

REDUCING WORKLOAD IN SCHOOLS

The Delivery Plan commits the Government to formulating a more intense new programme of reducing unnecessary workload and bureaucracy in schools. This is not an end in itself but rather a means to maximise the time available to teachers to focus on learning and teaching and driving improvement.

Good practice to reduce workload in forward planning, assessment, self-evaluation & improvement planning and monitoring & reporting have been agreed and exemplified in the reports of the CfE Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy. Posters highlighting actions in these four areas have also been prepared and distributed. LNCTs were asked to provide examples of good approaches at local authority level for the workload section of the SNCT website.

Unnecessary workload can arise through demands from Government and national agencies, from Local Authorities, from Schools and from teachers themselves. The demands can be both real, based on system or policy requirements, and perceived, based on misapprehension of system or policy requirements. The latter can be reduced by providing clear, authoritative statements which dispel common myths and overturn misconceptions. A key action will, therefore, be the development and implementation of a more vigorous communications strategy which will ensure that messages about proportionality are widely disseminated with impact and that teachers and headteachers are empowered by them to challenge disproportionate demands.

The impact of real demands can be reduced by putting in place actions at all levels to ensure that the good practice agreed in the Tackling Bureaucracy Reports are being implemented.

Forward Planning

The Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy recommended that:

Schools and local authorities should simplify their procedures to ensure that forward planning is high-level and less time consuming. In particular, forward planning should not be undertaken at the level of each and every Experience and Outcome.

Proposals

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals supported this recommendation and said that the Scottish Government should clarify or re-emphasise the need for strategic, proportionate approaches to planning using the Es and Os and based on professional dialogue. They also suggested that Local Authorities and HM Inspectors should monitor this and that Education Scotland should collect and share examples of best practice. It was also proposed that Education Scotland provide clear progression pathways for all curriculum areas.

Actions

A clear and concise statement of the CfE framework clarifying the role of Experiences and Outcomes and other key materials for a proportionate approach to planning learning, teaching and assessment will be published by mid-August 2016.

Clear, practical advice on assessing achievement in literacy and numeracy will be provided by the end of August 2016. Similar guidance on all other curriculum areas across Broad General Education will be provided by the end of 2016.

HM Inspectors have been monitoring workload demands in school inspection and providing advice on ways of reducing this where necessary. A few schools have had a main point of action to reduce bureaucracy in their inspection reports.

HM Inspectors will carry out a focused review of the demands placed on schools by each local authority in relation to CfE. The review will take place during the weeks beginning 15 and 22 August and a report of the outcomes will be published by mid-September. The report will enable teachers and headteachers to challenge unnecessary or disproportionate demands with regard to CfE. Each local authority will receive recommendations from the Inspectors. We expect these recommendations to be turned into a local action plan to reduce workload and bureaucracy and for local authorities to publish these plans. Area Lead Officers will then monitor progress. This means that we will have 32 local action plans to reduce workload and bureaucracy tailored to each local authority.

Examples of best practice, including case studies showing the use and impact of more proportionate approaches, will be published on Education Scotland's new National Improvement Hub and on the SNCT website.

ASSESSMENT

The Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy recommended that:

Assessment judgements should be based on evidence drawn mainly from day-to-day teaching and learning and that while tracking pupil progress and moderation were important, assessment should be based on professional judgement and did not require the production of large folios of evidence.

In the broad general education, schools should focus on assessing progress in Significant Aspects of Learning rather than at the level of individual Experiences and Outcomes.

In the senior phase, SQA and local authorities should continue to streamline assessment and national and local quality assurance processes for National Qualifications and ensure that these are aligned and proportionate.

Proposals

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals supported this recommendation and said that Education Scotland should emphasise that assessment, verification and moderation practice should be streamlined to ensure that

it genuinely supports learning. It was also suggested that duplication of assessment, across unit assessments, coursework assignments and the final exam for N5, Higher and Advanced Higher be removed and that SQA provide practical guidance and examples on how combined assessments should be produced to reduce overall demands on students and teachers. Further proposals included the introduction of external marking in all subject areas except where logistics will not allow it, ensuring that the new standardised assessments are integrated and comparable with existing assessments and that expansion of the use of ICT (video, online and digital photography) for assessment be considered, especially in secondary.

Actions

The clear and concise statement of the CfE framework to be published in mid-August should address clear understanding of assessment practice.

