

## **Secretary of State's Response to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) Thirty Third Report 2023**

### **Response of the Association of School and College Leaders**

- 1 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is a trade union and professional association representing over 24,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business leaders and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people across primary, secondary, post-16 and specialist education. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
- 2 ASCL welcomes the opportunity to make a written response to the Government's proposals following the STRB's recommendations to the 33rd Remit. Our response is based on the views of our members, obtained through discussions at ASCL Council, with relevant advisory groups, and prompted and unprompted emails and messages.
- 3 When considering the impact of any proposals on different groups, it is ASCL's policy to consider not only the nine protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010, but also other groups which might be disproportionately affected, particularly those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. We have answered any equality impact questions on this basis.
- 4 This submission is in addition to the joint statement we have sent in partnership with the NAHT, NASUWT, NEU and Community.

#### **Timeliness of the process**

- 5 Rather disappointingly, we find ourselves in need of commenting on the timeliness of the process. Despite the remit being issued significantly earlier than in previous years, the report and response to it were again delayed until July.
- 6 Again, we saw the Department's inability to meet the first deadline cause a delay to the deadlines for all consultees. We must commend the STRB who, despite those delays, managed to complete and submit its report earlier than the original deadline suggested by the Secretary of State.

- 7 We acknowledge that circumstances this year were very different to previous years due to the industrial dispute between teaching unions and the Secretary of State, but it still took two months from the date that the STRB report was submitted to the Secretary of State before it was published, along with her response.
- 8 ASCL, along with the majority of consultees, have repeatedly voiced our concerns over the report being published at the end of the summer term, and the impact that this has on our members when trying to balance their budgets.
- 9 It creates unnecessary and unacceptable workload and stress for school leaders and is totally out of time with the requirements they face with regards to budget setting and approval.
- 10 We welcome the commitment from the Secretary of State in her letter to the General Secretaries of the trade unions<sup>1</sup> to remedy this by aligning the STRB process with the school budget cycle, it is imperative that this is followed through.

### **Matter for recommendation**

**The recommended adjustments to salary and allowance ranges for classroom teachers, unqualified teachers and school leaders in 2023/24, taking account of the aim of promoting recruitment and retention, the Government's commitment to uplift starting salaries to £30,000, and the cost pressures on schools.**

- 11 ASCL does not support differentiated pay awards and we have made our position clear that whilst we are supportive for the increase in starting salaries to £30,000, any uplifts must also be applied to all points within all pay ranges and allowances.
- 12 We were therefore very pleased to see that this seems to be a view which is shared by the Review Body as it recommended a 6.5% increase to all pay ranges and allowances, with higher increases to some parts of the main pay range to achieve a £30,000 starting salary in England.
- 13 Notwithstanding the above point, we remain concerned about the level of competitiveness of a £30,000 starting salary, due to the delay in implementation, increases to graduate starting salaries and high inflation.
- 14 When the £30,000 starting salary was included in the Conservative Party Manifesto in 2019, the median graduate salary according to research<sup>2</sup> by High Fliers, was £30,000. It had remained static for seven years between 2015 and 2021.
- 15 However, High Fliers' data<sup>3</sup> also shows that the median salary increased to £32,000 in 2022, and was expected to increase to £33,500 in 2023, meaning that graduate pay increased by 11.7% in the last two years.

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<sup>1</sup> SoS letter to General Secretaries ASCL, NAHT, NASUWT and NEU, 14 July 2023

<sup>2</sup> [The Graduate Market in 2023, High Fliers, March 2023](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Ibid](#)

