



NEU Work/Life Balance for Teachers - Model policy

Introduction

_____ School/Trust recognises that teacher working hours are widely acknowledged, including by Government, to be excessive, unsustainable and not supportive of children's learning. This school will, therefore, take positive steps to reverse this trend and ensure that all teachers are able to balance their working lives with their other commitments. All teachers, including head teachers are entitled to enjoy a reasonable work/life balance. This is acknowledged in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD), which states that: "Governing bodies and head teachers, in carrying out their duties, must have regard to the need for the head teacher and teachers at the school to be able to achieve a satisfactory balance between the time required to discharge their professional duties... and the time required to pursue their personal interests outside work. In having regard to this, governing bodies and head teachers should ensure that they adhere to the working limits set out in the Working Time Regulations."
(2018 STPCD, Section 2, Part 7, paragraph 52.4)

One of the key professional duties of head teachers is to: "Lead and manage the staff with a proper regard for their wellbeing and legitimate expectations, including the expectation of a healthy balance between work and other commitments."
(2018 STPCD, Section 2, Part 7, paragraph 46.13)

In recognition of these statutory provisions, the governing body of _____ School/Trust has adopted the following work/life balance policy following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

Work/life balance is about ensuring that this school's/trust's teachers are able to combine work with their personal interests and commitments outside work. Good work/life balance is an essential factor in staff effectiveness and satisfaction, which in turn supports pupil learning. It can help to recruit and retain better motivated staff through giving them greater control of their working lives.

As part of its commitment to work/life balance _____ School/Trust:

- recognises that effective practices to promote work/life balance benefit both teachers and pupils
- will promote the development of workable solutions and encourage a partnership between individual teachers and their line managers
- will reform accountability systems so that they are based on trust, respectful professional dialogue and proportionality
- will develop, monitor and evaluate appropriate policies and practical responses that meet the specific needs of the school, having regard to fairness and consistency, and valuing teachers for their professional skills, not their working pattern
- accepts that teachers on the upper scale do not have extra responsibilities – they have the same set of statutory duties as main scale teachers
- will re-emphasise its commitment to work/life balance to its staff on a regular basis
- will encourage senior managers to lead by example.

Policy objectives

The aim of this policy is to:

- enable employees to balance their working lives with their personal needs, interests and caring responsibilities
- safeguard the health, safety and welfare of staff
- assist the head teacher/s in carrying out his/her professional duties

The governing body agrees to:

- ensure that the contents of this policy are communicated to staff on a regular basis
- consult regularly with staff and their trade unions to ensure that the policy is effective in achieving a reasonable work/life balance for all staff
- ensure that the policy operates in a fair and consistent manner.

Policy implementation

Role of the governing body

The governing body will nominate a work/life balance governor with responsibility for promoting and monitoring work/life balance in the school.

Staff consultation

The involvement of staff is key to the success of this policy. Trade union representatives and staff will be consulted over the introduction, monitoring and ongoing evaluation of the policy and its impact.

Individual monitoring

As well as consultation with staff and unions as a whole, the following measures will be adopted by the governing body to monitor work/life balance and individual workload concerns:

- Provision of up-to-date job descriptions, with duties and responsibilities relating to individual teacher's roles clearly identified and staff consulted prior to any changes.
- Consultation between the head teacher (or deputy head teacher) and newly qualified teachers (NQTs), new appointees and those promoted internally, six weeks after they take up their new post, to explore work/life balance issues and to see if the school can offer further support.
- Properly conducted exit interviews, or use of exit questionnaires, when staff resign to find out if problems with work/life balance played a part in the resignation. The governor with designated responsibility for work/life balance will oversee this.

Practical steps to ensure a good work/life balance for teachers at _____ School/Trust
Setting targets to reduce overall working hours

The governing body will seek to exert downward pressure on working hours by setting an initial target of reducing total working hours to the 1998 Working Time Regulations limit of 48 per week, with a commitment that no more than 48 hours will be worked in any individual week. The governing body recognises that NEU policy seeks to limit the overall number of hours worked to a 35-hour week and commits to seeking to reduce overall working hours to this limit.

Reasonable additional hours

A reasonable work/life balance cannot be achieved if the hours worked by teachers in addition to directed time are excessive.

To ensure that teachers' overall working hours are reasonable, the governing body will carry out a termly audit to determine the additional hours that teachers are typically carrying out per week.

