

# Raising standards and tackling workload in schools in Wales



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales



**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL**  
**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The DfES published a document entitled 'Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement' in January 2003. This set out a seven point plan designed to reduce the workload of teachers and to improve standards. The document states that 'proposals in the Agreement for changes to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document will apply equally to teachers in England and Wales'. This initiative is to be implemented over a three-year period.

1.2 This report outlines the impact of the National Agreement in schools, since its introduction and up to summer 2005. It provides:

- an update on the progress schools have made on all aspects of the National Agreement;
- an update on how far teachers are able to spend more time on the tasks that contribute to raising standards; and
- information on the extent to which support staff are helping in that process.

## 2. Background

2.1 This report builds upon two previous reports by Estyn on related themes:

### 1. Good practice in para-professional and other support for teachers – November 2003

The report includes case studies of good practice and describes:

- typical uses of non-teaching school staff and those deployed in schools by local education authorities (LEAs);
- the impact of support staff in schools on the reduction of teachers' workloads;
- how support staff can help to raise pupils' standards;
- good practice in the use of paraprofessional support in schools; and
- how support staff help pupils with learning difficulties to access the curriculum.

### 2. Teachers' workload – September 2004

The report comments on aspects of school life that have an impact on teachers' workload. These include:

- the role of national and local government and other agencies;

- issues arising from teachers' working practices;
- the roles of headteachers;
- greater use of support staff; and
- increased use of information and communications technology to aid administration.

2.2 The detail of this report on raising standards and tackling workload in schools in Wales largely follows the section headings identified in the National Agreement. It includes an update on:

- planning for change in schools;
- the transfer of administrative and clerical tasks to support staff;
- work/life balance for teachers and headteachers;
- cover for absent teachers;
- examination invigilation;
- leadership and management responsibilities;
- the role of support staff;
- resources to support change allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- the support Change Managers have given to schools; and
- the impact of workload reduction on pupils, teachers and schools.

2.3 It draws on discussions with:

- headteachers, teaching and non-teaching staff;
- Change Managers;
- the School Workload Advisory Panel (SWAP) ; and
- Governors Wales.

It also draws on:

- questionnaires sent to a random selection of schools in each LEA in Wales; and
- visits made by Her Majesty's Inspectors to a range of schools.

### **3. The main findings of the report**

3.1 Whilst there are some positive outcomes of the National Agreement to date, there remain many issues of concern.

3.2 The implementation of the National Agreement is at too early a stage to have any significant or measurable impact on the standards that pupils achieve. The changes implemented so far have had little or no discernable effect on pupils' standards.

### **Positive outcomes:**

- 3.3 At the end of the academic year 2004/2005, most schools were positive about the changes associated with the National Agreement. They have found the first two years of implementing the changes manageable.
- 3.4 Most schools have:
- addressed all aspects of the Agreement, and workload changes are now beginning to feature as priorities for school development;
  - achieved success in transferring the specified administrative and clerical tasks from teachers to support staff (Annex 1). This has generally freed up time for teachers; and
  - encouraged teachers to use the extra time to deal with general classroom issues and to plan and mark more effectively.
- 3.5 Teachers have generally appreciated the changes being made in schools and many state that their work/life balance is improving.
- 3.6 The issue of a limit on cover for absent teachers applies mostly to secondary schools. Many secondary schools are aiming to reduce the present 38 hour limit on cover to even lower levels over time.
- 3.7 Although the changes for examination invigilation do not come into force until September 2005, a number of schools are already using invigilators rather than teaching staff for external examinations.
- 3.8 In secondary schools, there are new categories of support staff, for example, cover supervisors.
- 3.9 In all schools, the work of support staff is contributing to a reduction in the workload of teachers. Greater use of support staff enables teachers to spend more time on teaching and learning issues.
- 3.10 In many primary schools, extra support staff have been employed and, in others, the hours of employment of existing support staff have been extended.
- 3.11 The Welsh Assembly Government has provided significant additional resources in support of the Agreement. This money has been allocated to LEAs for distribution to schools based upon locally agreed formulae.
- 3.12 A number of schools have established Change Teams but, in most schools, support for change has come from within existing management structures. This has not had any adverse effect on those schools.

