforce

Phase 1

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Introduction

1. In March 2001, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to undertake an independent review to identify the main factors that determine the workload of teachers and headteachers.[1] They were also asked to develop a programme of practical action to eliminate excessive workload and promote the most effective use of all resources in schools in order to raise standards of pupil achievement. The PwC report identified that teachers were working more intensive weeks than other comparable managers and professionals, with 50–60 hour weeks the norm. Also, headteachers were working 300–400 hours a year more than similar managers and professionals and this was contributing to problems in recruitment and retention at that level. The report concluded that reducing the workload of teachers was vital to improving pupil performance and that tackling workload issues would involve significant change in the way that schools were managed. Following publication of the report, the School Teachers' Review Body made a series of proposals for reducing excessive workload, including changes to the teachers' contract.

2. In October 2002, the DfES published *Time for standards: reforming the school workforce*, which set out the government's plans for creating additional time for teachers and headteachers and, therefore, time for raising educational standards. It was followed in January 2003 by *Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement*, which set out a seven-point plan (see annex A) designed to reduce teachers' workload and improve standards, to be implemented over a three-year timescale (see annex B). This agreement was signed by the government, employers and trade unions (with the exception of the National Union of Teachers). It set out a strategy for improving the quality of education in schools by remodelling the school workforce; this included the transfer of some of the clerical and administrative responsibilities of teachers (see annex C) to trained support staff so that teachers could concentrate more on teaching and learning.

3. In December 2003, Ofsted published the results of a survey of how schools were managing their workforce to ensure high-quality education for their pupils.[2] The 150 primary and secondary schools included in this survey were chosen because they had been found to be effective in their previous inspections. Nevertheless, only about a quarter were judged to be well placed to implement the national workforce agreement; two fifths were expected to find some elements difficult to implement; and almost one in ten were likely to find remodelling very challenging. Nationally, it was likely that a higher proportion of schools would find it difficult to implement the national agreement fully.

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[1] *Teacher workload study, final report*, PwC, 5 December 2001.

[2] *Leadership and management: managing the school workforce*, HMI 1764, Ofsted, 2003.

4. In the autumn term 2003 and the spring term 2004, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) carried out a further inspection to assess how effectively schools were then implementing the national workforce agreement and what impact this was having. This report is based on inspection visits to 25 primary schools, 20 middle schools, 10 special schools and 45 secondary schools. The schools included those in inner city, suburban and rural locations. Inspectors held detailed discussions with members of the school staff with a wide range of roles and responsibilities, including support staff, teachers and school managers, and also with governors and pupils. They observed lessons and scrutinised school policies and other relevant documentation. The report also draws on evidence of the responses of 12 local education authorities (LEAs) to the national agreement, gathered during inspections of these LEAs by HMI in the spring term 2004.

5. The school visits were planned to assess the early effects of the remodelling initiative by determining:

- the school's starting position and readiness to introduce the requirements of the national agreement
- what progress the school was making in introducing the reforms
- the resources (people, time, financial, training, and information and communication technology (ICT)) that the school had allocated to support the initiative
- the strategies being used to remodel the workforce and to monitor and evaluate their effect on the standards attained by the pupils, the quality of education provided and the workload of teachers
- whether the reforms were improving the recruitment and retention of staff.

Main findings

- At the beginning of the academic year 2003/04, schools were at different stages of readiness to implement the first phase of the national workforce agreement. The majority of the secondary and special schools had, as a result of their own development activities, already implemented significant aspects of the agreement, whereas most of the primary and middle schools had made less progress.
- The level of the headteacher's commitment to the principles underpinning the agreement, and their capacity to manage the change process, were central to its successful implementation.
- During the first year of the national agreement, most of the schools tended to think of remodelling the workforce as action designed to reduce the teachers'

workload, without making explicit the link from this to improving the quality of education and raising the attainment of pupils. Although some made clear the links between their school improvement plans and actions to remodel the workforce, this was rare.

- The great majority of headteachers saw school funding as a key factor in their ability to implement the national agreement fully. Some schools, most notably those with falling rolls, had faced a reduced budget and, in extreme cases, had had to reduce the size of their staff. Others, particularly those that had been supported by specific grants for national initiatives, had been able to invest in additional staff over a period of years. Whereas the former schools had generally made little headway with the reforms, the latter were well placed to reduce workload and to remodel their workforce.

- The great majority of the schools had made satisfactory progress in transferring the specified administrative and clerical tasks (see annex C) from teachers to support staff, but had made less obvious progress with the other objectives for the first phase of the national agreement (see annex B).

- Progress had been made in implementing some of the objectives of the second and third phases of the national agreement, even though schools are not yet required to do so. For example, headteachers in about half of the secondary schools and most of the special schools already provide their teachers with about 10% of their working week to use for planning, preparation and assessment activities.

- Most of the schools were not monitoring the implementation of their workforce reforms systematically and very few were evaluating their impact on staff workload, standards of attainment or the quality of education.

- The perception of many of the headteachers was that their own workloads had increased since the reforms were introduced. In many of the primary schools, for example, headteachers had increased their teaching commitments to give their teaching staff more planning, preparation and assessment time. Although many secondary headteachers had expanded their senior leadership teams and, consequently, had been able to delegate some of their responsibilities, they still commonly felt that their workload had expanded.

- The schools were generally beginning to identify more systematically the strengths and interests of their support staff so that they could deploy them more effectively. This was leading to improvements in teaching and in the curriculum, for example through using those with specialist skills in ICT to provide teachers with immediate access to technical support. In most cases, the changes to the roles and responsibilities of support staff had increased their range of work and had been well managed; the majority welcomed these changes.

- ICT was used successfully in many of the schools to reduce teachers' workloads. Its most immediate benefits had been realised in the preparation of

letters and reports to parents, in analysing assessment data and in making curriculum and lesson planning easier. However, its full potential has been far from realised because the skills of staff in using ICT to manage their work, and their access to hardware and to effective systems, varied considerably between and within the schools.