- 16 This leaves the £30,000 starting salary lagging behind before it is even implemented in September.
- 17 The 2023 pay award may be highest ever recommendation by the STRB, but it was not enough to repair the erosion of pay that the profession has experienced since 2010, nor did it keep pace with inflation.
- 18 It was much improved on the STRB's initial recommendation as part of a multi year award and the DfE evidence submissions to the STRB (in 2022 and 2023), and also on the offer tabled by the Secretary of State during the pay negotiations in March, which members of all teaching unions rejected.
- 19 However, whilst this was an improved award, it cannot be assumed that it resolves the issues around pay erosion and recruitment and retention.
- 20 *As we say in our 'Manifesto for the 2024 General Election'<sup>4</sup>, 'There has been a decline in teachers' real-term pay for more than a decade, in excess of most other public sector workers. This gap is particularly stark for experienced teachers and for leaders, as their pay has grown more slowly than that of newly qualified teachers. While the 6.5% pay increase for 2023/24 is welcome, it goes nowhere near reversing this decade-long decline.'*
- 21 It is the first step towards restoring the real terms pay cuts since 2010 and towards recruiting and retaining a sufficient quantity and quality of teachers and school leaders, but it must be just that, the first step. This is not 'job done'.
- 22 *A report published by NFER in July 2023 also supports this view: 'However, over the longer-term the analysis shows that even a pay award of 6.5 per cent is unlikely to make a highly significant difference to the overall supply picture on its own. Pay awards in 2024/25 and beyond that merely match the anticipated growth in average earnings in the wider labour market are unlikely to significantly address the pressing recruitment and retention challenges. There therefore remains a need for a wider strategy for improving recruitment and retention that is based on a long-term plan to continue to improve the competitiveness of teacher pay and/or financial incentives, action to improve the non-financial attractiveness of teaching, or a combination of both.'<sup>5</sup>*
- 23 In our initial evidence we called for a long-term commitment to funding over a number of years in order that the significant real term decline in pay rates can be reversed together with the re-establishment of previous differentials between pay ranges.
- 24 Education must be seen as an investment and not a cost. Where there is good investment in education, this in turn leads to economic growth. Without the sufficient quantity and quality of teachers and leaders, it will not be possible to achieve either.

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<sup>4</sup> [ASCL Manifesto for the 2024 General Election](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Policy options for a long-term teacher pay and financial incentives strategy](#)

- 25 This is why, in our Manifesto<sup>6</sup>, that we say that a priority for the next government must be to provide much-needed investment to improve teacher and leader pay to address the recruitment and retention crisis.
- 26 We were pleased to see that the STRB<sup>7</sup> shares our view on this: *‘Our recommendations are primarily driven by the objective of remedying, in a balanced and considered manner, the structural deterioration in the relative pay of teachers and the inadequate recruitment of graduates. 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.’*

### **Recommendation for the 2023/24 pay award**

- 27 The 6.5% increase for teachers and leaders is welcomed. However, it fails to address the long term, systemic real term decline in the pay of school teachers and leaders. ASCL highlighted this in our original submission to the STRB and our position remains unchanged that an increase in pay substantially higher than inflation is necessary in order to restore pay in real terms to 2010 levels.
- 28 ASCL notes that the STRB stated the following on page 7 of their report<sup>8</sup>:
- ‘The primary objective of our recommendations is to start to address, in a balanced way, the structural deterioration in the pay of teachers relative to comparable professions and the inadequate recruitment of graduates.’*
- ‘The relative value of teachers’ earnings is falling behind the wider labour market (by 10 percentage points since 2010).’*
- 29 We note that this is almost the polar opposite of the Treasury who, in their evidence to pay review bodies stated that *“the public sector remuneration package remains competitive.”*<sup>9</sup> We believe that the STRB evidence conclusively debunks the Treasury’s belief that the pay of public sector employees has maintained parity with private sector counterparts.
- 30 We welcome the STRB’s analysis of the long term erosion of pay and believe this further demonstrates the need for a medium-term strategy to restore pay levels in order the address the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis. We look forward to working with the STRB to achieve this goal.

### **Pay award funding**

- 31 The government has assured us that the pay award will be fully funded.
- 32 It is our view that a successful mechanism to ensure that staffing costs are fully funded would deliver the following:
- The minimum per pupil funding uplift accessible to all schools meets the uplift in the operational costs of a school in the same funding year.

