

Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB): Remit for the 6th Report

Supplementary comments from the Association of School and College Leaders on the evidence provided by statutory consultees (part one)

1. Following the submission of evidence provided by the statutory consultees with regard to the 6th remit of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB), we wish to thank the organisations involved for the considerable thought and independence demonstrated in their responses.
2. We have focused our supplementary comments on the evidence submitted by the Welsh Government.

Matter for recommendation – pay award 2025/26

Funding/Affordability

3. We again reiterate our objection to the continued insistence of the Welsh Government to include affordability and costs within the remit of the review body. The trade union consultees are united in their stance on this; the review body, as an independent body, should be allowed to make recommendations that it deems appropriate based on the significant evidence considered as part of each remit.
4. Our view remains that it is not the place of consultees to provide costs of any proposed changes to pay and conditions.
5. This is where there is conflation between the role of the review body and the role of the Welsh Government.
6. It is the IWPRB's role to make independent recommendations on pay awards that it deems appropriate to ensure the sufficient quantity and quality of teachers and leaders.
7. It is then a political decision for the Minister for Education and Welsh Language as to the Welsh Government's ability to fund the recommendations.
8. It is ASCL's position that all pay awards should be fully funded¹ by the Welsh Government.
9. On the Welsh Government's evidence submission (Page 13), we find it disappointing to note that while schools' expenditure is up by 7.4% on the previous year, the proportion delegated directly to schools have fallen by 1.3% in the same period.
10. The evidence (Page 16) refers to the School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010, and how they '*ensure consistency to a point with the requirement for 70% of schools budgets to be set based on pupil numbers.*'

¹ This must be ringfenced funding which is not a calculated average

11. This requirement will become increasingly problematic as pupil numbers fall. Welsh Government figures indicate a fall of around 10% over the next 10 years. Year on year income will react relatively quickly to falling rolls while costs will not reduce at the same rate. If not already present, protections should be included to limit losses at individual school level. This will support the government's stated intention to ensure that resources are targeted where they are most needed.
12. School reserves are dropping through the floor (Page 17). This is unsustainable. Coupled with the exponential rise in the number of schools in deficit (2.5 x the number in 2023), it is difficult to see how many will be able to fund the required pay award without additional support.
13. At the very least we would want to see the minimum 3.8% (authority level) increase replicated in every school in 2025.
14. The significant variance in levels of funding delegated to schools across different authorities remains a concern.
15. The Welsh Government highlights that the pay award funding is not ringfenced. This means that schools may be mandated to implement pay awards for which they have not received the funding intended from the Welsh Government.
16. This is simply unacceptable, and we again call for pay award funding to be ringfenced and not a calculated average, to ensure that all schools receive sufficient funding to cover the actual pay award costs.

Commitment to no detriment

17. We have highlighted previously how the Welsh Government has tried to use a variety of definitions of the 'no detriment' principle in recent years.
18. For example, in the 2nd remit, the previous Minister for Education gave the comparison of the percentage increase to the total pay in Wales being equal to the increase in the pay bill in England. This contradicted her own letter to the IWPRB for the same remit which stated: *'Additionally, I have been very clear that teachers and leaders in our schools in Wales should suffer no detriment in their pay and conditions as a consequence of the devolution of pay and conditions.'*²
19. A letter sent by the then Minister for Education and Welsh Language during the 2023 pay talks clearly stated: *'On the 'no detriment' principle, I can confirm that should conversations in England result in an offer for teachers and leaders which is higher than any pay settlement in Wales, we would match the pay award.'*
20. The Cabinet Secretary also referenced this when going beyond the IWPRB's recommendation³ for a 4.3% increase in 2024 and matching the 5.5% increase awarded in England, stating that she was *'committed to no detriment to teachers' pay and conditions in Wales.'*
21. We are therefore concerned that the Welsh Government's evidence⁴ to the IWPRB to simply references that *'teacher salaries should not be less in Wales than they are in England'*.
22. The commitment is much broader than that and encompasses pay and conditions for teachers and leaders in Wales, and we expect this commitment to be honoured fully.

