

Evidence submitted by NGA to STRB

February 2024

1. Background

- 1.1. The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees, and governance professionals within the state school system of England. We advocate for all boards, regardless of school type or governing structure, with the overarching goal of enhancing the well-being of children and young people by fostering high standards and bolstering the effectiveness of governing boards.
- 1.2. Governing boards play a pivotal role as the accountable entities for academy trusts and schools, offering oversight, strategic direction, and ensuring senior leaders are held accountable. Drawing on insights from our 2023 annual governance survey and extensive experience supporting governing boards across the education sector, NGA remains acutely attuned to the myriad challenges confronting schools and their communities. With nearly a quarter of a million trustees and governors dedicating their time, care, and expertise, these individuals shape the vision, culture, and strategic priorities of educational institutions, making critical decisions to address pressing issues and safeguard the sustainability of trusts and schools.

2. NGA's position on teacher and leader pay:

- 2.1. Governing boards frequently cite high workload, concerns about well-being, and pay as primary factors impeding their ability to attract and retain staff, highlighting the urgent need for diversity within the workforce.
- 2.2. NGA acknowledges the 6.5% pay rise for teachers and leaders in September 2023 and we understand the financial pressures the Department for Education faced when making that decision. We were pleased that your 2023 recommendations acknowledged the need to “start” to address the “structural deterioration in the pay of teachers relative to comparable professions”.
- 2.3. NGA maintains our concerns that last year’s pay rise has only gone so far, falling short of the fully funded inflationary increase that was needed as part of a comprehensive, long-term strategy for pay and incentives for all staff. This is needed to counteract the existing structural deterioration and salary deficit being severely heightened by recent inflation levels that continued past the STRB’s 33rd report recommendations.

- 2.4. The decade-long decline in funding dating back to 2010 was unquestionably made worse by the cost of living crisis which still lingers at the start of 2024. We note that the CPIH annual rate of inflation released on 14 February 2024 stood at 4.2%. We suggest that as a minimum this should be the starting point for discussions about this year's pay settlement, but with the STRB also taking a view to the wider evidence on the need for catch up from previous years.
- 2.5. The same IFS report also indicated that the actual return to 2010 school spending levels, which is in itself severely limited in ambition, has now been put at risk by rising costs, with costs rising faster than overall inflation. This has resulted in more experienced teachers seeing a 13% real-terms drop in salaries between 2010 and 2022, according to the IFS.
- 2.6. Our stance therefore remains consistent with previous years. All teachers and leaders should receive a cost-of-living rise as a minimum, distinct from performance related pay progression as outlined in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD).
- 2.7. NGA also thinks that the government must be mindful of falling inflation rates in 2024 not being reflective of the actual cost of living in 2024. A report by [NFER in September 2023](#) documented how the cost of living increase in 2023 further negatively impacted teacher's personal finances, with less than half of teachers able to "pay an unexpected expense outright". This came at a time when it was widely reported that pay in other sectors had risen faster than inflation by the most for two years.
- 2.8. NGA is concerned that, since the announcement of the last pay award, the profession has continued to become a less attractive career in part as a result of failure to keep remuneration in line with inflation and the rise in cost of living in previous years. Both the integrity and attractiveness of the profession must be improved and maintained.
- 2.9. Recognising the profound concerns expressed by teachers regarding their pay, which led to various union ballots and industrial action in 2023, NGA would emphasise the damage caused by the disruptive nature of such actions and its detrimental impact, particularly on pupils' learning. Instead of the development of a minimum level of service, as currently being progressed by the Department for Education, NGA continues to advocate for voluntary arrangements that could still be achieved between the government and education unions, which would also help secure the current and future integrity and attractiveness of the profession.
- 2.10. A report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) underscores the significant real-term decline in teachers' pay over the past twelve years, in stark contrast to rising average earnings across other sectors. It is incongruous that the state now assigns a significantly lower value to teachers despite the pivotal role education plays in fostering a prosperous economy.
- 2.11. NGA accepts that for those entering public service careers, remuneration is rarely the sole determinant of job satisfaction, but appropriate levels of pay do enable people to make a living following a vocational pathway, and it also serves as a symbol of society's respect for its educators, especially at a time when schools are being leaned upon more than ever to fill the gaps that other societal services are no longer able to provide.

