

Response to the consultation on the School Teachers' Review Body's (STRB) 30th Report and the draft 2020 School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document September 2020

1. Background

1.1 The National Governance Association (NGA) is the national membership body for school governors and trustees. NGA has several categories of membership comprising school governing boards, 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. Recommendations of the STRB

2.1 NGA welcomes the recommendation of STRB that the minimum of the minimum pay range is increased by 5.5% and the move towards increasing in increasing teacher starting salaries to make the profession more competitive in the graduate jobs market and to help tackle teacher shortages. We recognise that this increase, alongside the 2.75% uplift for all other pay and allowance ranges for teachers and school leaders, amounts to a significant real terms increase to all parts of the teacher pay framework.

2.2 Whilst agreeing with the STRB that schools and their governing boards should regard teacher pay as a priority when setting their budgets, we do not think it is realistic to expect the additional cost arising from the recommended pay award to be absorbed by the increases in funding set out in the 2019 spending round settlement. The findings of our 2020 annual governance survey (see 3 below) are a clear indication of the choice faced by many governing boards wanting to implement the increases proposed by STRB: spend more on salaries and cut somewhere else.

2.3 NGA agrees with those organisations representing most teachers and school leaders in England that the pay award being much lower for experienced teachers will have an adverse impact both on retention and recruitment at senior level.

3 The views of those governing on the impact of STRB recommendation on school budgets

3.1 This is tenth year of NGA's annual school governance survey and in the summer term 2020 over 6500 governors and trustees responded. Funding and staffing are the two topics that continue to challenge more respondents than any others. Despite increased government funding, balancing the budget remains the issue concerning more governing boards than any other. This is the case for respondents from all types of schools, although it was reported most by local authority maintained schools as a top concern (43%), then by stand-alone academies (38%) and lowest for multi academy trusts, raised by 34% of both trustees and those governing at academy level.

3.2 More respondents reported that they were able to balance their budgets in the coming year, 63% compared with half in what was then their current financial year. We do not know whether this is a result of increased funding awarded by the Government or measures taken by the trust or school to reduce expenditure. It is likely a combination of both for most.

3.3 These two top concerns – money and people – are intertwined. Education is a people business, and most of a school budget is spent on staff salaries and pensions. While a good majority of governors and trustees support the government in raising the starting salaries for teachers, there is considerable concern that these pay increases may not be adequately covered by the current school funding levels.

3.4 The annual governance survey was completed mainly in May and it is clear from the feedback that we have received in recent weeks, both from governing boards and through the wider sector, that the extra costs and funding pressures created for schools by the COVID-19 pandemic has focused a sharp lens on issues that already existed. This is particularly the case with High Needs funding.

3.5 The true financial cost of the pandemic to schools may not become clear until next year once governing boards have analysed the breadth of additional expenditure incurred alongside the impact on additional/private income streams. However, it is clear now that schools require further financial support with extra costs that are common to all, if the intended impact of the STRB recommendations for the teacher are to be realised in terms of attracting good graduates and career changers to join the teaching profession, supporting incentivising those who wish to progress into middle and senior leadership roles.

4 The views of those governing relating to STRB conclusions on recruitment and retention at all levels in the teaching profession

4.1 NGA shares the concerns of STRB over the growing challenge in retaining experienced classroom teachers and those in leadership roles. We agree with emphasis the report places on pay a framework that ensures earnings for experienced teachers that are not out of step with the earnings of those with similar experience in other graduate professions.

4.2 Nearly two in five governors and trustees responding to the 2020 annual governance survey agree that it is difficult to attract good candidates for senior executive leadership (SEL) posts at their school or trust (37%). Thirteen percent strongly agree that it is difficult to attract good candidates for this post with a quarter also agreeing (25%) while just under half disagree (49%).

4.3 This was a similar picture for teaching posts with 38% of governors/trustees strongly agreeing (7%) or agreeing (31%) that recruiting good candidates for these positions is difficult with half of respondents disagreeing (50%). Meanwhile, a third of governors/trustees (34%) also strongly agree (7%) or agree (27%) that recruiting for other senior posts is difficult while 47% disagree.

4.4 Though these figures illustrate that staff recruitment at all levels is difficult for a substantial proportion of those governing, these figures mark an improvement across the last five years. Since 2016, the proportion of respondents reporting that recruitment is difficult has fallen across all staffing posts. 14% fewer respondents agree that recruitment for teaching posts is difficult in 2020 than did in 2016, 10% fewer respondents for senior posts and 5% fewer for SEL posts. One reason for this decline could be the overall reduction in staff posts due to budget constraints; 40% of respondents reported making a staff post redundant in the last 12 months with respondents reporting making on average 1.3 redundancies.

4.5 The 2020 annual governance survey once again highlights that improving the competitiveness of the teachers' pay framework will only work towards recruiting and retaining the best staff if it is done alongside other activities at both school and system level to embed healthy workforce cultures. Indeed, based on the experiences of governors/trustees, the most significant factors affecting the recruitment and retention of quality staff in schools and trusts are not about pay. They are about: workplace culture (65%); reputation of the school or trust (53%); managing workload and wellbeing (45%); continuing professional development and opportunities for professional growth (43%), and opportunities for advancement within the school or trust (29%).

5 Advisory pay points

5.1 NGA welcomes the recommendation of STRB that that advisory pay points are reintroduced on the MPR and UPR from September 2020. We believe that this supports a fair and transparent pay structure, which promotes both fairness and feelings of equal pay value across the different pay ranges

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