

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY NGA to STRB JANUARY 2020

1. Background

1.1 The National Governance Association (NGA) is the national membership body for school governing boards and academy trusts. It has several categories of membership comprising school governing boards, MATS, individual governors and clerks, and independent local associations of school governing boards. NGA seeks to represent the interests of governing boards in all state funded schools (local authority maintained and academies). Our organisation's aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing boards.

2. The teacher workforce including in relation to recruitment and retention

2.1 In NGA's annual survey conducted jointly with the Times Educational Supplement (TES), survey respondents selected up to five of the most pressing issues facing the school(s) they govern. The findings revealed that school governors and trustees are united in the three key issues they face regardless of school structure, phase, region and/or Ofsted grade. These are: funding pressures, lack of resources to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) and staff workload and wellbeing.

2.2 Over 40% percent of respondents to the survey rated either the recruitment or retention of high quality teaching staff as one of the five most important issues facing their schools.

2.3 The survey continues to highlight regional variations and that recruitment is particularly challenging in areas surrounding London, where the costs of living and accommodation are similar to those London areas that receive a salary uplift. NGA therefore requests once more that consideration is given to whether additional pay increases (over and above the cost of living) may have even potentially greater effect on recruitment and retention if they could be focused on specific needs in different parts of the country.

2.4 Whilst the survey also demonstrated that factors other than pay, for example workload and wellbeing, affect recruitment and retention, there is little doubt that improving the competitiveness of the teachers' pay framework will support the work of governing boards committed to embedding healthy workforce cultures that attract and retain the best staff.

3 Affordability and the impact of STRB recommendation on school budgets

3.1 NGA recognises the position of STRB when it comes to making meaningful assessments of affordability at a system-wide level. However, NGA has argued for a number of remits that the award from STRB must be fully funded. Consideration to whether recommendations are affordable across the school system as a whole cannot be made without referencing the current funding landscape.

3.2 Once again funding was the top issue for respondents to the 2019 annual governance survey. Over 76.1 % of respondents said that they are not confident that funding pressures can be managed without any adverse impact on the quality of education provided, an increase from 74% of respondents in the 2018 survey. Only half of respondents said that their board was expecting to be able to balance the budget next year and of those drawing on reserves, 61.4% said that their board expected these to run out by 2021.

3.3 NGA were amongst the many professional bodies to welcome the government's announcement in September 2019 that spending on education is to increase by £7.1 billion between now and 2022/23, and that spending on schools will be £2.6 billion higher in 2020/21 than in 2019/20. However, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, it will do no more than reverse by 2022/23, the 8% reduction in per-pupil spending since 2010. Although presumptions of inflation and cost increases faced by schools do differ, it is clear that rising costs are going to result in a number of schools facing a cut in real terms to their budgets next year. According to analysis carried out by the National Education Union, pupil funding in 2020 will be higher than its 2015 level in real terms in just 18 of the 533 parliamentary constituencies (3%) in England.

4 Levels of pay and pay progression

4.1 NGA's position remains that all teachers should be entitled to a cost of living rise as a minimum, and that 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).

4.2 Whilst being clear about the influence of perceived workload and work-life balance pressures on deciding whether or not to enter the teaching profession, NGA supports the conclusion of STRB's 29th report that the teachers national pay framework is too low in relation to the graduate labour market and the wider economy.

4.3 NGA welcomes the government's declared intention to increase teacher's starting pay to £30,000 a year nationally by 2022 as a meaningful attempt to position teacher pay amongst the most competitive in the graduate labour market. However, because there is no separate funding of this huge increase and the increases expected in upper and leadership pay to keep them in line, governing boards may be placed in the invidious position. Put simply the government spending round in September provided extra money to help schools deal with real terms cuts at the same time as committing a large proportion of the money to give a necessary boost to teacher pay. It is questionable as to whether a real terms funding of just over £4 billion is enough to do both.

4.4 NGA does not have the detailed evidence required in order to take a definitive position on whether schools should move towards a relatively flatter pay progression structure than is currently typical, alongside significantly higher starting and early career salaries. It is fair to say that separate main and upper pay ranges serve a valuable purpose to governing boards wishing to retain experienced teachers and their impact on achieving the vision for their schools. However, there is also a case for saying that the same outcome can be achieved by better pay overall, the appropriate use of teaching and learning responsibilities and retention allowances.

4.5 NGA agrees in principle with those organisations representing the overwhelming majority of teachers and school leaders in England that a fair and transparent pay structure, promotes both fairness and feelings of equal pay value across the different pay ranges.

5 Leadership pay

5.1 NGA remains concerned about how about how some governing boards are interpreting the flexibilities in the STPCD in relation to leadership pay and think that it would be helpful to have further discussions about the issues involved in setting leadership pay at a level which is demonstrably appropriate and provides good value for money. As in previous years, we would submit that a middle leadership pay scale is necessary.

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Annex School governance in 2019 annual survey by NGA