- 2.12. NGA has contributed to the national policy development on building a more sustainable and attractive profession, including through being part of the DfE's current workload taskforce. Therefore, while NGA emphasises the importance of enhancing the well-being of teachers and leaders, offering opportunities for rewarding and fulfilling careers, the widespread dissatisfaction among teachers and school leaders regarding their pay cannot be disregarded, particularly given the significant [portion of teachers who leave the profession](#) within one year (13%), two years (20%), five years (31%), and ten years (41%).
- 2.13. While we applauded the government's commitment to elevate the starting salary for teachers to £30,000, to attract high-quality graduates capable of delivering exceptional education, we remain concerned regarding the policy's efficacy. A £30,000 starting salary has now significantly diminished in value over time compared to when the commitment was initially made, compounded by the well-documented relative increase in salaries across other sectors. There is therefore a strong argument that the starting salary be further increased. This must also be provided with sufficient central funding from government to meet these costs.
- 2.14. Furthermore, NGA would draw attention to the potential ramifications of differentiated pay awards and diminishing differentials between teacher and leadership pay ranges, exacerbating the decline in retention rates across all categories of school leadership.
- 2.15. The trend of pay decline in the teaching profession has also come at a time when executive leadership positions in multi academy trusts (MATs) in some cases have continued to [reach new highs](#). NGA continues to work with the ESFA on developing stronger triggers for reducing high executive pay, but recent evidence published by The Kreston group revealing almost half of MATs have built up deficits reveals shows that many MATs can also no longer afford it. However, there is still the legacy issue of benchmarking against other trusts that have historically set high levels of pay.
- 2.16. While NGA supports the principle of autonomy in developing pay arrangements, many governing boards continue to express a preference for a level of consistency, with pay spines encompassing all pay ranges to manage performance-related progression effectively at the school level.
- 2.17. NGA advocates for the inclusion of leadership pay scales. Specifically, we advocate for a pay framework that establishes a scale for middle leaders, thereby providing clarity and reducing the necessity for awarding teaching and learning responsibility points for sustained additional responsibilities.
- 2.18. We appreciate your deliberation on the adequacy of current remuneration packages and work conditions in accommodating the diverse career stages and responsibilities within the profession. NGA acknowledges the fiscal constraints associated with sustaining marketing and recruitment campaigns orchestrated centrally, targeting various tiers of the professional hierarchy.
- 2.19. Furthermore, while initiatives like the introduction of a £30,000 starting salary are commendable for attracting fresh talent to the teaching profession, there remains a pressing need for concerted efforts at the national level to address the retention of experienced educators. Research from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) highlights the increasing attrition rates among teachers, with retention posing a significant challenge, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and physics.

It is imperative that proactive measures are taken centrally to mitigate this trend and ensure the longevity of experienced educators within the profession.

- 2.20. Finally, NGA continues to urge the government to view pay of the teaching profession with an eye to the long-term sustainability of keeping talented individuals in the classroom, helping to realise the potential of the future generations that economic performance of the nation will be reliant on. This strategy should encompass broader initiatives beyond financial considerations, aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of a career in education. It is paramount that the government takes a leading role in addressing inequalities in recruitment, retention, and development, starting from the crucial entry stage into the profession and extending to leadership positions.

3. The need to ensure feasibility of proposals:

- 3.1. We acknowledge the DfE has given the STRB the task of recognising the impact cost pressures have on schools' overall budgets. However, we advocate for independent review boards to report to the government, considering the imperative to recruit, retain, and motivate the workforce, while leaving affordability decisions to the government based on economic and political considerations. By limiting the STRB's remit in this way, the government reduces its ability to make the difference needed to the staffing recruitment and retention challenges we currently face. NGA acknowledges and applauds the STRB's assertion of its independence in 2023/24 and asks that it does this once again.
- 3.2. The past year has presented governing boards with very significant financial hurdles, including the energy crisis and rising inflationary pressures. Despite increased funding announced in the 2022 autumn budget, concerns regarding funding levels are growing. In NGA's annual governance survey 2023, just 18% of schools and trusts perceive themselves as financially sustainable in the medium to long term, marking a significant decrease from previous years.
- 3.3. Bar 2021, when NGA did not specifically ask about challenges, balancing the budget has been the top challenge identified by governing boards since we first asked the question in 2018, but in 2023 this reached its highest level with 52% placing it at the top, an increase of 8 percentage points on 2022.
- 3.4. There is of course a wide range of experiences regarding finances, but for the first time in three years, the percentage of those responding to NGA's annual governance survey in 2023 who were able to balance their school's or trust's income and expenditure fell below two thirds. When broken down by school structure, the one exception is SAT (single academy trust) respondents, with 73% saying they could balance income and expenditure. This compares to 61% of MAT board respondents and just 52% of maintained school respondents. While the fact that the majority of SATs are secondary schools will be a key reason, it is still a significant finding. Overall, there has been a twelve percentage point increase with now almost one third of boards unable to balance their budget without drawing on reserves.
- 3.5. It is imperative to strike a delicate balance between affordability and necessity. We propose that motivational pay levels be recommended to the government, with separate decisions on affordability contingent upon economic conditions and public finances.

