



**March 2024**

## **Joint Statement to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB)**

### **Repair the damage to teacher and school leader pay**

#### **The united view of teachers and school leaders**

- 1 Our organisations represent virtually all teachers and school leaders in England. Our members see first-hand the impact of damaging political choices by successive Governments since 2010. Real terms pay cuts and sky-high workload have created a teacher recruitment and retention crisis which affects teachers, leaders, parents and pupils.
- 2 Our position is grounded in the evidence and we are united on the key issues. The evidence of the damage caused by attacks on pay since 2010 is overwhelming. It is widely recognised by independent researchers and by the STRB itself. Last year, the STRB acknowledged in its report that the longstanding decline in the value of teachers' and school leaders' pay is unquestionably a key cause of the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis.
- 3 Each of our organisations submitted separate written evidence to the STRB by the deadline of 21 February. The Secretary of State missed the deadline, further undermining the concept of the independence of the review body process. The Secretary of State's evidence to the STRB was finally submitted on 29 February, along with the Treasury evidence to review bodies collectively. Both the Secretary of State's evidence and the Treasury evidence show a complete failure to engage with the findings of the STRB's 33<sup>rd</sup> Report and understand the crisis in schools or the additional funding that is urgently needed. Once again there is an open attempt to fetter and undermine the independence of the STRB.
- 4 We are clear that, in seeking to constrain the STRB to working within the existing inadequate funding envelope, the Secretary of State is failing to engage with the real position on pay, workload, and recruitment and retention. The pay teachers and school leaders have lost in real terms since 2010 needs to be restored, and effective action taken to reduce workload, in order that the recruitment and retention crisis can be tackled. The solutions needed are not possible without significant additional investment in education.

- 5 The Government is isolated from the evidence-based consensus. It seeks to ignore the reality on teacher pay and conditions and attempts to constrain the STRB. The STRB's role, however, is to conduct an objective, evidence-based review taking into account all relevant factors including the key factor of recruitment and retention. The STRB's recommendations must address the reality of pay cuts, sky-high workload and the recruitment and retention crisis.
- 6 We call for fully funded, inflation-plus and undifferentiated pay increases sufficient to make a meaningful step towards a major correction in pay. Alongside significant improvements in workload, we urgently need a step-change in teacher pay to tackle the deep, widespread and entrenched recruitment and retention problems. These immediate next steps must signal a clear intent towards the full restoration of the pay lost in real terms since 2010, and the creation of a pay structure and pay levels capable of supporting teachers, school leaders and the education service in the long term.

### **School funding**

- 7 It is important at the outset to emphasise the point that the current inadequate funding envelope cannot provide the basis for the improvements in pay and conditions needed to tackle the recruitment and retention crisis.
- 8 The Secretary of State's remit letter emphasises the cost pressures faced by schools and says that the STRB should carefully consider the impact of pay rises on school budgets. This is yet another attempt by the Government to use its own damaging policy on school funding to perpetuate its equally damaging policy on teacher and school leader pay.
- 9 ASCL, NAHT, NASUWT and the NEU called on the Chancellor to provide a funding increase of at least £1.7 billion in 2024-25 in the Autumn Statement.<sup>1</sup> The unions noted that, following the correction of an accounting error, mainstream schools' funding via the National Funding Formula would only rise by an average of 1.9% per pupil – well below the current rate of inflation and placing even greater pressure on already over-stretched school budgets.
- 10 On this basis schools would only be able to afford a staff pay rise of 1% in September 2024. The unions welcomed the decision to substantially increase the level of the National Minimum Wage in April 2024, but noted that many schools will not be able to afford this without an increase in school funding.
- 11 Current spending on education stands at just 3.9% of national income – the lowest proportion for more than twenty years and poor in comparison with other developed countries. The OECD average is 5%.
- 12 In the event of a pay award equivalent to that awarded in 2023-24, the joint union letter to the Chancellor noted that schools' costs were expected to rise by at least 5.8% in 2024-25.

