

News story: More support for school leaders to tackle workload

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has pledged to help school leaders cut “unnecessary” workload and support teachers to focus their energies in the classroom.

In a joint letter sent to all school leaders today (Monday 5 November), co-signed by multiple organisations including Ofsted and the Confederation of Schools Trusts, the Education Secretary reiterated his commitment to clamp down on teachers’ workload.

The letter cites research which shows that more than half of teachers’ time is spent on non-teaching tasks, including planning, marking and admin, and that workload is one of the most common reasons for teachers leaving the profession.

This coincides with the publication of a report from the Workload Advisory Group – led by education expert, Professor Becky Allen – that Mr Hinds set up to look at this issue as part of his commitment to champion the profession.

The report was commissioned to explore some of the longstanding issues with workload and found that teachers can suffer from anxiety and burnout because of an increasing expectation on schools to use detailed pupil data.

To combat this, the Education Secretary has committed to reduce the need to collect unnecessary or excessive pupil data, support school leaders to help deal with the workload associated with teacher appraisals and make better use of technology to simplify data systems.

Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds said:

Many teachers are having to work way too many hours each week on unnecessary tasks, including excessive time spent on marking and data analysis. I want to make sure teachers are teaching, not putting data into spreadsheets. That’s why I am stopping my department asking for data other than in the school’s existing format.

I am united with the unions and Ofsted in wanting teachers to do less admin. I have a straightforward message to head teachers who want their staff to cut right down on collecting data to be able to devote energies to teaching: I will support you. Frequent data drops and excessive monitoring of a child’s progress are not required either by Ofsted or by the DfE.

The Workload Advisory Group report sets out ways that schools, Government and Ofsted can tackle the cultures that are leading to this and clamp down on

unnecessary use of data.

In his response to today's report, and building on his pledge not to initiate any further changes to school assessments or the national curriculum this Parliament, Mr Hinds has committed to:

- only asking for pupil attainment data if a school is at risk of failure, above that which is collected for national assessments, if a school is failing;
- requesting data in a school's existing format, where possible, to avoid duplication;
- stopping the introduction of resits for year 7 pupils, which would have generated extra workload for teachers;
- providing practical tools for schools to manage pupil data more effectively, including guidance on how to log incidents of poor behaviour in a simpler way, which the report found can be very burdensome for teachers; and
- giving guidance to head teachers on how to conduct teacher appraisals and the use of pupil targets and attainment data.

In addition to the commitments announced today, the Department will be conducting research into the burdens of reporting in schools and the use of technology to support data collection.

This will be used to help promote the most effective uses of technology to make data systems work for teachers, rather than the other way around.

Ofsted has also accepted the recommendations of today's report in full, and pledged to make sure inspections promote the proportionate use of data in schools, to help tackle the 'audit culture'.

Today's announcements follow the launch of a [series of online resources](#) in July to help school leaders take action to remove burdensome responsibilities, which have been viewed more than 143,000 times and downloaded more than 61,500 times since their release. It also builds on the [Education Secretary's announcement in March](#) that neither the government nor Ofsted require teachers to spend time filling out templates for individual lesson plans, or "triple marking" every piece of work.

Chair of the Teacher Workload Advisory Group Professor Becky Allen said:

The workload advisory group looked at the way data is used by schools, and why this has led to unsustainable workload and stress for teachers. Our report recommends changes that the Department for Education and Ofsted can make to improve the way information about pupils is managed.

The report does not tell schools how they should manage data in their own context – they are too diverse in size and nature for there to be one single 'right' way to do things. But we did find some common themes, and widespread data practices that don't help pupil progress but do increase teacher workload. I hope that the

principles and advice we have provided for schools will help them to question their current practice to change this.

International studies show that England's teachers work longer hours than their European counterparts, even though they spend about the same amount of time in the classroom.

The Department has committed £7.7 million for a Curriculum Fund, which will include pilots on how classroom teachers use high quality curriculum programmes to help cut unnecessary workload.

Today's report coincides with two research reports published in this area; the Teachers Working Longer Review has put forward a series of recommendations to encourage teachers to stay longer in the profession.

The Early Career Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Exploratory Research report highlights good practice already going on in schools around structured CPD, high-quality mentoring and supporting progression.

The publication of the Workload Advisory Group report comes ahead of the Recruitment & Retention Strategy, which the Secretary of State committed to in March of this year, and will be published in due course.

Today's announcement is part of the Government's continued work to increase support for the teaching profession, including boosting training opportunities for teachers in the early stages of their career, a £508 million grant to fund a pay increase up to 3.5% for classroom teachers on the main pay range, and the introduction of flexible working practices.