Where this audit shows that a particular policy or initiative is contributing to excessive workload, or when it is raised by trade unions on behalf of staff, the school will consult and review the policy or initiative to seek to reduce workload pressures. See also section below on new initiatives.

Accountability systems within the school

Teachers employed by _____ School/Trust will be trusted and respected. This will be demonstrated by the adoption of the 'Ofsted Inspections Clarification for Schools' Document and in particular by adhering to the following good practice:

- Teachers will not be required to provide evidence of the work that they undertake, other than that which arises naturally.
- Teachers will not be required to use marking schemes which generate excessive written dialogue between them and their pupils.
- There will be no requirement to produce detailed lesson plans, or to hand them in for scrutiny.
- Lesson observations will be limited to three per year, except in cases of concern and, in accordance with Ofsted advice, such observations will not be graded according to the Ofsted evaluation schedule.
- Peer observations will be positively encouraged.
- Teachers will be consulted on how data collection demands can be reduced.

Calendars

An annual calendar of meetings, deadlines and events will be provided to staff so that they can plan ahead and manage their workload in such a way as to help maintain a satisfactory work/life balance.

When drawing up a calendar for the following academic year, the head teacher will consult staff in the summer term on the pattern and number of meetings, to be agreed within the limits explained below.

Consultation with staff will also include the timings of Inset days, report schedules, parents' evenings, sports days, classroom observations and other activities and events that might impact on work/life balance.

If, because of unexpected pressures, a member of staff recognises that they may not be able to meet a particular deadline, they should inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity to discuss how they can be supported in completing the task.

Directed time

Following consultation, staff will be provided at the beginning of each academic year with a breakdown of directed time, setting out their commitments in terms of teaching, planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, management time and meetings.

New initiatives

Before their introduction, all new initiatives will be considered by management and teacher union representatives in terms of their impact on work/life balance. The following questions will be considered:

- What will be the benefit of the new initiative for pupils and for teachers?
- Will all teachers be equally affected by any changes to working practices?
- How much time will teachers need to spend on this new initiative?
- Are additional resources needed and, if so, have they been made available?
- Will it lead to other activities no longer needing to take place, or being undertaken by, for example, support staff?
- What, if any, will be the net increase in working hours?
- Does the policy conflict in any way with teachers' contractual entitlements as set out in the STPCD? (If so, the policy teachers' entitlements will be protected.)

If it is agreed that the proposed new initiative is beneficial and workload neutral, it will be introduced on a trial basis. A review process will be put in place to ensure that additional or unanticipated workload burdens do not build up over time.

Where it is clear that the proposed new initiative will lead to a net increase in working hours, something teachers currently do will be dropped so that overall workload does not increase. Where this is not possible, the new initiative will not be introduced.

Meetings

The head teacher will consult teaching staff on the pattern and number of meetings that staff are required to attend. Meetings will last no more than 60 minutes and will be held on no more than an average of one evening per week during a term, with a maximum of two evenings in any one week.

Meetings will be timetabled at the beginning of the academic year and should have a clear purpose. Only staff whose presence is essential will be required to attend.

Agendas will be prepared and circulated in advance, and it is the responsibility of those calling and directing meetings to ensure effective time management. Meetings will terminate when their purpose has been achieved, even if this is before the allotted 60 minutes.

Part-time teachers will not be required to attend meetings or come into school for other purposes on days when they are not required to be available for work under their contract of employment.

Time off in lieu

Following parents' evenings or open evenings for prospective pupils and parents, the school may need to open later than normal the next day in order to allow a sufficient break for staff in accordance with the Working Time Regulations, which confer the right to a minimum rest period of 11 consecutive hours in a 24-hour period.

Working at home

Consideration will be given to requests from staff wishing to work at home during their PPA time.

Job sharing and part-time working

_____ School/Trust recognises the benefits for staff and employers of job shares and will seek to accommodate requests for job sharing or part-time working wherever possible.

The position of the head teacher

This policy is intended to ensure that the head teacher and others in management positions also maintain a reasonable work/life balance.

Equality monitoring

To ensure that we are meeting our public sector equality duty, we will monitor annually the impact of this policy by reference to the protected characteristics of staff (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). The results will be shared (anonymised where appropriate) with the recognised trade unions.

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