4. Cost pressures schools encounter and may encounter:

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- 4.1. Staff pay costs emerged as the foremost challenge for governing boards when setting balanced budgets, with 72% citing it as one of their top three main challenges in 2023. This finding underscores the profound impact of staffing expenses on overall budgetary considerations. Meanwhile, over a third (34%) of respondents identified pay as one of their top challenges concerning staffing, ranking third after workload and well-being issues (44%) and recruitment (39%). Support staff positions were particularly challenging to fill, with 35% reporting difficulty in recruitment.
- 4.2. Each school operates within its unique funding context, but a significant proportion of governing boards struggle to balance budgets due to the decade of educational underfunding. Our previous responses underscored the challenges faced by many governing boards in achieving financial equilibrium, often resorting to drawing on reserves or facing deficits.
- 4.3. While clearly a separate matter, NGA calls for considerations to include the rising costs pressures regarding the condition of school buildings over the last year. Recent RAAC concerns highlight longstanding issues with school estate planning and investment. Current measures are primarily reactive, lacking a proactive approach to other critical issues such as asbestos and lead piping removal. Modernising school energy provision is also crucial, given that schools contribute 25% of UK public sector building emissions. As well as increased anxieties over the ability to sufficiently pay staff, governing boards are also growing more concerned regarding providing suitable working conditions for staff, and safe learning environments for pupils.
- 4.4. NGA member responses provide insight into the financial predicaments faced by schools, such as projected deficits stemming from escalating costs and the unforeseen burden of increased staff pay. A respondent to our survey stated that *“School budget will not be adequate for current staffing levels. All budgets based on 3% annual rise are blown away by recent government and local government (unfunded) pay rises. We will need to restructure make staff / posts redundant to get near a balanced 3 year budget.”*
- 4.5. The financial strain on schools driven by rising costs and unplanned expenditure, notably staff pay, remains persistent. A recent [report](#) by the IFS shows that while school funding is on course to exceed 2010 levels in real terms, it only just about keeps pace with cost pressures schools are actually facing. [Analysis](#) also shows schools serving disadvantaged children have faced the biggest funding cuts.
- 4.6. While we welcomed the additional funding announced in the autumn statement, it falls short of addressing the magnitude of pay rise required to mitigate the recruitment and retention crisis unless further funding is allocated.
- 4.7. Although the DfE claims that per-pupil funding has been restored to 2010 levels, the prolonged stagnation in school funding presents a stark reality. The incremental increase announced in the autumn statement, while a positive step, remains slower than historical trends, hampering efforts to improve pay and sustain educational standards. While the increase in funding alleviates some financial strain, it leaves little room for significant improvements in pay amid ongoing cost pressures. Schools are forced to consider efficiency savings while grappling with the repercussions of teacher shortages, posing challenges to provision and standards.