---

<sup>1</sup> Joint union call for significant increase in school funding | National Education Union (neu.org.uk)

- 13 This overall increase in schools' costs would require an increase of at least £1.7 billion in 2024-25 in order to recruit and retain teachers and protect schools and colleges from having to make further cuts in the provision to children's and young people's education.
- 14 The Government ignored the clear case made by the unions for additional funding and at the time of writing continued to refuse to implement the increases needed. We are clear that the STRB must not be constrained by the inadequate funding levels allocated to schools. We reject the Government's definition of "affordability," which takes no account of the huge cost to our education system and economy of not properly valuing educators. The STRB must undertake an objective and comprehensive analysis of the evidence and identify the solutions that are needed.
- 15 The "trade-offs" to which the STRB referred in its last report<sup>2</sup> are political decisions for the Government to make. The STRB's job is to focus on the evidence and on its core duty of ensuring that there is a sufficiency of teachers, both in terms of quantity and quality, to deliver the required educational provision for children and young people.

### **Pay correction needed for teachers and school leaders**

- 16 Our united position on teacher and school leader pay is that the nominal pay increase of September 2024 must be the first in a series of sustained above inflation pay increases designed to restore the pay lost in real terms since 2010.
- 17 The Secretary of State's remit letter describes the 2023 pay awards recommended by review bodies including the STRB as "historically high." She goes on to say that the STRB must "consider the historic nature of the 2023/24 award and the Government's affordability position."<sup>3</sup>
- 18 The Secretary of State's remit letter ignores the economic context within which the September 2023 pay increase took place. It was inflation that was "historically high" in 2023, but the Secretary of State's remit letter takes no account of this key factor.
- 19 RPI inflation was 8.9% in September 2023, so the 6.5% increase for teachers and school leaders represented another real terms cut against RPI inflation.<sup>4</sup> Even compared with CPI inflation, the pay increase represented a small real terms cut.<sup>5</sup> The 6.5% increase for teachers and school leaders was also below the 7.9% rate of annual growth in regular earnings (excluding bonuses) in the three-month period from July to September 2023.<sup>6</sup> The 6.5% teacher and school leader pay rise was significantly below the median private sector increase of 7.2% in the three months to September 2023.

---

<sup>2</sup> STRB 33<sup>rd</sup> Report, paragraph 3.42.

<sup>3</sup> Secretary of State remit letter 20 December 2023.

<sup>4</sup> RPI All Items: Percentage change over 12 months: Jan 1987=100 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

<sup>5</sup> CPI ANNUAL RATE 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> Average weekly earnings in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

- 20 The 6.5% pay increase of September 2023 went significantly beyond the pay increases proposed by the Government, but the evidence above shows that there was still a worsening of teacher and school leader pay in real terms against inflation and in relative terms compared to earnings in the wider economy. Had the Government got its way, the competitive position of teaching and the real value of teacher pay would have been hit much harder.
- 21 The argument in the Secretary of State's evidence that pay awards should return to a "more sustainable" level needs to be viewed in the context of the high inflation of 2023, which resulted in even the 6.5% pay increase being below inflation<sup>7</sup> despite it being 3% higher than originally offered by the Government. The Secretary of State's evidence completely ignores the huge real terms cuts to teacher and school leader pay since 2010, despite the palpable impact those pay losses are having on living standards and recruitment and retention.
- 22 Deliberate Government policy choices have been made since 2010 to cut the real value of teacher pay. Teacher and school leader fury at the years of pay freezes, pay caps and below-inflation pay increases drove the support for the 2023 disputes. The value of teacher and school leader pay against RPI inflation has been cut by around 25% since 2010. This has had a devastating impact on the ability of the profession to recruit and retain.
- 23 The pay cuts in the teaching profession have been much worse than those elsewhere since 2010. The STRB itself noted in its previous report that earnings in teaching had "fallen further than earnings across the economy, the public sector and professional occupations."<sup>8</sup>
- 24 The inflation rate has reduced, but prices are still rising and last year's double-digit price increases have been baked in. RPI inflation was still above 5% at the end of 2023, significantly higher than the norm for inflation since the early 1990s. The Resolution Foundation has said that 1.5 million people face an average annual rise in mortgage bills of £1,800 in 2024.<sup>9</sup> Average monthly rents hit a record high in late 2023.<sup>10</sup>
- 25 Thanks to Government pay cuts, teachers and school leaders had already seen inflation erode the value of their pay before the externally driven inflation shocks of the early 2020s.
- 26 The pay cuts and the resulting increased vulnerability of teachers and school leaders to price increases is completely ignored in the Secretary of State's remit letter. The Government is completely out of touch with the realities faced by teachers and school leaders. The impact of pay cuts on teachers and school leaders, and the direct consequences for recruitment and retention, must feature strongly in the STRB's analysis and must significantly inform its recommendations on pay.

