

News story: Damian Hinds sets out plans to help tackle teacher workload

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has pledged to strip away workload that doesn't add value in the classroom and give teachers the time to focus on teaching in his first speech to the profession.

Speaking to more than 1,000 heads and teachers at the Association of School and College Leaders' (ASCL) annual conference in Birmingham, the Secretary of State has said that his "top priority" is making sure teaching continues to be regarded as "one of the most rewarding jobs you can do". Improving workload will be at the heart of this.

Mr Hinds spoke alongside the Chief Inspector for Schools, Amanda Spielman and ASCL general secretary Geoff Barton in a show of their shared responsibility and joint commitment to tackling the workload burden on schools.

Thanks to a hardworking and incredibly talented generation of teachers, alongside the government's bold reforms, there are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010, our pupils are now amongst the best readers in Europe and GCSEs have been reformed to match the best education systems in the world.

During his speech, the Education Secretary outlined his plans to support teachers and work with the profession to continue to build on this record.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

There can be no great schools without great teachers to motivate children and inspire curiosity. Teaching is still a top destination for graduates and there are more teachers in our schools than ever. But I recognise that recruitment and retention is difficult for schools and that one of the biggest threats to this is workload.

Above all else, the key to education is the person standing at the front of the class. I believe we need to get back to the heart of successful teaching – to strip away the workload that doesn't add value and give teachers the time to focus on what actually matters. Together with Ofsted and the Association of School and College Leaders, we will take collective responsibility for this issue and tackle the workload burden on our schools.

The Education Secretary announced:

- a strategy to drive recruitment and boost retention of teachers working with teaching unions and professional bodies to devise ways of attracting, and keeping, the brightest and best graduates

- a commitment to work with Ofsted, regional schools commissioners, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and multi-academy trusts – to clarify their roles and ensure teachers and school leaders have a clear understanding of who they are accountable to, and for what
- that there will be no new tests or assessment for primary schools and no changes to the national curriculum, GCSE or A levels for the remainder of this parliament, beyond those already announced

Addressing the gathering of headteachers, Chief Inspector of Schools Amanda Spielman said:

I want to look at how Ofsted can play its part in reducing workload, so that you're able to focus on the things that matter to you and to your pupils.

It really doesn't matter what an inspectorate thinks if we can't attract good people into teaching. The record number of good and outstanding schools won't be sustained if the people, who make them run so well, are burning out and leaving the profession.

When I see NQTs brimming with passion to change young lives for the better, I think it an utter travesty that so many end up losing their early enthusiasm, because of the pressures of the job. Especially when so many of those pressures are entirely unnecessary.

Because that's what endless data cuts, triple marking, 10 page lesson plans, and, worst of all, Mocksteds are: a distraction from the core purpose of education. And a costly distraction at that.

We must do all we can to support removing unnecessary workload for teachers and school leaders and direct the focus back to what matters.

General secretary of ASCL Geoff Barton said:

Teacher workload is one of the key issues of our time in education. It deters would-be teachers and makes it harder to retain good teachers.

Only coordinated action by school leaders, Ofsted and the government will solve this problem, and we are pleased to be working together to find solutions. We must extinguish unnecessary workload and free up our teachers to do what they do best – teach.

In a further sign of their joint commitment to tackling teacher workload, a myth buster video featuring the Secretary of State and Amanda Spielman will

be previewed at the conference, alongside leading figures from the world of education.

The Secretary of State's speech coincides with the publication of a number of research reports, commissioned by the Department for Education, to analyse teachers' workload. The findings will help build on the government's reforms since 2010, which were necessary and right, and have helped raise academic standards across the country and seen a record 15,500 more teachers now working in our classrooms.

Today's announcement will build on measures already helping to support teachers' development and attract the best, brightest recruits into the profession, including:

- the consultation to strengthen Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and improve career progression for teachers by ensuring the right structures are in place at the beginning of teachers' careers and improving access to high-quality professional development
- a Flexible Working Summit with business and education leaders to explore how the profession can be more flexible – including through part time roles – which resulted in a number of pledges
- developing a free website for schools to publish vacancies to help reduce costs and make it easier for aspiring and current teachers to find new posts