



Department
for Education

Ways to reduce workload in your school(s)

**Tips and case studies from school
leaders, teachers and sector experts**

July 2018

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Introduction

This document was developed by school leaders, teachers, and experts in education technology and initial teacher education, following consultation with schools across the country. It provides tips to remove unnecessary workload and make policies and processes in schools more efficient, including through the effective use of technology. It also links to case studies of how schools have changed their practice.

The document supplements the principles and recommendations from the three independent workload reports on [marking](#), [planning and resources](#), and [data management](#).

This document is aimed at school leadership teams, including executives of MATs and other groups of schools, but may also be helpful for governors, middle leaders, teachers and support staff. It takes up to 15 minutes to read. The linked case studies take an additional 15 minutes to read.

The hints and tips are not intended to be exhaustive and there is no requirement for schools to use them.

This document will be reviewed in autumn 2018. We would welcome any comments or suggestions on how to improve this guidance from those working in schools or the education sector: please contact workload.solutions@education.gov.uk.

Using technology effectively

Always put teaching first. Technology should not be the starting point for any decisions. Make your decisions based on what you want to achieve not what the technology can do, and look for the simplest solutions. See [case study from Cam Everlands Primary School](#).

Leaders need to champion the use of the technology, and mandate if necessary. Messages need to come from the top so that everyone can see that this is viewed as important. Find some tasks that everybody does and make sure these are part of a new system so that people have to go there.

Time investment in planning is key. Plan out carefully what you want to achieve and by when. Be realistic in your expectations. Time spent at the implementation stage is important and cannot be rushed. Consider conducting a small-scale trial, seek out teacher feedback, and gradually scale-up the implementation. A key driver for teachers adopting technology is seeing the benefits for other teachers first.

Winning people over is important. Find out who the champions in your school are and look for ways to use their knowledge and enthusiasm to support others on their journey. Address why some people view technology as a problem. Think about when things have not gone well in the past and what could have been done differently. What is it that has created this feeling and how can you address it? See [case study from Danesfield School](#).

Share the vision and actions with parents and carers. Provide information and offer training where possible to understand the tools being used and how parents can be involved in the process.

If using cloud-based services, robust infrastructure including sufficient broadband capacity and sitewide wi-fi is vital. Survey existing physical and wireless network infrastructure, broadband provision and pupil devices and ensure that these have the capacity to manage the expectations of the cloud-based approach. See [case study from Broadford Primary School](#).

Be aware of the time taken for warranty repairs to be undertaken. Equipment not working can be a massive barrier. If budget allows, it is useful to have 'hotswap' identical devices ready to stand in whilst broken devices are being repaired.

Audit staff training needs and consider different people's development needs. Some may prefer face-to-face training, others online content and fewer meetings. Signpost people to how-to videos, either on sites such as YouTube, or simply made with a tablet or other device. After a CPD event, have a 'go to' person who can support those that need it.

Feedback and marking

Consider why you are marking. Use the principles and recommendations from the report on [eliminating unnecessary workload around marking](#) to review your practice and consider carrying out a [feedback and marking workshop](#) with staff. Ignore myths that suggest that spending hours marking makes a better teacher, and that writing pages of feedback makes you more effective: concentrate on feedback which is meaningful, manageable and motivating.

Consider a range of feedback techniques which are proportionate. Not all feedback has to be written. Evaluate the time spent on marking by all staff and discuss whether this is proportionate. Consider live class feedback (e.g. audio, photo, video) which can be recorded and added to electronic versions of pupils' work. Tools such as Tapestry, 2Build a Profile and Free Flow Info also allow teachers to match evidence to assessment criteria, include ongoing feedback to parents and can reduce the number of face-to-face meetings. Always ensure meaningful interaction so the type of feedback, language and style are suitable for the pupil. See case studies from [Shaw Primary Academy](#), [Barr Beacon School](#) and [Shireland](#).

Build in live sampling. Select a sample of work and mark it in front of pupils, e.g. use a visualiser, so students see how work is corrected, enabling them to then make amendments to their own work. Consider ways to display content on a tablet or laptop by mirroring images via tools such as Apple Air Play, Google Chromecast and more.