---

<sup>7</sup> RPI All Items: Percentage change over 12 months: Jan 1987=100 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

<sup>8</sup> STRB 33<sup>rd</sup> Report, paragraph 3.16.

<sup>9</sup> More than a million Britons face £1,800 mortgage payments hike in 2024, says think-tank | This is Money

<sup>10</sup> Average asking rents 'hit new record high with 11 inquiries typically per home' (msn.com)

- 27 A paltry pay increase in September 2024 would make it even more difficult to recruit new teachers and would create yet more retention problems. The anger of teachers and leaders would be intensified and their anger would be shared by parents who know that attacks on pay and conditions damage recruitment and retention, and are therefore attacks on the education service.
- 28 We are clear that without a fundamental reversal of policy by the Government to fully fund a significantly above-RPI inflation pay increase the recruitment and retention problems will continue to get worse. The STRB has been noting the impact of pay cuts on the competitiveness of teaching for some time. It must follow through on this logic, recommending the pay increases needed to correct teacher pay in real and comparative terms. It is then the Government's political responsibility to respond to the recommendations – and to take the political consequences at the forthcoming General Election.
- 29 Alongside the restorative correction needed to pay levels, significant improvements are required to the pay structure for teachers and school leaders. We welcome the steps to remove the obligation on schools to operate performance-related pay (PRP). The profession continues to be united in opposition to PRP, which has added to workload and for which there is no evidence that it has improved standards.
- 30 The imposition of PRP and the dismantling of the national pay structure have contributed to the recruitment and retention problems and have exacerbated pay inequalities. Appraisal has been undermined by PRP. The funding position of the school has played a significant role in determining pay outcomes.
- 31 We need a properly funded and fair national pay structure which better reflects the needs of the profession, not only without PRP but also with nationally mandated minimum pay points, so that serving and potential teachers can make career plans with confidence. The pay structure must offer competitive pay levels, pay progression that is not linked to performance, and appropriate payments for additional responsibilities.
- 32 Our united view on pay structure issues is supported across the school system. The vast majority of schools (including academies) adhere to the joint union pay advice, which sets out recommended pay scale points for teachers and school leaders. We repeat our call for the immediate restoration of mandatory pay points as a minimum entitlement for all teachers and school leaders. The joint union pay advice was used as the basis for the current advisory points in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and should also be used as the basis for the mandatory pay points needed.
- 33 There are serious equalities concerns with regard to pay decisions, but the DfE has not provided the evidence needed on the equality issues. Equality impacts must be monitored in line with the Government's Public Sector Equality Duty.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Public sector equality duty - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

34 We repeat our call for supply teachers to be included in a fair national pay structure, on the same basis as other teachers.

### **The recruitment and retention crisis**

35 A major recruitment and retention crisis has been allowed to develop since 2010 and has now reached catastrophic proportions. Our organisations have consistently warned of the damage done by Government policies on teacher pay and conditions. The pay cuts, failure to address workload issues, imposition of PRP and fragmented national pay structure have all contributed to the current position. The recruitment and retention crisis was made in Downing Street. It can only be ended by major changes in Government policy on teacher and school leader pay and conditions.

36 Securing a healthy supply of teachers and school leaders is a core responsibility of the STRB. The STRB must engage with the undeniable truth that attacks on pay and conditions are a major cause of the recruitment and retention problems.

37 In its last report the STRB noted the “structural deterioration in the relative pay of teachers and the inadequate recruitment of graduates.” The STRB also said: “Additional investment is needed and it will be more cost-effective to act sooner rather than later. The cost of failure is high: it affects teaching quality and adversely impacts children’s education.”<sup>12</sup>

38 The Secretary of State’s remit letter completely ignores these critical issues, even as recruitment targets are missed by record amounts and retention problems intensify.

