



TEACHER PAY AND CONDITIONS



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Required Element 1

Make full use of devolved powers over teachers' working conditions to ensure that teachers are allowed to devote their time to teaching and inspiring their pupils, placing the needs of the child / young person at the center of everything they do.

Summary

Following the publication of the first report of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body in June 2019 which focused on the adjustments that should be made to teachers' pay scales and allowances, a number of other issues have been raised that need to be addressed.

The issues raised by stakeholders refer to;

- **the need for consistency in terms of teachers' working conditions nationally including a return to a national grading and pay point system,**
- **the need to address supply teachers' working conditions and establish an effective national supply system,**
- **the need to reform the system of school funding.**

Some of these issues could be part of the second remit of the Pay Review Body.

The Challenge

Welsh Ministers received powers to set the pay and conditions of teachers and school leaders in Wales from 30 September 2018. Welsh Ministers established the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body to recommend revisions that should be introduced to teachers' and leaders' pay and conditions to raise the status of the profession and support recruiting and the retainment of high quality teachers and leaders in all schools.

A recommendation to increase the main pay range was made in the Body's first report, published in June 2019. But the report also includes a number of other recommendations that have not yet been implemented.

One of these recommendations is the need to implement a consistent pay grading system across Wales, a matter which is agreed by the unions, the WLGA and the Government.

This recommendation along with many others such as supply teachers' working conditions should form part of the remit of the pay review body for the future. In the context of supply teachers, there is a need to build on the successful pilot work undertaken by the Welsh Government and establish a new cluster system to provide this service to schools.

Another issue that continues to cause difficulty for schools in forward planning is that schools will only be funded for a year at a time.

These key challenges must therefore be faced;

- A. Implement a consistent procedure for teacher pay scales,
- B. Establish a new system for supply teachers with fair working conditions,
- C. Changing the way schools in Wales are funded.

Responding to the key challenges

A. Consistent national procedures for teacher pay scales.

With the establishment of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body there is an opportunity to develop an effective and equitable system for ensuring favourable working conditions for teachers.

One of the issues raised by the teaching unions and discussed in the first Pay Review Body report is their unanimous support for restoring a system of nationally and consistently prescribed pay scale points on the various pay ranges¹.

Although there is some disagreement on the exact scale to use, the Welsh Government states in the same document,

*“ that ideally, it would prefer the reintroduction of scale points to provide national rates for all teachers.”*¹

In addition, the WLGA also state that they wish to see;

"the re-introduction of the standardised scales that are used in practice in the vast majority of schools in Wales" .

The reintroduction of a national pay scale should be supported because;

- of the need to ensure **fair wage rates** nationally,
- maintained schools in Wales have adopted a consistent teacher pay structure since the removal of the previous national structure anyway,
- this will end unnecessary, laborious negotiations and bureaucracy between the different Local Authorities,
- all stakeholders support this principle.
- there will be greater certainty that wages in Wales will compare favourably with wages in England.

It should therefore be ensured that there is a system whereby all local authorities and all maintained schools in Wales

operate consistent pay scales with defined grades for teachers and that this will be an integral part of the remit of the Independent Pay Review Body for 2020. The exact grades will need to be agreed with firm recommendations to the Minister thereafter.

We consider that a clear pay structure with agreed pay scales will be of great benefit when considering new career paths for teachers. This is a key factor in retaining teachers within the profession.

This should be considered primarily in relation to pay routes that reward teachers who continue to teach and show initiative in aspects such as pedagogy, assessment, mentoring new teachers etc. (See Required Element 2 Section B - Teaching career incentives).

¹Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, First Report – 2019

Responding to the key challenges

B. Supply teachers.

Supply teachers are a very important part of the education workforce. There must be a system that can ensure continuity of pupils' education when planned and unplanned teacher absences occur.

Schools can employ qualified supply teachers by using whatever procedure they feel is appropriate to meet the needs of the school. This may include direct employment models, deploying additional teachers, collaborating with other schools to share resources, or using a commercial supply agency.

In September 2019 the Welsh Government established a system based on supply agencies approved through the National Procurement Service Framework. Schools are encouraged to use the local agencies listed as these agencies meet the quality standards and statutory safeguarding requirements. The agencies within the Framework are also committed to improving supply teachers' terms and conditions of service and introducing a basic daily rate of pay for them.