Similarly, the Benchmark guidance for literacy and numeracy to be published in August 2016 and the guidance on all other curriculum areas to be published by the end of the year, should provide a clear basis on which to undertake efficient and effective assessment practice.

SQA will consult in September on how best to streamline its course documentation for National Qualifications.

The Assessment and National Qualifications Group will be reconvened in August 2016 to explore what more can be done to reduce workload associated with the new qualifications. A member of the Teacher Panel will be co-opted onto that Group and the Panel will have an opportunity to assess its proposals.

Self-Evaluation and Improvement

The Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy recommended that:

Self-evaluation should focus only on the key information required to support improvement and that local authorities and schools should review their approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning to ensure that these are proportionate. Improvement plans should focus on a manageable number of priorities that clearly show better outcomes for learners.

Proposals

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals supported this recommendation.

Actions

The HMI focused review of local authorities in August will include consideration of whether disproportionate demands are being placed on schools with regard to self-evaluation and improvement.

Examples of best practice, including case studies showing the use and impact of more proportionate approaches, will be published on Education Scotland's new National Improvement Hub and on the SNCT website.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy recommended that:

Local authorities and schools should focus on providing robust, concise information drawn from day-to-day learning and teaching that gives a clear picture of progress and achievement. They should regularly review the efficacy of ICT systems for planning and reporting to ensure that they are fit-for purpose and do not unnecessarily take time away from teaching.

Schools should involve parents in developing more simple and effective means of reporting that emphasise quality of engagement rather than reams of paperwork.

Proposals

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals supported this recommendation and said that local authorities should have a joined up approach to tracking children's progress rather than individual Schools having to develop their own, that Education Scotland should develop a simple, intuitive online parental reporting system and that the Scottish Government should promote greater use of oral reporting to parents which should only cover literacy, numeracy, Mathematics and Health & Wellbeing, with comments on other strengths and development needs. It was also suggested that Reporting formats be amended as a result of national discussion involving teachers and parent groups to identify core aspects of reporting which are accessible and meaningful to parents, teachers and learners.

Actions

The Governance Review to be launched in September will help identify ways of better empowering parents as will the review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 currently being undertaken by the National Parent Forum of Scotland.

Examples of best practice, including case studies where teacher workload has been reduced, parents are content and duplication at school and local authority level has been avoided, will be published on Education Scotland's new National Improvement Hub and on the SNCT website.

The National Improvement Framework will gather evidence of parental engagement in supporting children's learning.

A standardised national parental reporting system could be developed to support a more proportionate and focused approach.

Other Issues

Resources

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals suggested that insufficient numbers of teaching, support and management staff, as a result of shortages, budget reductions or faculty structures, has led to increased workload especially for promoted teachers. Similarly reductions in class sizes and class contact time would reduce workload volume. Addressing many of these concerns would require significant additional financial resources although the focus on Pupil Teacher Ratios in the current Teacher Numbers Commitment should provide more flexibility and the Governance consultation in September will provide an opportunity to develop different models covering resourcing and school management roles.

Professional Dialogue

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals suggested that Scottish Government should set a clear expectation that the 5 inset days in 2016-17 and 2017-18 should be used to enable teachers to carry out adjustments and developments for implementing CfE. It was also suggested that additional inset days be considered. The use of such time is predominantly a matter for local decision making but a new communication strategy can strongly reinforce the value of professional dialogue and the need to commit time within Working Time Agreements for such collegiate activity.

Professional Update

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals suggested that clear guidance should be provided on the minimum evidence of professional learning to be included in Professional Update requirements profiles submitted to GTCS. ICT platforms for recording of evidence of professional learning need to be more user-friendly. We will ask GTCS to consider whether improvements can be made to this process.

Broad General Education

Respondents to the DFM's request for workload reduction proposals suggested that time be provided for teachers to engage in professional dialogue around how Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing can be prioritised within the curriculum without narrowing learners' experiences and that policy decisions which impact on delivery of the BGE (e.g. 1+2 languages, STEM initiatives, 2 hours of PE, Eco Schools, Rights Respecting Schools) be reviewed. The Government remains fully committed to the breadth of CfE, to the priority of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and to the funding for delivery of subject specific programmes. The CfE Management Board will be asked to review the workload impact of the latter.