Use “sampling for planning”. Focus on a sample of pupils' work after a lesson and use the understanding gained about progress to inform the planning of the subsequent lesson(s).

Use low stakes and self-marking tools. For example: Kahoot, Quizlet, Google Forms and Diagnostic Questions can save teachers time. Prepared questions can be saved and shared, allowing teachers to re-use or adapt the content rather than create something from scratch.

Use marking codes where appropriate. These can be used to draw pupils' attention to common strengths and areas to develop to reduce the need for lengthy responses.

Prioritise key pieces of work. Use schemes of work to identify which pieces of work should be prioritised for more detailed feedback.

Review your feedback and marking policy. Consider examples from primary and secondary schools and other case studies [here](#).

Curriculum Planning

Evaluate your curriculum planning. Start with the principles from the [report on eliminating unnecessary workload around planning and teaching resources](#) to review your planning and consider running a [curriculum planning and resources workshop](#). Consider if your existing schemes of work are clear in relation to pupil progress and attainment in all the relevant subjects, are fully resourced with sequenced lesson planning and high quality curriculum materials, and planned over well-defined blocks of time.

Plan efficiently. If developing new schemes of work or revising existing ones, establish a team or staff pairs led by more experienced colleagues. Also consider specialisms and strengths when allocating responsibility. Start with agreed learning objectives over blocks of time, plan sequences of lessons to achieve these objectives and establish the most effective way that pupils will be assessed. See [case study from Bryanston School](#).

Choose high quality resources. First consider the use of commercially produced resources (e.g. textbooks, print and digital resources, subscription services). Assess whether they meet most or all of your curriculum needs, are sufficiently high quality and constitute good value for money. If you decide to develop or adapt resources, factor in teachers' time in searching, development, trialling and quality assurance. Agree on your most trusted sources as a school or department for particular subjects. Make standard tools available to staff/pupils as part of the school's cloud-based platform. Make use of curriculum resources available under the DfE's [copyright licences for schools](#).

Plan collaboratively and share. Timetable PPA at a common time where possible, and consider curriculum planning across schools. Create an online user group or shared drive for high quality resources. Use collaborative software such as GoogleDocs, OneDrive or OneNote to enable you to work on the same document at the same time and consider Cloud services such as G-Suite. Agree file naming conventions and folder structures so you can make best use of folders and can find what you want easily. See [case study from Prince Henry's Grammar School](#).

Ensure resources and IT systems are accessible. High quality resources that form part of schemes of work should be accessible at all times, or booking systems in place for physical resources. Having a facility within the school, phase or department to register additional needs as an ongoing document will support teachers in developing and maintaining this.

Remove the need for paper-based homework planners. Upload homework to an online platform where pupils and parents can view homework tasks, whilst reducing printing costs and lost homework sheets at the same time.

Data management

Plan the collection of data. Ask yourself what the purpose is, what the most efficient process is, and how you can ensure the data we collect is reliable and valid. Interrogate the validity of data collected on pupil attainment and progress, including target setting and predictions. Use the principles from the [report on eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management](#) to review your data management processes and consider running a [data management workshop](#) with staff.

Consider the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in place from 25 May 2018. The GDPR means all organisations handling personal data, including schools, need to have the right governance measures. The [data protection toolkit for schools](#) will help schools develop processes to collect and handle the data, and respond quickly and appropriately to data breaches. You can also read [General Data protection: Evolution or revolution for schools](#) blog and watch the [GDPR guidance for schools video](#).

Consider the design of your systems. Most data collection systems can now work together so it is important that teachers only enter pupil data once: let the systems do the rest. Audit other areas of workflow and consider how many times items of data are handled, how this can be reduced and if technology can support this. See [case study from The White Horse Federation](#).

Make sure processes support the accurate input of valid data. Allow time for moderation before the input of data, and build in a checking process to avoid unnecessary work that can follow from mistakes.

Develop staff confidence and ability to manage and process data effectively and in delivering interventions. Consider training for staff on the use of relevant systems and the purpose of data collections and monitoring. Provide support for inexperienced staff new to interventions, saving time in planning and maximising impact.

If you require it, look for systems which suit your needs. For example, a system providing data analysis and also suggesting next steps for teaching or intervention; or systems which provide immediate alerts to staff of sensitive issues, and an ongoing record of management of these issues. See [case study from St. Peter's Primary School](#).

