

## **EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY NGA to STRB FEBRUARY 2021**

### **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 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 (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. NGA position on teachers' pay**

2.1 We recognise that the government will not be seeking recommendations from STRB for pay uplifts in 2021/22 for the majority of teachers. However, 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).

2.2 We were pleased that in his letter to the STRB on the 15 December 2020, the Secretary of State acknowledged the huge contribution of school leaders and teachers to the nations efforts to the unprecedented challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Feedback received from our membership re-enforces this. It also highlights how tirelessly teachers and leaders have worked, how much more has been asked of them and how difficult it has been to maintain continuity of education when policy-making processes are slow to understand what is happening in different schools. In view of this it is difficult to understand how imposing a public sector pay freeze on teachers can be justified irrespective of public spending pressures caused by the pandemic.

### **3. Pay uplifts for teachers' earning the full time equivalent of basic earnings of less than 24,000**

3.1 We support the principle of pay uplifts for those teachers earning the full time equivalent of basic earnings of less than 24,000. However, we do not have the detailed evidence required to take a definitive position over consolidated and non-consolidated pay increases for such teachers, or how these increases should be applied in the London pay bands.

3.2 We agree with those organisations representing most teachers and school leaders in England, who say that the positive impact of a pay uplift for those teachers earning the full time equivalent of basic earnings of less than 24,000, will be negated by adverse impact of a public sector pay freeze, both on retention and recruitment at senior level.

3.3 NGA has argued for several remits that pay uplifts recommended by STRB must be fully funded. Whilst we are pleased the Chancellor has confirmed the uplift in the overall schools' budget of £2.2 billion from 2020-21 to 2021-22, we do not believe this to be the only factor when considering affordability in the current funding landscape.

3.4 Despite increased government funding, balancing the budget remains the issue concerning more governing boards than any other, according to the 2020 annual governance survey. This is the case for respondents from all types of schools. Respondents were still reporting many areas in which spending is being curtailed. Many schools are continuing to make some posts redundant, including two-thirds reporting reducing the number of support staff and a third reducing teaching staff.

3.5 Since the beginning of the pandemic, schools have been taking additional safety measures to protect pupils and staff, mitigate the spread of infection and provide support to pupils learning remotely. This has had a significant impact on many schools' finances, but to date, the government has only provided limited support to meet these additional costs. A [report](#) published by the National Foundation for Educational research shows that schools are struggling with COVID-19-related schools with those in deprived areas faring the worst.

#### **4. The overall state of the teacher workforce, including on recruitment and retention**

4.1 Nearly two in five governors and trustees responding to NGA's annual governance survey in 2020, agreed that it was difficult to attract good candidates for senior executive leadership (SEL) posts at their school or trust (37%). Thirteen percent agreed strongly that it is difficult to attract good candidates for this post with a quarter also agreeing (25%) while just under half disagree (49%). Senior executive leadership positions are particularly difficult to recruit in schools judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted, where 62% agree it is difficult to attract good candidates. This falls to 45% for those governing 'requires improvement' schools and 36% and 39% for respondents from 'good' and 'outstanding' schools, respectively.

4.2 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.

4.3 Though the data illustrate that staff recruitment at all levels is difficult for a substantial proportion of those governing, they 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.

4.4 Our quantitative data from summer term 2020 paints a more positive picture than previous years, as does the improvements in recruitment and retention driven by the COVID pandemic. However, we would not go as far as saying that the deep-seated problems in teacher recruitment and retention have been solved. Indeed, feedback from governors and trustees currently tells us many are concerned that headteachers may decide to retire early after seeing their schools safely through the pandemic. The government should not be surprised if imposing a public sector pay freeze leads to experienced teachers, leaders and potential leaders leaving the profession regardless of what it does in policy terms to reduce teacher workload and promote wellbeing.

4.5 We have consistently said that the 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. Staff wellbeing was second in the list of most common concerns of school governing boards in the annual governance survey and that response was early during the pandemic. We know from all NGA's contact with governing boards during the last twelve months, that the wellbeing of senior leaders at present is a particular concern.

## **5. Leadership pay**

5.1 Although it is not part of STRB's remit, NGA remains 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.

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**Annex** School governance in 2020 annual survey by NGA