In establishing the framework the Welsh Government has sought to bring greater structure and control to the process, ensuring that the agencies comply with some important principles. However, many stakeholders remain concerned about the supply teacher system in Wales and believe that the agencies are draining money out of the education system. The view is that there is a need to revert to a system run by the Local Education Authorities which offers supply teachers similar working conditions to full-time teachers.

In October 2017, the Education Minister announced a £2.7 million project to improve the way supply teachers support schools. The purpose of the

'Delivery Cluster Project' in schools is to test the value of an innovative approach to employing additional teachers to work across clusters of schools. As well as covering absenteeism, it was hoped that this arrangement would support wider school developments and improve learner outcomes.

Therefore, this project has done more than just provide a manageable way for schools to secure supply teaching services. It also highlights;

- the quality and specialisms of supply teachers and,
- how they are used most effectively in schools.

An evaluation of the project was published in November 2019 and an overview of the plan and findings can be found in the leaflet;

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-12/school-based-supply-cluster-model-project.pdf>

The Evaluation of the School Delivery Cluster Project ² identifies several positive outcomes including;

- more stable progression and teaching experiences for supply teachers leading to a positive impact on teaching and learning,
- that permanent classroom teachers have more confidence in the supply system and are therefore more willing to leave the class to do other developmental work or receive professional learning,
- facilitating transition in clusters involving primary and secondary schools,
- offers better organization in supporting pupils with additional learning needs,
- that newly qualified teachers can complete their induction,

- adding to the education workforce as a number of supply teachers secure permanent posts during the project period.

The evaluation also reports on a number of other benefits including the increased collaboration between schools in the cluster. This is very timely when considering the planning and preparation required for the new Curriculum.

We believe the project was an investment in the quality of teachers as well as additional capacity for the schools and the supply teachers involved in the project said that they had a chance;

"...to build relationships with colleagues and feel part of the school team"²

For financial reasons mainly, only a minority of schools have continued with the supply clusters at the end of the project but we believe the benefits above attest that the 'value' of these schemes outweighs the 'cost'.

We feel there is sufficient evidence in the evaluation that should lead to further action by the Welsh Government. Apart from ensuring a more standardised and effective delivery regime there are many other benefits to the clustering regime. The Welsh Government should secure funding to establish a National supply cluster system as an option for Welsh schools, encouraging schools to take this collaborative approach and distance themselves from agencies that operate primarily for profit.

2 Evaluation of the School Based Supply Cluster Model
Project Evaluation of the Delivery in Cluster Project
Schools - Welsh Government November 2019

Responding to the key challenges

C. School funding

The call for schools to be provided budgets for longer than a year at a time is not a new issue. However, it is significant that many stakeholders, particularly the headteachers, with whom we discussed, continue to press for this.

As far back as 2006, the Assembly's School Funding Committee³ recommended the introduction of three-year budgets for schools.

Such an arrangement would allow for a better planning process and more effective use of scarce funds. Schools wouldn't feel the need to keep a reserve of funds to meet unexpected and unpredictable demands.

The uncertainty is intensified in the fluctuation of pupil numbers from year to year affect the budget allocated by the local authority.

One element that is severely affected by this lack of security is hiring new staff and retaining existing staff. This is where the pressure on a school budget is greatest.

The number of teachers on temporary contracts (73%)⁴ or part-time contracts during their first year of teaching, the induction year highlights this clearly.

This creates uncertainty in the recruitment process and is one of the factors that militates against more teachers who are beginning their careers remaining in the profession.

The main obstacle to establishing school budgets over a three-year period is that the Welsh Government's own funding depends on funding from the UK Government. However, we believe that this should not be a stumbling block and work should continue to make this a reality.

We agree with and press for the urgent implementation of Recommendation 15 in the document 'School Funding in Wales'⁵ published in 2019 which states:

'That the Welsh Government consider how it can take forward the long-standing aim of providing schools with three-year budgets, in the context of three-year funding settlements for local authorities, in order to enable schools to plan more effectively for the long-term.'

3 Children, Young People and Education Committee, 16/01/2020

4 Source: Education Workforce Council, statistics, 2015/16

5 School Funding in Wales - Welsh Government, July 2019

Required Element 2

The profession needs to be made attractive to potential teachers, raising the status of teachers in a society that will lead to recruiting more excellent teachers to meet demand, helping to retain staff. Consider alternative entry routes into the profession including initiatives such as developing support staff.

Summary

The recruitment and retention of teachers within the teaching profession in Wales is currently in crisis.

