

STARTING PAY ON APPOINTMENT

NEU Guidance for members in England and Wales

This NEU document is aimed at new teachers and those returning to teaching service after a break. It explains the basics of the pay structure and gives advice on ensuring you are fairly paid and able to seek the most favourable use of pay discretions.

What we say

When you read through this document you may have questions about what happens in your particular school or workplace and there may be collective issues that affect other members. In most circumstances, you should initially discuss the matter with your workplace rep, as they will know whether similar concerns have been raised by other members. If you do not have a rep at the moment, it would be a good idea to get members together to elect one. Further advice on this is available at:

<https://neu.org.uk/becoming-a-rep>

Although you may sometimes feel that you are the only person affected by or concerned about a particular issue, in reality this is seldom the case. Any difficulties you may experience are likely to be linked to wider conditions at your workplace and as a member of the NEU you have the advantage of being able to act collectively with your colleagues. This should give you the confidence of knowing that you have the weight of the Union behind you.

NB – This document refers to the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). Teachers employed in local authority maintained schools are statutorily covered by the provisions of the STPCD. Many academies and academy chains also employ teaching staff according to terms of the STPCD, but they are not obliged to do so (except in the case of teachers whose STPCD rights are protected by TUPE legislation following the school’s transfer to academy contracts). Members working in academies should check with their NEU rep or should refer to their contracts in cases of doubt.

What are the rules on starting pay?

The STPCD now provides two pay ranges for classroom teachers, the Main Pay Range and Upper Pay Range. There are no longer any mandatory fixed pay points, just minimum and maximum values. The longstanding right to ‘portability’ of previous pay entitlements has also been removed. Governing bodies can determine whether the school uses a fixed pay scale and what point any newly appointed teacher will start on. **This means that every teacher needs to discuss starting pay whenever they apply for a new job.** The NEU strongly opposes this change to teachers’ pay arrangements. Denying pay portability is likely to lead to unfair and discriminatory pay outcomes.

If you are offered a post at a pay rate which doesn't reflect your previous teaching service, you may need to bargain for an improved pay offer. Once you have been appointed to a post, you should discuss pay policy issues with your workplace rep – with a view to bringing the school's pay policy into line with the NEU pay policy checklist : <https://neu.org.uk/neupay-policy-checklist>

What do I need to know as a newly-qualified teacher?

Most NQTs are placed on the first point of the school's pay scale for teachers on the MPR. Governing bodies can, however, place teachers with relevant experience outside teaching on a higher point. This should be covered in the school pay policy. The NEU believes that governing bodies should always take such experience into account and (assuming the school uses a six point Main Pay Scale) give teachers one extra point for every year of teaching employment (eg teaching in independent schools, academies, sixth form and FE colleges or teaching overseas) and one point for every three years of relevant paid or unpaid non-teaching experience.

What do I need to know as a re-entrant to the profession?

The "portability" of pay entitlements has been abolished, so schools can offer to pay teachers at any pay point where they are moving schools or returning to teaching. Even those previously paid on the Upper Pay Scale are not entitled to retain that status when changing school or returning after a career break. This is particularly likely to affect teachers returning to teaching after a career break and therefore has major equality implications. The NEU seeks a clear commitment from all schools to the principle of pay portability in principle and its application in practice.

The governing body can, however, agree to maintain your previous pay rate and also to give you extra points for additional experience during a break in service. Again, this should be covered in the school pay policy.

Specific provisions relating to teachers previously paid as leadership group teachers or employed in other related areas such as sixth form colleges, Soulbury employment in local authorities etc, allow schools the discretion to pay them on the UPR not the MPR.

Be very careful to check the wording of advertisements and in particular the wording relating to starting pay.

Where can I find out more about 'discretionary' pay points?

The governing body must have a written school pay policy setting out the pay scales for teachers and the criteria for determining starting pay for appointments and pay progression. This may often be based on a local authority or academy chain model policy. In every case you should find out from the school itself whether it has agreed to maintain 'pay portability' for teachers' previous pay entitlements and what its policy is on awarding extra points for experience outside teaching.

For further information on what you can ask for before accepting a position please read our *Contracts of Employment* guidance which includes a model letter which you can use in asking for information.

What should I bear in mind when considering a pay offer?

If you are a re-entrant, work out what pay you should receive if your previous entitlement was maintained. Whether you are an NQT or a re-entrant, work out what you could also ask for based on relevant non-teaching experience. Be clear in your mind what you are prepared to accept if the offer doesn't match your previous entitlement or the maximum you could be offered for non-teaching experience.

When is the best time to raise the question of starting pay?

The best time is after the governors have made you an offer of the job. Make it clear that you do want to work at the school but you would like to discuss pay. Your experience should be listed on your application form. Give them an indication of what you are looking for. Be clear in your own mind, however, what you can or will settle for above the minimum entitlement. If you do want that job you may have to make a very quick decision. Whilst some schools will give you time to consider, many will want to settle the matter immediately.

What if you are offered a specific starting pay point at the interview?

Confirm this when the school or local authority writes to you confirming the offer of the job. Ensuring clarity over starting pay in writing is essential to avoid any difficulty once you have started work.

What happens if the school says that starting pay is to be determined by the local authority or academy trust?

This can be quite common for NQTs. In this case, you should say that you accept the post subject to confirmation of starting pay. If you are moving post, however, you should ask for immediate confirmation that you will be paid at least at your existing pay point, so that this is confirmed before you resign your existing job.

What if the school offers less than my previous salary?

You should think very carefully about accepting a job at a school which does not allow pay portability as it may be similarly reluctant about allowing annual pay progression. The decision, however, is down to you.

What if you experience problems?

If you experience problems in relation to your salary or its payment and have not been able to resolve it yourself, speak to the NEU school representative in the first instance. Genuine errors will usually be resolved through discussion with the head teacher. You can also formally appeal against any decision affecting your pay.

Where should I go for further advice and support?

If further advice is needed, contact your NEU workplace rep in the first instance. If there is no NEU rep in your workplace, or the peripatetic nature of your employment makes contact with a workplace rep difficult, contact the NEU AdviceLine, or the NEU Wales office instead. Their details may be found at <https://neu.org.uk/contact-us>.

Further Resources

Further NEU guidance on school teachers' pay can be found at <https://neu.org.uk/help-and-advice/pay>. Pay advice for teachers working in Sixth Form Colleges is also available at the same link.

[Advice for teachers employed as Soulbury Officers.](#)

The 2020 [School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Document](#).

The [School Teachers' Pay and Conditions \(Wales\)](#) Document 2020.

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