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<sup>6</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>7</sup> [STRB 33<sup>rd</sup> Report](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Government evidence to the STRB](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Economic Evidence to Pay Review Bodies: 2023-24 Pay Round](#)

- 33 There is an expectation that the core schools budget includes an allowance for pay awards. The recently announced teachers' pay additional grant (TPAG) is intended to cover the affordability gap created by the pay award of 6.5% in 2023:
- Government affordability calculations indicate that the first 3.5% of the award is affordable from existing school budgets.
  - Government has calculated that the TPAG will cover the remaining 3% costs
- 34 The fly in the ointment here is that government continued to use the School Costs<sup>10</sup> document methodology, which is based on assumptions using national averages. DfE school costs calculations assume a funding uplift in mainstream schools of 6.7%, and that the first 3.5% of the award is affordable.
- 35 By definition using an average means that around half of schools will achieve an uplift at this level, but half won't. For those that won't, covering the costs of the award (even after the allocation of the TPAG) will create budgetary pressure.
- 36 Below are a few examples of this from members who have tested the adequacy of the TPAG to pick up budget shortfall as a result of the agreed award:
- 11-18 maintained school will be £20,000 short
  - 11-18 SAT will be £30,000 short
  - MAT with two 11-18 schools will be around 25% short
  - 11-18 SAT will be £34,000 short.
- 37 In our own evidence to the STRB we indicated that schools would be unable to afford a 3.5% award. Our assumptions included an uplift of around 5.6% before any additional grants.
- 38 At the time the award was made the Government also announced a £40million Hardship Fund. The full details of this fund are not yet available; however, we expect that access to it will only be for those schools in exceptional circumstances. We do not anticipate that it will be accessible to all schools for whom the TPAG does not meet the full affordability gap.
- 39 The principles of what a fully funded pay award will look like apply equally to all types of schools. However, calculating operational costs for special schools and Alternative Provision (AP) is even more problematic than for mainstream.
- 40 Special and AP are funded to support the specific needs of their pupils and this drives proportion of spend on teaching and non-teaching staff. Additional funding to meet the affordability gap for specialist provision will be allocated to local authorities to pass through to special schools and AP.

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<sup>10</sup> [Schools costs 2022 to 2024](#)

## **Pay progression including Performance Related Pay**

- 41 We must share our disappointment and frustration that there appear to be no plans to remove the requirement for schools to use Performance Related Pay (PRP) despite it being tabled as part of the pay offer in March.
- 42 The joint unions, and other consultees have been calling for the removal of performance related pay from the Document for several years now.
- 43 The STRB have also highlighted this as an area for review in previous years, and the latest report said:

*3.52 'Our analysis of the evidence shows that it is not only an appropriate pay uplift that is necessary to address shortcomings in the framework for teacher reward and to improve morale. In particular, we have heard repeatedly from all consultees their concerns relating to the operation of performance-related pay progression and workload.'*

*3.53 We are not expressing an ideological or technical view on the case for salary increases being linked to performance. However, most consultees believe the current model is not working and evidence of its efficacy is limited. It appears that the burden of administering it exceeds any benefit that it is achieving. Moreover, we have heard views suggesting that its outcomes are not fully equitable for some groups with protected characteristics or for part-time workers. Our view is that the approach to pay progression requires a reassessment and that the obligation on schools to use the current model should be removed. We note that the Government offered to take this approach as part of a settlement to the current pay dispute. We see this as a pragmatic approach pending further review.'*

- 44 Whilst this was not a recommendation, due to this not being included in the remit, it is clear that the STRB shares the view of the joint unions.
- 45 There is a widespread belief amongst the teaching and leadership workforce that the statutory requirements around PRP will be removed from the STPCD when it is published based on the above, and there has been no clear statement of intent from the Secretary of State in relation to this.
- 46 We therefore urge the Secretary of State to act on the STRB observation and the repeated calls from the joint trade unions and remove PRP from the STPCD from September 2023.

## **Workload and working time**

- 47 We are pleased to see that the Workload Reduction Taskforce, that was also tabled as part of the pay offer in March, is still going ahead.
- 48 It is crucial that this work is prioritised and that recommendations from the group are considered promptly in order to be incorporated into the STPCD to begin to have impact in this academic year.

- 49 We particularly want to see rapid progress on the item around working time for school leaders. We cannot continue to see our members' workloads and working hours at such excessive levels and increasing.
- 50 Our members work incredibly hard and are entitled to a reasonable work-life balance allowing them to take well-earned breaks, whether that be evenings, weekends or during in school closure periods.