39 The Government missed its target for recruitment of new secondary school teachers in 2023/24 by 50% this year and by 4% for primary school teachers, despite reducing that target by 21% compared to the previous year. The overall target for primary and secondary was missed by 38%. This is the tenth year of missed targets in the last eleven. Only three out of eighteen secondary subjects hit their targets.<sup>13 14</sup> The problems are system-wide, not a market-failure in specific subjects.

40 These catastrophic figures come on top of many previous failures to hit recruitment targets. The cumulative impact is huge. Teacher shortages exist across the curriculum, there are fewer experienced teachers to help less experienced teachers, the pipeline to school leadership is damaged, and teacher and leader shortages intensify workload problems.

41 Retention has also become an increasing problem. The latest School Workforce data<sup>15</sup> shows the position in November 2022, so we may find that the position is even worse when the next set of figures are published in June as the pandemic effect on recruitment and retention continues to recede.

---

<sup>12</sup> STRB 33<sup>rd</sup> Report, paragraph 3.47.

<sup>13</sup> Teacher recruitment: Just half of secondary target met ([schoolsweek.co.uk](https://schoolsweek.co.uk))

<sup>14</sup> Initial teacher training: trainee number census 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

<sup>15</sup> School workforce in England, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK ([explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk))

- 42 In the meantime, the latest information confirms that almost a third of teachers leave in the first five years, and almost a quarter within three years. For all but one of the eleven yearly cohorts, the retention rate for the latest year is worse than it was in 2010. Almost one in three leaders appointed aged under 50 leaves their role within five years, of whom more than half quit state-funded education entirely. Failing to tackle teacher and school leader retention directly damages children’s education. The education service cannot afford to lose the skills of experienced teachers and leaders.
- 43 The evidence shows that there is a fundamental recruitment and retention problem, with teacher shortages across the curriculum.
- 44 Differential pay increases, for example higher increases for starting pay and early career, have added to the recruitment and retention problems. They fail to address the fundamental, profession-wide recruitment and retention crisis. They also create additional problems: teachers and leaders who do not benefit from differentiated pay outcomes become angry and demoralised, adding to retention issues. They have eroded the differentials between pay ranges, acting as a disincentive to move into middle and senior leader roles.
- 45 It is in this context that the reference in the Secretary of State’s remit letter to “targeted remuneration to address subject-specific recruitment and retention challenges” must be seen.
- 46 The answer to the overarching recruitment and retention problem is not to further fracture and complicate the pay structure. The only answer is to send a powerful and clear message that the profession as a whole is valued, by means of the fully funded, significantly above-inflation and undifferentiated pay increases for which we call.
- 47 The remit letter again refers to forecast changes in the pupil population and the impact on demand for teachers. Any such analysis must take account of the impact of recruitment and retention problems, which have resulted in teacher shortages across the curriculum and cumulative damage to the school system. The forecasted falls in pupil numbers will not be sufficient to negate the current level of teacher shortages. Rising class sizes make a significant contribution to workload pressures.

## **Workload**

- 48 Workload is consistently reported as one of the key reasons teachers and leaders are leaving the profession. Workload has reached unprecedented levels in our schools and academies; and teachers are working more hours than they have ever done. High workload and high workload intensity is driving education staff out of the profession, contributing to the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector.