Recommendations

Schools should:

- ensure that their plans to remodel the workforce focus not only on reducing teachers' workloads but also on raising standards
- integrate the whole initiative systematically into their improvement plans rather than introducing it in a fragmented way simply to meet the requirements of the implementation timetable
- evaluate their workforce restructuring programme to assess the efficiency and effectiveness with which their human, physical and material reasons are being deployed to raise standards and the value for money being obtained.

Introducing the national workforce agreement

6. There was considerable variation between the schools in their understanding of, and preparation for, the national workforce agreement. Its title, *Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement,* makes clear that it has two distinct but related purposes. During the first year of implementation, however, the headteachers and staff in most of the schools considered that the main emphasis was on reducing workload. In particular, while the priority was rightly on the removal of administrative and clerical tasks from teachers, schools had given little consideration to how releasing teachers from these activities might, through encouraging a greater focus on teaching and learning, raise standards.

7. The different rates of progress of schools in implementing the national agreement were often influenced by the headteachers' attitudes to the required changes and their varying levels of knowledge of what was expected of them. In the best-led schools, many of the proposed changes had already been introduced before September 2003 and their headteachers were actively seeking further opportunities to reduce workload and create a better work/life balance for teachers. In others, however, headteachers had been unconvinced of the need for reform and had made little progress before the agreement was signed.

8. In the majority of the schools, changes in the roles of teaching and support staff were being introduced well before September 2003. The special schools, in

particular, had made considerable progress; most had transferred the specified non-teaching tasks well in advance of the projected timescale. The relatively large numbers of support staff employed in special schools have commonly provided greater opportunities to delegate work appropriately. Similarly, most of the middle and secondary schools had been progressively removing many of these tasks from teachers over a number of years. The main effect of the September 2003 deadline was the impetus it provided for leaders in these schools to review systematically the support they provided for teachers and pupils. In contrast, many of the primary schools had made noticeably less progress before September 2003.

9. The key factors influencing a school's preparedness for the national workforce agreement, and the school's subsequent progress in implementing it, were: its budgetary situation and, in particular, its ability to attract additional funds; its size; and the leadership of the headteacher.

10. Some of the high-achieving schools showed a degree of reluctance to consider what they sometimes regarded as unnecessary change; they employed relatively few teaching assistants, preferring to appoint additional technicians or part-time teachers. Other schools, particularly those with significant numbers of pupils presenting challenging behaviour, having special educational needs, or for whom English is an additional language, frequently employed considerable numbers of teaching assistants. This latter group of schools were often more willing to consider alternative ways to deploy their support staff, including their taking increased responsibility in the classroom.

11. The considerable variation in the progress made by schools in implementing the national agreement was often influenced by what the schools' leadership teams regarded as more immediate priorities. These included major building work, local school re-organisation, problems of staff recruitment and removal of special measures. Some headteachers saw these kinds of priorities as being more important, and distinct from, workforce reforms and, consequently, invested much of their leadership time in responding to them. The headteachers of schools identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures had often made only limited progress in implementing the national agreement. This was generally because the staff and governors were highly focused on removing the school from special measures without fully recognising and understanding how workforce reform could usefully complement their plans.

12. Schools that made a slow start to implementing the national agreement had often failed to develop explicit plans for remodelling their workforce. In many of the primary schools, the headteachers and governing bodies were caught up in the minutiae of the day-to-day running of the school and did not create sufficient time for themselves to determine improvement priorities. This lack of focused leadership time frequently resulted in separate planning for the implementation of the national agreement. For example, the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors of a high-achieving primary school had focused appropriately on the areas for improvement highlighted in their recent Ofsted inspection report. In spite of a significant budget surplus, however, they did not link their plans strategically to

workforce remodelling. One instance of this was that, although one of their development priorities was to improve provision for music, they had not considered the employment of a part-time specialist music teacher to both raise standards in music and also release planning, preparation and assessment time for other staff.

13. The most effectively managed schools had either produced a separate remodelling implementation plan or had integrated it within the school's development plan. In these, the headteachers and other school leaders were often well placed to make good progress towards implementing the national agreement. They had a clear understanding that reducing the teachers' workload allowed them more time to focus on teaching and learning in order to raise standards.

> *The headteacher of a small primary school had developed a very strong team approach to school improvement initiatives that pervaded all aspects of the school's development and involved all the governors and staff. As a result, they were fully engaged in planning for the implementation of the national workforce agreement and in creating a comprehensive strategic plan for the school's improvement.*
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> *The improvement plan set out how their improvement priorities were to be achieved through specific actions. For example, they sought to enhance the education they provided through reviewing how the entire school budget was utilised. This approach involved staff and governors determining how they could best achieve their priorities by making full use of the available resources. They decided to use the school's limited budget to invest in appointing and training a small number of high-quality teaching assistants who would be capable of making a significant contribution to the pupils' academic and pastoral development. The subsequent appointment and deployment of the teaching assistants, some of whom possess specialist skills, has resulted in them taking increased responsibility for leading the teaching of ICT and art and design across the school. As a result of this initiative, the overall quality of teaching has improved and the school is very well positioned to respond to future change.*

14. Schools have made particularly good progress where they have both integrated remodelling with other school improvement priorities and also been successful in attracting additional revenue to the school to help fund their plans.

> *The headteacher and senior management team of a large secondary school are fully committed to the remodelling proposals. Through strong financial management, the school has utilised a wide range of funding sources very successfully to employ additional staff to support its improvement plans. Great care has been taken to integrate plans for remodelling the workforce into other school improvement priorities. The school has focused on remedying a dip in performance at Year 7 and overcoming the logistical problem of managing a split site. A decision was taken to introduce a new*

integrated curriculum model involving three subject areas (humanities, creative arts and technology), taught by a dedicated team of staff based on one site. The pupils were taught in parallel classes with an additional teacher available to support the development of independent and collaborative learning. Additional planning, preparation and assessment time was created to enable the team, including support staff, to work together. This initiative has: significantly reduced the time lost by staff travelling between sites; enhanced the role of support staff by involving them actively in the planning process; and improved pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour.