In order to attract, recruit and retain teachers in the classroom we will:

- **offer suitable incentives and better support to new teachers as they train, qualify and in the early years of their career,**
- **offer specific career pathways that are not associated to leadership that reward effective teachers and encourage them to stay in the classroom,**
- **widen the choice of alternative routes into the profession and support schools in adopting flexible working agreements.**

The Challenge

*The teaching profession was not thought to be as highly respected or valued as it could be.*¹

Because of these negative perceptions it is necessary to show clearly that there is an appreciation of teachers' work and that a fulfilling and successful career in teaching can be pursued. The challenge of retaining teachers in the early years of their career is one of the biggest challenges facing the profession.

In order to ensure that sufficient teachers are recruited, the incentives in place need to be attractive and effective so that retention is achieved as well as attracting new teachers.

We need to ensure that the training for new teachers is of the highest quality and extends for a much longer period than the current regime which includes a training year and induction year to follow. Elements of Welsh should be introduced to all prospective teachers in Wales.

Teachers entering and moving through the profession should be able to identify and follow clear career paths that meet their needs and expertise. The traditional career paths that have meant taking on managerial responsibilities should continue, but other opportunities must be offered to teachers to develop in specialisms and the professional knowledge related to their core work of teaching.

We need to facilitate the way in which those who wish to enter teaching after pursuing careers in other fields. Also, if the profession is to compete in the future for and retain talented employees there needs to be much more flexible opportunities in terms of employment patterns.

These key challenges must therefore be faced;

- A. At present the incentives and support when embarking on a career path are not sufficient to attract enough teachers into the profession;
- B. There are not enough career incentives to encourage good teachers to work where they are most needed;
- C. Access to the profession must be facilitated for those who are changing careers and offer flexible employment procedures to retain the workforce.

1. Research Study on the Attractiveness of Teaching, and Retention of Teachers – Welsh Government 2019.

Responding to the key challenges

A. Financial support and incentives for new teachers.

The numbers choosing to study to become teachers are falling in England and Wales with far too many teachers leaving the profession in the first five years of their career. The severity of the situation requires action in many ways.

There needs to be a package of financial incentives and a training and maintenance programme that gives teachers the right support at the start of their careers.

In addition, a significant number of student teachers from Wales are choosing to study outside the country.

Cross-border flows from Wales to England have been increasing over time. The number of Welsh-domiciled trainees taking course in England has risen from 23 per cent in AY 2010/11 to 34 per cent by AY 2016/17²

One of the main reasons for this seems to be the generous incentives available in England. For example, in England a teacher with an ordinary degree in a subject such as Geography may receive a financial incentive of £26,000 whereas in Wales a first class degree is required to receive just £3,000. The science and maths subjects compare better but a first class degree in Wales is required to receive the highest payments.

The concern is that teachers who have studied in England then stay in England to teach. Once the new curriculum for Wales has been established it will be more difficult for teachers to return if they so choose and accelerated training should be ensured to facilitate their return path.

We will simplify the regime and ensure that the new financial incentives compare more favourably with those in England by;

- placing less emphasis on differentiating according to the degree of the prospective teacher,
- eliminating the need for GCSEs in specific subjects,

- extend the incentive payments over a longer period to place more emphasis on teacher retention rather than incentive payments only at the start of the training period,
- continue to offer favourable incentives to shortage subject teachers and also continue to offer incentives to teach through the Welsh language,
- encourage schools to offer more full-time contracts to teachers during their first year of teaching, the induction year.

While recognizing the value of recent initiatives to re-train primary teachers for teaching in the secondary sector, the advertising campaign and the targets placed on initial teacher trainers, we do not believe that this together with changing the financial incentives will solve the problem.

In terms of providing for the Welsh-medium sector, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's new strategic plan³ clearly states;

'Ensuring a sufficient supply of teachers, lecturers and trainers will be vital to the success of the Welsh Government's Language Strategy. At present, it is inevitable that the current targets for increasing the number of teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh will not be reached...'

We believe that training and support for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is vital and we assume that they do not always receive the support needed at the start of their career when the challenges are at their peak. This includes relevant training to develop the Welsh language skills of all prospective teachers in Wales.