² WG evidence to IWPRB 2nd Remit

³ IWPRB 5th Report and Cabinet Secretary's Response

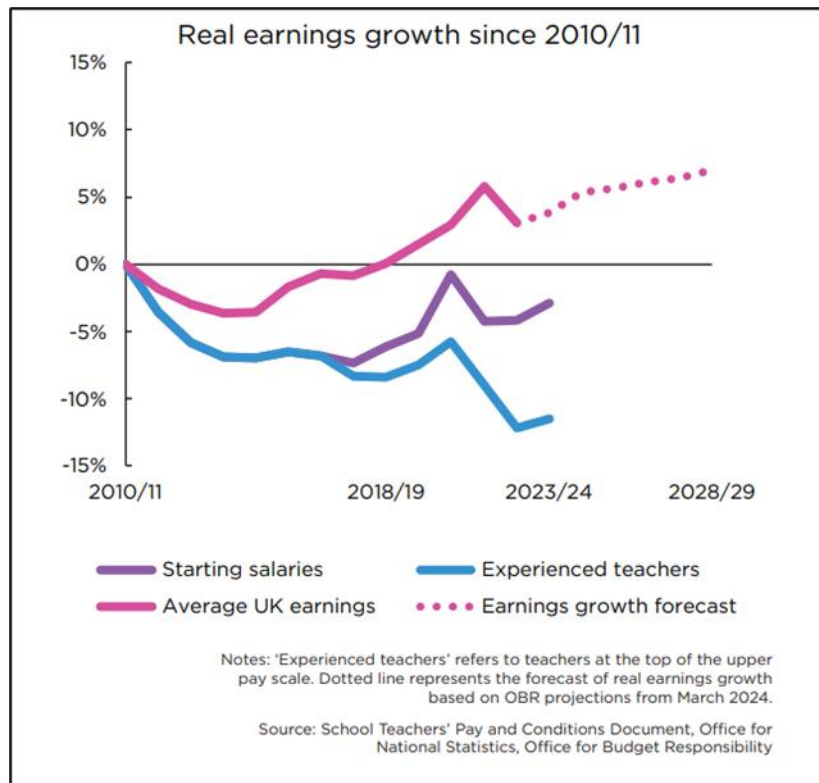
⁴ WG evidence to IWPRB 6th Remit (pg 59)

Pay award

23. Whilst we are pleased to see that there are no recommendations for targeted or differentiated pay awards in the Welsh Government's evidence, we find it extremely disappointing that the recommendations for pay awards are modelled for increases of just 1%, 2% and 3%.
24. This is exactly what the Welsh Government included in its evidence for the 2024 pay award, where, as referenced above, the IWPRB recommended a 4.3% increase, and the Cabinet Secretary went beyond this to award 5.5% to match the pay award in England.
25. These are not realistic or sufficient suggested pay increases for several reasons.
26. Any of the awards suggested would result in further real-terms damage to teacher and school leader pay.
27. Whilst we again welcome the undifferentiated approach to the pay awards, the uplifts suggested are nowhere near sufficient. They do not reflect the high levels of inflation and cost of living that our members face and would all be below-inflation increases.
28. As stated in our initial evidence, we believe that the pay award should be made up of three elements:
 - An uplift that at least keeps pace with RPI.
 - A proportion towards the restoration of real-terms cuts since 2010.
 - A proportion to compensate for the lack of flexible working opportunities available within the profession.
29. A pay increase of 1%, 2% or 3% would do none of the above.
30. This would also be out of step with the pay growth expected across the economy and also within the private sector, which will widen the gap between the private and public sectors even further.
31. Latest ONS earnings data show that annual pay growth rates remain relatively strong. For the period October to December 2024, annual growth for regular earnings (without bonuses) was 5.9%.
32. In our initial submission we provided significant evidence to demonstrate the erosion of pay experienced by the public sector since 2010, and particularly in teaching.
33. Part of this was from the NFER Teacher Labour Market 2024⁵ which said '*Public sector pay caps throughout the 2010s, the 2021/22 pay freeze and the cost-of-living crisis have meant that teachers' pay has failed to keep up with inflation since 2010/11. This has been most pronounced for more experienced teachers and school leaders. In 2023/24, despite the 6.5 per cent increase, pay for experienced teachers was 12 per cent lower in real terms than in 2010/11. Even though it was the highest rise in decades, the 2023/24 pay award has not substantially reversed the considerable pay deterioration experienced teachers have faced since 2010/11*' (See figure 1 from the report).
34. Of particular concern to us is the line which says, '*This has been most pronounced for more experienced teachers and school leaders.*'

⁵ Teacher Labour Market in England Report 2024, NFER

Figure 1



35. So, in the chart above (figure 1), the blue line for experienced teachers also applies to school leaders due to the differentiated pay awards which repeatedly targeted the main pay range.
36. Clearly an award of 3% or less would make no impact on repairing the erosion of pay experienced since 2010/11, and when compared with the earnings growth forecast would in fact widen the gap even further.
37. A significant increase is required as part of a longer-term strategy to repair the real-terms value of teacher and leader pay.
38. Although inflation has fallen from the exceptionally high levels seen in recent years, it is still far from stable and is also running well above the Bank of England target of 2%. Latest ONS figures place CPI at 3% and RPI at 3.6%.⁶
39. Furthermore, those previous high levels are baked into prices, meaning that our members will still feel the impact of the cumulative increases; all that will happen now is that those very high prices will rise more slowly than they had been doing.
40. Finally, suggesting awards of this level does not send a message to teachers and leaders in Wales that they are valued.
41. On 13 January 2025, the Cabinet Secretary issued a written statement about a strategic education workforce plan. The statement said '*All staff – leaders, teaching professionals, support staff - play a critical role in the life of the school and the progress of children and young people. It is critical to get the balance right in terms of workload, experience, as well as pay and conditions.*'
42. It is fair to say that the awards suggested certainly would not get the balance right.

