

Secretary of State's Response to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) Thirty Fourth Report 2024

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

- 1 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is a trade union and professional association representing over 25,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business leaders and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people across primary, secondary, post-16 and specialist education. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
- 2 ASCL welcomes the opportunity to make a written response to the Government's proposals following the STRB's recommendations to the 34th Remit. Our response is based on the views of our members, obtained through discussions at ASCL Council, with relevant advisory groups, and prompted and unprompted emails and messages.
- 3 When considering the impact of any proposals on different groups, it is ASCL's policy to consider not only the nine protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010, but also other groups which might be disproportionately affected, particularly those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. We have answered any equality impact questions on this basis.

Timeliness of the process

- 4 Whilst we must express the disappointment of our members at the late publication of the STRB report and ministerial response, we acknowledge that the delay was caused by the previous Secretary of State and the outgoing government.
- 5 As in previous years, we saw the Department's inability to meet the first deadline, whereas other consultees were expected to adhere to and did so.
- 6 ASCL, along with the majority of consultees, have repeatedly voiced our concerns over the report being published at the end of the summer term, and the impact that this has on our members when trying to balance their budgets.
- 7 It creates unnecessary and unacceptable workload and stress for school leaders and is totally out of time with the requirements they face with regards to budget setting and approval.

- 8 The STRB itself has made clear its views on this matter in this observation in its 34th Report¹:

The STRB process

2.70 This year's STRB process has once again been impacted by delays to the delivery of evidence. The timing of the process is unpredictable and is later than needed by schools. This has, to some extent, undermined confidence in the process and is a distraction to both consultees and the review body in its work. The delays also increase the implementation challenges for schools. This has become a pattern but is avoidable.

2.71 We believe the process should be transparent and predictable for all parties. Since most aspects of this process are needed every year, it would be sensible to plan time accordingly and not rely on a political decision to initiate the routine aspects of the work. The process could be guided by a standing timetable, prescribing the key milestones and making it possible to review and implement recommendations in a timely manner.

STRB observation: An appropriate standing timetable would enhance the STRB process.

- 9 With this in mind, we were appreciative of the new Secretary of State's commitment to publishing the report and response within a matter of weeks of taking up post following the General Election, and for providing additional funding to schools to help cover the teacher pay away and other cost pressures.
- 10 We also warmly welcome the Secretary of State's commitment, that she will prioritise ensuring that the pay round works better for schools and are delighted to see that this has already started with the early publication of her remit letter to the STRB on 30 September.

Matter for recommendation

An assessment of the adjustments that should be made to the salary and allowance ranges for classroom teachers, unqualified teachers, and school leaders in 2024/25.

- 11 ASCL was pleased to see the recommendation for a 5.5% increase to all pay ranges and allowances.
- 12 Whilst this in and of itself does not restore the real terms cuts to teacher and school leader pay, it was an above inflation increase and a welcome step towards this.
- 13 We must continue to see increases of this nature in forthcoming years until the real terms value of teacher and leader pay has been restored and salaries become competitive with comparable graduate professions.

¹ STRB 34th Report

- 14 The STRB's report states that *'the primary objective of our recommendations is to continue to address, in a balanced way, the structural deterioration in the pay of teachers relative to comparable professions and to improve levels of recruitment and retention.'*²
- 15 Going forward, pay awards must at least keep pace with RPI inflation to ensure that the profession is not hit with real terms cuts in the future.
- 16 We have seen the impact this has had on recruitment and retention, and as the review body highlighted in one of its observations in its report³ last year:
- 'Investment is needed to proactively manage the worsening recruitment position and declining competitiveness of teacher pay. It will be more cost-effective to act sooner rather than later. The cost of failure is high: it affects teaching quality and adversely impacts on children's education.'*
- 17 Teaching must be seen as a desirable career once again and this will require salaries to be competitive at all levels.
- 18 This has to include restoration of the differentials between pay ranges which have been eroded over time as a result of pay awards which targeted the main pay range over the upper pay range and leadership pay range.

