

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY NGA to STRB MARCH 2022

1. Background

1.1 The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and governance professionals of state schools in England. NGA has several categories of membership comprising school governing boards, individual governors and trustees, clerks, governance professionals and independent local associations of school governing boards. NGA seeks to represent the interests of governing boards in all state funded schools. Our aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards and improving governance effectiveness.

2. NGA position on teacher and leader pay

2.1 Our position remains unchanged from previous years in that 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 or any other conditions as set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). We appreciate that given the rate of inflation at present that would be a significant bill, but if this does not happen, in effect school teachers and leaders are being rewarded with a pay cut which would be unreasonable any year but would be particularly inappropriate given the service provided to pupils and their families over the past year.

2.2. Like the majority of governing boards (see 3.7) we agree that starting salaries in teaching must rise if the profession is to attract high-quality graduates and career-changers. Therefore, we support in principle the pledge to raise the starting salary to £30,000.

2.3 At the same time, those exercising leadership roles must be fairly remunerated for the additional pressure and responsibilities they take on. In previous years, where we have felt it warranted, we have supported focusing pay rises on the lowlier paid parts of the profession. However, given the situations faced by school leaders throughout the pandemic, this would not be an acceptable response this year.

2.4 In his remit letter to STRB dated the 17 December 2021, the Secretary of State acknowledges broader structural issues raised in previous STRB reports and says that his department will set out further detail as to when and how they will be considered. We would welcome STRB making further reference in its report, to the issues of leadership pay and the factors which determine it. Also, pay differentials between the teacher and leadership pay ranges and the question of which leadership roles are covered by the existing pay structure. This is an issue which has been exercising NGA for many years.

3. The need to ensure that pay proposals are affordable across the schools' system as a whole

3.1. Staff are a school's most valuable resource and the largest area of expenditure in the budget. NGA welcomes the significant additional investment referred to by the Secretary of State in his remit letter. However, we do not think the investment is sufficient to cover the costs of pay rises that are needed over the next three years to cover inflation and ensure that teacher pay is made more competitive.

3.2 Responses to our 2021 annual survey of governing boards point towards school budgets being under less immediate strain than in previous years, because of the additional investment announced in the 2019 spending round. Seventy two percent of boards responding said that they were able to balance their budgets (with 21% reporting a healthy surplus). This compares to the 63% in 2020 and the 49% in 2019. However, a significant proportion of boards responding (28%) said they could not balance their budget without drawing on reserves or assistance from the relevant authority. This tallies with the findings of the [survey](#) carried out by the National Association of Headteachers in June 2021.

3.3. Context should be given to the additional investment announced in the 2019 spending round and the 2021 spending review. Analysis by the Institute of Fiscal Studies indicates that by the end of the spending review period (March 2025), spending levels will have reversed real-terms cuts made since 2010. Another way of looking at it is that governing boards will have been managing budgets for fifteen years with no overall growth in school spending. We know that many governing boards have achieved their balanced budgets by, to borrow a phrase from the Chancellor, “maxing-out” on sensible efficiency savings. As a result, they have reduced both their staff and the offer to pupils. Less than half of boards (44%) responding to our 2021 survey said that their school or trust finances were sufficient to deliver their strategic priorities for pupils.

3.4 A [report](#) published by the Public Accounts Committee on the 4 March, challenges the assertion of the Department for Education that schools are in good financial health. It points out that some of the steps that schools have taken over recent years to remain financially sustainable have adversely affected childrens’ education. This includes schools that have cut staff, dropped certain subjects from the curriculum, and reduced support for pupils with SEND in response to financial pressures.

3.5 Every school has its own funding context. Overall, it is fair to say that the financial landscape in which schools operate will remain challenging for some time. Governing boards will see their budgets squeezed further by rising general costs (e.g. utility and fuel charges, the resources needed to fund the recovery of lost learning and the funding of SEND being based on historic need, which is very different to the requirements of SEND today.

3.6 The number of primary and nursery-aged pupils in England is projected to fall by around 300,000 over the next five years (6.5 %), from about 4.6 million this year to 4.3 million in 2026. We know that in certain parts of the country, including in some inner-cities, this is already beginning to effect school budgets. For boards faced with declining pupil numbers, the challenge of maintaining staff they don’t have funding to support (unless they reduce the published admission number), will result in them burning through their reserves to maintain these levels for children who might join in-year.

3.7 For some governing boards, the continuing squeeze on school budgets will make pay awards unaffordable unless savings are found elsewhere. However these same governing boards support the pay uplift that is needed to increase the competitiveness of teaching in relation to other professional occupations. This is evidenced by the 72% of respondents to our annual governance survey in 2020 who supported the pledge to raise the starting salary to £30,000. We call on the government to address the issues of funding sufficiency and distribution that place boards in this invidious position.

