



Department  
for Education

# **School workforce planning**

**Guidance for schools**

**January 2017**

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## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education on reviewing school staff structures, following requests from school leaders and their representatives. The publication includes:

- A list of options for school leaders to consider
- Questions for school leaders to consider when reviewing their staff structures
- An example timeline
- Links to advice, case studies and tools for school leaders to use

## Review date

This guidance will be reviewed by January 2019.

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for anyone who has a strategic leadership position within a school or academy trust, including:

- Executive headteachers
- Academy CEOs
- School leadership teams
- School business managers and finance directors
- Governors and trustees

The guidance is for all schools and therefore its use needs to take account of local aims and school type.

## Reviewing school staff structures

Schools should review their staff structures regularly as part of their annual school improvement, curriculum and financial planning. These reviews should start from first principles to investigate whether the deployment of staff is as effective and efficient as possible.

A staffing review is about ensuring that the school is always investing in the right mix of staff, and in high quality professional development, to deliver excellent pupil outcomes.

Staffing costs make up 70 to 80% of an average school's expenditure. All schools should ensure that their staff structures maximise the impact of this spending, and that they make efficiencies where possible in other areas (for example, on procurement and back office spending).

### What are the options?

Schools should begin by considering a wide range of options, without feeling that they need to disregard any immediately. Effective school workforce planning is not solely about examining the number of staff – it should lead to the more effective and efficient use of existing staff.

There is no single staff structure, or approach to reviewing staffing, that will suit all schools. Contextual factors, including funding, pupil demographics, and school improvement priorities, play an important part.

To avoid unnecessary staffing changes, schools should aim to plan their staffing over 3 to 5 years. This allows them, for example, to take natural staff turnover into account when planning for future changes to staff structures.

Some of the considerations that schools include in their reviews are:

- **How to maximise the potential of existing staff to improve outcomes** – including access to high quality professional development; consideration of the skills and level of experience of existing staff; eliminating unnecessary or inefficient practice; retraining or redeployment.
- **How to make the most of part time and flexible working opportunities wherever possible** – including whether staff structures allow for part time teaching staff, support staff and leaders where appropriate; whether they allow all staff to work flexibly to maximise efficiency; and whether there are opportunities for staff to be shared across schools or settings.
- **The balance of short term and long term costs** – including whether the school would be able to absorb additional recruitment or redundancy costs; and whether longer term gains offset these costs.

- **The school's needs over the medium term** – including whether these are being considered effectively as part of 3 to 5 year planning.
- **The assumptions necessary for calculating these needs** – including pupil numbers and budget forecasting.
- **Staff workload and morale** – taking into account the principles and recommendations of the workload reports on [marking](#), [planning](#), and [data management](#); and consideration of potential impact, positive and negative, on morale of any changes.
- **How any need for redundancies could be minimised** – Acas' advisory booklets, [Redundancy Handling](#) and [Redundancy](#), contain guidance on handling redundancies, and avoiding redundancies where possible.
- **The requirements set out in any existing agreements** – including any relevant local restructuring, recruitment and redundancy procedures. This should include checking that all staff-related policies are up to date and comply with relevant legislation.
- **Equality impacts on pupils or staff** – including how best to mitigate these impacts; and whether the school is compliant with equalities legislation. The [Equality Act 2010 – Advice for Schools](#) is available to support schools in this area. Further information can also be sought from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#), and the [Equality Advisory and Support Service](#).
- **Contractual implications** – including whether contracts need to change as a result of changes to staff structures and job roles; and whether to take specialist HR advice.

## Key questions for school leaders to consider

School leaders may wish to ask themselves the following questions when reviewing their staff structures. These are most effective when considered together by schools' leadership teams, including business managers, curriculum leads and governing boards. There are also links to further advice and case studies.

### Is the mix of staffing roles right to achieve the school's objectives?

#### Options to consider

**What is the best balance between teachers and support staff?** Could teaching assistants (TAs) and other classroom based support staff be used in more targeted ways, such as working in teams across year groups?

**Could non-classroom based support staff be deployed more effectively and efficiently?** Can some roles be merged, or can support staff be shared with other schools? Do they have the right skills and status?