### **Causes for concern:**

- 3.13 Although workload changes are now beginning to feature as priorities for school development, in many schools this is only so for the short term. Schools are reluctant to plan for long term changes that have significant financial implications when budgets are largely unknown.
- 3.14 Many teachers state that the extra non-teaching time created has been negligible.
- 3.15 Most schools are not monitoring the changes nor are they evaluating the impact of the changes on standards of pupils' achievements. Very few schools have made any sort of link between the removal of administrative and clerical tasks from teachers and improvements in standards.
- 3.16 In some very small schools, there has been little evidence of workload reduction. There are still schools without clerical and administrative support for lengthy periods during each week.
- 3.17 The concept of work/life balance for headteachers is very difficult for governors to address. The Agreement specifies that 'Governing Bodies will need to ensure that the headteacher has an appropriate workload....' However, as headteachers largely direct their own work, they do not often consider work/life balance issues for themselves.
- 3.18 The issues associated with workload reduction and workforce remodelling have increased, at least in the short term, the workload of headteachers.
- 3.19 In many schools, there has been little extra non-teaching time for members of leadership teams. The time taken to plan and implement the National Agreement has fallen on leadership teams resulting in additional demands for this group.
- 3.20 Many schools are finding that getting supply staff to cover for subject specialists is even more difficult than it used to be.
- 3.21 A number of schools, particularly in rural areas and for Welsh medium education, have difficulty finding support staff. It is also a problem in schools with specialist educational facilities. Some schools state that the quality of support staff is variable.
- 3.22 Some schools do not organise the deployment of support staff well and this undermines their potential impact.
- 3.23 There are differences in the 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.
- 3.24 Although schools generally have coped well so far with resources for workload

reduction, all schools are concerned about future levels of sustainable funding for workload reduction and workforce remodelling.

3.25 The quality of the courses run by Change Managers and the support they provide for individual schools has been variable.

3.26 The Welsh Assembly Government has not given enough information about workload reduction and workforce remodelling to teachers, parents and governors. Parents and governors, in particular, are largely unaware of the significant implications of the changes implemented so far and of those to be adopted from September 2005.

#### **4. Recommendations**

##### **The Welsh Assembly Government needs to:**

R1. monitor the impact of workload reduction and workforce remodelling on the workload of headteachers;

R2. provide schools with guidance on work/life balance and how this might be achieved, in particular, for headteachers;

R3. produce specific information for teachers, parents and governors on workload reduction and workforce remodelling; and

R4. ensure that there is enough funding in the future to fully support the implementation of the National Agreement.

##### **Schools need to:**

R5. plan to implement the National Agreement in detail;

R6. fully integrate these plans into long term school development plans; and

R7. monitor and evaluate the impact of changes on:

- workload of teachers; and
- pupils' standards of achievement.

#### **5. Progress to date**

5.1 The National Agreement has significant implications for:

- school planning;
- administrative and clerical tasks that teachers undertake;
- work/life balance of teachers and headteachers;
- cover for absent teachers;
- examination invigilation;

- leadership and management responsibilities;
- the roles of support staff;
- resources allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government; and
- change management.

## **Planning**

- 5.2 Schools that have planned carefully have been able to make good progress in implementing the changes associated with the National Agreement. Schools are developing their own approaches to the issues of workload reduction.
- 5.3 Most schools are undertaking some sort of planning for the changes but usually only in the short term and for current activities.
- 5.4 A large number of schools do not regard issues associated with the National Agreement as part of their own planned developments and are, therefore, not including them within the school development plan. However, in those schools where the headteacher and senior managers are positive about the changes, detailed planning exists.
- 5.5 In just over half of the schools surveyed, workload and workforce changes are now priorities. This is particularly so for the introduction of Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time from September 2005. Nevertheless, few plans feature aspects of the National Agreement over the longer term. Schools are reluctant to plan for changes that have significant financial implications when budgets are largely unknown.
- 5.6 In the best examples, schools have produced specific action plans that relate to raising standards and tackling workload. In these schools, staff have identified key objectives relating to workload issues and have included targets and timescales for their development. These schools have also identified the resources necessary to implement the proposed changes.

## **Administrative and clerical tasks**

- 5.7 The National Agreement states that ‘teachers should have support so that they can focus on teaching and learning and expect administrative and clerical processing to be done by support staff. Consequently, teachers should not routinely be required to undertake administrative and clerical tasks.’ (Annex 1)
- 5.8 Only a few schools have formally measured and planned the use of the extra time created by the removal of administrative and clerical tasks. Schools generally have not yet linked reductions in these tasks to a greater focus on teaching and learning activities and raising standards of pupils’ achievement.
- 5.9 Most schools have increased the number and range of administrative and other support staff to address the 25 tasks identified in the National Agreement that need not routinely be carried out by teachers. Most schools have been successful in transferring these tasks from teachers to support staff. This has been most successful in schools which have addressed the transfer of tasks as

one issue.