A recent report stated:

*'...there may be a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the arrangements for formal induction of NQTs. The support needs of schools where NQTs are employed and the level of input that should be expected from ITE providers should also be considered.as part of the work of embedding reforms to ITE provision in Wales.'*⁴

Collaboration between schools, teachers, the higher education institutions that currently provide initial teacher education(ITE) and the other teacher support bodies (the Regional Consortia) needs to be improved to create a strategic plan that includes continuity of training and support over more than two years ensuring;

- a lighter timetable for teachers during their training period and induction year with a gradual move to the normal school timetable,
- a personal mentor is available in school for each teacher for at least three years
'...formal mentoring and support ceases after one successful year in school and the panel believes that consolidated support should be offered to teachers over the first four years of their career at least.'⁵
- schools are adequately funded to give mentors time to do the work, to recognize the expertise of mentors and for mentors to receive bespoke training,
- schools operate in clusters to ensure the best support in this area for NQTs,

- the need to place more emphasis on the Welsh language and increase the Welsh language skills of all prospective teachers,
- the involvement of higher education institutions in partnership with the other support bodies continues for longer than at present in order to offer ongoing training and advice to the teacher and mentor,
- ensuring the development of high quality instructional and classroom resources to support teachers and trainers.

- 2 A comparison of teacher training incentives in Wales and England
- 3 The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's strategic plan 2020/21 to 2024/25
- 4 Research Study on the Attractiveness of Teaching, and Retention of Teachers – March 2019
- 5 Teaching: A valued profession – September 2018

Responding to the key challenges

B. Career incentives for teachers.

We do not believe that the current career pathways for teachers are appropriate for the development of education in Wales.

In order to develop a school career the traditional route is for a teacher to move to administrative roles in addition to the teaching load. This in turn leads to a 'promotion' to head of year, assistant head, deputy or head teacher.

This path suits some and meets their expectations and should not be disturbed as nurturing and developing effective leaders is vital to improving the education system.

However, many teachers are keen to develop a career without following this path. The current system meets the need for leaders in a school but may be depriving learners of effective educators. Alternative professional growth pathways need to be available.

Some countries such as Singapore have developed models where teachers don't just get promoted because of seniority or in undertaking administrative responsibilities but can choose a career path that develops them to become senior teachers and curriculum leaders.

We therefore need career paths for teachers based on priorities such as:

- the development of a strong expertise in pedagogy
- awareness of the latest research
- the ability to be innovative in their teaching
- the ability to teach effectively using two languages - Welsh and English
- the means to experiment and develop good practice in collaboration with colleagues, locally, nationally and globally.

A suite of specialist qualifications should be established in various aspects of teaching such as assessment, behaviour management, subject specialism, mentoring new teachers, bilingual teaching and educationalism.

The report, '*Teaching: A valued profession working towards A Career, Conditions and Pay Framework for School Teachers in Wales*' – September 2018' makes extensive reference to the establishment of a 'Specialist in Pedagogy' which would be similar to that being recommended, merits further discussion.

These teachers would receive remuneration for their innovation that would be equal to those following current school career paths. The 'Independent Welsh Pay Review Body' should therefore establish a pay regime that promotes this career progression pathway.

The pay regime should provide incentives that favour those teachers who are prepared to teach in the most challenging schools and those schools where standards need to be improved. As the most important element in improving school outcomes is the quality of teaching this could be a major contribution to reducing the performance gap which, according to Estyn, remains a "big challenge".

These innovative teachers should be able to take advantage of opportunities to work beyond the school and undertake specific secondments over varying periods. School support agencies and organizations such as ITE providers would benefit from their expertise and recent classroom experience, with teachers then returning to the school with an array of experiences and specialties.

These teachers would be a great asset and a key part of the workforce of those middle-tier organizations to support schools and offer support to teachers.

Responding to the key challenges

C. Easy access to the profession and flexible employment

Efforts to market the profession need to be increased to those who have embarked on different career paths but are keen to change.

A system should be established that can offer opportunities for those who are interested to experience the work in a school.

The new Open University-sponsored PGCE scheme is a step in the right direction with a clear and widely publicized arrangement.

Clear and definite pathways need to be established with the specific and tailored financial support that enables suitable classroom assistants to become teachers. This is a valuable section of the workforce that needs to be encouraged and supported in order for them to become fully qualified teachers.

Workers now expect to be able to work flexibly to cope with other demands such as parenting or caring for elderly parents etc.

More teachers are now working part time, but the figure is much smaller on average than other professional occupations. There is evidence that many are leaving teaching because they are unable to work part time or be flexible.

Apart from increasing the part-time opportunities, flexible agreements that allow the following could be considered.