**Is the balance right between classroom teachers and the leadership team?** How may this need to change over the next 3 to 5 years? Are the roles of middle leaders clearly defined?

**Does the mix of subject specialist teachers, particularly in secondary schools, match curriculum requirements?** Can existing staff be trained to meet shortages in other subjects at the right level? Can staff be shared across schools or settings?

#### Useful data and evidence

- **Benchmarking data.** These can inform discussions within and between schools about the use of support staff and teachers. These data are included in the [DfE benchmarking tools](#).
- **Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation** on the [effective use of teaching assistants](#) and the [Pupil Premium evaluation](#).
- **School data on use of non-classroom support staff.** These include a breakdown of full time equivalent (FTE) staff according to specific roles or functions. Some schools find it helpful to share these data among themselves at a local level to inform comparisons of staff deployment.

#### Case studies and advice

- Case study on [efficiencies in support staff spending](#).
- Case study on [a leaner and more effective leadership team](#).
- Case study on [strategic deployment of support staff](#).

## Are teaching staff being deployed in the most effective and efficient way?

### Options to consider

**What staffing resource is required to deliver the curriculum effectively and efficiently?** What are the curriculum priorities? Could curriculum-based financial planning tools be used to assess options for staff structures? Do class sizes and pupil teacher ratios allow for the most efficient use of staffing resource?

**Can teachers' time be more focused on the classroom?** How does teachers' and leaders' contact time compare with other schools? Are teachers supported to concentrate on the tasks that make the biggest impact on pupil outcomes? Has the school considered the recommendations of the three teacher [workload review groups](#) to eliminate unnecessary tasks?

**Could more be made of flexible working opportunities, including for teachers and leaders where appropriate?** Is the school drawing on the widest pool of talent by making suitable arrangements for part time staff, job shares and flexible working where feasible?

**Can the costs of supply teachers be reduced?** Could collaboration with other schools help to negotiate down agency fees for supply teachers, without reducing supply teacher pay? Could flexible working arrangements enable greater forward planning or improve attendance, and reduce the need for external supply teachers? Does the school have an effective policy for managing staff absence?

### Useful data and evidence

- The outputs of **curriculum planning tools** to help analyse what the right mix of staff would be to deliver the curriculum.
- [Education Endowment Foundation evidence](#), which assesses the impact of class size on pupil outcomes.
- School data on supply teacher costs and teacher absences.
- Discussions with other schools to compare approaches to teacher contact time, including for middle and senior leaders, to carefully consider the optimum arrangements for each school.
- The three reports on eliminating unnecessary teacher workload related to non-teaching tasks ([marking](#), [planning](#), and [data management](#)).

### Case studies and advice

- Case studies on [eliminating unnecessary workload](#).
- Case study on [curriculum-led financial planning](#).
- Case study on [the financial benefits of efficient timetabling](#).
- Case study on [three-year budget planning](#).

## Are the right appraisal policies in place?

### Options to consider

**Do all staff have objectives which contribute to improving the education of pupils at that school?** Is teachers' performance assessed against objectives and the relevant standards? Do middle and senior leaders have stretching objectives which contribute to the implementation of the school's improvement plan?

**Are all pay progression decisions made on the basis of performance?** Pay policies can recognise and reward teachers' performance and incentivise continuous development.

**Are part time staff and supply teachers treated fairly?** The school's appraisal policy must ensure that part time and supply staff are assessed fairly, with expectations commensurate to their individual roles.

### Useful data and evidence

- School-level information on supply teacher use.
- School data on teachers receiving performance-related progression payments each year.

### Case studies and advice

- DfE advice on [Implementing Your School's Approach to Pay](#), which includes a model pay policy for schools to consider.
- DfE's [School Teacher's Pay and Conditions Document](#) – statutory guidance for maintained schools in England and Wales.
- DfE's [Teacher Appraisal and Capability: a model policy for schools](#).
- [Teachers' standards](#).



## When should reviews of staff structures take place?

Schools are advised to plan and implement staffing reviews over the medium to long term (3 to 5 years) alongside financial planning. Medium to long term planning should take into account how pay progression or salary uplifts could change staffing costs; and how staff turnover could change staff structures. Typically, a review of a staff structure will begin in early autumn, with initial planning during the preceding academic year. Reviews should be carried out in line with curriculum and school development planning. An example 12 month cycle could look like the following, although not all reviews will need all of these steps.