5. The national state of teacher and school leader supply:

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- 5.1. We know that that teacher and leader shortages are a critical issue for most schools and governing boards. At the end of 2023 it was [reported by the DfE](#) that it had missed its recruitment target for secondary teacher trainees by half, and had also missed its target for primary. Meanwhile data also released by the DfE itself in 2023 revealed that state school teachers leaving the profession hit the highest rate in 4 years, with the number of NQT's leaving the profession after one year also increasing.
- 5.2. Recruitment continues to be a challenge for governing boards with 32% of those responding to our annual survey in 2023 saying that teaching posts are the most difficult to recruit while 35% of respondents said that support staff were the most difficult role to recruit for.
- 5.3. 44% of respondents said that recruiting teachers was their biggest staffing challenge while 62% said that a lack of suitable candidates was the biggest obstacle when it came to recruiting staff.. Notably 63% of secondary respondents said recruitment was the biggest challenge. Further, many of the schools and trusts able to recruit to teaching posts did face the challenge of retaining them. 32% of respondents to our annual survey in 2023 said that teaching posts were the most challenging to retain while 34% said that support staff were the most difficult to retain.
- 5.4. The three biggest obstacles to recruiting and retaining staff were a lack of suitable candidates (62%), offering competitive pay and benefits (44%) and managing workload and wellbeing (31%). 12% of respondent shared that developing and retaining staff was one of the top three challenges facing their school/ trust and 14% of respondents said that attracting high quality staff was one of the top three strategic priorities for the school/trust.
- 5.5. In 2022, NGA asked slightly different questions. Those governing in all-through schools (81%), alternative provision (73%) and special schools (70%) were the most likely to struggle with teacher recruitment. Across all settings 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.
- 5.6. The challenge appears to be more acute for boards in academy trusts (57%) than for those in local authority maintained schools, which can in part perhaps be explained due to the longstanding skew towards secondary academisation. Our survey showed the challenges to be greatest in London (61%) and the South West (57%) compared to other parts of the country.
- 5.7. Competitive pay and benefits were identified as the second most common obstacle in recruiting and retaining staff, with 44% of respondents reporting this issue. Anecdotal evidence further underscores the struggle, with respondents citing challenges such as the high cost of living and inadequate salary increases compared to other sectors. A response from our annual survey highlighted the difficulties in the *“Recruitment and retention of young, talented staff members.”*, as they *“live in one of the most expensive parts of the UK and there is minimal uplift in salaries. Unless young teachers live at home with parents it is difficult to build a life here. Many young teachers are forced to move away.”*
- 5.8. Boards report increasing levels of difficulty in terms of driving recruitment campaigns based on attractive pay and conditions. In February 2024 Teacher Tap published data showing a “substantial jump” of 42 per cent in the proportion of educators reporting they were doing other work outside their day job. Meanwhile wider research shows that the typical (median) salary reported for graduates in 2023 was £32,000, with teaching unable to compete with a host of other benefits, including flexible

working arrangements and home working. Restoring competitiveness therefore necessitates sustained above-inflation pay rises over several years.

- 5.9. There is a significant amount of other data that puts the issue of recruitment and retention into a wider context and will be of concern to all those governing. A [House of Commons report](#) on teacher recruitment and retention published in December 2023 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 44,000 full time equivalent teachers left the state-funded sector in the 12 months to November 2022. As of November 2022, 13% of newly qualified entrants to the sector were not working in the sector one year after qualifying, and 20% were not working in the sector two years post qualification. Evidence from the National Foundation for Education Research in November 2022 says that in almost half (45%) of state schools some maths lessons are being taught by teachers qualified in a different subject.
- 5.10. It is clear that much more work needs to be done to tackle the gender pay gap. A [2023 analysis of the gender pay gap in education](#) shows that difference between female and male secondary head teachers is the largest in 12 years, with women this year earning £3,908 less on average than their male counterparts. The gap for primary heads has continued to narrow but still stands at £2,181 less for women, on average. This is despite the existence of a 'national pay framework'.
- 5.11. The gender pay gap begins to increase from age 35-39, with the difference in average salaries more than doubling by the next age group (40-44), from £3,596 to £7,819. This year, the difference by age 60 and over for heads reached an average of £15,961.
- 5.12. 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.
- 5.13. 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 or trust and their pupils.
- 5.14. 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 that are many factors which affect recruitment, the current levels of pay continue to have a significant detrimental impact on the recruitment and retention of school teachers and leaders.

6. Non-Pay Matters:

- 6.1. Governing boards acknowledge that staff, particularly teachers, are a school or trust's greatest asset and are pivotal in realizing the institution's vision for student outcomes. Accordingly, boards invest considerable time, effort, and resources into fostering conducive work environments by cultivating

positive leadership cultures, prioritising continuous professional development (CPD), and implementing policies to promote manageable workloads and well-being. Our annual survey revealed that boards commonly utilise staff surveys to identify and address workload and well-being concerns, with those prioritizing staff retention and development more likely to engage in various strategies to address these issues. Many respondents expressed concern for the well-being of their headteachers and trust CEOs, underscoring efforts to ensure their workload remains balanced and manageable.