- job sharing,
- leaving school when not in class care,
- employees with specialisms in specific disciplines teaching for short periods - hybrid jobs,
- sabbatical periods for teachers to spend time in industry, relevant to their field,
- an opportunity to undertake useful academic research for their career and school.

Much of this is dependent on school priorities and headteachers will need support to take action.

The report, '*Teaching: A valued profession working towards A Career, Conditions and Pay Framework for School Teachers in Wales*' – September 2018' suggests alternative methods of employment that could keep experienced staff in employment longer and attract more back into the profession.

Some ideas that merit further consideration are;

- a three-month entitlement of leave scheme for every ten years of service through a monthly salary contribution,
- enable teachers with 35 years of successful experience to have one day's unpaid leave for each full week,
- all teachers with ten years or more successful experience to be encouraged to participate in a career audit to consider new permanent, temporary and part-time opportunities.

Required Element 3

Eliminate all unnecessary interventions that disrupt the essential child-teacher relationship, focusing on meaningful support, monitoring and accountability where necessary following a full review of existing practices.

Summary

Teachers constantly mention that there are many requirements, not directly relating to their main task of educating pupils that distract them from fulfilling their role.

To support teachers to ensure workload and bureaucracy is managed it is necessary to:

- **continue to support schools in coping with their high work demands and provide a new organisation that eases the burden,**
- **adjust the complex monitoring regime and accountability to frequent agencies that increase pressure on schools,**
- **consider the roles of the main agencies in the middle tier, the relationship between them and their influence on raising standards in schools.**

The challenge

"I have no doubt that managing workload and reducing classroom bureaucracy is essential if we are to support our teachers in raising standards."¹

We have long known that our teachers' workload is too heavy, and action must be taken to reduce it.

The results of the National Workforce Survey conducted by the Education Workforce Council² clearly show that 'workload' (78.1% of responses), 'administrative aspects' (52%) and 'inspections' (36%) were the least rewarding aspects of the work of schoolteachers.

Excessive workload is one of the main reasons for the high numbers of teachers leaving the profession after just five years of teaching. This is also often the reason for teachers' reluctance to take up managerial posts in schools.

Reducing workload is a complex issue and involves much more than reducing the number of hours teachers work. Teachers say that they no longer feel in control of the type of work they are required to do and that the additional requirements mean that they are less focused on teaching.

It must be acknowledged that work has recently been undertaken by the Welsh Government to reduce workload following the establishment of a representative stakeholder group in April 2019. A 'Workload Charter' has been established which offers valuable support, advice and resources. The Charter also offers support to headteachers and school leaders so that they can set the right tone and prioritize wisely to alleviate staff workload concerns. But more needs to be done.

One of the main reasons for the increased workload is accountability and the need to continuously monitor, record and report on progress and at the request of different agencies. There is a need to establish an efficient and consistent system of monitoring and reporting on progress in order to meet the requirements of schools and external organizations without duplication. Many of these agencies are in the 'middle tier' of bodies that exist between the Welsh Government and schools.

Many agencies support schools and others oversee their work and the frequency of these bodies and the lack of clarity about the role of some of them leads to confusion. The purpose of the middle-tier bodies should be reconsidered, and their responsibilities better defined to avoid any unnecessary bureaucracy and increased workload for schools.

These key challenges must therefore be faced;

- A. Build on the work already done and invest further to ensure that teachers are not involved in work that keeps them from teaching effectively,
- B. Reduce external pressure on schools in terms of accountability by standardising monitoring and recording of progress,
- C. Review the functions of various middle-tier agencies to guard against duplication of work and ensure the best and most efficient support for schools.

1 Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education -Plenary, 11/06/2019.

2 National Education Workforce Survey - Education Workforce Council April 2017

Responding to the key challenges

A. Continue to lighten workload.

Teachers and headteachers need to be able to focus on the role they are best prepared to perform, the role they were trained to fulfill and the role that motivated them to become teachers in the first place.

Teachers are happy to work hard when they can see that the work is making a difference and that pupils are making progress. This is clearly demonstrated by the National Workforce Survey³ with 93.5% of teachers that responded stating that 'teaching and seeing learners develop' was the most rewarding and indeed the most important aspect of their work.