15. Few of the headteachers or governing bodies had sought advice from their LEA or from other agencies, such as the National College for School Leadership, about how they might plan most effectively to meet the requirements of the national agreement. This was partly because the majority of LEAs were still establishing the procedures and systems needed to support their schools. A small number had provided valuable support and assisted their schools to prepare for the initiative by organising training and other events. Most had mounted introductory seminars for headteachers and had selected individual schools to become 'early adopters' of the change process, but these early developments had had little impact on the majority of schools and headteachers. In addition, the main responsibility for providing support and guidance to schools in a small minority of LEAs was delegated to the personnel department rather than the schools' advisory service. As a consequence, the advice offered to schools focused more on reducing workload rather than linking this objective to improving standards.

16. Many school governors had little detailed knowledge about the national agreement and had made only a minor contribution to its introduction in their schools. Most of the governors were largely passive in their response; they rarely questioned either the rationale for the existing staff structure or the headteacher's plans for reforming it.

17. There was a wide variation in the ability of the schools to fund the workforce reforms. Headteachers often attributed their ability to implement change successfully to the financial resources at their disposal. Many of the schools faced significant financial pressures when the national agreement was introduced, including those arising from falling rolls, a restructuring of pay scales for support staff and an increase in schools' pension costs. Whereas some schools had significant budget surpluses, others faced deficits and had to initiate staff reductions just at the time that the initiative was being introduced. The first staff to be made redundant were usually those on temporary contracts, often support staff.

18. Many of the headteachers felt that they faced considerable financial uncertainty which restricted their ability to plan for the longer term. This was a particular concern for a few headteachers in special schools where their LEAs were reviewing the future provision for pupils with special educational needs. Because schools have traditionally received confirmation of their budgets on an annual basis, school managers have often been reluctant to implement changes which carry longer-term

financial implications. Many of the schools cited this as a reason for caution in revising staff structures, especially where this involved increasing the overall size of their workforce. Schools are likely, therefore, to welcome the government's recent announcement that they will, in future, receive three-year budgets.

19. Many of the schools received additional funding as a result of their involvement in national programmes, including Excellence in Cities, Education Action Zones, specialist schools and leadership incentive grants. These initiatives, though pre-dating the workforce agreement, have supported its aims by funding an increase in the number of support staff in many schools and by encouraging their more varied use. Schools not involved in such programmes, especially primary schools, commonly had less flexibility in their staffing budgets.

20. Schools employing a larger workforce, generally secondary and special schools, were often well positioned to delegate work equitably among their staff. Smaller schools, mostly primary or middle, typically employed considerably fewer staff and they often argued that this reduced their flexibility to introduce workforce reform. Indeed, because of budgetary pressures, a few small schools had had to reduce the number of support staff, and sometimes teachers, just as the national agreement was being introduced.

Progress in implementing the national workforce agreement

21. The expectation of the first phase of the national agreement that administrative and clerical tasks be transferred from teachers to non-teaching staff has, in most of the schools, been largely achieved. The great majority, however, have made less obvious progress with the other objectives: reducing overall excessive working hours; ensuring that all teachers enjoy a reasonable work/life balance; and providing time for teachers to focus on their leadership and management responsibilities.

22. Schools had commonly found some non-teaching tasks more difficult to transfer than others because teachers had been reluctant to accept that support staff could perform them effectively. Many teachers, for example, continued to collect money from pupils because they felt that only they had the authority to receive money, and exert pressure for payment when necessary. Some still chose to retain responsibility for tasks that they regarded as important, such as displaying pupils' work in the classroom, while others had delegated such tasks very effectively to support staff.

23. Many secondary teachers gained satisfaction from carrying out administrative responsibilities effectively; consequently, there was some reluctance to relinquish them. The administration of examinations, for example, was usually undertaken by a teacher. Although some schools provided administrative support for this work, the overall responsibility often remained with the designated teacher. Headteachers sometimes encountered particular difficulties when trying to remove administrative responsibilities from teachers where the posts carried management allowances.

24. Only a few of the schools had delegated the responsibility for organising supply cover to support staff. There was a misguided perception among some

headteachers, particularly primary, that the need to match teachers' subject expertise and teaching experience to the needs of the relevant class meant that this role needed to be their personal responsibility. Indeed, a newly appointed primary headteacher had taken this role away from the experienced school secretary who had arranged supply cover for many years, and added it to his own workload.

25. Although not a requirement until 2005/06, the secondary schools often invested in additional support staff to take on responsibility for invigilating examinations in order to release teachers. The recently appointed non-teaching examination officer in one secondary school, for example, supported by external invigilators, had responsibility for all internal and external examinations. This provided teaching staff with valuable additional time for curriculum planning and development at a key period of the summer term.

26. Many of the secondary schools had gradually increased the dedicated administrative support available for teachers, although the amount of support varied greatly between, and even within, schools. This variation was sometimes due to poor management and a failure to recognise where support was most needed. Middle managers in one secondary school, for example, received very little support and one head of department had calculated she regularly worked a 70-hour week as a result. In another school, the heavy marking load of teachers with large sixth-form sets had not been recognised in the way that support staff had been deployed. In the better-managed schools, headteachers and middle managers had often organised the deployment of support staff carefully to ensure that support was allocated where it was most needed. The headteacher of one secondary school, for example, having recognised the increasing administrative workload of the heads of year, appointed additional support staff which enabled these pastoral heads to spend more time leading their teams.