- 6.2. While governing boards endeavor to be exemplary employers and positively influence recruitment and retention, their efforts are often impeded by systemic issues beyond their control, undermining the objectives of initiatives like the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter. Frequent policy changes, stringent accountability measures, and reduced support services for children and families contribute to workload intensification and limit professional discretion, particularly for school leaders. These challenges, compounded by feelings of undervaluation due to inadequate remuneration, have profound psychological impacts.
- 6.3. Recognising the pivotal role CPD plays in fostering an attractive and sustainable career in education, most governing boards incorporate it into their improvement plans. A significant proportion of respondents to our annual governance survey affirmed the importance of providing CPD for recruitment and retention purposes. We commend initiatives such as the entitlement for early career teachers to access high-quality CPD and the investment in fully funded National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). NGA has advocated for governance knowledge to be integrated into NPQ frameworks, particularly for leadership roles.
- 6.4. However, investing in CPD entails not only financial resources but also allocating time, presenting further resourcing implications. Therefore, we advocate for additional investment to support schools and trusts in developing and delivering coordinated workforce and talent strategies that positively impact recruitment and retention.
- 6.5. PPA time, stipulated within the framework of 1265 hours (or 1252 hours for the school year commencing in 2022), is paramount for maintaining a motivated and effective teaching staff. This dedicated time is not merely a luxury but a necessity for educators to adequately plan, prepare, and assess their teaching responsibilities. By ensuring teachers have sufficient PPA time, schools acknowledge the complexities of the profession and provide educators with the necessary resources to excel in their roles. Moreover, guaranteeing PPA time is not only beneficial for individual teachers but also holds significance for governing boards. A well-supported teaching staff directly correlates with the overall success and reputation of a school. When teachers are provided with the time and space to plan and assess effectively, it enhances the quality of education delivered to students, fostering a positive learning environment, and ultimately contributing to the school's achievement goals. Therefore, recognising and honoring PPA time is not just a matter of teacher well-being but a strategic investment in the educational excellence of the institution.
- 6.6. We also think that it should be recognised that line management as an additional duty requires a significant amount of time both for managers and teachers and it is important that the integrity of line management duties can be maintained with appropriate levels of time. Line managers must be entitled to a reasonable amount of time during school sessions in order to undertake those responsibilities. This should be clearly identified on your timetable. Managers who felt their

workload was too much (or worse) were far more likely to be unhappy with the time they had for management.

- 6.7. Flexible working arrangements can significantly enhance recruitment, retention, and well-being within schools and trusts. NGA has championed flexible working practices and encourages governing boards to embed them in their policies and practices. Nonetheless, teaching still lags behind other graduate roles in offering flexibility, potentially diminishing its attractiveness as a career choice.
- 6.8. External demands and inflationary pressures in other sectors have intensified the challenges of staff recruitment and retention within the education sector. Many schools struggle to retain support staff, who often find better paid roles with less responsibility in other sectors. Recruitment difficulties are particularly acute in secondary schools, especially in shortage subjects such as maths, geography, physics, and computer science.
- 6.9. In summary, governing boards are contending with a myriad of financial and staffing challenges, exacerbated by external economic pressures and inadequate funding. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts at both national and local levels to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the education system.

7. Conclusion:

- 7.1. In conclusion, significantly enhancing pay and ensuring effective pay progression for teachers and school leaders serve as foundational steps toward alleviating workload and accountability pressures and fostering an attractive and sustainable career in education.
- 7.2. NGA's view is therefore that there exists a compelling case for granting teachers and leaders a pay increase at the very minimum in line with inflation and that consideration needs to be given to the need to compensate for the losses of previous years in order to address the escalating recruitment and retention crisis.

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21 February 2024.

Annex

NGA Annual Governance Survey Report 2023:

<https://www.nga.org.uk/media/yoejj3qf/nga-annual-report-2023-aw.pdf>

The record provided of views and experiences of governors and trustees in England, spanning a 13- year period, is unparalleled by any other survey or dataset. Over this extended timeframe, NGA’s annual school governance survey has consistently stood as a surrogate for official data, delving far deeper into the evolution of governance and the prevailing issues within boardrooms.

Methodology

The annual governance survey (AGS) is an annual self-selecting online survey that has been conducted by NGA for thirteen consecutive years. It provides a comprehensive overview of school and trust governance, involving governors, trustees, and academy committee members (local governors) from state-funded schools in England. The survey was disseminated predominantly through NGA’s channels. Respondents do not need to be members of NGA, but 76% reported that they are. This year, the survey, conducted from 25 April to 2 June 2023, utilised Edurio’s research-based survey instruments, with 2,695 participants. It was distributed through various channels to ensure respondent anonymity and demographic representation. Data analysis was performed using Edurio’s software, identifying trends and variations based on region, school type, phase, and other respondent demographics.

Representativeness Survey respondents from different school structures are similar to that of state schools in England. Trustees are slightly overrepresented in the sample, with MAT trustees in particular taking the time to respond.

