

Evidence submitted by NGA to STRB

March 2023

1. Background

1.1 The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and governance professionals of state schools in England. We have several categories of membership and represent the interests of boards irrespective of their school type and governing structure. Our aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards and improving the effectiveness of governing boards.

2. NGA's position on teacher and leader pay

2.1 Our position remains unchanged from previous years. All teachers should be entitled to a cost of living rise as a minimum and this should be considered as a separate issue to performance related pay progression as set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). If that minimum cannot be honoured in any particular year because of the state of public finances, that needs to be acknowledged and rectified in future years.

2.2 We recognise the deep concern amongst teachers over their pay, which has led to a number of ballots held by the education unions and industrial action by members of the National Education Union in February and March. However, the disruption caused by industrial action does not serve anyone's interests, least of all pupils. Therefore, we hope the intensive talks currently being held between government and the education unions, which are focused on pay, conditions and workload, will be constructive and lead to a swift resolution.

2.3 We believe there is a strong case for awarding teachers a significant pay increase in order to address the worsening recruitment and retention crisis. A [report](#) published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS), shows how teachers have suffered a significant real-terms fall in their pay over the past 12 years while average earnings have risen across the rest of the economy. It is perverse that the state is putting a significantly lower value on teachers than in the past, given how important education is towards creating a successful economy and when there is no credible analysis which shows teachers are less important to our economic prospects than they were ten years ago.

2.4 For public servants, remuneration isn't everything. But it is something, especially as a symbol of a community's respect for them. It remains our view that improving the wellbeing of teachers and leaders and the opportunities for them to enjoy a rewarding and fulfilling career, is just as important as improving their pay. At the same time, the widespread dissatisfaction teachers and school leaders feel about their current pay cannot be ignored, nor the part it plays in the decisions taken by over a quarter of teachers who leave the profession within five years, and the forty percent who leave within ten years.

2.5 We support the government's commitment to raising the starting salary for teachers to attract high-quality graduates with the knowledge and confidence to provide the best possible education for children and young people. Like others in the sector though, we are doubtful that a 30k starting salary will have the required impact, given that is now worth much less than when the commitment was first made, and that other salaries particularly in the private sector have increased relative to teaching.

2.6 We recognise there is a risk of differentiated pay awards and diminishing differentials between the teacher and leadership pay ranges, contributing further towards the decline in retention rates across every category of school leadership.

2.7 We support the principle of autonomy in developing pay arrangements. Our experience of working with governing boards tells us that many, if not most, want a consistent pay spine for all the pay ranges which they can use to manage the required performance-related progression at school-level. Following the reintroduction of pay scales for unqualified teacher, main and upper pay ranges in the STRB, we think there is a case for also including leadership pay scales.

2.8 We agree that all elements of the pay system work together in a complementary manner and are pleased that the STRB has been asked to consider the extent to which current pay and conditions recognise and support distinct career stages and roles. In particular, would like to see a pay framework that creates a scale for middle leaders and reduces the need to award teaching and learning responsibility points for sustained additional responsibilities.

2.9 It is clear that much more work needs to be done to tackle the gender pay gap. School workforce statistics to update the findings from the joint "[Closing the Gender Pay Gap in Education](#)" report released last year, show that while the gap for primary headteachers has narrowed slightly, the gap for secondary school leaders has leapt by over thirty seven percent in the last year. And we know that the pay gap may be even worse for women of colour or those with disabilities – unfortunately we still don't have national data needed to track this. We call on the government and the whole schools' sector to take this issue seriously and act on several key recommendations in the report, including the call from the STRB for a comprehensive review of the pay framework for both classroom teachers and leaders.

3. The impact of pay rises on schools' overall budgets

3.1 We appreciate that STRB has been asked to recognise the impact pay rises will have on schools' overall budgets and we do not dispute the [analysis](#) used by the DfE to inform their view that a pay award of 3.5% will be manageable within schools' budgets next year. However, we think a more compelling model for reviewing pay would be for independent review boards to report to the government, having taken account of the need to recruit, retain and motivate the workforce, but leaving the government to decide what is affordable given the state of the economy and the public finances.

3.2 Every school has its own funding context and it is generally accepted that increases in income and expenditure are not felt equally across the sector. However, our previous responses have highlighted how challenging it is for a significant proportion of governing boards to balance the budgets of their schools and trusts following a decade of underfunding of education. Our last annual governance survey was carried out in May 2022, when inflation was around 8% and schools were budgeting for a pay increase of 3% for experienced teachers and leaders in 2022. Over a quarter of boards responding said that they were unable to set a balanced budget for their school or trust, without either drawing on their dwindling reserves or requiring a licensed deficit/loan from their local authority or ESFA as appropriate. Many of those reporting to be able to balance income and expenditure, stated that they were doing so at a cost to the organisation as a whole. Respondents spoke of relying on committed staff who are willingly taking on additional duties, limiting their curriculum offer and putting infrastructure improvement plans on hold.

