

## TEACHER PANEL

### TEACHER WORKLOAD

#### Purpose

1. This paper provides an overview of some of the drivers of teacher workload as well as the key actions taken at national level in recent years to address the issue. Although the paper does not provide a detailed summary of local authority and school-level activity, it should be noted that those aspects are important when considering issues of workload and bureaucracy. The panel is invited to discuss progress and whether further actions are now required.

#### Background

2. Teacher workload and undue bureaucracy has consistently been cited as a challenge for a number of years by those working in the teaching sector. A Curriculum for Excellence Working Group was established in 2013<sup>1</sup> and chaired by the then Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, Dr Alasdair Allan. The group featured representation from six teacher professional associations, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, ADES, COSLA, NPFS and SQA. It agreed actions to tackle the identified drivers of excessive workload and bureaucracy, with a role for the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers and Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers in monitoring, discussing and addressing issues<sup>2</sup>. The national working group on bureaucracy subsequently reported on the progress of agreed actions in a separate report in 2015<sup>3</sup>. Annex A provides a summary of the key drivers of bureaucracy as identified in the 2013/2015 reports.
3. In June 2016, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills instructed Education Scotland to undertake a focused review of the demands placed on schools by local authorities in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), particularly around their arrangements for curriculum, planning, assessment and reporting in schools. Education Scotland produced a report in 2016<sup>4</sup> detailing further actions for themselves and local authorities both individually and collectively.
4. Challenges of teacher workload and undue bureaucracy still persist, despite the work outlined above. An EIS national survey which captured over 12,000 views

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2013) [‘Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy’](#)

<sup>2</sup> The full list of drivers identified by the Working Group can be found in Annex A.

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2015) [‘Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy – Follow Up Report’](#)

<sup>4</sup> Education Scotland (2016) [‘Review of local authorities’ actions to tackle unnecessary bureaucracy and undue workload in schools’](#)

and reported initial findings in 2019 showed that 82% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with their workload levels and 64% reported working more than 5 hours extra a week, over and above their contracted hours.

### **Key drivers and actions to address those drivers**

5. While it is clear that a challenge around teacher workload continues to persist, the causes of teacher workload are often multifaceted and will differ across schools and local authority areas. The paragraphs below set out some of the potential drivers of the issue as well as the key actions to address it.

#### *Curriculum Bureaucracy*

6. The way that the curriculum is implemented in schools is an important factor. The key issue that has been cited is excessively bureaucratic approaches to planning learning, teaching, assessment and reporting across the Experiences and Outcomes in both the Broad General Education and in the Senior Phase. Schools were required to respond to changes in qualifications and the additional verification process in the initial years of CfE.
7. As stated in paragraph 2, a number of steps have been taken to try to address issues nationally. Following the two bureaucracy reports in 2013 and 2015, the then Chief Inspector of Education published a [definitive statement on Curriculum for Excellence](#) in 2016. This statement, reviewed by the Teacher Panel prior to publication, was accompanied by a letter from the Deputy First Minister to all Directors of Education in 2016, reminding them of the need to reduce workload demands on schools. National level benchmarks for all curriculum areas and levels were published in 2017, with an aim to provide clarity on the national standards expected within each curriculum area at each level. Education Scotland published a Tackling Bureaucracy toolkit in 2019. In the senior phase, following representations, mandatory unit assessments were removed for National 5 courses from 2017-18 onwards, Higher courses from 2018-19 onwards and Advanced Higher courses from 2019-20. The empowerment agenda is a further driver in the system, aimed at helping teachers and school leaders to challenge excessively bureaucratic approaches.

#### *Digital*

8. As part of our work to take forward the non-pay elements of the teachers' pay deal (2018-21), the Scottish Government is currently working with Education Scotland to undertake user research discovery work into the practical issues that cause workload issues for teachers, with a view to developing and delivering digital solutions to teacher workload issues.
9. The aim is to explore the day-to-day tasks undertaken by teachers that are time intensive and add to a teacher's workload, without adding significant value to learning and teaching. Findings will be looked at alongside available technologies

to allow us to determine whether there are opportunities to develop and deliver digital solutions to help alleviate issues around teacher workload.