4. The national state of school teacher and leader supply

4.1 NGA does not have detailed evidence on the state of teacher and leader supply. We noted with concern that the government’s target for secondary teacher recruitment was not achieved in 2021.

4.2 The responses to our 2021 survey highlight recruitment and retention challenges in the teaching profession, though not to the extent of other surveys. For example, the [report](#) published by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) in March 2020, which provides an in-depth examination of how teacher shortages and pay levels vary between schools in England.

4.3 Governing boards responding to our 2021 annual governance survey ranked attracting high quality leaders as their third most important strategic priority, behind improving pupil wellbeing and managing and improving school premises. Attracting high quality teaching was ranked the sixth most important. Twenty five percent of respondents agreed that it is difficult to recruit the teachers they need and 30% agreed that it is difficult to recruit the leaders they need.

4.4 Our data points towards the challenges of recruitment at all levels being most acute in London and the South East. Those governing in special schools (43%), all-through (42%) and alternative provisions (40%) were, on average, most likely to agree that it is difficult to recruit staff for leadership, senior and teaching positions. Those schools rated as inadequate by Ofsted were almost twice as likely to find recruiting staff difficult than those rated good or outstanding.

4.5 Almost half (48%) of respondents identified workplace culture as the most important factor when it came to recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and leaders in their school or trust. This was the case across all school types, phases and regions. In comparison, 31% identified the reputation of their school, 29% managing workload and wellbeing and 27% CPD and professional development.

4.6 The overwhelming majority of respondents to our 2021 annual governance survey (77%) said that their governing board both monitored and actively addressed issues relating to staff workload and wellbeing in their school and trust. The percentage figure in 2020 was 71%.

4.7 It remains our view that improving the competitiveness of the teachers’ pay framework and embedding healthy workforce cultures are equally important when it comes to recruiting and retaining quality staff in schools and trusts. We know from our contact with governing boards that the wellbeing of their senior leaders and the future of leadership supply is of particular concern. To address this, policy solutions are needed to the issues of high-stakes accountability and unsustainable workloads and must be complemented by a pay system that rewards professional experience, expertise and responsibility.

5 Evidence of the wider state of the labour market in England

5.1 We note that [data](#) from the Office of National Statistics points to a continuing recovery in the labour market and increased employment. However, the data published by the EPI referred to in paragraph 4.2, highlights the risk of new teachers leaving the profession for other jobs as the economy recovers and that the benefits of any upturn in teacher numbers could be quickly lost. This will be of concern to governing boards, particularly those who are struggling to recruit teachers generally, in subjects where teacher exit rates are more severe (maths, science and languages) and in subjects, such as maths and physics, where graduates are paid much more in other professions than they are in teaching.

5.2 The labour market has changed significantly as a result of the pandemic with remote working becoming popular with some workers; this is not an option open to teachers and therefore having more flexibility may make other professions more appealing, particularly when they command significantly more remuneration. Too often government and officials view these issues as tangential to the vocational commitment of a life in public service, even though it is accompanied by significant workload and accountability.

6. Forecast changes in the pupil population

6.1 We are unable to comment in detail on forecast changes in the pupil population and consequent changes in the level of demand for teachers. However, it is fair to say that the increasing number of secondary school pupils and the insufficient number of teachers entering the secondary sector will cause significant challenges to governing boards and instability through in-year vacancies and temporarily-filled posts.

7. Giving autonomy to school leaders and governing boards to develop pay arrangements

7.1 We support the principle of autonomy in developing pay arrangements whilst at the same time recognising some governing boards want a consistent pay spine for all the pay ranges, which they can use to manage the required performance-related progression at school-level.

7.2 We remain concerned 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.

8. The gender pay gap

8.1 We wish to bring to the attention of STRB, [analysis](#) a recent report published by NGA, WomenEd, ASCL and NAHT, into the gender pay gap differences across the education sector. The report finds that despite the existence of a broad national pay framework, and regardless of school phase or structure, men typically earn more than women. The more senior the position, the wider the gulf becomes.

8.2 The report calls for national level analysis of the pay gap trends from the Department for Education, which includes ensuring that the national data has separate information on the most senior roles in the system. It also repeats the previous call made by STRB for a comprehensive review of the pay framework for both classroom teachers and leaders. This should include:

- Comprehensive analysis by the Department for Education on the equality implications of the teachers' and leaders' pay system, including consideration of the role that performance-related pay has on the gender pay gap.
- Review of the factors determining pay for school leaders
- Review of the question of which leadership roles are covered by the existing pay structure.

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Annex NGA report: School and trust governance: Priorities, resources and people November 2021.