

Raising Standards and Tackling Workload

Implementing the National Agreement

April 2003

On 15 January Government, employers and school workforce unions signed an historic National Agreement that will raise standards in schools by tackling workload and freeing teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

Since then the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG)¹ has had a series of meetings, leading for the publication on 7 April of a package of consultative documents covering contractual changes to teachers, the role of support staff in teaching and learning and draft standards for higher level teaching assistants.

This is the first in a series of joint guidance notes to be issued by WAMG to assist schools in implementing the Agreement in England and Wales.

WAMG recognises that schools start from very different points on this agenda and will progress at different rates. Some will have been in a position to have already made considerable progress. For a variety of reasons, others will have barely begun. Whatever stage has been reached the guidance aims to provide, at key points, an outline of the issues which schools will need to address and information on national developments.

To assist with the monitoring of the Agreement, to inform future guidance notes and to indicate any issues on which schools may need additional support, the Signatory Organisations represented on WAMG would welcome feedback from their members and schools.

Raising awareness of the Agreement

1. Since 15 January the signatories have all issued information about the Agreement. However, it is important that staff in each school have a shared understanding of the impact its provisions are likely to have.
2. An early opportunity should be identified for teaching and all support staff, including administrative staff, to meet together to share information and discuss the implications. This discussion could also identify how information will be communicated in the future to ensure that all staff are kept fully informed of developments, both nationally and within the school. Copies of the Agreement are available on the DfES website or by e-mailing dfes@prolog.co.uk and also at www.learning.wales.gov.uk. All heads and chairs of governing bodies have been sent a copy.

Preparing for changes to the teacher's contract

3. The Agreement contains a number of contractual changes to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) for teachers and heads which are to be phased in between September 2003 and September 2005.
4. By 1 September 2003 at the latest the following contractual changes will need to be implemented:
 - the transfer to appropriate support staff of 24 of the 25 clerical and administrative tasks teachers should not be required routinely to undertake (**paragraph 23 of the Agreement**);

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NASUWT

NEOST

PAT

SHA

T&G

UNISON
the public service union

¹ The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group is composed of representatives from ATL, DfES, GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, SHA, T&G, UNISON and the Welsh Assembly Government who are all signatories to the Agreement.

- the introduction of a reasonable work/life balance (*paragraphs 27-29 of the Agreement*); and
 - the provision of a reasonable allocation of time during the normal school day to support those with leadership and management responsibilities (*paragraphs 45-48*).
5. Other contractual changes are scheduled to be introduced over a longer timescale, although the draft changes and accompanying guidance will form part of the 7 April consultation.
 6. In advance of the outcome of that consultation (expected in May) there is useful preparatory work that schools can undertake, especially in relation to the transfer of the clerical and administrative tasks to appropriate support staff. Paragraphs 8-14 below indicate a number of practical steps which can be undertaken.
 7. Implementing the other contractual changes planned for September 2003 (see paragraph 4 above) will best be done once the specific wording has been finalised. However, schools are encouraged to review any current provisions in place and to consider what options may be available to address these issues.

Transferring administrative and clerical tasks

8. Each of the tasks listed in paragraph 23 of the Agreement should be reviewed to identify if it is currently being done and who is doing it. This review will also provide the opportunity to determine if there are different ways in which the tasks can be carried out or if they need to be carried out at all. Chapters 3 and 4 of the DfES Bureaucracy Cutting Toolkit (available on the DfES website) contain some useful advice. Alternative arrangements will need to be made for any task currently being carried out by a teacher.
9. There may be cases where teachers have management allowances or leadership posts for carrying out some of these tasks. There are two options for dealing with this. Either the teacher may continue to manage the task or s/he may undertake an alternative responsibility commensurate with their management allowance or post and more focused on teaching and learning. In the context of the remodelling agenda the second option is the preferred one. Any alternative responsibility should normally be agreed between the head and the teacher.
10. In transferring administrative and clerical tasks to support staff, heads must have regard to the suitability of the task to the member of staff's current role, the impact on their workload and whether sufficient time is available, or could be freed up; whether additional training is needed and any implications for pay and grading.
11. A range of options could be used to facilitate the transfer of tasks, including:
 - revising a job description to replace an existing activity with a new one;
 - revising a job description to reflect additional responsibilities, including consideration of any additional remuneration which may be necessary;
 - extending paid working hours.

Any revision of job descriptions should normally be agreed between the head and the member of staff. An extension of working hours must be by agreement.

12. At all stages teachers and support staff should be given the opportunity to discuss the changes and encouraged to take advice from their union or professional association.
13. Where the need for additional staff is identified, heads may wish to take the opportunity to consider whether the new post could embrace a number of the facets of extended support staff roles identified in the Agreement.
14. Small schools may wish to consider whether for certain tasks a post could be shared with a neighbouring school or schools.