

## Managing and Reducing Workload

*(By 2020) ...Teaching is seen as a highly skilled profession that is constantly being refined, challenged and developed to improve outcomes for students.*

*Teachers see themselves as contributing collectively to excellence in a world-class education system, the creation of a fair society and the common good. This renewed focus on the moral imperative of teaching and the purpose of education has brought a strong sense of energy, collective purpose and professionalism.*

Extract from ASCL's *Blueprint for a Self-Improving System*

### First principles

- 1 Additional workload is work teachers do for perceived and/or unnecessary compliance processes which takes them away from the complex process of teaching and learning. This is driven by an out-of-kilter accountability culture.
- 2 We believe that through a coordinated effort, teachers' and leaders' workload can be managed and reduced. However, we must not position teaching in an outdated industrial era of clocking on and off. Teaching is first and foremost a profession. As such it ignites passion and moral purpose. It is born of the conviction that teachers make a difference in the lives of children. Teachers come into the profession with a commitment to evaluate constantly the way in which their practice improves children's and young people's learning and life chances. None of this can be done from a narrow industrialist model of work.
- 3 However, there is a problem that needs to be solved – too many teachers say that they are required to carry out unnecessary tasks that add to an already substantial workload. We must therefore consider ways to reduce tasks that are done for unnecessary compliance processes that take teachers away from the complex process of teaching and learning. Where school and college leaders are under pressure to drive unnecessary or onerous workloads, ASCL urges them to adhere to this guidance and will seek to support them.

### Analysis of the current system

#### Evidence from the Teachers' Workload Diary Survey

- 4 The 2013 Teachers' Workload Diary Survey provides independently collected data on hours and working patterns of teachers in England. A sample of 1,004 teachers was achieved.
- 5 On average, all teachers report working over 50 hours per week, with primary and secondary headteachers reporting more than 60 hours. Classroom teachers in most school types report teaching 19 to 20 hours a week. The exception to this was teachers in special schools who reported teaching 16.8 hours.

- 6 Teachers of all types work around 12 hours a week outside what might be regarded as their normal working week. Heads spent around half of this time on school and staff management while classroom teachers spent at least three quarters of it on planning, preparation and assessment (PPA). Time spent on PPA was as common for classroom teachers in primary, secondary and academy schools as teaching, at around a third of their total workload.
- 7 Other activities were performed to a lesser extent. Non-teaching pupil or parent contact made up 10-14 per cent of a classroom teacher's workload and slightly more than that for headteachers in secondary schools (16 per cent). On average less than 10 per cent of workload was spent on general administrative duties. Headteachers in secondary schools spent 11 per cent of their time on individual or professional development, while it was a much smaller proportion of classroom teacher working time (5 per cent or less).
- 8 The most common reasons given to explain the increase in unnecessary and bureaucratic tasks were preparation for an Ofsted inspection (16 per cent of deputy heads and classroom teachers, and 17 per cent of heads) and an increase in forms and paperwork (15 per cent of deputy heads and classroom teachers).
- 9 Teachers were asked to give examples of what they thought were unnecessary and bureaucratic tasks. Two common themes emerged:
  - duplication
  - excessive level of detail required in certain circumstances
- 10 In particular, duplication was mentioned in terms of paper work; marking and recording pupil progress; and data analysis, reporting and evidence gathering. The level of detail was considered by teachers to be unnecessary with regard to planning and preparation, and marking and progress recording.
- 11 Deputy heads and classroom teachers were asked what three things would improve the quality of teaching and pupil learning. Their top responses were: spending more time discussing work with individual pupils (30 per cent), one-to-one and small group teaching (28 per cent), collaborative planning with colleagues (26 per cent) and exploring and selecting resources (25 per cent).

### **Evidence from the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)**

- 12 TALIS is a large-scale international survey that focuses on the working conditions of teachers and the learning environment in schools. The sample size was approximately 150 heads and 2,500 teachers.
- 13 TALIS data correlates broadly with the Teachers' Workload Diary survey. TALIS data shows that teachers in England report working 46 hours per week. This is on average one of the highest figures in TALIS and nine hours more than the median for all countries. It is just slightly less than teachers in Canada (48 hours), Japan (45 hours) and Singapore (48 hours).
- 14 Average face-to-face teaching time in England (20 hours) is broadly in line with the international average. However, teachers in England on average spend more time per week on things other than face-to-face teaching compared to many other countries. There is no one area that accounts for the difference, but on each of the three most time-consuming activities, teachers in England are spending more time preparing lessons (7.8 compared to a median of 7.1 hours for high-performing countries); marking and correcting students work (6.1 hours compared to 4.5 hours) and general administrative work (4.0 hours compared to 3.2 hours).

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- 15 Both the Teachers' Workload Diary Survey and TALIS are observational studies. The information collected in both surveys is self-reported and in this sense, subjective. Neither can reveal causal relationships with any certainty. Correlation does not imply causation.
- 16 However, we can begin to propose and test some policy solutions in relation to reducing teacher workload from the survey evidence. Our position is that measures to reduce workload should also impact positively on student learning and outcomes. That means reducing work that is done for perceived and/or unnecessary compliance processes which takes teachers away from the complex process of teaching and learning.