> *The headteacher of a large secondary school has, over a number of years, been very successful at developing flexible working patterns for support staff which has maximised their deployment. This has been achieved through developing formal performance management procedures where individual skills and interests are discussed and future training needs identified. As a result of the school's commitment to developing its staff, it now employs a committed group of very skilled and flexible support staff, many of whom have multiple roles which are clearly defined in their job descriptions. Many undertake a wide range of high-level responsibilities, such as teaching small groups of pupils, which is giving them the confidence and skills needed to take an even more significant role in the classroom. This gradual and systematic approach is supported by the school's investment in its intranet which provides all staff with good access to planning materials and teaching resources.*

27. Although most of the teachers recognised that their working patterns had been changed by the transfer of administrative and clerical tasks to support staff, their perception was that this had yet to result in either a substantial reduction in their overall workload or an improved work/life balance. Since few of the schools had

implemented ways of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their remodelling strategies, it was not possible to substantiate the teachers' perceptions.

28. Although teachers generally understand the need for reform, and many support the initiatives for change, there is still a strong sense that they feel the pace of reform is too rapid and does not allow sufficient time for reflection and evaluation. They also understand the need for accountability, but judge that the resulting paperwork is often excessive. Special educational needs staff were particularly prone to this and it was not uncommon to find special educational needs co-ordinators spending too much of their time on administration rather than teaching.

29. Staff in many schools, particularly secondary, felt under continuing pressure from external bureaucratic demands. Senior managers often saw themselves as investing increasing amounts of time preparing bids for additional funding, sometimes for relatively small amounts, which they considered added significantly to their workload. Others pointed to what they saw as a rising number of bureaucratic requests, for example an increasing number of consultation documents inviting a response. While the growing trend for government materials to be published on the Internet, rather than distributed as published documents, was generally welcomed, many headteachers felt that it did not necessarily save significant amounts of time as they still needed to download the information and decide how best to respond to it.

30. Some school leaders recognised their role in managing aspects of bureaucracy, for example by screening their staff from what they considered to be unnecessary paperwork arriving at the school and targeting other documents at relevant individuals or groups. They were most successful when they focused on their school improvement priorities and considered whether or not each new initiative or request for information complemented their own plans and timescale. Most felt that the impact of their efforts had, thus far, been limited.

31. Many school leaders, however, had yet to find effective ways of reducing their expectations both of themselves and of their staff. Primary headteachers, in particular, often contributed to the workload pressures by having excessive expectations of teachers, such as overly detailed planning. These unnecessary demands often arose from a misplaced fear of criticism by the LEA or from inspection.

32. Teachers were generally required to attend numerous meetings throughout the year. It was rare, however, for anyone to review the rationale for this significant investment of time. Some headteachers had started to reduce the expectation that staff needed to meet so frequently and had sought ways to cut the time spent in meetings. Strategies included: guillotining meetings; requiring only recommendations or action points to be recorded, rather than full minutes; ensuring that meetings were only attended by those who needed to be there; and using a school intranet for communication.

33. Schools generally used ICT effectively to support administrative work. For example, some use electronic registration to record attendance and to monitor pupil

absences. A few are using technology to outsource administrative work to external companies. In one secondary school, for instance, pupil attendance information is passed each morning to the staff working at an external call centre. They have responsibility for contacting all the families of absent pupils to establish the reason for the absence. The school's attendance figures show that this initiative has led to a dramatic reduction in the absences of pupils. The school also believes that outsourcing this administrative work has been cost-effective and reduced the administrative burden on school staff.

34. Recent government initiatives had enabled many of the schools to enhance their ICT capability by providing additional resources for teachers and pupils. A number had provided laptops for all their teachers, for example, which had helped to reduce aspects of their workload. The teachers were commonly using them to assist with planning and assessment, recording pupils' progress and compiling written reports on pupils. Some of the schools had invested in intranets to facilitate communication between staff and to share planning and assessment documentation. Primary schools were generally less well developed in this respect than secondary and middle schools.

35. Many of the schools use ICT very effectively to analyse pupil performance data. This not only reduces the workload of teachers but also enables them to set targets more effectively and to analyse each pupil's progress. It also helps schools to monitor their overall performance in a more reliable and systematic way.

> *Staff in a large secondary school use assessment data well to track the progress of their pupils and to inform their planning. Two administrative support staff have been appointed to ensure that information on the performance of pupils is added quickly to the school's computer network, allowing staff to have access to up-to-the-minute data. As a result, some departments have improved their identification of gifted and talented pupils and others have pupil performance targets stored electronically and linked to the electronic reporting system. This close monitoring has helped to improve pupil attainment, for example the proportion of Key Stage 3 pupils improving their performance by two National Curriculum levels has increased, and the close monitoring of gifted and talented pupils has helped the staff to ensure that they are suitably challenged. Pupils identified as underachieving are monitored closely by the senior management team and, in a few subjects, the information gained is used to support aspects of effective classroom management, such as seating arrangements. The school's increased focus on monitoring individual pupils has also had a positive effect on teachers' morale as the administrative work has largely been removed from them, which has reduced their workload.*

36. Teachers' skills in using ICT to manage their work, and their willingness to use the technology, vary considerably between and within schools. As a result, the administrative use of ICT in some schools remains underdeveloped. Some teachers

and support staff feel that variability in the quality and availability of ICT training has contributed to the disparity of ICT usage between individuals.

37. While staff, pupils and parents often welcome additional ICT resources, few of the schools monitor their use and evaluate whether they contribute to a reduced teachers' workload, improve the quality of teaching and, ultimately, raise standards of attainment. Very few schools, for example, have developed policies to manage the effective use of email, which, although it enables efficient communication, also causes some staff to spend considerable time creating and responding to additional correspondence.

Guaranteed time for planning, preparation and assessment

38. The national agreement sets out the expectation that, from September 2005, all teachers should receive a minimum of 10% of their normal timetabled teaching time for planning, preparation and assessment purposes. This is seen as a key element in enabling teachers to achieve higher educational standards. Most of the secondary and special schools already provide their teachers with about 10% of the teaching week for planning, preparation and assessment. Although this time is vulnerable to use as cover for absent staff, many of these schools use supply teachers to minimise this loss and they are in a sound position to deliver this part of the national agreement on time.