- 49 An Executive Summary of phase two of the DfE Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders (WLTL) survey was published after the deadline for submitting written evidence to the STRB and has confirmed that the situation has not improved and is only getting worse. The findings of the survey are stark. Full time teachers are now working on average 52.4 hours per week, up from 51.9 in 2022; and leaders are working on average 58.2 hours per week, up from 57.5 in 2022. 36% of respondents to the survey said they were considering leaving teaching in the next 12 months, compared with 25% who had that intention in 2022. Of those who had left teaching between 2022 and 2023, 67% indicated they were not likely to return. The government has failed to find a solution to the workload crisis in our schools and this is having damaging effects on recruitment and retention. The survey, which polled more than 10,000 teachers and leaders, also found that overall job satisfaction has nosedived. Only 46% were satisfied “most of the time”, compared to 58% last year and 19% of respondents rarely had satisfaction with their role. Unsurprisingly, the most common factor for leaving teaching was high workload with 94% saying it was an important factor.
- 50 Last year’s report by the NFER<sup>16</sup> highlights the challenges faced by the government in recruiting and retaining teachers. The report concludes that more needs to be done to reduce workload if retention levels are to improve during a resurgent labour market.
- 51 The STRB must prioritise implementing and supporting measures that reduce teacher workload and improve wellbeing. This means calling for urgent action on fundamental system reform to the current accountability regime; introducing more effective measures to reduce the workload associated with data, marking, and planning (e.g. promoting the recommendations from the 2016 and 2018 workload advisory groups); increasing PPA time and PPA time to include leaders (recognised leadership time). Finally, the STRB should remove or place a limit on the overarching requirement on teachers to “work such additional hours as may be necessary to enable the effective discharge of the teacher’s professional duties” working time. There must also be inclusion of limits on working time for school leaders to ensure that they are able to sustain a reasonable work/life balance. These sensible changes will reduce teacher workload to more manageable levels, increase morale, improve teacher professionalism, and aid retention.
- 52 Some of the measures above are currently being considered by the Workload Reduction Taskforce. It is crucial that the STRB fully supports the implementation of all agreed Workload Reduction Taskforce recommendations and make further recommendations that will speed up the reductions in workload and work intensity that are necessary and urgent in schools.

---

<sup>16</sup> Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2023 - NFER



- 53 All stakeholders agree that reducing workload and the hours teachers and leaders are working is an immediate priority for the education sector. The government has committed to reducing working hours of teachers and leaders by 5 hours a week. However, meaningful reductions in workload and working hours can only be achieved if the resources and funding needed are made available. Therefore, the STRB must ensure that any additional funding required to fulfil the recommendations of the Taskforce and achieve the government's aims are provided.
- 54 Until workload is reduced, and teachers have a reasonable work/life balance, the government will continue to miss its recruitment and retention targets, which only adds to the problem. Significant reductions in workload along with improvements in pay are vital to ensure the necessary supply of the teachers and school leaders the education service needs.

### **The review body process**

- 55 We continue to have serious concerns about the review body process. We recognise that the STRB – responding to the impact of last year's disputes and the improved offer wrestled from the Secretary of State – pushed against the Government's constraints to a significantly greater extent than it had in previous years. We urge the STRB to respond properly to the clear evidence for significant improvements in pay and conditions. This means stepping outside the constraints placed upon it by the Government.
- 56 The latest remit from the Secretary of State underlines our concerns about the review body process. The Secretary of State again seeks to obstruct the objective, evidence-based and comprehensive analysis that is needed to identify effective solutions on pay, conditions, and recruitment and retention. There is no mention of the need to restore the real value of teacher and school leader pay, and the remit seeks to limit the STRB to inadequate Government funding levels.
- 57 The STRB must refuse to be so constrained. Recommendations which do not effectively address the real issues facing our education service will again have no credibility with teachers, school leaders or the wider public. The STRB must adopt a holistic and evidence-based approach. It must recommend the fully funded pay correction and urgent improvements in workload that are needed to fix the recruitment and retention problems, value teachers and school leaders, and protect our education service.

### **Conclusion**

- 58 Government political choices since 2010 have damaged the education service. Isolated from the united view of the profession, the Government continues to refuse to face the reality of a recruitment and retention crisis caused by pay cuts and sky-high workload. The Government knows that the evidence on these issues is overwhelming, so it seeks to exclude them from the STRB's remit.

- 59 We are clear on the nature of the problems and on the solutions required to solve those problems. Each of our organisations will be sending separate written evidence to the STRB, but this joint statement underlines the consensus and the clear evidence in support of our call for a fully funded, major correction to pay and significant improvements in workload. The only way to recruit and retain the teachers and school leaders our education service needs is to value them properly.
- 60 This evidence reflects the views of the overwhelming majority of teachers and school leaders. It is therefore a key piece of evidence for the STRB and should be a significant determinant of STRB recommendations.