### **Career paths and pay structures for teachers and school leaders**

- 51 We submitted extensive evidence on this remit item. We feel that the most pressing of these is to broaden the scope of the STRB remit and the STPCD so that it remains relevant to the whole state funded sector, including academies.
- 52 As part of this we want to see Business Leaders brought into that scope. Business Leaders are not served well by the NJC arrangements, their roles are different to those of support staff, they are school leaders.
- 53 They carry out crucial roles which carry a significant level of whole school/trust strategic responsibility and accountability in the same way that their leadership colleagues do as Assistant Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers.
- 54 It is imperative that they are recognised and remunerated in the same way as those leadership colleagues, and it is our view that being brought under the auspices of the STRB and the STPCD under a leadership category is the only way that this can be achieved.
- 55 We must see this included in the next remit.

### **56 Future priorities**

- 57 The STRB 32<sup>nd</sup> Report highlighted five areas of future priority:
- *Career paths and pay structures for teachers and school leaders*
  - *Pay progression, including the appropriate use of performance or capability-related pay*
  - *Teacher shortages including by subject, geographical area and experience*
  - *Flexible ways of working to support wellbeing*
  - *Support for the broader state school sector, including the academy sector*
- 58 We welcomed the inclusion of one of them in the 33<sup>rd</sup> remit. However, as they were indeed identified as priorities, we must see the remaining ones addressed.



## Consultation on draft STPCD

59 The contents page (page 2) needs to be updated to reflect changes since September 2022 and the pay awards for September 2023.

60 As we have commented in previous years, the order of the columns differs from the tables for the minimum and maximum of each pay range to the tables for the advisory pay scales.

61 The pay range columns are shown here:

	<b>England (excluding the London Area)</b>	<b>Inner London Area</b>	<b>Outer London Area</b>	<b>Fringe Area</b>
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62 The advisory pay scales columns are shown here:

<b>Spine Point</b>	<b>Rest of England (£)</b>	<b>London Fringe (£)</b>	<b>Outer London (£)</b>	<b>Inner London (£)</b>
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63 This needs to be corrected so that the columns are all in the same order for consistency.

64 On page 83, the bracketed sentence referencing the school year beginning September 2022 needs deleting.

65 On page 85 '*Further sources of information*' - it would be helpful to add a link to the Department's Flexible Working in Schools resources.

## Pay Scales

66 We have previously welcomed the reintroduction of more pay scales into the STPCD but we believe that they should be a mandatory element of the STPCD in an advisory capacity for minimum pay, rather than compulsory fixed points.

67 We are disappointed that again there was not a recommendation to reintroduce the Leadership pay scales into the Document this year.

68 It seems nonsensical to reintroduce pay scales for Unqualified Teacher, Main and Upper pay ranges but to exclude the Leadership pay range.

69 We strongly recommend that these are reintroduced to the Document at the earliest opportunity.

70 As in previous years, we will continue to publish updated pay scales for all pay ranges in conjunction with Community, NAHT, NASUWT and NEU, and we will encourage employers to use these as a minimum.



## Conclusion

- 71 The 6.5% pay award is welcomed, but it must be the first stage of a strategic plan to restore the erosion of pay which has taken place since 2010.
- 72 Future pay awards must at least keep pace with RPI and be fully funded by the government – this is in addition to the restoration of pay referenced above.
- 73 Performance related pay must be removed from the STPCD from September 2023.
- 74 The scope of the STRB and STPCD must be broadened to include all school leadership role, in particular Business Leaders.
- 75 The government must take urgent action to address the recruitment and retention crisis. This cannot solely be focussed on early career teachers. It is imperative that teaching is seen as an attractive profession for a career, whether that be as a teacher or as a school leader, not just for recent graduates.
- 76 The Secretary of State's commitment<sup>11</sup> to '*to align the timing of the STRB process with the school budget cycle to make it easier for schools to plan ahead, make effective choices and reduce nugatory contingency planning.*' must be followed through.
- 77 We hope that this is of value to your consultation, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Louise Hatswell and Carl Parker  
Conditions of Employment Specialists: Pay  
Association of School and College Leaders  
15 September 2023

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<sup>11</sup> [Ibid](#)