39. A few of the schools have adopted innovative approaches to creating planning, preparation and assessment time. In one secondary school, for example, staff work a 49-period fortnight; the school closes early on alternate Wednesdays when staff are able to hold meetings and plan future work together. This timetabling strategy has reduced the amount of time staff spend planning and meeting after school. The school still fulfils its obligations with respect to overall teaching time, and the timetabling strategy has reduced the amount of time staff spend planning and meeting after school.

40. Teachers in the special schools generally received a good level of non-contact time, often a guaranteed 10%, and most teachers planned sensibly for its use. Teachers in one school were given clear guidelines for their use of planning, preparation and assessment time and its impact was monitored and evaluated by the headteacher. This approach helped to ensure that the teachers used the time productively and that progress was made in achieving the priorities in the school's development plan.

41. Few of the primary schools provided teachers with the proposed planning, preparation and assessment time. Most of the headteachers viewed their ability to achieve this objective with some scepticism and considered that they would be unable to do so without additional funding. Indeed, many were simply awaiting additional government funding before beginning to plan systematically for the provision of planning, preparation and assessment time. Caution in introducing planning, preparation and assessment time was sometimes related to immediate financial difficulties. Some schools that were facing a reduction in pupil numbers had

decided to retain their existing teaching complement and invest in smaller classes rather than provide regular non-contact time for teachers.

42. A few primary schools were able, nevertheless, to provide teachers with 10% non-contact time each week, and considerably more for senior managers. They achieved this by using a wide variety of strategies, including: using budget reserves to employ an additional teacher; making use of internal and external specialist staff, for example musicians, to work with larger groups of pupils, so releasing colleagues; buying in external specialists, such as staff from sports centres; using staff from secondary schools with a particular specialism, for example modern foreign language specialists; and, in a few schools, identifying times when support staff could take responsibility for the whole class, such as story time.

> *The headteacher of a primary school saw the provision of planning, preparation and assessment time as a priority and, although the amount of time teachers received had reduced due to a deficit budget, had sought to protect the provision, as far as possible. She had worked creatively to fund the provision of planning, preparation and assessment time by reviewing all aspects of the school budget. All the teachers negotiated individually with her to agree a personal termly action plan which set out how the time was to be spent and the criteria to be used to evaluate how well their activities had contributed to achieving the school's development priorities. She made clear her high expectations of how the time was to be used.*

43. A number of primary schools provided planning, preparation and assessment time in small amounts, such as that provided by being released from assemblies. This will clearly not meet the expectations of the national agreement that planning, preparation and assessment time should be provided in blocks of not less than 30 minutes. Indeed, to meet this requirement, considerable numbers of primary school headteachers anticipate they will have to increase their own personal teaching commitment. School governors need to be alert to the possibility of headteachers increasing their own workload in this way.

44. In spite of the practical difficulties, all of the schools viewed the commitment to provide teachers with regular non-contact time as a positive development and recognised that it would provide them with an opportunity to engage in planning and other related activities during the normal school day. In turn, this should reduce their workload and improve their work/life balance. However, very few managers yet systematically monitor the use teachers make of regular non-contact time or evaluate its impact, either on the teachers' work/life balance or on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Workload of headteachers

45. Headteachers of the larger secondary schools often had good personal support, usually from a personal assistant and also a bursar or business manager. Many had expanded the size and role of the leadership team so that they were able to

delegate aspects of their workload, such as day-to-day financial management. The primary school headteachers were also often supported well by administrative staff, most usually a secretary. Some had increased the hours of their administrative staff and a minority had appointed additional staff.

46. Most of the headteachers considered that their workload had increased since the reforms were introduced and felt that this had had a negative impact on their work/life balance. Very few, however, were able to substantiate their claims with firm evidence. Although some had increased the size of their senior leadership teams and, consequently, delegated more of their responsibilities, they had also taken on additional work, such as increased monitoring of teaching and the analysis of assessment data. In some small schools, they had taken on some additional administrative tasks themselves to provide their teaching staff with more time. In schools where staffing reductions had been made to stay within budget, headteachers and other staff with leadership and management responsibilities often faced an increased workload.

47. Some primary school headteachers were reluctant to delegate responsibilities, such as organising supply cover, to administrative staff. A considerable number took responsibility for all the performance management meetings for their staff instead of using senior staff to act as team leaders. Many maintained a fairly high teaching commitment, often to allow pupils to be taught in smaller groups for English and mathematics, or to provide cover for colleagues. Although this classroom commitment sometimes ensured that they were seen as being 'hands-on' leaders by staff and parents, it restricted the time available for their leadership and management responsibilities.

Leadership and management time

48. Few of the schools had yet provided additional leadership and management time for their staff as a result of the workforce agreement. Most middle managers felt they had received little benefit from the reforms. Many subject leaders in secondary and primary schools, for example, had received little or no additional time for their leadership roles. The responsibilities of special educational needs co-ordinators, in particular, entail a high clerical workload and few had support staff to whom they could delegate this to allow them to concentrate on their leadership role.

49. Only a minority of teachers who received leadership and management time were given explicit guidance about how this was to be used. This led commonly to an ad-hoc approach. Indeed, it was often used for marking and preparation, rather than leadership tasks such as monitoring the quality of subject teaching or scrutinising the quality of pupils' work. The minority of headteachers who were monitoring the use of this time met with subject leaders and other managers to ensure that their time was being used effectively to achieve school priorities. Subject leaders were expected to monitor the quality of teaching and to identify specific actions for improvement. For example, the science co-ordinator in one primary school had identified a weakness in the school's approach to teaching the topic 'Forces'. She

planned and carried out a training event for all the Key Stage 2 staff which was subsequently evaluated by checking that more pupils were achieving their targets in science.