The Welsh Government has recognized the need to act in the context of 'excessive workload for teachers' preparation in the 'Workload Charter', working in collaboration with many relevant stakeholders. This work is a valuable first step and there are many valuable points including;

- guidance for teachers setting out what teachers should and should not do in terms of planning, teaching, providing feedback etc. An example of the prepared poster can be found here:

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/www.estyn.gov.wales/files/documents/Reducing%20workload%20-%20English%20poster_0.pdf

- a training package for schools,
- sharing models of good practice in collaboration with the four Regional Consortia,
- a survey of the data collected at each tier.

With the current need for headteachers, middle leaders and teachers to focus on delivering the New Curriculum for Wales, early action is needed to alleviate the administrative and bureaucratic workload concerns of teachers.

There is a need to build on the foundations of the 'Workload Charter' and invest in additional staff who can ease the workload of the profession at all tiers. Implementation should follow

soon, especially in regards to the recently held 'School Business Managers'. The outlook is favourable and action should be taken in accordance with Estyn's recommendations as far back as 2010 which asserted that '... school business managers are a valuable part of the school management team ...'⁴

It should be ensured that;

- all secondary schools receive funding to appoint a business manager,
- business managers should be appointed for clusters of small schools,
- there is encouragement for business managers to share good practice and collaborate and to undertake appropriate training,
- we secure the input, advice, expertise and co-operation of the Local Council Education Departments.

Some schools already have such officers and benefit greatly from their expertise. Such a system can be cost effective with savings in staff time in schools as well as less duplication of work and more effective implementation in the context of smaller schools.

Similarly, there is a need to follow a similar structure to appoint officers who deal with the many problems that pupils have beyond school - pastoral and discipline officers to work closely with the school nurse.

These officers can reduce the pressure of work in a secondary school, especially in terms of the duties for heads of year and allow them to take on more work in the classroom. They could undertake the administration and co-ordination with external agencies such as Social Services etc. They could be a great help in administering disciplinary procedures and releasing teachers to undertake their respective jobs.

As with business managers, such officers could operate in clusters of Primary schools.

Such officers could be a great help especially in the primary sector to advise and assist in the implementation of the new Additional Learning Needs requirements that will be in place from September 2021.

These officers could be from a social work background with qualifications related to educational psychology and mental health.

With the increased emphasis on health and wellbeing in the new Curriculum, access to the expertise of such officers within the workforce would be invaluable. This is a fast-moving area of expertise and such officers would ease the pressure on schools and teachers to deal with such issues.

Much more use needs to be made of technology to lighten workload and save time. For example, in rural areas the use of video conferencing is key for meetings and professional learning to reduce travel time.

All new initiatives leading to significant changes for schools and teachers should, by default, be accompanied by a Workload Assessment. This would then provide guidance on the timely adoption of the changes, taking into account the additional funding required to achieve this.

- 3 National Education Workforce Survey – Advice - Education Workforce April 2017
- 4 School business managers: a good practice guide - Estyn, April 2010

Responding to the key challenges

B. Reduce the accountability pressures on schools.

Accountability must be in place to ensure that standards are raised, the attainment gap narrows, and the education system is effective.

However, according to one experienced secondary head teacher, there is too much accountability with the school having to primarily report to the governing body but then much external intervention comes from middle tier bodies such as local authorities, consortia, Estyn and the Welsh Government.

We also get a feeling that there is no national consistency in the current system with inconsistent messages being transmitted, a heavy emphasis on bureaucracy which results in an excessive workload.

The external demands for monitoring and inspection therefore need to be standardised and a less cumbersome and burdensome accountability system for schools established.

The document 'Draft evaluation and improvement arrangements (accountability) for Wales' ⁵ recognizes that there is 'an increasing and unnecessary workload for teachers and others in the system, without the necessary impact or benefit for learners.'

In welcoming many of the reforms in this document in terms of accountability, and in particular the increased emphasis on self-evaluation and identifying school strengths and weaknesses, it must be ensured;

- the new regime reduces workload and does not add to it,
- schools receive guidance and support to self-evaluate effectively and efficiently,
- the support is of high quality and offers schools guidance to improve in all areas and aspects of their work in the

classroom and beyond,

- there is consistency in the support provided throughout the country and that support is available in the preferred language of the school,
- the progress indicators used to demonstrate improvement are neither narrow nor laborious to produce,
- that the school inspection regime is a positive one that offers clear leadership for further improvement.

We welcome the forthcoming changes to Estyn's inspection regime that will be compatible with the requirements of the new Curriculum for Wales and based on school self-evaluation. We have received favorable comments about the intentions of the new system from teachers and headteachers. Estyn's involvement in the work will give reason and value to the school self-evaluation process and we trust that this will put less pressure on teachers when adopting a less focused approach to classroom observation of teachers.