Use one source of information to record progress and attainment to help inform all staff. This is useful for pupils with specific needs, including sharing key approaches to learning, seating plans and rewards systems. Use an online collaborative system for recording the impact of interventions as they happen.

Conduct an intervention 'health check'. Use evidence based, structured interventions which have a low impact on staff time. Regularly monitor interventions, discard those with low impact and extend those that are proven to work. Monitor the allocated time commitment of each intervention and plan the frequency, time per session and total duration of the intervention.

Communications

Consider why you are communicating. Think about all the communications you make in the day and review if they are making a difference – if not, stop. Establish and publish a [communications policy or protocol](#) planned around pinch points in the year. Start small with little activities that chip away at the time in a working day. Find out which areas of the school generate the most paper, slips or forms and consider if they are necessary, or if alternative systems can be used. Consider running a [communications workshop](#). See case study from [Southend High School for Boys](#).

Staff meetings. Reduce meeting times. Have clear start and end times with timed agenda items. Consider the number of meetings in place each week and provide flexibility. Make meetings about pedagogy to make the best use of the time. Have a nominated person look over departmental/phase/staff meeting agendas and reject them if they are not focused on pedagogy. Consider using tools like Google Forms to book meetings online.

Use a variety of communication channels with parents and carers. Add frequently asked questions or ‘decision tree’ options to the school website to direct users, e.g. a short email or text may be as appropriate as a phone call, or a phone or video call could be used rather than a face to face meeting. Apps and software can be used to send letters and reminders home, as well as collecting forms, making payments and booking appointments. See [example communications policy from St Edward's RC/CoE School](#).

Use of email: Set out times after which staff should not check, send or reply to work emails (whilst being mindful of urgent needs, for example, in relation to safeguarding). Use distribution lists and functions such as out of office messages and delayed delivery. All emails should have a descriptive heading with a status assigned to it to signify its urgency. Consider a daily/weekly bulletin using cloud services, and alternative messaging tools to reduce emails or categorise messages. See [example email protocol from St Edward's RC/CoE School](#).

Parental events. Review the number and effectiveness of parental events. Consider the impact on pupil progress of each event as well as attendance from parents, and balance the range of events on offer. Monitor staffing at events – decide on the supervision required and create a rota to reduce the number of events that staff are required to attend. Agree with staff what is a reasonable number of out-of-hours events (taking into account directed time) and prioritise your programme around the capacity you have.

Written reports. Evaluate your approach to written reports – assess the time and impact of current practice. Explore alternatives to written reports. Compare your current approach with the [requirements for reporting to parents](#). Consider how reports could be made more succinct (e.g. limiting the word count) and meaningful (focusing on key strengths and areas for development).

Managing change

Plan ahead, identify and eradicate 'pinch points'. Time the calendar production in advance of the new school year. Ask a range of staff to review and provide feedback from their perspectives before finalising the calendar. Consider running a '[planning a yearly calendar](#)' workshop. Use assessment and examination calendars to support the school calendar and cross reference against these¹. Include assessment points and data collection cycles for the year, and check that data will be collected and processed in time for use. Review these points regularly to ensure that all data drops are necessary, and that data is collected when it will be most efficiently used. Share monitoring events, CPD and meeting schedules well in advance. Give regular updates and advance notice of evening and after school events to parents/carers and staff.

Implement changes in a structured and staged manner. Ensure there is adequate time at the planning stage when preparing to make changes. Make fewer, more strategic decisions. Decide if other existing practices can be stopped or streamlined. Don't make change for change's sake. Make sure that changes have a specific focus linked to improvement priorities, and have a clear, logical implementation plan. Consider what and when to stop and adopt a one-in, one-out rule for new tasks, encouraging consistency and sustainability. Consider '[Putting evidence to work: A school's guide to implementation](#)' report from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

Create a shared understanding of the process. Introduce new skills, knowledge and structures with explicit up-front training, structured collaboration and complementary coaching and mentoring. Build leadership capacity by developing teams. Encourage staff to collaborate with other colleagues in school teams and with colleagues from other schools and external agencies to share and distribute workload.