> *A large secondary school had developed some successful strategies to remodel its workforce which were linked to its improvement plan. The leadership group, for example, had created some new posts of 'department assistants' whose responsibilities were set out in clear job descriptions. These new post-holders worked flexibly to help heads of department collate subject data, prepare and organise resources and manage administrative tasks. This development reduced the workload of the heads of department (the head of music, for example, commented that her weekends are now free of administrative tasks) and created planning, preparation and assessment time, enabling them to improve the quality of their leadership. It had provided opportunities for departmental managers to improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing them with additional time for monitoring lessons and evaluating the progress being made towards improving standards.*

Developing role of teaching assistants

50. Teaching assistants were making a valuable contribution to teaching and learning in many of the schools. This was particularly the case where teachers planned well-differentiated lessons and agreed with the assistant the objectives for the pupils being supported. The main strengths of such lessons were the quality of the relationships between staff and pupils, the varied approaches to teaching and learning, and the close match of work to pupils' needs. Such practice is long established in special schools, where support staff commonly work very closely with teachers on planning and teaching lessons which are aimed effectively at meeting the needs of each individual pupil; it is becoming more common in other schools.

51. Many of the schools were making increasing use of the withdrawal of small groups of pupils for teaching assistants to work with intensively on areas of identified need. This often involved the effective use of intervention programmes, such as additional literacy support. Managers were using assessment data with increasing skill to identify individuals and groups of pupils who would benefit from such additional support. A number of schools could point to a measurable improvement in the achievement of pupils when teaching assistants worked with clearly identified groups and used a well-structured programme in which they had been trained.

52. Many of the primary schools have increased the overall level of teaching assistant support. This has been done to improve provision for pupils and also to reduce the teachers' workload. They had not, however, always given sufficient consideration to the most effective and efficient ways of deploying their teaching assistants. For example, class teachers in the majority of these schools were generally supported by teaching assistants working peripatetically with individuals or

groups of pupils rather than being attached to a particular teacher. This arrangement reduced the opportunities for individual teachers and teaching assistants to plan and work together and, as a consequence, class teachers frequently did not utilise the full potential of their teaching assistants. It also led to an increase in the teacher's workload as they had to brief the teaching assistants on a lesson-by-lesson basis. Additionally, there were often inconsistencies within individual schools in the amount of support each class teacher received.

53. Class teachers working with younger year groups frequently received more classroom support than their colleagues working with older year groups. This organisational arrangement was often long established in the primary schools and based on the fact that younger pupils are generally more dependent upon adult support while older pupils are more likely to be self-sufficient. A minority of the schools had, however, reviewed their deployment of teaching assistants to achieve the maximum impact on the teachers' workload and on standards of attainment. Schools in which teaching assistants had taken on new duties, such as transferring pupils' data and updating pupils' records, found that the administrative burden on teachers reduced. This was particularly beneficial to teachers working with older pupils as they spent the released time marking and preparing their lessons more thoroughly which improved the quality of their teaching; some also felt that their work/life balance had improved as they were able to complete more of their work at school rather than at home.

54. Only a very few of the schools use teaching assistants to teach whole classes, and then often under the close supervision of a teacher. In one secondary school, for example, an integrated curriculum in Year 7 is planned and taught very effectively by a team of teachers and teaching assistants. Some special schools use their teaching assistants to provide first-day cover for absent teachers, with a designated teacher overseeing the arrangements. Most of the senior managers and teachers are, at present, resolutely opposed to using assistants to teach whole classes. Most consider that classes should, wherever possible, be taught by trained teachers as they have the necessary subject knowledge, classroom skills and behaviour management strategies on which to draw. They also report that many of their teaching assistants are reluctant to take on these additional responsibilities. Indeed, a small number of the headteachers are reluctant to use them even with small groups and prefer to invest any budget surplus in additional part-time teachers.

> *The headteacher of a small rural primary school had, over time, developed many of the principles and practices underpinning the national agreement. As part of her strategy to reduce teachers' workloads, she had appointed two highly skilled teaching assistants whom she deployed in their specialist capacity to lead the teaching of ICT and art and design across the school. Their deployment not only improved the quality of the teaching by raising the expectations of pupils, it also provided valuable opportunities for teachers to teach with, and learn from, these specialist staff.*

55. Most of the schools identified the strengths and interests of their support staff so that they could deploy them more effectively. In a secondary school, for example, the librarian had been appointed as the school's literacy co-ordinator with responsibility for planning and teaching a study skills programme to Year 7 pupils. This course emphasised the development of reading skills, such as questioning and the critical evaluation of reference sources. She also provided high-level support to heads of departments about the use of ICT in subject teaching and influenced teaching practice by supporting lesson planning, and setting and monitoring improvement targets for pupils.

56. Support staff with relevant experience and skills helped with specific subjects in some schools; for example, a primary school teaching assistant with good skills in ICT was based in the computer suite and provided valuable technical support for teachers and pupils by resolving computer hardware and software problems as they occurred. In a few secondary schools, assistants with appropriate experience helped to teach the work-related curriculum in Key Stage 4 and those with relevant qualifications were sometimes employed as part-time instructors to teach aspects of National Curriculum subjects, for example former chefs to teach aspects of food technology.

> *A secondary school, serving a very disadvantaged area, decided to expand its vocational curriculum and appointed a hospital works supervisor as a teaching assistant to make use of his considerable practical and technical skills. Under the guidance of an experienced teacher, he quickly developed the necessary skills to take responsibility for teaching aspects of a vocational course and together they offer a course which meets the needs of the pupils very successfully. This development has been very effective in keeping pupils in school who might otherwise have truanted or been excluded, and has provided them with useful practical skills that have made them more employable.*

57. Higher standards were generally achieved where support staff were deployed to bring about clearly specified improvements in a defined area of school life. For example, the schools which had allocated learning mentors to work with vulnerable pupils, and sometimes also employed their own education welfare officer, had noted gradual rises in their overall attendance and significant improvements in the attendance of the targeted groups. Similarly, improvements were achieved in pupils' behaviour in the schools which had established a support team that specialised in helping pupils with challenging behaviour.