- 5.10 However, some schools have removed some of the tasks from teachers but retained others. This is largely because it is difficult to change teachers working practices, for example, photocopying and the display of pupils' work.
- 5.11 The majority of teachers appreciate that their significant workload has been recognised and that it is gradually being reduced. However, a minority of teachers are concerned that parents may perceive that the National Agreement means that their role and professional status is being diluted.
- 5.12 The removal of administrative and clerical tasks from teachers has generally allowed them more non-teaching time. For many teachers the extra non-teaching time created has been 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.
- 5.13 In some very small schools, issues of workload reduction have had the least impact. There are still schools without clerical and administrative support for substantial periods during each week. Small schools still have little financial flexibility to make changes. In one primary school visited there was no clerical support staff. All administrative work is still being undertaken by the headteacher.

### **Reasonable work/life balance**

- 5.14 Work/life balance is about helping teachers ensure that their workload allows them to spend time on their personal interests outside work. The National Agreement makes reference to work/life balance and states that 'all teachers should enjoy a reasonable work/life balance' and 'headteachers will need to ensure that their staff have appropriate workloads, in support of a reasonable work/life balance, having regard to their health and welfare'. Furthermore, 'Governing Bodies will need to ensure that the headteacher has an appropriate workload, in support of a reasonable work/life balance...'
- 5.15 There is an expectation amongst new qualified teachers that schools will meet the terms of the National Agreement in full. More experienced teachers see the agreement as positive but many are also sceptical and feel it may only be a temporary initiative. These teachers sometimes do not want to give up some tasks that they have always done. Overall, most teachers report an improvement in their workload as headteachers try to address the requirements of the National Agreement.
- 5.16 A few schools have established a policy on a work/life balance. These policies usually refer to:
- teachers' hours of work:

- what work they will be required to undertake outside school hours; and
  - how the school is developing the work/life balance of teachers.
- 5.17 Most schools would welcome guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government on maintaining a work/life balance. The issue is being addressed more successfully for teachers than for headteachers.
- 5.18 The concept of work/life balance for headteachers is very difficult for governors to address. The Agreement states that ‘Governing Bodies will need to ensure that the headteacher has an appropriate workload, in support of a reasonable work/life balance, having regard to their health and welfare’. However, as headteachers largely direct their own work, they do not often consider work/life balance issues for themselves. In addition, the issues related to workload reduction, workforce remodelling and other Welsh Assembly Government initiatives have put greater pressure on headteachers.
- 5.19 Most schools have reduced the number of staff meetings being held. Meetings are being planned further in advance with non-essential meetings cancelled.
- 5.20 An increasing number of headteachers are beginning to work at home to complete certain written tasks, for example, the preparation of termly reports for governors. However, this does not necessarily reduce their workload.
- 5.21 In many schools, headteachers and governors have worked together to reduce the number of full governing body meetings and committee meetings held. A large number of schools schedule governing body meetings to start earlier.

### **Cover for absent teachers**

- 5.22 The National Agreement refers to occasions when the qualified teacher normally responsible for a pupil’s learning outcomes is absent from the classroom. It proposes a number of linked steps on cover including:
- ‘...limits on the extent to which a teacher at a school can be asked unexpectedly to cover for an absent colleague, with progressive movement towards a position where this should only happen rarely’; and
  - ‘...no teacher may be required to provide cover for more than a set number of hours per year. Initially, the number of hours is set at 38, but it should be unusual for most teachers to provide such a high amount of cover...’
- 5.23. The issue of cover for absent teachers is of most relevance in secondary schools. Some secondary schools have appointed cover supervisors to deal with teacher absences. These are support staff specifically appointed to supervise classes when teachers are absent and to help with other duties. Cover supervisors are not qualified teachers but have a good general education, and are able to relate well to young people. Schools appointing cover supervisors usually offer a full induction and training programme. This can sometimes include training in behavioural management strategies.

- 5.24. The National Agreement states that ‘the cover supervisor model is particularly valid where a teacher has been able to set work, or where pupils are able to undertake self-directed learning...cover supervisors are for short-term absences only...’.
- 5.25. Secondary schools are aiming to reduce the 38 hour limit on cover to even lower levels over time. One secondary school has already limited cover to 14 hours per year.
- 5.26. The 38 hour cover limit (this equates to about one hour of cover per week throughout the year) is having an adverse impact in some secondary schools as it reduces some of the flexibility.
- 5.27. Many schools have even more difficulty finding subject specialists to cover for absent physical education, technology and science teachers.
- 5.28. Most teachers feel that it is desirable to provide trained teachers to cover for absences.