## Managing and reducing workload in a self-improving system – policy proposals

- 17 We have drawn on the vast experience of ASCL members and the excellent work being done in Scotland to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy to develop ten policy proposals that mobilise the whole system.

### For government and the inspectorate

- 18 The current accountability and inspection systems both have workload implications.

19 **Create a slim, smart and stable accountability system.**

The accountability framework, which is a key role for government, should not drive workload. We want accountability measures that are stable over time, proportionate in number, and smart. Accountability measures should focus only on the most valuable information that supports the greatest improvement.

20 **Consolidate and embed curriculum, qualification and assessment reform.**

The current reforms are having a significant impact on workload – evidence of this can be seen in our guidance to school leaders on curriculum reform listing the key activities that need to be undertaken. We are not suggesting that the reform process is stopped, but rather there needs to be absolute clarity from the DfE and its agencies about the detail of the changes and the timeline for implementation. Moreover, there should be no further ad hoc changes. We need to consolidate and implement change within planned timescales.

21 **Reform inspection.**

The way inspections are currently conducted has unintended and perverse consequences. Ofsted is perceived to require schools to adopt certain practices or work in certain ways. We are working with Ofsted to clarify some of the 'myths' of inspection. The first and most important myth is that Ofsted can require schools to do anything. It cannot. It is an inspectorate and as so, does not make policy or legislation.

- 22 For example, the focus on marking as the visible and verifiable way of judging the quality of teachers' feedback to students is in some cases unhelpful. Feedback is part of the teaching process, and it is important that teaching quality is judged as a whole by its impact – processes themselves should not be the deciding factor. Not all written marking is good feedback, and some of the best feedback leaves a trail in the mind of the learner, not on the pages of her books.

- 23 We know that inspectors are using marking to judge not just the quality of feedback, but also the overall quality of teaching. Huge weight has been placed on it, even more so since the decision not to grade teaching. The approach of inspectors is driving practice on the ground.

24 ASCL is working with Ofsted to reform inspection so that it is more proportionate. For more detail on what this should look like, see ASCL's policy paper on inspection.

**25 Reduce bureaucracy associated with self-evaluation.**

A whole-school approach to self-evaluation play a key role in improving performance but over-reliance on forms, audit and tick box approaches can distract from high quality teaching and learning. Self-evaluation should not be a bureaucratic exercise. We believe it is right that no one form of self-evaluation is mandated or required.

**26 Implement a national fair funding formula.**

Schools have been improving performance and outcomes since 2010 in an essentially 'flat cash' environment. This has rightly led to significant and in some cases outstanding improvements in operational efficiency. However, there is mathematical limit where efficiency tips into increased workloads. We need to move swiftly towards a national fair funding formula that is sufficient, equitable and sustainable.

## **For the profession**

**27 Develop teachers' practice in providing feedback.**

Professional dialogue is key to improving learning. Paperwork should be kept to the minimum required to support this process.

28 We know that good feedback is among the most effective ways of progressing students' learning.<sup>1</sup> Marking is one form of feedback but this does not necessarily mean inordinate amounts of teacher writing in books. We urge schools to reduce marking that is done for the sake of compliance. We need teaching that is agile and rapidly responsive to students' needs as they grapple with learning. It is more important that teachers closely track students' developing knowledge and understanding and are responsive to it, than they are able to present beautifully marked books.

**29 Create the conditions for smarter planning and preparation.**

Forward planning is a professional tool to assist teaching and learning. Teachers should plan to the level of detail that will work best for their pupils.

30 Forward planning should support professional dialogue rather than simply fulfil an audit function. Planning and preparation will vary with the teacher's level of experience, familiarity with the material and preferred style, so we would caution against a one-size-fits-all approach. We need to create the conditions for teachers to share resources.

31 Planning should not be a bureaucratic and complicated function; it should focus on impact rather than process. We suggest minimising planning that is done alone or in isolation, and emphasising professional conversations in teams led by clear-sighted heads of department or team leaders.

**32 Reduce compliance processes that do not impact on learning.**

All institutions have 'ways of doing things' which may be embedded and historical. Some of these may not impact on learning and have simply become self-serving. They may also be fuelled by anxiety about beliefs (real or imagined) about what Ofsted expects to see. We need to free teachers from unnecessary fear,

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1 Hattie, J. (2008) Visible Learning and Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit which can be downloaded from <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/toolkit-a-z/>

uncertainty and doubt about inspection and/or myths about what they believe inspectors want to see – we need to build their confidence to focus on developing professional knowledge and skill rather than a narrow compliance culture.



**33 Review ICT planning and reporting systems.**

While ICT systems can support very detailed planning and reporting, this does not mean they should be used in that way. What matters is that systems are used effectively to support and protect time for professional dialogue.

**34 Evaluate reporting to parents.**

Parents are looking for reports that give a clear, rounded personalised summary of their children’s learning and progress. They want good quality conversations with teachers that feel personal and specific to their child. The paperwork needs to support this rather than becoming an end in itself.