> *To improve the challenging behaviour exhibited by many of its pupils, a middle school established a 'learning and achievement base' staffed by two specialist teaching assistants skilled in behaviour management, counselling and classroom management strategies. Pupils displaying inappropriate behaviour, having difficulties in forming successful relationships, having a poor attendance record or being involved in bullying incidents, are referred to the base so that the staff can prepare an individual*

behaviour management plan. These plans draw extensively upon observational evidence of the pupils' behaviour, discussion with teachers and, where possible, parents to identify appropriate improvement targets. Programmes on anger management, social skills, self-esteem, and co-operation skills are arranged to meet the needs of individual pupils.

The work of the unit has significantly reduced the pressure on teachers of managing pupil behaviour and strengthened links with parents. The unit's prompt intervention has reduced the amount of time lost dealing with disruptive behaviour. During the last academic year, about a third of the school's pupils had received support from the unit and there were no permanent exclusions from the school.

58. Some schools used support staff to help teachers deal with more challenging pupil behaviour. One of the special schools, for example, had addressed poor behaviour on the school's transport by employing support staff to accompany pupils on their journeys. This had improved the behaviour of the pupils both on the transport and in school. This had, in turn, reduced the load on teachers by cutting the number of behaviour problems they had to resolve and created more time in lessons for them to concentrate on teaching. Some of the teachers reported that the pupils' improved behaviour had reduced their personal levels of stress and enhanced their job satisfaction.

The appointment of a full-time behaviour support manager at a special school, catering for pupils who exhibit extremely challenging behaviour, had made a significant impact on the teachers' workload because of the improved behaviour of the pupils. The appointment was part of the headteacher's strategy to reduce the level of stress experienced by staff. To coincide with the appointment, the school adopted a 'no exclusion' policy and supported this with strategies such as the creation of a 'chill-out' room which provides pupils with a base that they can use to calm down. All visits to this room are monitored closely to analyse and identify potential trigger points and this information is used to improve teaching approaches. The average time taken to return a pupil to class is 15 minutes. The success of the school's strategy is demonstrated by a reduction in the number of behavioural incidents that staff have to resolve and the achievement of the school's target of zero exclusions. These, in turn, have reduced staff absence and improved their morale.

An effective 'pupil services department' has been created in a rural middle school to support the behavioural and social needs of pupils. Three teaching assistants have been given increased hours to provide dedicated support for behaviour, attendance and pupils with special educational needs across the school. Each teaching assistant has responsibility for one area and provides appropriate support for pupils. This includes providing behaviour modification programmes,

making home visits and attending review meetings for pupils with special educational needs. As a result, teachers' time has been saved, pupils feel better supported by specialist staff, attendance has improved, bullying incidents have reduced and the assistants feel more valued. Parents appreciate the quicker contact with the school over behavioural issues affecting their children.

59. Many of the primary and middle schools were making increasingly effective use of ICT technicians to provide technical support for teachers, including the maintenance of equipment. Although this technician support was often only available part time, and sometimes organised in conjunction with other local schools, it removed a considerable amount of routine maintenance from the ICT co-ordinators; this created time for them to focus on supporting other teachers and thus improve the overall quality of ICT provision throughout the school.

Staff recruitment, morale and development

60. Many of the schools in the survey reported that they were able to recruit teachers and support staff of suitable quality without too many problems, although it was more difficult to do so in some areas of the country, including London and the south east, and in some subject specialisms. Where schools faced recruitment problems, headteachers sometimes adopted imaginative approaches, for example one middle school offered teachers a lease flat and opportunities to teach older pupils at the partner high school. Most of the schools eschewed the use of recruitment and retention points; where they were used, some staff felt that they were not always awarded fairly and that this had resulted in some resentment from other staff.

61. Morale was generally high among staff in the schools and staff turnover was relatively low. Most of the teachers who had left in the past two years had done so on retirement or promotion. Few had been lost to the profession through alternative employment. Two main factors were reported as influencing staff retention, namely arrangements for induction and support, and the pupils' behaviour. Many staff, for example, commented positively on their induction programme, their commitment to the school and their plans to continue working there. Many teachers and teaching assistants also spoke of experiencing high levels of job satisfaction when they worked in schools where they felt well supported by management and recognised for their efforts in working with pupils, some of whom exhibited challenging behaviour.

The turnover of support staff in this secondary school was low. There was a strong sense that all support staff are valued by teachers and managers. Their employment contracts are designed well to encourage loyalty and commitment. For example, their work hours are arranged flexibly to complement family commitments, and job sharing is encouraged. As a result, when a vacancy does arise, the school receives a high number of applications.

62. Support staff in the schools generally shared the teachers' strong commitment to the principles of the national agreement. They considered its proposals to be supportive of school improvement and to offer opportunities for them to develop and extend their roles and responsibilities. Many support staff reported that the introduction of the national agreement had dramatically changed some of their roles and responsibilities. They attributed a perceived increase in their workload to the fact that they had assumed additional responsibilities, including the administrative and clerical tasks transferred from teachers, without any balancing reductions. Many headteachers had managed these changes well by consulting all staff and negotiating an acceptable programme for change but, in a significant minority of schools, they did not always ensure that teaching and support staff worked together effectively as a team. One, for example, had given teachers an extra week to write reports but had not changed the date for administrative staff to issue the reports to parents. This added considerable pressure to the office staff at a busy time of year.

63. To prepare support staff for their additional responsibilities, many of the schools had increased the number of training opportunities available to them. While most support staff appreciated having greater opportunities to plan jointly with teachers and to participate in professional development events, many found it difficult to attend these activities unless they took place during their contracted hours. They often saw their family commitments as a barrier to full participation.