### **Examination invigilation**

- 5.29 Although the changes for examination invigilation do not come into force until September 2005, a number of schools are already using invigilators for externally set examinations.
- 5.30 In many schools, invigilators are not always teachers or former teachers. Many are support staff that have been trained for this specific purpose.
- 5.31 Many schools are setting up invigilation teams. Retired headteachers or teachers sometimes lead these teams.
- 5.32 One LEA has drawn up a job description, agreed by all schools, for Examination Invigilators. This has been useful for schools to refer to when appointing staff to these positions.
- 5.33 Some schools have appointed an Examinations Officer from their support staff. This person is responsible for the safe, secure and efficient operation of the school’s internal and external examinations.
- 5.34 A few pupils expressed concerns that they may not know Examination Invigilators. They were worried that perhaps invigilators may not have sufficient knowledge or expertise to advise them properly if issues arise during examinations.

### **Leadership and management responsibilities**

- 5.35 The National Agreement refers to members of the leadership group having ‘time to focus on their leadership responsibilities and be supported in leading the reform agenda and managing change in their schools’.... and having ‘a reasonable allocation of time in support of their leadership and management

responsibilities’.

- 5.36 In many schools, there is little extra time for members of leadership teams.
- 5.37 However, in some schools, headteachers are not doing some tasks that they have done historically as they feel they are not linked enough to teaching and learning. In primary schools, this includes administrative staff inputting data on the computer and checking day-to-day finances and orders.
- 5.38 As a result of increasing workload pressure on headteachers, in many schools, senior management teams are now looking carefully at the work the headteacher and the leadership group are involved in and what work can be done by others.
- 5.39 A large number of primary schools have created some time for subject leaders to monitor and evaluate standards across the school in the subjects which they are responsible for.

### **Support staff**

- 5.40 The National Agreement has significant implications for the roles of support staff in schools. Generally, support staff now have access to a greater number of roles and improved choices and career opportunities.
- 5.41 All schools have increased the role that support staff play in school life by employing extra staff, by increasing the hours worked of existing staff or by a combination of both. Many primary and secondary schools are employing extra traditional support staff such as receptionists, school clerks, administrative officers and learning support assistants (LSAs). Other schools have extended the hours of employment of existing support staff.
- 5.42 Secondary schools have employed more support staff in new roles outside the classroom, for example, data managers, reprographics technicians, attendance officers, network managers, cover supervisors, behaviour managers and examinations officers.
- 5.43 In all schools, the work that support staff do is contributing to a reduction in the workload of teachers. Support staff are enabling teachers to spend more time on issues directly related to teaching and learning.
- 5.44 There are weaknesses in the way schools manage support staff. For example, their work is often not co-ordinated effectively and many do not have enough opportunities for continuing professional development. However, many schools are training support staff to carry out their roles more effectively. Where good training is organised, a large number report improved morale.
- 5.45 Some LEAs have audited the training needs of all clerical support staff and LSAs. These LEAs will now train support staff appropriately to meet their needs.
- 5.46 Some schools have had difficulty getting support staff. This is particularly so in rural areas, in Welsh medium schools and for classes for pupils with special

educational classes.

- 5.47 Many schools state that the quality of support staff they have been able to appoint is variable.
- 5.48 In a small number of schools, teachers do not value the contribution made by support staff. Support staff earn significantly less than teachers. They often feel that their workload and responsibility is increasing but they are not being adequately remunerated.
- 5.49 In a small number of schools, recently qualified teachers who are unable to secure jobs as teachers are employed as LSAs.

## **Resources**

- 5.50 The Welsh Assembly Government has provided significant additional resources in support of the Agreement. This money has been allocated to LEAs for distribution to schools based upon locally agreed formulae.
- 5.51 In all LEAs, some of the resources used to support the National Agreement are held centrally. These resources pay for the posts of Change Managers and for the significant training programmes undertaken with headteachers. This 'top slicing' of workload funding varies across Wales from 7.5% of the total workload budget at the highest level to 4% at the lowest.
- 5.52 There are differences in the funding formulae for work associated with the National Agreement in different LEAs across Wales. Whilst the distribution of resources between primary and secondary phases has been consulted on and positively accepted in some LEAs, in others, the division of resources has met with some resistance from headteachers. This is because headteachers in these LEAs feel that they are not getting a fair distribution of the available resources.
- 5.53 The distribution of resources between primary and secondary phases varies between 80% for primary and 20% for secondary to 50% for primary and 50% for secondary. Consequently, amounts of money allocated to similar schools across Wales vary.
- 5.54 Most headteachers perceive that success in implementing the National Agreement is dependent on adequate funding. Although schools have coped well so far with resourcing the workload reduction, there is great concern amongst most schools that they will not have enough funding for the next stage of implementation; in particular, for the demands of PPA time.
- 5.55 A small number of teachers question the large amounts of money being spent and perceive that this could have been spent in better ways, for example, by reducing class sizes or by having more support staff in classes with teachers on a daily basis.

