

NEU Workload Survey



July 2018

The findings of a comprehensive new survey of over 11,000 primary and secondary teachers, demonstrates that the Department for Education (DfE) is still a long way off resolving the issue of workload and unnecessary monitoring in schools.

Teachers surveyed were members of the National Education Union (NEU) working in schools in England and Wales.

The DfE's Workload Challenge survey was launched in October 2014, its findings reported in February 2015 and the working groups' recommendations appeared in March 2016. In 2015, schools' inspectorate Ofsted issued a myth-buster on workload. These were communicated to schools, with the intention of tackling excessive teacher workload arising from marking, data and planning expectations. Since then, in July 2018, the DfE has issued a series of videos with the NEU and other teacher unions explaining what Government and Ofsted do *not* expect schools to do.

However, the NEU's survey – conducted in July 2018 – demonstrates that although some progress is being made, teachers are still undertaking time-consuming accountability and data collection processes which do not support the teaching and learning process. Working hours are still too long (averaging 55-60 hours per week, according to the DfE's own research), and too many of those hours continue to be filled with accountability work that is unnecessary and which contributes nothing to a child's learning.

On Marking

Primary schools

Are you required to undertake frequent deep or triple marking?	
Yes	63%
No	37%

An astonishing 63% of primary teachers are still undertaking deep or triple marking.

Is it required or recommended that you photograph pupils' practical work to keep a record?
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Yes	82%
No	18%

It is impractical and time consuming when teaching a class of 30 pupils to photograph children's work, yet 82% of primary teachers are still doing so.

Are you required to provide evidence of the oral feedback you give to your pupils?	
Yes	61%
No	39%

Despite the 2016 guidance, 61% of primary teachers say they are still formally recording their conversations with pupils.

Has your school reviewed its marking policies and practices since the publication of the DfE review group recommendations on reducing teacher workload in 2016?	
Yes	45%
No	35%
What recommendations?	20%

While 45% of primary schools have reviewed their marking policies since the 2016 DfE recommendations on teacher workload were released, a significant percentage (35%) have not, and a fifth of respondents (20%) indicate that the recommendations have not been communicated to them.

Do you think the volume of marking you are required to undertake is manageable?	
Yes	31%
No	69%

Workload is one of the main reasons teachers have for leaving the profession. The fact that 69% of primary teachers believe their marking workload is unmanageable should be of great concern to Government.

Secondary schools

Are you required to undertake frequent deep or triple marking?	
Yes	59%

No	41%
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Deep or triple marking remains normal practice in secondary schools, with 59% of teachers continuing to do so.

Is it required or recommended that you photograph pupils' practical work to keep a record?	
Yes	14%
No	86%

An expectation to photograph pupils' practical work is less common in secondary schools, with 14% of teachers confirming they are required to do so.

Are you required to provide evidence of the oral feedback you give to your pupils?	
Yes	34%
No	66%

Again, the recording of conversations is expected less in secondary schools, with one third of secondary teachers saying this was required of them.

Has your school reviewed its marking policies and practices since the publication of the DfE review group recommendations on reducing teacher workload in 2016?	
Yes	44%
No	30%
What recommendations?	26%

While 44% of teachers said their school had reviewed their marking policies, a worrying 30% had not and over a quarter (26%) were not aware of the recommendations.

Do you think the volume of marking you are required to undertake is manageable?	
Yes	22%
No	78%

An overwhelming 78% of teachers in secondary schools believe that marking practices are unmanageable.

On Data

The planning and marking of work is a core part of the teaching and learning process, but the collection of data by teachers is an unnecessary and burdensome addition to teachers' workload.

Our survey shows that three quarters of primary teachers (74%) and 59% of secondary teachers use a website or app to collate granular data on every child's classroom activity. These sites are usually cumbersome and frustrating to use.

It is not surprising that only a third of primary teachers and a quarter of secondary teachers think data collection has a positive impact on their teaching. It is clear, too, that schools are not following the Government's advice on data gathering.

Around two thirds of all teachers (66% in primaries and 63% in secondaries) believe that data collection is unmanageable.

Primary schools

Is data collection streamlined in your school to eliminate duplication and based on the principal of 'collect once, use many times'?	
Yes	26%
No	74%

Does your school use a website or app to record data?	
Yes	74%
No	26%

Do you think the volume of data collection you are required to undertake is manageable?	
Yes	34%
No	66%

Secondary schools

Is data collection streamlined in your school to eliminate duplication and based on the principal of 'collect once, use many times'?	
Yes	18%
No	82%

Does your school use a website or app to record data?	
Yes	59%
No	41%

Do you think the volume of data collection you are required to undertake is manageable?	
Yes	37%
No	63%

On Planning

The demands on teachers to provide lesson plans is markedly worse for primary teachers, though still impacts on those working in the secondary sector.

Only a quarter (25%) of primary teachers and less than one-in-five (18%) secondary teachers report that their school has reviewed its planning in response to Government advice.

Primary schools

Are daily or weekly written lesson plans a routine expectation in your school?	
Yes	84%
No	16%

Are you required to plan according to a template or prescribed format?	
Yes	78%

No	22%
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Is your planning routinely 'handed in' to and/or 'marked' by the Senior Leadership Team?	
Yes	44%
No	56%

Do the planning requirements in your school make planning feel like an accountability exercise that does not contribute to effective teaching and learning?	
Yes	59%
No	41%

Do you think the volume and type of planning you are required to undertake is manageable?	
Yes	40%
No	60%

Has your school reviewed its planning policy or practices since the publication of the DfE review group recommendations on reducing teacher workload in 2016?	
Yes	25%
No	52%
What recommendations?	23%

Secondary schools

Are daily or weekly written lesson plans a routine expectation in your school?	
Yes	12%
No	88%

Are you required to plan according to a template or prescribed format?	
Yes	42%
No	58%

Is your planning routinely 'handed in' to and/or 'marked' by the Senior Leadership Team?	
Yes	8%
No	92%

Do the planning requirements in your school make planning feel like an accountability exercise that does not contribute to effective teaching and learning?	
Yes	27%
No	73%

Do you think the volume and type of planning you are required to undertake is manageable?	
Yes	54%
No	46%

Has your school reviewed its planning policy or practices since the publication of the DfE review group recommendations on reducing teacher workload in 2016?	
Yes	18%
No	45%
What recommendations?	36%

Sample

Our survey of 11,341 NEU members working in 6,908 schools was conducted in July 2018. It covers both primary and secondary schools across England and Wales.

The results of the survey were amalgamated by school and then grouped by sector to give a clearer picture of existing practice in schools. There was difference in practice between the primary and secondary sector; workload practice that is known to cause unnecessary workload is more common in primary schools. For that reason, data is presented separately by sector.