We would also like to see the new regime;

- removing the summative grades (excellent / good / adequate / unsatisfactory) which will lead to less competition and more collaboration between schools,
- ensuring greater consistency among inspectors and inspection teams,
- ensuring that there is no duplication of the work of the Regional Consortia and that the responsibilities of the various bodies are clear,

- pay due regard to the well-being and mental health of those involved in the process while ensuring that teachers' workload is not excessive.

It is good to know that the Education Minister is "considering the future of the categorisation system" ⁶. The National School Categorization System, which places schools into one of four colour groups, was established six years ago. Although the school league tables have been abolished in Wales for twenty years, the categorisation regime continues to label schools in the public eye and that can be damaging to some schools.

- 5 Draft evaluation and improvement (accountability) arrangements for Wales - Welsh Government February 2019
- 6 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-51315168>

Responding to the key challenges

C. Middle tier agencies.

Many stakeholders we spoke to have expressed discontent about the contribution of the middle tier to the education system in Wales. The comments refer to oversight and confusion over the role of the various agencies with suggestions that there is some overlap and duplication of work which causes confusion for schools. (Examples of this have already been mentioned in discussing accountability in the previous section - B. School accountability pressures.)

Here are the comments of one head teacher who stated;

“... There is too much accountability, the school is accountable to the governors but there is intervention by the Local Authority, Consortia, Estyn, Welsh Government and other bodies.... this signals the need for costly middle tier reform and duplication of work and sends inconsistent messages to schools. There needs to be a greater relationship between Estyn inspections and Consortia monitoring to reduce the pressure on schools and teachers.”

Due to the obvious concerns about the middle tier, we welcome the establishment of the 'Strategic Education Delivery Group' Chaired by Professor Dylan Jones which aims to achieve greater consistency in middle tier activity and to guard against waste and duplication. We look forward to the findings of the group and trust that this will lead to less confusion and pressure on schools and more support and assistance to raise standards.

We feel that all of the organizations in the middle tier have a key role to play in raising standards and creating an effective education system but there needs to be greater clarity in their respective roles and improvement in the way they work together to support stakeholders.

With the period of major change facing schools over the coming years they will need more advice, guidance and support than ever before. There is therefore a need to ensure that meeting this requirement is the priority of the middle tier and the three bodies that are key to this are;

1. The Regional Consortia,
2. The Local Authorities,
3. Estyn.

Discussing the relationship between the Regional Consortia and Local Authorities and other middle-tier partners, one regional leader recently said;

“... at times, without trying, we stand on each other's feet, but we get to discuss how it has happened ...”⁷

This statement reinforces our assumption that the current system is not working as smoothly as it should, leading to confusion and waste. We would like to see the reform of the system beginning with a clear definition of the different responsibilities of these three bodies.

We recognize that there is a great deal of collaboration between the Local Authorities and the Regional Consortia but feel the Consortia need to be statutory bodies in order to be able to create their own regulations and be less reliant on the Local Authorities. This should then lead to better national co-ordination and effective joint working so that there is more consistency in the support that schools receive.

We sense that the Regional Consortia are now doing more advice and support work in schools rather than challenging and monitoring only. We feel the need to move further in this direction focusing almost exclusively on providing professional learning and curricular support in all areas of learning for schools.

are rising. We hope that such a system will make the role of each body clear to

The School Funding in Wales report (2019) states;

*'The Welsh Government should closely monitor and evaluate how effective the regional consortia were in fulfilling their school improvement role.'*⁸

With the new Curriculum on the horizon it is essential that this is the priority of the consortia over the next five years.

More of the officers who support schools should be successful seconded teachers for short periods (one or two years). There is a need to establish a clear structure for this which will be an important part of a teacher's career path. The credibility of these teachers will be high as they have recent successful classroom experience (See Required Element 2 Section B)

It is clear that there is a need to look urgently at the general role and current priorities of the consortia system as there is a great deal of discontent in some parts of Wales.

Local Authorities should focus primarily on supporting the administration of schools ensuring close collaboration with a network of business managers and pastoral and disciplinary officers that need to be established and already referred to in this Required Element.

Local Authorities should be responsible for administering the supply teacher system taking into account the outcomes of the 'Delivery Cluster Project' the Welsh Government has just undertaken.