Timing	Key activities
<b>April to July</b>	Plan review, gather relevant information (for example, to inform benchmarking comparisons).
<b>September to October</b>	Review of the staff structure, undertaken by the school leadership team. This is informed by school improvement priorities, curriculum planning, projections of pupil numbers, expected future funding and benchmarking comparisons.  Develop a proposed 3 to 5 year plan for the staff structure.
<b>October</b>	Informal discussions about the findings from the review of the staff structure and the proposed 3 to 5 year plan. If any recruitment or redundancies are being considered, it is important to have the correct HR advice.  Initial discussions can involve the school leadership team, governors, staff and union representatives. Outcomes from these discussions inform any decision to hold a formal consultation on proposed changes to the staff structure.
<b>November to January</b>	Consultation – if proceeding with changes following informal discussions. Involve HR specialists. Consult all staff and union representatives on proposed staffing changes and revise the proposed plan accordingly. It is good practice for a consultation to last at least four weeks.  Begin recruitment processes where appropriate.
<b>January to March</b>	Finalise any relevant changes following formal confirmation of allocated budget for the next year. Continue any recruitment processes.  Where appropriate, carry out further consultation (this is necessary only if possible redundancies are needed). All staff and union representatives are consulted separately to the prior consultation on the proposed staffing structure. This consultation covers ways that redundancies could be avoided, and how to mitigate the impact of redundancies.
<b>September</b>	Year 1 changes to staff structure in place. Assess progress on 3 to 5 year plan and revise accordingly.

## What tools are available to help?

Benchmarking tools help schools to compare their staff structures with other schools.

Financial planning and curriculum planning tools can be used to test possible staff structures.

### Benchmarking

Benchmarking against other schools can be a useful starting point for reviews of staff structures. Benchmarking data can inform conversations among school leaders to help identify the reasons behind differences in staff structures.

Key benchmarking data on staffing include:

- **Total spending on staff** – allowing schools to monitor the proportion of their total expenditure that is spent on staff. Anything above 80% is unusually high, and may not be financially sustainable.
- **Breakdown of spending** – showing spending on both support staff and teachers.
- **Drivers of staffing costs** – including average cost per FTE staff member; pupil teacher ratios; class sizes; leadership structure (senior and middle); and teacher contact time.

DfE tools and advice can help schools to benchmark their staff structures. These include:

- [Benchmarking tools](#), which automatically generate comparisons on many of the data outlined above. Schools can choose which schools they are compared against for benchmarking purposes.
- [Top 10 Planning Checks](#) to support governors and school leadership teams when they look at benchmarking data. The checks include a list of suggested questions for governors and leaders to ask about their own spending.

Some important data on staffing, including class sizes and teacher contact time, are not collected centrally by DfE. They are therefore not included in DfE benchmarking tools.

These data will, however, be held at individual school level and can also inform discussions with other schools. Schools have done this successfully by making agreements with local schools, or by contacting similar schools on the benchmarking website.

## Staffing and financial planning

Tools to help schools to analyse the implications of different staff structures include:

- An example tool to help schools track teacher staffing levels across their curricula, published alongside this guidance. This was developed by a school, and provides information about staffing levels to deliver the curriculum.
- [An ASCL spreadsheet tool](#) to help schools to build staffing costs into multi-year budget planning. This allows schools to test the implications of different approaches to staff deployment on their budgets. It is particularly focused on testing options for teaching staff structures.

## What are the options for further support?

For further help, possible sources of support include:

- A video from DfE on [Schools financial efficiency: top tips for financial planning](#).
- Advice on financial planning and staff deployment from the suppliers listed on the DfE [Financial health checks](#) list.
- HR, financial planning and staffing consultancy support, particularly from trade unions and other national organisations.
- A list of [schools](#) that offer financial management advice and expertise to other schools.
- [Guidance on procurement](#), developed by DfE and Crown Commercial Service, for efficiencies in non-staff spending.
- Local authority HR advice and financial advice.
- Specialist providers of HR advice.



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Reference: DFE-00034-2017



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