



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

10 September 2019

Dear Secretary of State

School Teachers' Pay: STRB's 29th Report and Government Response

As you know, our organisations represent the overwhelming majority of teachers and school leaders in England. This joint response to the consultation on your predecessor's announcement on teacher pay following the 29th report of the STRB is intended to demonstrate the consensus within the teaching profession on the key issues relating to pay. Each of our organisations may also make a separate independent response to the consultation.

The STRB report underlines the serious concerns that the STRB has consistently expressed in recent years on teacher recruitment and retention. The STRB says that "*the teacher supply situation has continued to deteriorate*", that "*this has affected teachers at all stages of their careers*" and that teacher recruitment and retention trends "*paint a worrying picture*" (page ix). Noting the further projected increases in pupil numbers, the STRB anticipates further problems ahead for teacher supply. This is only the latest in a series of STRB reports expressing serious concern on teacher supply.

The STRB also makes a clear link between the recruitment and retention problems and teacher pay issues. The STRB says that "*the evidence relating to pay shows teachers at all career stages lagging behind other graduate professions*" (STRB, paragraph 4.27) and that "*the steady decline in the competitiveness of the teachers' pay framework is a significant contributor to teacher supply difficulties*" (STRB, page x).

Based on its concerns about retention as well as recruitment, its recognition that problems of pay exist at all career stages and its acknowledgement of the damage caused by differential awards, the STRB has recommended a uniform uplift of 2.75% to pay and allowance ranges rather than any "targeted" award.

The STRB is clear that *“a focus on pay for early career teachers, at the expense of those on the upper or leadership pay ranges, risks being ineffective even in its own terms. Those considering joining the profession, and particularly career changers, look ahead at their future possible earnings”* (STRB, page xi). The deterioration of pay for experienced teachers and leaders relative to those on the main scale further undermines retention within the profession.

The STRB’s recommendation must be seen in the context of the lengthy period of real-terms cuts in teachers’ pay and the worsening position against other graduate professions and other groups in the wider economy. The damage caused by pay freezes, pay caps and below-inflation pay awards is still with us and is a main driver of teacher supply problems. We need urgent action to restore the real and relative value of teacher pay. That is why our organisations called on the Government to increase teacher pay by 5% and to fully fund such an increase.

The 2.75% recommended increase is below the current rates of increase (at the time of writing) in both RPI inflation and average earnings in the wider economy. It will not, therefore, improve the position of teacher pay at all relative to inflation or earnings elsewhere.

Teachers will see the value of their pay decline still further in real terms and compared to other graduates, making the teacher supply crisis even worse. The 2.75% recommended increase is also, of course, significantly lower than the 3.5% uplift recommended by the STRB to all teacher pay and allowance ranges last year – even though the STRB notes that teacher recruitment and retention has continued to deteriorate.

In addition, the Government has not provided the additional funding needed even for this inadequate pay increase. The Government expects schools to find the first 2% of the pay increase, when schools are already under severe financial pressure. The new Prime Minister has pledged to reverse the education cuts. This must include providing additional funding to cover the full 2.75% pay increase. Without this, schools will have to make significant cuts to spending from other areas of their already overstretched budgets. This will undoubtedly result in job losses which will only exacerbate the recruitment and retention crisis.

This year again saw a delay of several months before the Government made this announcement and published the STRB Report. This has again created an unacceptably short timescale for this statutory consultation – a process which will be complicated by the lack of detail on the Teacher Pay Grant.

We therefore reserve the right to make further representations, jointly and separately, when further information on funding is made available. More importantly, perhaps, it has created great difficulty for schools, both in undertaking their own consultations and in setting their final budgets for the year which must now accommodate an increase for which many will not have budgeted and none will receive sufficient additional funding.

Conclusion

We jointly call on you to set aside your predecessor's announcement and take the urgent action on pay that is clearly needed. We ask you to agree to increase all teacher pay points and allowances by 5% as the start of a programme to restore teachers' pay and bolster its professional status.

We also call on you to provide the additional funding needed to finance this increase as the start of an even more important programme to provide schools with sufficient funding, initially through a reversal of the real-terms cuts of the last decade.

Furthermore, we urge the Government to consult with the teaching and leadership unions on the scope of the STRB's remit to consider reforms to the pay structure for the profession. We are united in our view that such a remit should consider the pay for classroom teachers, experienced teachers and school leaders concurrently, in order that the pay system is properly designed to support career progression and retention.

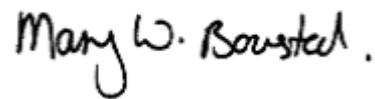
Yours sincerely



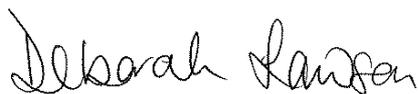
Geoff Barton
General Secretary
ASCL



Paul Whiteman
General Secretary
NAHT



Dr Mary Bousted
Joint General Secretary
NEU



Deborah Lawson
General Secretary
Voice



Kevin Courtney
Joint General Secretary
NEU