## **Change management**

- 5.56 The National Agreement states that ‘school leaders...will be supported by a national change management programme, to help achieve in their schools the necessary reforms...’.
- 5.57 The quality of the training organised by Change Managers has been variable. Many schools report that the training has been very good while a few describe it as poor. This is largely because some schools have found that the training undertaken in their LEAs did not meet their specific phase needs enough.
- 5.58 The training has focused on the significant changes for schools of the implementation of the National Agreement.
- 5.59 Many headteachers felt that during the training there were too few opportunities for discussion or for applying the training to their own particular school situations. Many also felt that the materials used lacked a Welsh context. Consequently, many of the training sessions have been difficult for Change Managers to deliver.
- 5.60 Specific school support from Change Managers across Wales varies considerably. In many areas, Change Managers respond well to requests or organise workshop sessions. In some areas, however, schools have received no individual support.
- 5.61 In some areas, Change Managers have given specific advice to schools about the possible combination of staff and others that could make up Change Teams. These are teams whose membership may include a cross section of staff in the school and representatives from pupils, parents and governors. The purpose of a Change Team would be to consider and plan the changes that are needed to take account of workload reduction and workforce remodelling.
- 5.62 However, most schools have not formed Change Teams and support for change has come from within existing management structures. In many cases, this is working well.

## **Impact of the National Agreement**

- 5.63 The implementation of the National Agreement is at too early a stage to have had any significant impact on the standards that pupils achieve.
- 5.64 Most schools report that changes implemented so far have had little or no effect on pupils, and pupils are generally unaware of any changes.
- 5.65 Many teachers are sceptical about whether the changes will result in raising standards.
- 5.66 Teachers generally appreciate the changes and undertake fewer administrative and clerical tasks. They have a clearer understanding of the focus of their work on teaching and learning.

- 5.67 In many schools, teachers have used the extra time created for general classroom issues but with little proper planning. As a result, they perceive little overall improvement. However, others state that they are able to spend more time on planning and marking more effectively and on preparing better for lessons.
- 5.68 There is some evidence from teachers of improved work/life balance.
- 5.69 The workload of headteachers has generally increased.
- 5.70 Many schools have improved processes to help teachers with administrative and clerical tasks.
- 5.71 Secondary schools have successfully addressed the restrictions on teachers covering for absent colleagues.

### **General issues**

- 5.72 The National Agreement refers to the need for the Welsh Assembly Government to 'promulgate the standards and workload agreement to all parts of the education service and take steps to ensure it is widely understood through a dedicated communications campaign'.
- 5.73 There has been a lack of information from the Welsh Assembly Government regarding workload reduction and workforce remodelling for teachers, parents and governors. This has meant that individual headteachers have had to disseminate these issues and inform these groups.
- 5.74 In many schools, headteachers have informed staff well about the changes. However, many schools have neglected to inform parents of workload and workforce issues in enough detail.
- 5.74.1 Some LEAs have produced standard information for parents and are distributing this to their schools.
- 5.75 Not all governors are aware of the changes that are needed or of the significance of these changes. Many governors are unaware of what workload reduction and workforce remodelling is about, even in those schools with strong, supportive governors,
- 5.76 Governors Wales are providing governors with an overview of what the National Agreement entails in a Summer 2005 newsletter. This will be useful information for school governors.

## Annex 1

### Administrative and clerical tasks.

Teachers should not routinely be required to undertake administrative and clerical tasks, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• collecting money</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• chasing absences</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• photocopying a substantial amount of materials</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• producing standard letters</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• producing class lists</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keeping records and filing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• putting up classroom displays</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• analysing attendance figures</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• processing exam results</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• collating pupil reports</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• administering work experience</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• administering examinations</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• invigilating examinations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• administering teacher cover</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• trouble shooting and minor repairs for ICT equipment and systems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• commissioning new ICT equipment</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ordering supplies and equipment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• stocktaking</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• cataloguing, preparing, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• minuting meetings</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• co-ordinating and submitting bids</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• seeking and giving personnel advice</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• managing pupil data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• inputting pupil data</li></ul>