*Teacher and support staff numbers*

10. Challenges relating to teacher and support staff recruitment in recent years have potentially affected workload for existing teachers. This is particularly relevant in certain subject areas and geographical locations where teacher recruitment and retention has been particularly challenging. Some areas of Scotland face significant recruitment challenges.
11. While the responsibility to maintain a sufficient complement of teachers and other support staff lies with local authorities, the Scottish Government has taken action to help improve teacher recruitment. Work has been taken forward to support universities in the development of alternative routes into teaching, including a focus on increasing the number of STEM teachers. These routes into teaching, which are being used to explore a range of options for establishing greater flexibility for those wanting to enter the teaching profession, have, over the last two years, attracted 799 people who may not otherwise have entered teaching.
12. The Scottish Government offers bursaries of £20,000 for career changers to undertake teacher training in STEM subjects where the demand is at its greatest. These bursaries will provide financial help, making it easier for enthusiastic career changers to pursue teaching. The bursary scheme exceeded its target during a successful first year, with 107 bursaries approved in 2018-19 and 111 in 2019-20 against a target of 100. A new phase of the Scottish Government's recruitment campaign is also under way and both Napier University and Queen Margaret University have, from August 2019, started to provide initial teacher education programmes.
13. Similarly in relation to teacher retention, the Scottish Government agreed to include a package of additional measures aimed at addressing issues relating to workload, wellbeing and teacher empowerment within the 2018-21 teacher pay deal. This includes the development of new professional learning opportunities for teachers focusing on their health and wellbeing. This work is being taken forward in partnership with local government and the unions through the Enabling Teacher Agency Advisory Group.
14. There are indications that this work is having the desired effect with teacher numbers increasing for the fourth year in a row in 2019. Teacher vacancies are also significantly reduced. There are now more teachers than at any time since 2009 (52,247 including ELC), and the ratio of pupils to teachers is at its lowest since 2013. Primary teacher numbers are at their highest since 1980.

*Presumption of mainstreaming*

15. The presumption that all children are provided with an education in a mainstream setting is a central pillar of the Scottish Government's inclusive approach to

education. Section 15 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 provides that a pre-school and school-aged child should be educated in a mainstream school unless it:

- would not be suited to the ability and aptitude of the child;
- would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for the children with whom the child would be educated; or
- would result in unreasonable public expenditure being incurred which would not ordinarily be incurred.

This inclusive approach affords all children and young people the opportunity to be a part of a community, boosting their emotional wellbeing and aiding the development of social skills. There are however concerns that such an approach can increase workload as teachers may be required to support a higher number of pupils with complex additional support needs within a mainstream setting. This can be particularly challenging if teachers are not properly supported and assisted with this work.

16. The Scottish Government and Education Scotland are working to help teachers to best support learners with additional support needs within mainstream settings. Guidance on the presumption of mainstreaming was published on 26 March 2019. Education Scotland has developed two online inclusion resources for practitioners to support this, providing free professional learning resources on inclusion. The reviewed and refreshed Autism Toolbox is now also available for teachers and support staff. On 30 January 2019, the Deputy First Minister committed to a review of the implementation of additional support for learning, including where children learn. The Chair, Angela Morgan, was appointed on 23 September 2019. Angela reported jointly to COSLA and Scottish Ministers on 28 February and the report, recommendations and a joint response will be published shortly. The findings from her review will then be used to inform the work that is being taken forward to enhance implementation of additional support for learning.

### *Education funding*

17. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that lack of resource can also increase teacher workload. For example, teachers may be asked to do more with less if local authority education budgets are reduced.
18. The statutory duty to deliver education sits with local authorities. The Scottish Government has sought to ensure that local government receives a fair funding settlement that supports vital public services. Local authorities will receive total funding from the Scottish Government of £11.4 billion in 2020-21. Taken together with the potential to increase council tax by 3 per cent in real terms, the local government settlement provides councils with access to an additional £724.4 million (7.2 per cent) revenue funding for local services, including education. Additionally, the Scottish Government has provided £120 million in Pupil Equity Funding in 2019-20.

### Questions for discussion

19. The panel is invited to note the contents of the paper and consider the following questions.

- Does the Panel agree that:
  - the areas highlighted in the paper are the main drivers of teacher workload;

or

- are there other factors that should be considered; and
- is there a particular factor that can be considered the main driver of teacher workload?
- Have the actions to reduce teacher workload, as outlined above, been effective, or are there other actions that should be taken?
- What further action needs to be taken at local, regional and national level to ensure that teacher workload is consistently manageable across Scotland?

Learning Directorate  
March 2020

## ANNEX A

### **DRIVERS OF EXCESSIVE BUREAUCRACY IDENTIFIED BY THE CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE WORKING GROUP ON TACKLING BUREAUCRACY (2013/2015)**

1. **Over-detailed planning processes.** Planning at the level of every individual experience and outcome; planning with too many layers and too much repetition. A lack of balance between written planning and planning based on professional dialogue.
2. **Assessment, tracking and reporting systems that are not fit-for-purpose.** Inappropriate use of ICT systems. Quality assurance and monitoring processes that make insufficient use of evidence from day-to-day teaching and learning; and sometimes cumbersome approaches to profiling and reporting to parents.
3. **Adopting rather than adapting.** Inflexible use of “one size fits all” approaches to CfE rather than adapting to suit local circumstances.
4. **Unnecessary auditing and accountability.** Local authorities sometimes requiring excessive detail for auditing and accountability. Schools over-preparing for inspections based on misunderstandings about Education Scotland’s expectations.
5. **Lack of confidence.** Headteachers and staff still need to gain full confidence in the changes that they are making to their practices. This leads to detailed approaches being adopted in the developmental phase which could be – but are often not – reduced as familiarity and confidence grow.
6. **Unclear expectations.** Uncertainty over what schools have to do, should do and can choose to do in implementing CfE.