64. The introduction of opportunities for support staff to train as higher level teaching assistants was regarded by many school managers as likely to assist with the retention of support staff and to encourage them to take on additional responsibilities. The initiative had generated considerable interest among both headteachers and support staff.

Challenges facing schools

65. Overall, the first year of the national workforce agreement has been marked by some clear successes, most notably the transfer of most of the 24 specified clerical and administrative tasks from teachers to support staff. School leaders, often inspired by effective work already underway in their school, have developed their thinking over the year about how the workforce might be reformed. However, some significant challenges lie ahead.

66. Significant numbers of headteachers and school staff have not recognised sufficiently that the national workforce agreement is not only about reducing workload but, importantly, about raising standards. Too few schools have integrated their plans for implementing the national agreement explicitly into their improvement plans and many schools have not spent sufficient time planning for the entirety of the initiative; instead, they have placed too much reliance on their current activities and priorities.

67. Few of the schools were monitoring their implementation of the national agreement well and very few were evaluating its impact either on reducing staff workload or on raising standards. For example, where support staff and ICT

equipment had been deployed to assist with teachers' administrative duties, senior managers had rarely investigated how well the arrangements worked or canvassed whether they might be improved. It was not unusual for some teachers to be unaware of the support that had been made available. In one secondary school, for example, the number of administrative staff hours had been increased but, because not all staff were aware of this additional resource, it was not being exploited fully. While senior managers and teachers were often full of praise for recently introduced support arrangements, such as the provision of laptops, and while some believed that their workload had been reduced and that their work/life balance had been improved, they relied largely on anecdotal evidence for this. Few had attempted to quantify the improvement. Schools seldom examined the length of the working week of middle managers, for example, or looked at the impact of changes on staff attendance.

68. It is difficult for headteachers to evaluate the unique effect of any single school improvement strategy because most employ a wide range of approaches on a number of fronts and find it hard to isolate the contribution of any single action. However, schools that had deployed support staff to work on a tightly focused area of school improvement with clearly defined objectives were able to evaluate the impact of this action on reducing workload and raising standards by analysing pre-determined outcomes. In some of the schools, the development of social inclusion teams, in which support staff were working together to support vulnerable pupils, had led to clear improvements in attendance and behaviour, as shown by a reduction in the number of exclusions and in the number of pupils being referred to specialist support staff. One school, which employs a coach to work with and support Year 11 pupils as they transfer into the sixth form had evaluated her impact by looking at the increase in numbers of pupils joining the sixth form and those progressing on to higher education.

69. It was rare for schools to evaluate their workforce restructuring in terms of its value for money. Even when large sums were involved, headteachers had not considered comparing outcomes with costs. A primary school which used several thousand pounds from its reserves to provide teachers with regular planning, preparation and assessment time, did not specify in advance its expectations of this investment and had not subsequently examined what had been achieved; consequently, it was unable to judge if the considerable investment was justified.

70. Paradoxically, schools with a high proportion of long-serving teachers often claimed to have less flexibility to reform their workforce than those with a higher turnover. Headteachers of these schools saw the associated high salary costs as reducing the proportion of the budget available to them for staffing decisions. They felt that there were not the same opportunities open to them to remodel their staffing as in schools with a higher staff turnover. Some headteachers view some of their teachers and support staff as very conservative and resistant to change suggesting that they act as a barrier resisting innovation. Headteachers in such situations will need to maximise their management and leadership skills to ensure that all the staff work together constructively.

Annex A. The national workforce agreement – seven-point plan for creating time for teachers and headteachers

i) Progressive reductions in teachers' overall hours over the next four years

ii) Changes to teachers' contracts, to ensure teachers, including headteachers:

- do not routinely undertake administrative and clerical tasks
- have a reasonable work/life balance
- have a reduced burden of providing cover for absent colleagues
- have guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment time within the school day to support their teaching, individually and collaboratively
- have a reasonable allocation of time in support of their leadership and management responsibilities

and that headteachers have dedicated time which recognises their significant responsibilities for their school

iii) A concerted attack on unnecessary paperwork and bureaucratic processes for teachers and headteachers. An implementation review unit will be established, featuring a panel of experienced, serving headteachers

iv) Reform of support staff roles to help teachers and support pupils. Personal administrative assistants for teachers, cover supervisors and higher-level teaching assistants to be introduced

v) The recruitment of new managers, including business and personnel managers, and others with experience from outside education where they have the expertise to contribute effectively to schools' leadership teams

vi) Additional resources and national 'change management' programmes to help school leaders achieve in their schools the necessary reforms of the teaching profession and restructuring of the school workforce

vii) Monitoring of progress on delivery by the signatories of the agreement.

Annex B. The national workforce agreement – summary of key measures and timescale for their implementation

Phase 1 – 2003/04

- promote reductions in overall excessive hours
- establish new signatories group
- establish new Implementation Review Unit
- routine delegation of 24 non-teaching tasks
- introduce new work/life balance clauses
- introduce leadership and management time
- undertake review of use of school closure days.

Phase 2 – 2004/2005

- introduce new limits on covering for absent teachers.

Phase 3 – 2005/2006

- introduce guaranteed professional time for planning, preparation and assessment
- introduce dedicated headship time
- introduce new invigilation arrangements.

Annex C. The national workforce agreement – administrative and clerical tasks that teachers should not routinely undertake

- collecting money
- chasing absences
- bulk photocopying
- copy typing
- producing standard letters
- producing class lists
- record-keeping and filing
- classroom display
- analysing attendance figures
- processing examination results
- collating pupil reports
- administering work experience
- administering examinations
- invigilating examinations
- administering teacher cover
- ICT troubleshooting and minor repairs
- commissioning new ICT equipment
- ordering supplies and equipment
- stocktaking
- cataloguing, preparing, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials
- minuting meetings
- co-ordinating and submitting bids
- seeking and giving personnel advice

- managing pupil data
- inputting pupil data.