School self-evaluation plans are central to the new inspection regime. Consortia officers will validate these plans and find out much about the needs of schools in doing so. However, any further monitoring will be the sole responsibility of Estyn.

There will need to be ongoing dialogue between the three bodies to ensure that the system is working and that standards

schools contributing to reduced accountability and workload.

To this end, the important recommendation of the School Funding report⁸ needs to be acted upon;

'That the Welsh Government undertake work to communicate and explain clearly the respective roles of local authorities and regional consortia in providing education services, specifically services to schools. In doing so, the Welsh Government should consider how this can be taken forward within the work of the middle tier group led by Professor Dylan Jones.'

7 Children, Young People and Education Committee 16/01/2020

8 School Funding in Wales, Children, Young People and Education Committee – National Assembly for Wales July 2019

Conclusion

This report was produced after the publication of the document 'Let our teachers teach!' at the 2019 Plaid Cymru Conference. The document (Appendix 1) contains 10 action points to improve the education of our children.

In order to implement most of the actions, 3 'Minimum Elements' were drawn up to underpin the work;

1. make full use of devolved powers over teachers' working conditions to ensure that teachers can devote their time to teaching and inspiring their pupils, placing the needs of the child / young person at the center of everything they do.
2. make the profession attractive to potential teachers, raising the status of teachers in a society that will lead to the recruitment of more excellent teachers to meet demand, and help retain staff. Consider alternative entry routes into the profession including initiatives such as support staff development.
3. remove all unnecessary interventions that disrupt the essential child-teacher relationship, focusing on meaningful support, monitoring and accountability where necessary following a full review of existing practices.

The above elements of course exist in context of the Welsh Government's strategy to create a million Welsh speakers and the arrival of the new Curriculum for Wales in September 2022.

The Required Elements were discussed with several stakeholders across Wales representing many tiers and institutions in education. In discussion with the various delegates it was good to understand that many of their aspirations coincided with the main elements of the Plaid Cymru action plan.

The document summarises the priorities that will need to be implemented to ensure that teachers' working conditions change to allow them time to devote to their primary purpose of educating children. This, above all else is what will lead to raising standards.

In summary, those priorities include;

- Consistent national arrangements for teacher pay scales.
- Establish a new system for providing teachers with fair working conditions.
- Changing the way schools in Wales are funded.
- Fair financial support and incentives for new teachers.
- Career incentives for classroom teachers.
- Easier access to the profession and flexible employment.
- Continue to lighten workload.
- Reduce the accountability pressures on schools.
- Review the role of middle tier agencies.

The Welsh Government has already identified some of the priorities and commissioned research, piloted and produced numerous reports. There are recent reports that refer to issues such as workload, retention and recruitment, supply teachers, school finance, business managers with the recommendations sometimes going a long way to meeting the above requirements.

The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body has been established and has reported that the recommendation to raise teachers' salaries has been accepted. The Strategic Education Delivery Group was recently established to address 'middle-tier' activity and we look forward to the findings of the group, particularly in relation to the balance between accountability and support offered by the various agencies.

We therefore assume that the Welsh Government is aware of many of the challenges and shortcomings within the education system and understands what actions need to be taken to improve the situation. However, implementation of the recommendations is often either very slow or not happening at all.

Stakeholders surveyed referred to several issues that did not fall into the 3 required elements.

One body commented and voiced strongly held views that much more support was needed to promote apprenticeships through the medium of Welsh. Opportunities to pursue an apprenticeship in Welsh in any field are scarce even in Welsh speaking areas. One exception to this is Urdd Gobaith Cymru which is pioneering in this field.

Many stakeholders thought that the current Sabbatical Scheme was not effective. This language course is for teachers, trainers, lecturers and classroom assistants who want to improve their Welsh and gain confidence in the language. Not enough practitioners receive the training and not having enough follow up support leads to only a small increase in the use of Welsh in the classroom. It was thought that more focus was needed on taking advantage of Welsh language skills that teachers presently have but are not using them in the classroom.

Since discussions with stakeholders the position of the ERW Consortium has changed dramatically with half the Local Authorities deciding to leave the Consortium. Will this influence the remit of the Strategic Education Delivery Group chaired by Dr Dylan Jones? An experienced head teacher in a south east secondary school was very dissatisfied and said; 'Consortia work in particular needs to be reviewed. Staff are sometimes not experienced enough to challenge schools and a negative relationship can develop which results in a low 'impact' on standards.'

