

Considerations unaddressed by consultation questions

As the national body for school and trust governance, our response focuses on the implications of the proposals for the education sector. NGA welcomes the proposal to introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for employers with over 250 employees, although we do have some concerns about its application in practice.

The proposals are a positive step towards advancing pay equity in the education sector. NGA strongly believes that equity and inclusion should be evident at every level within schools and trusts, and that governing boards have a role to play in achieving this. Through the decisions they make and the scrutiny and support they provide, boards can drive real change for leaders, staff and pupils. Having reporting mechanisms like the ones proposed can help governing boards deliver on these responsibilities more effectively, by creating clear and benchmarkable metrics which can be monitored over time.

NGA has long called on the government to address inequalities across the workforce lifecycle – from recruitment into the profession to progression into leadership positions and pay equity. As such, NGA already encourages governors and trustees to use pay and appraisal data to consider whether staff are treated equitably, and this proposal is a meaningful step towards that by offering the chance to better understand and address disparities in pay through data.

Mandatory reporting can highlight patterns of underrepresentation, pay disparity and/or the lack of progression opportunities for ethnic minority staff and staff with disabilities. With these insights, governing boards, either as the employer or the body exercising employer responsibilities, can work with senior leaders to identify systematic barriers and take appropriate action. This includes using the data collected for developing targeted policies and interventions that support the recruitment, retention and development of diverse staff.

However, while the proposal is well-intentioned, limiting the requirement to employers with more than 250 employees means that within the education sector, it will primarily apply to larger multi-academy trusts (MATs), still a minority of the sector given the number of LA maintained schools and smaller MATs. While local authorities will be included, the education-specific workforce will not be separated unless this is required in law or statutory guidance – something we would recommend. We would therefore be keen to work with the DfE to consider how this provision could be adapted for education employers so it could be reasonably applied to the majority of the sector. We appreciate that for some of the smallest employers, there will not be a sufficient sample size for a metric of this kind to be helpful.

Guidance should also be provided on how metrics can be appropriately published and contextualised. For example, while gender splits are largely constant across the country, ethnic diversity varies massively between geographical areas. As a result, an employer in one area might have a less ethnically diverse workforce than an employer in another, but could still be doing a better job of reflecting the diversity of the particular communities it serves. As always, no metric is a perfect measure, and will instead need to be treated as one piece of evidence among many.

Ultimately, sector-wide diversity is vital in education, but limiting mandatory reporting to employers with 250+ employees (likely larger MATs) risks painting an incomplete and skewed picture, while placing an additional burden on a minority of the sector. As such, consideration nga.org.uk

should be given to how to capture data from across the full diversity of school settings to inform meaningful policy and sector developments.

Recommendations

Offer sector-specific tools and templates

Provide accessible resources tailored for the education sector—including example templates for pay gap analysis, guidance on interpreting data, and suggested actions boards can take based on findings. This will support governing boards to fulfil their strategic and employer responsibilities more confidently and effectively.

Phase in mandatory reporting over time

Consider a longer-term plan for extending mandatory reporting to employers, supported by capacity-building initiatives. This would help ensure more comprehensive data coverage and drive equitable practice across all types of school settings.

Consider how more schools can be included

The present proposals would appear to only establish useful reporting requirements for larger MATs, excluding the majority of the education workforce. Consideration should be given to how additional schools could be incorporated, for example “education-only” LA reporting which would mirror expectations on trusts.

We encourage the government to adopt a reporting model that supports transparency, drives equitable change, and captures the full diversity of the education workforce.