3.3 Sample of our member responses below:

“We have a surplus for this year, but with the cost-of-living crisis, projected staff pay rises and lower birth rates, in some year groups we are projected to have a deficit in two years’ time.”

Primary school vice-chair

“We’ve worked hard to eliminate a significant inherited deficit so we have no reserves to fall back on. Energy costs will be £250k higher, additional funding will be completely swallowed up by this and the likely (but deserved and necessary) staff pay increases are standing still for 2022-23. We don’t expect an uplift so this will mean cuts.”

MAT CEO

“We have had a surplus for years and have been prudent in making savings during recent significant cuts in funding for schools but COVID has wiped out all our contingency and carry-over. Predicted future pay rises and energy costs are going to make us tumble into significant deficit.”

Primary school chair

3.4 The financial pressures faced by schools and trusts intensified further in the months following the survey, due to rising costs (including energy costs only partly compensated for by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme) and the 5% pay increase awarded to experienced teachers and leaders from September 2022, which was unplanned expenditure, given that schools had budgeted for 3%. Analysis highlighted that on average primary schools were facing a 35-45k shortfall by September 2024 and secondary schools were facing a 200-250k shortfall by 2024, which would equate to around four to five teachers. These shortfalls were likely to be felt the most by schools in the most deprived communities, at a time when the achievement gap between poor pupils and their more affluent peers has hit a ten-year high.

3.5 NGA was amongst the national education organisations seeking a commitment from the government to relieve the pressure on school budgets by increasing funding. We therefore welcomed the announcement in the autumn statement that the schools’ budget in England will receive an additional 2.3 billion in 2023-24 and 2.3 billion in 2024-25. We view it as a significant step forward. However, it is unlikely to make the level of pay rise needed to address the recruitment and retention crisis affordable to most school budgets, unless further money is made available.

3.6 The increase announced in the autumn statement means that per-pupil funding has finally been restored to what it was in 2010. However, the stark reality is that there has been fourteen years without growth in school funding. According to the IFS, the increase amounts to around 3 per cent each year from 2021 to 2025, once inflation and pupil numbers have been factored in. Whilst acknowledging this as a “change of pace”, IFS also point that it is still slower than during the 2000s, when spending per pupil was increasing by about 5 to 6 per cent per year after inflation.

3.7 The increase means that those leading and governing in schools and trusts are less likely to be making heart-wrenching choices about what they can and cannot afford to do. However, because so much of the money will be used to deal with the myriad of cost pressures they still face, there is very little left over for any significant improvement to pay. It is the worst of all worlds: still having to consider efficiency savings whilst dealing with the negative impact on provision and standards of fewer people wishing to be teachers.

4. Teacher and leader shortages

4.1 We know that that teacher and leader shortages are a critical issue for most schools and governing boards. The number of boards responding to our annual survey who said that their school/trust found it difficult to recruit teaching staff increased significantly in 2022 (53%), compared to 2021 (29%). Of those respondents, those governing in all-through schools (81%), alternative provision (73%) and special schools (70%) were the most likely to struggle with teacher recruitment. The challenge appears to be more acute for boards in academy trusts (57%) than for those in local authority maintained schools and in London (61%) and the South West (57%) compared to other parts of the country. A lack of applicants specialising in social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and SEND were flagged as presenting a particular recruitment challenge as well as those specialising in specific subjects such as modern foreign languages (MFL) and STEM subjects.

4.2 Responses to our survey show a clear link between the long-term decline in the real value of pay to and the challenges faced by schools/trusts attempting to recruit the teachers they need. The number of respondents citing competitiveness of the pay as their principal reason for being unable to recruit has risen sharply between 2020 (22%) and 2022 (35%). This is further re-enforced in a survey of pay issues carried out by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) in September 2022. Only twelve percent of school leaders responding to the ASCL survey said that current salaries are effective in attracting the best graduates to the profession and just six percent said that current salaries will encourage teachers to stay in the profession. A similar proportion believe that salaries encourage teachers to become leaders; and less than five percent of respondents believed that salaries would encourage school leaders to remain in the profession.

4.3 There is a welter of other data that puts the issue of recruitment and retention into a wider context and will be of concern to all those governing. Most recently a [House of Commons report](#) on teacher recruitment and retention published in December 2022, which highlights that over the past decade, the overall number of qualified teachers in state funded schools has not kept pace with pupil numbers. The statistics on teacher retention are alarming. Approximately 36k full time equivalent teachers left the state- funded sector in the 12 months to November 2021, almost thirteen percent of newly qualified entrants were no longer in teaching one year after qualifying and seventeen percent were no longer in teaching after two years. Another [report](#) recently published by the National Foundation for Education Research, says that in almost half (45%) of state schools some maths lessons are being taught by teachers qualified in a different subject. The Institute of Physics has said that about 400 schools in England do not have a teacher for A-level physics.