Benchmarking – Teacher Job Levelling

- 19 We welcome the report commissioned by the review body. There is a lack of data available in relation to this, particularly for school leaders.
- 20 However, as is widely known, benchmarking is a useful factor to look at when considering pay, but it should be just one factor and not a single deciding factor.
- 21 It's also important to remember that benchmarking is always retrospective, and not a current comparison.
- 22 We note that the report confirms the concerns that consultees and the review body have been voicing for several years, that *'teacher and leadership pay is at the low end of the competitive range for jobs of comparable size and scope'*.⁴
- 23 However, we do believe that the findings are less sound for leaders, particularly in the secondary sector. This is due to the huge diversity of roles and levels of responsibility across secondary schools and within trusts.
- 24 We hope that this work can be built on and explored further in future remits.

Targeting remuneration

- 25 ASCL made recommendations in relation to this remit item, which were for a competitive pay framework that does not differentiate and a response career-long retention scheme that can be adjusted as demand requires it.

² STRB 34th Report

³ STRB 33rd Report

⁴ Teacher Job Levelling – Final, WTW, March 2024

- 26 Along with our supporting evidence we provided some examples of international schemes on student loan forgiveness and long-term retention schemes.
- 27 We were pleased to see the review body had suggested similar schemes along with a variety of other options with potential impact and cost implications.
- 28 We would welcome the opportunity to explore this area further as part of a future remit item.

Pay award funding

- 29 We welcomed the additional funding announced in July. We understand that the £1.2 billion allocated to schools is intended to support overall cost pressures, fully funding the pay award for teachers and support staff at national level.
- 30 The government has calculated the additional sum based on the expectation that schools will already have budgeted for an uplift within existing budgets.
- 31 The School Costs Technical Note⁵ indicated that a pay award of around 2% was affordable nationally, and therefore the additional funding should cover the difference between that and the 5.5% award.
- 32 Whilst this may be the case at national level, affordability at individual school level will be different and our members continue to be challenged financially if they do not operate according to the national average funding and cost profile.
- 33 The distribution methodology attached to the additional funding is formulaic, rather than matching actual costs.

Pay progression including Performance Related Pay

- 34 ASCL was delighted to see confirmation from the Secretary of State that the requirement for schools to use Performance Related Pay (PRP) will be removed from the STPCD from September 2024.
- 35 The joint unions, and other consultees have been calling for the removal of performance related pay from the Document for several years now, and it is pleasing to see that the consensus on this has now been acted upon.

Workload and working time

- 36 We remain concerned about the workload and working hours within the profession, and particularly of our members.
- 37 We are disappointed that the recommendations relating to this from the Workload Reduction Taskforce have not been expedited.
- 38 We welcome the positive messaging from the new Secretary of State, and the resetting of the relationship between the government and the education workforce, and we hope that this will be backed up with further positive actions.

⁵ [School Costs Technical Note 2023-2025](#)

- 39 We must see rapid progress on the item around working time for school leaders. We cannot continue to see our members' workloads and working hours at such excessive levels and increasing.
- 40 Our members work incredibly hard and are entitled to a reasonable work-life balance allowing them to take well-earned breaks, whether that be evenings, weekends or during in school closure periods.

Career paths and pay structures for teachers and school leaders

- 41 This was considered very briefly under a previous remit, to which ASCL submitted extensive evidence.
- 42 We feel that the most pressing of these is to broaden the scope of the STRB remit and the STPCD so that it remains relevant to the whole state funded sector, including academies.
- 43 We reiterate our call for Business Leaders to be brought into that scope. Business Leaders are not served well by the NJC arrangements, nor will they be by the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). Their roles are very different to those of school support staff, they are school leaders.
- 44 It is imperative that they are recognised and remunerated in the same way as their leadership colleagues, and it is our view that being brought under the auspices of the STRB and the STPCD under a leadership category is the only way that this can be achieved.
- 45 We have already provided stark highlights from our Business Leader pay survey⁶ which showed that 50% of respondents were planning to leave their role within the next three years.
- 46 Business Leaders carry out crucial roles which carry a significant level of whole school/trust strategic responsibility and accountability in the same way that their leadership colleagues do as Assistant Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers.
- 47 The risk presented to the sector if we fail to retain those working in these roles is huge, the compliance and regulatory responsibilities they hold are very specialised, and these are often the only people in schools and trusts with the relevant expertise to ensure that requirements are adhered to.
- 48 We urge the Secretary of State to recognise the clear distinction between those working in business leadership roles and school support staff and hope to see this item included in the next remit.