Communicate your changes. Work with governors, parents and carers, and pupils to make sure that the whole school community understands the reasons for change. See [example from St. Joseph's College](#).

Ask if you do not understand why a process or practice is carried out. Be clear about how a process or practice is leading to positive impact on pupils. Suggest alternatives if you think better ones exist.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-calendar> and <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/key-dates-and-timetables/key-dates-in-the-examination-cycle-2018-2019>

Performance management and staff support

Review and streamline your performance management processes. Link school development priorities to staff appraisal objectives and refer to [DfE advice](#) on teacher pay and appraisal (in particular, on reducing bureaucracy on page 16 and on managing teacher workload on page 43).

Agree Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic objectives. Ensure all objectives are relevant and set within a realistic timeframe with all resourcing and professional development implications planned for. Staff should not be expected to provide separate evidence for pupil progress and outcomes – it should be collected from existing data sources. Agree clear success criteria for each objective so that staff are clear what they need to be able to evidence at the end of the cycle.

Involve staff in assessing their performance. Use professional dialogue to reduce the workload of the reviewer and allow staff to take ownership of their personal and professional development. Enable staff to collaborate on activities and prepare for review meetings. Ensure that reviewers manage similar numbers of staff, and provide directed time to conduct reviews. Use light-touch interim reviews where appropriate to ensure that staff are on track to achieve objectives, avoiding build-up at the end of the cycle.

Create clear protocols and expectations. Agree protocols for staff monitoring, taking into account the impact on workload of these processes. Include these on the school calendar and stick to the timescales.

Provide support for staff wellbeing. Consider options for external support such as the [Education Support Partnership](#), and case studies of setting up a [wellbeing group](#) or [protocol](#).

Organise classroom environments. Design and implement effective processes to maintain and organise classrooms. Build in transition and induction for teachers and new pupils. Maximise the use of permanent displays which do not need to be changed. Create relevant checklists for classroom environments based on audit. Include expectations around display, equipment, layout and agree them with staff.

Support teachers in the early stages of their career. Provide specific professional development: areas such as planning, assessment and feedback, data management, setting up classrooms, managing behaviour and understanding school policies can all create additional workload for early career teachers. Ensure that mentors and induction tutors have the time, capacity, expertise, knowledge, experience and personal qualities required for the role. Review the demands you make on trainees, NQTs and teachers in the early stages of their career. Can you reduce the amount of evidence required and streamline reporting mechanisms relating to their appraisal and monitoring? Consider the [DfE advice](#) that any ‘collection of evidence should be proportionate and not increase workload for teachers’, and [advice and case studies on supporting early career teachers](#).

Additional materials

The DfE [Teaching Blog](#) includes case studies and examples of effective practice.

Reports from independent teacher workload review groups, which produced principles and recommendations to help eliminate unnecessary workload related to:

- [marking](#)
- [planning and resources](#)
- [data management](#)

[Myths and Facts](#) document from Ofsted explaining what inspectors do and do not expect to see when they inspect a school.

The main points from the reports and Ofsted myths and facts have been highlighted in [a pamphlet and poster for teachers](#) endorsed by DfE, teaching unions and Ofsted.

The [Governance handbook for academies, multi-academy trusts and maintained schools](#) states '*all boards and executive leaders should ensure that they adhere to the working limits set out in [legislation](#). The [Competency Framework for Governance](#) states that all members of the Board should pay 'due regard to ensuring that leaders and teachers are able to have a satisfactory work life balance'.*

The [School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document](#) states '*Governing bodies and headteachers, in carrying out their duties, must have regard to the need for the headteacher and teachers at the school to be able to achieve a satisfactory balance between the time required to discharge their professional dutiesand the time required to pursue their personal interests outside work. In having regard to this, governing bodies and headteachers should ensure that they adhere to the working limits set out in the [Working Time Regulations 1998](#)'.*

The [Education Support Partnership](#) offer (see below or contact info@edsupport.org):

- **Free Telephone support & counselling:** BACP accredited counsellors are available on 08000 562 561.
- [Confidential Grant Service:](#) A confidential grants service to help manage financial and money concerns.
- [Training & Development Fund:](#) The fund has been created to assist staff in education with the cost of education-related training and former education staff to re-enter the education sector or to transition to a new career.



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