



Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

14 September 2020

Dear Secretary of State

School Teachers' Pay: STRB's 30th Report and Government Response

Introduction

This joint union response to the STRB's 30th Report and your proposals for implementation of the STRB's recommendations underlines the consensus in the profession on the key issues relating to school teachers' and leaders' pay. Although each of our organisations may wish to respond separately in addition to this joint response, we are united on the major teacher pay issues.

It is noteworthy that key STRB findings agree with the main points in the evidence we submitted jointly and separately to the STRB. The STRB has added its voice to the broad consensus on teacher pay issues. We urge you to engage with that consensus, so that we can work together on effective and lasting solutions to the problems faced by the teaching profession.

Recruitment and Retention

Once again, following successive STRB reports highlighting serious and entrenched teacher supply problems, the STRB expresses its serious concerns about teacher recruitment and retention. The STRB states that there are "severe and persistent problems with teacher supply" (STRB, page x). The STRB notes that these problems are not restricted to early career. In addition to recruitment targets being missed for the eighth successive year and high leaving rates in the early years of teaching, leaving rates have increased for teachers in the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups (STRB, *ibid*). The STRB is clear that the pay system must "reward teachers taking on additional management or leadership responsibilities" (STRB paragraph 4.7, page 72).

Impact of COVID-19

The STRB notes that, although the COVID-19 crisis may produce improvements in teacher recruitment and retention, any such improvements are likely to be short-lived. As the STRB notes, demand for graduates is likely to recover fully in the medium term. Our organisations have consistently argued that teaching cannot compete effectively with other graduate employers until the key problems on teacher pay are effectively addressed. In that context, we draw your attention to the STRB's statement that "teacher supply problems are likely to re-emerge unless action is taken" (STRB, page xii).

We agree with the STRB's statement that the COVID-19 crisis provides an opportunity to secure "a significant improvement in the competitiveness of the teacher pay framework over the next two to three years" (STRB, *ibid*). Such a "significant improvement" must in our view include: effective action to secure the competitiveness of teacher pay against other graduate professions; urgent restoration of the significant real terms pay losses against inflation as measured by the RPI; and a fair and transparent national teacher pay structure permitting clear career paths without performance-related pay (PRP). The contribution of teachers and school leaders in the current COVID-19 crisis has been immense. The Government must act to ensure that this contribution is properly rewarded.

Pay Levels

Like us, the STRB has serious concerns about the pay of both teachers and leaders; and it is clear that pay problems make a major contribution to the recruitment and retention issues. In addition to the real terms losses teachers and leaders have suffered since 2010 and low teacher starting pay, the STRB highlights the deterioration of teacher pay in the wider labour market. The STRB concludes that "for the majority of teachers and school leaders, including those in London, there continues to be a significant gap between the earnings of teachers and the levels of pay in other comparable graduate professions" (STRB, page x).

The pay of most teachers and leaders will increase by 2.75%, significantly lower than the 5.5% increase to starting pay and the increases in early years which have been the focus of Government communications and some media coverage. Feedback from our members underlines the key point we have raised previously, that experienced teachers and leaders are dismayed to see that they will receive only half the increase announced for starting pay. We are clear that differentiated pay rises in favour of early career teachers will not promote retention, or support the supply line to leadership.

The STRB's pay recommendations, which you have accepted, need to be assessed in the context of the long period of real terms pay cuts, including pay freezes and pay caps, imposed since 2010. The STRB noted that experienced teachers and school leaders "should receive a significant real-terms uplift to avoid damage to morale and motivation, which would have possible consequences for teacher retention" (STRB, page xi). The increase for most teachers of 2.75% is likely to be above RPI for September 2020. Nevertheless, with the latest data showing RPI at 1.6% for July 2020 and inflation prospects over the next year uncertain we are clear that the pay increases recommended by the STRB are not enough to make the urgent and significant restoration in the value of teacher pay needed to properly reward teachers and to tackle the deep-rooted recruitment and retention problems.

Your announcement of 21 July described the pay award as “affordable,” but we are clear that improvements to school funding are needed to ensure that the real terms cuts of recent years are fully restored and that teacher pay is significantly improved.

Pay Structure

All of our organisations are clear that the dismantling of the national teacher pay structure and imposition of PRP have created major problems and that the direction of policy on these critical areas must be urgently reversed. The restoration of advisory pay points for the Main and Upper Pay Ranges, with values based on the joint advice we have issued in recent years, is a step in the right direction but we need mandatory pay points, with the points regarded as a minimum entitlement for all teachers and school leaders as part of a fair and transparent national pay structure.

The STRB notes the consensus on the advantages of national pay points. As the STRB notes, this would provide greater clarity on pay and career progression. This is essential if we are to effectively tackle recruitment and retention problems. Potential and serving teachers need to know that they will be supported in mapping out a clear career path. The existence of unfair PRP, with factors outside of teacher and school leader control making pay progression unachievable, means that the profession cannot offer clear career pathways. For that reason, we disagree with the STRB’s statement that the benefits of national pay points can be achieved by using advisory pay points. We call on you to instead announce statutory pay points for all teachers and school leaders with such points regarded as a minimum entitlement.

We note the STRB statements on review of key aspects of the pay structure such as the threshold/Upper Pay Range and leadership pay. We are clear that a holistic review of the pay structure is needed and must include key factors such as the decline in teacher pay, the development of the teacher supply problem, and the need for additional investment in schools to support appropriate teacher pay levels and prospects. We call on you to ensure that this is reflected in the next STRB remit and that our organisations are fully consulted on that remit before it is finalised.

Although the STRB notes the problems created by implementing smaller pay increases for more experienced staff than those on M1-M5 (see for example STRB paragraph 5.40), it has in essence adopted one of the options proposed in the Government evidence and its recommendations do indeed result in lower pay increases for more experienced teachers. The STRB has effectively accepted the cost constraints imposed by the Government and it is not clear if the STRB would have recommended higher increases without such constraints. Restricting the STRB in this way means that an objective assessment of what is required to pay teachers appropriately and to solve teacher supply problems is not possible.

Publication of the STRB Report

We note that, as in previous years, there was a delay in the publication of the STRB Report until the end of the summer term. This causes significant problems for schools in undertaking their own consultations and planning for the new academic year.

Conclusion

Our organisations, representing the majority of teachers and school leaders in England, jointly call on you to apply a significantly higher increase than recommended by the STRB with the same increase applied to all teacher and leadership pay points and allowances. We call on you to restore mandatory pay points with those points as a minimum entitlement for all teachers and school leaders based on our previous joint advice. We call on you to engage with us in urgent discussions on the full restoration of pay lost since 2010, the establishment of a fair national pay structure without PRP and the additional resources needed if we are to secure a teacher pay structure capable of appropriately valuing, retaining and attracting teachers.

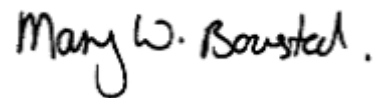
Yours sincerely



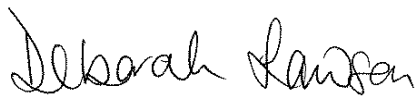
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