Consultation on draft STPCD

- 49 On the contents page, the following amendments need to be made:
- Part 1 - September **2024** pay award.
 - Part 3 - all need updating to 2024.

⁶ [ASCL Business leaders' pay survey, January 2024](#)

- Part 3 - 19 delete 'linked to performance'.

50 On page five, paragraph three needs updating to reflect thirty fourth report and 29 July 2024 for the publication date.

51 On page 17, paragraph 9.2, should say 'pay progression' (as per 16.2), this needs to be consistent throughout the Document.

52 On page 24, b) 1..1.1 and 1..1.2 should state '*may **only** decide to withhold progression...*' in line with e) in the same section.

53 On page 44, bullet 46.9 – it would make sense to separate into two bullets now that the requirement to operate performance-related pay has been removed.

54 On page 50, on PPA, as the agreement to take PPA offsite is not dependent on it being taken in one weekly unit, suggest amending this sentence to '*and PPA may also be taken away from the school site.*' or for it to be a separate sentence.

55 We again highlight the anomaly in the order of the pay range columns throughout the Document.

56 The pay range columns are shown here:

	England (excluding the London Area)	Inner London Area	Outer London Area	Fringe Area
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57 The advisory pay scales columns are shown here:

Spine Point	Rest of England (£)	London Fringe (£)	Outer London (£)	Inner London (£)
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58 It is non-sensical and confusing for columns relating to the same things to be displayed in a different order in the same document.

59 There is a risk that this may cause employers to confuse the columns.

60 This is a simple fix, but it does need to be corrected so that the columns are all in the same order for consistency.

61 On page 92 '*Further sources of information*' - it would be helpful to add a link to the Department's Flexible Working in Schools resources.

62 Also on page 92, the title and link for '*Implementing your school's approach to pay*' needs updating to '*Managing Teachers' and Leaders' Pay*'.

Pay Scales

- 63 We reiterate our disappointment that advisory pay scales for the leadership pay range have not been reintroduced into the Document and recommend that these are included at the earliest opportunity.
- 64 As in previous years, we will continue to publish updated pay scales for all pay ranges in conjunction with Community, NAHT, NASUWT and NEU, and we will encourage employers to use these as a minimum.

Conclusion

- 65 The 5.5% pay award is welcomed.
- 66 We must see a strategic plan to restore the erosion of pay which has taken place since 2010 and the structural deterioration in teacher and leader pay relative to comparable professions.
- 67 Future pay awards must at least keep pace with RPI and be fully funded by the government – this is in addition to the restoration of pay referenced above.
- 68 The scope of the STRB and STPCD must be broadened to include all school leadership roles, in particular Business Leaders.
- 69 The new government clearly recognises the seriousness of the recruitment and retention crisis. Its manifesto commitment to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers is a welcome one, but we wait to see more details on how and when this will be achieved.
- 70 The focus cannot be solely on early career teachers, nor can it be just on recruitment. It is imperative that teaching is seen as an attractive profession for a career, whether that be as a teacher or as a school leader, not just for recent graduates.
- 71 More must be done to retain the teachers and leaders already in the profession, by improving the pay and working conditions, including flexible working, so that they actively choose not to leave.
- 72 The Secretary of State's commitment that she will prioritise ensuring that the pay round works better for schools under the Labour government is a welcome one, which we must see actioned.
- 73 We hope that this is of value to your consultation, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.