4.4 Entrants to initial teacher training have dropped by twenty six percent in 2022, compared to 2019 and by eleven percent for primary entrants. At the same time, we had almost a third of respondents (32%) to our annual governance survey saying it is challenging to recruit candidates to senior leadership positions. This is not a surprise when you consider that according to the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT), the number of school leaders under the age of fifty who leave their role within five years has increased over the last five years and almost half of middle leaders across both phases of education left within the same period.

4.5 Unless urgent and meaningful action is taken at national and regional level, then it is difficult to see what governing boards can do to effectively staff their schools when the problems exist at all stages of the profession and across the sector. Even if individual schools and trusts are successful in recruiting and retaining the staff they need, unless the workforce expands, this success will be at the expense of another school/trust and their pupils.

4.6 The first step towards meaningful action must be to accept that the current situation is not sustainable, whatever changes occur to the pupil population due to birth rates. Then further accept that although decisions over what jobs to look for, take and leave are complex, the current levels of pay continue to have, a significant detrimental impact on the recruitment and retention of school teachers and leaders.

5. Non-pay matters linked to making a career in education attractive and sustainable

5.1 Governing boards recognise that staff and teachers especially, are a school or trust’s most valuable resource, vital to achieving the vision for what pupils will leave the school knowing, being and having done. Boards, therefore, invest a great deal of time, effort and resource into making their schools and trusts great places to work through creating the right leadership culture and climate, investing in CPD and adopting policies that promote manageable workloads and wellbeing. Boards responding to our annual survey cited staff surveys as the most commonly used method to identify and address workload and wellbeing issues in their school or trust. Findings also show that where retention and development of staff was a strategic priority, governing boards were more likely to engage in an array of methods to address issues relating to workload, wellbeing and work life balance. A large number of respondents expressed concern for their headteacher’s/CEO’s wellbeing through the free text boxes and said they were taking steps to ensure that their workload is balanced and manageable.

5.2 There is a lot more that boards can do to be exemplary employers and positively impact on recruitment and retention in their schools. Whether it is establishing effective staffing structures, better job descriptions, better appraisal and learning from conducting exit interviews. However, their job is undoubtedly made much harder by issues linked to the schools’ system, which are outside of their control and undermine the aims of the Education staff wellbeing charter. In particular we are referring to frequent policy changes (notably curriculum and assessment reforms), stringent accountability and being the last line of support standing due to the reduction of services that support children and families. These issues create workload intensification and limited professional discretion for teachers and especially for school leaders. The psychological impact is difficult to understate and greater if the individual remuneration also means they feel undervalued. too.

5.3 Most governing boards recognise the role CPD plays in making a career in education attractive and sustainable and have it in their improvement plans, even if it is not spelt out as a strategic priority; thirty seven percent of respondents to the annual governance survey said agreed that providing CPD and opportunities for professional growth were a key factor in the recruitment and retention of teachers for their school/trust. We therefore welcome the funding of an entitlement for all early career teachers in England to access high quality CPD during their first two years in the profession, underpinned by the Early Career Framework. We also recognise there has been investment in fully funded National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), which more experienced staff, teachers and leaders can access. Over the years NGA has been involved in three reviews of the NPQs. We argued tenaciously that the frameworks should be designed in such a way that builds a wider base of knowledge and skills relevant to the career stage. In particular, we argued that there should be more expectation of governance knowledge in the frameworks, especially for NLQH and NPQEL.

5.4 Investment in CPD does not only mean money but also finding time for that CPD, which brings further resourcing implications. Therefore we would welcome further investment to support schools and trusts to develop and deliver co-ordinated workforce and talent strategy that impacts on recruitment and retention.

5.5 We believe that flexible working also has a significant role to play in increasing recruitment and retention and supporting wellbeing in schools and trusts. NGA has been at the forefront promoting flexible working and encouraging governing boards to embed it in their policies and working practices of their school/trust. However, we also recognise that teaching is a long way from being able to offer the level of flexibility that other graduate roles (with potentially higher salaries) offer and may therefore seem less appealing as a career choice.

5.6 In conclusion, significantly improving pay and making pay progression work for the majority of teachers and school leaders, is the platform from which to build improvements to workload and accountability, relieve the pressures on the profession and make a lifelong career in education attractive and sustainable.

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6. Annex NGA report:

[School and trust governance: Priorities, resources and people November 2022](#)

For the twelfth consecutive year, NGA has run the annual school and trust governance survey. It is the largest survey of its kind and provides an extensive overview of the governance of state funded schools in England. While not all respondents answered every question, this survey provides unrivalled insight on the demographic, views and experiences of England's largest volunteer force. The survey is not just for NGA's membership – it was open to all school governors, trustees and academy committee members between 25 April and 30 May 2022 via the online surveying website SmartSurvey. In total, 4,185 respondents engaged with the survey.