⁶ [Inflation and price indices, ONS January 2025 time series](#)

43. The 2025 ‘Teacher Labour Market in England’⁷ report was published on 12 March. Below is one of the recommendations from the report:

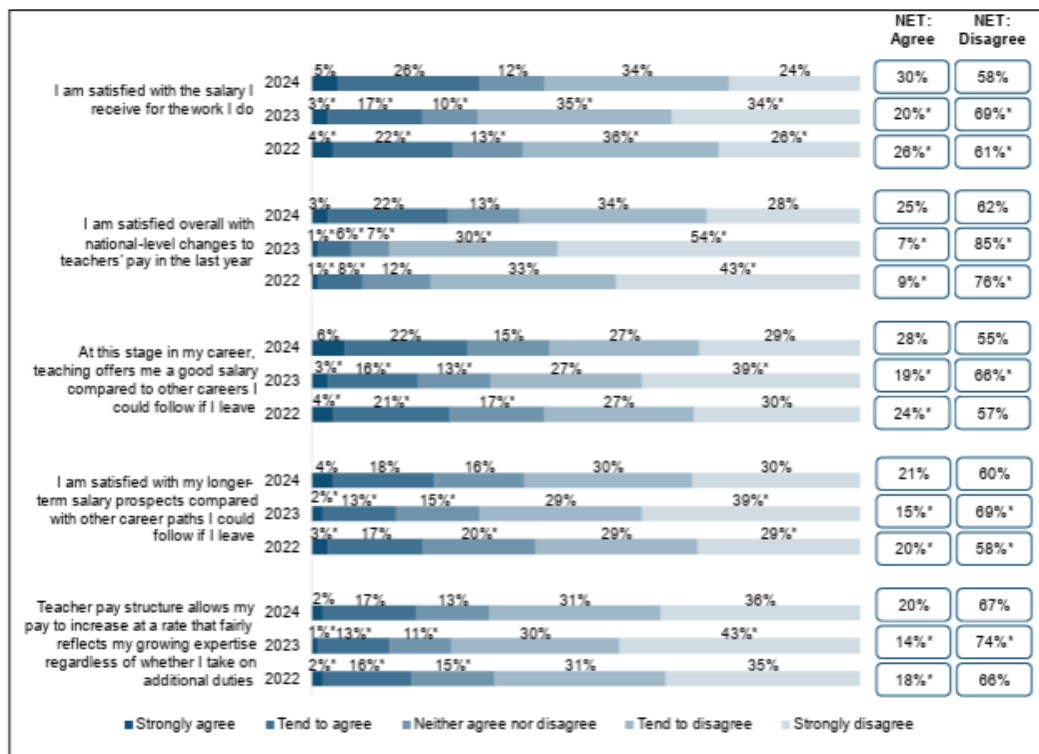
‘Recommendation 1: The School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) should recommend that the 2025/26 teacher pay award exceeds three per cent and/ or strongly signal that it intends to make future recommendations exceeding forecast rates of average earnings growth. The Government should also ensure that the Spending Review delivers rises in the Schools Budget necessary to increase teacher pay by at least 6.1 per cent from 2026/27 to 2028/29.’

44. The 6.1% increase between 2026/27 and 2028/29 is purely to match the forecast average earnings growth by the end of the current parliament, this would still do nothing to restore the erosion of pay since 2010/11, or to compensate for the lack of flexible working opportunities in the profession.

45. The report states that in 2024/25, real-terms growth in starting salaries since 2010/11 was 6 percentage points lower than average UK earnings, and for experienced teachers it was 15 percentage points lower.

46. Wave 3 of the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders (WLTL)⁸ published in November 2024, showed that the majority of respondents were not satisfied on any element of the survey questions on salary and salary prospects. Although there was some improvement on the views in 2023, this had worsened due to the industrial action ballots taking place over the 2022 pay award. The improvements only mean that figures have broadly returned to those recorded in 2022 (figure 2).

Figure 2: Teachers and leaders’ views on pay, 2022-2024



Source: Working lives of teachers and leaders survey. J1_1-5. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about pay and your job? Single response. All teachers and leaders (wave 1, 2022, n=11,177) (wave 2, 2023, n=10,411) (wave 3, 2024, n=10,020). *Indicates significant difference compared to 2024 survey.

⁷ Teacher Labour Market in England 2025, NFER

⁸ Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 3 summary report, DfE, November 2024

43. Although both reports relate specifically to England, they remain relevant to Wales for the reasons highlighted in our initial submission.
44. What is clear, is that the pay awards suggested by the Welsh Government, and the 2.8% increase proposed by the Secretary of State for Education in England, fall far short of what is needed to address the recruitment and retention issues experienced by both nations.

Impact on recruitment and retention

45. We have submitted strong and substantial evidence to show that teacher recruitment and retention have reached crisis point in Wales. We are perplexed once again that the Welsh Government maintains the view that recruitment and retention rates across Wales show little evidence of concern despite presenting empirical evidence to the contrary.
46. The Welsh Government have presented data and evidence focussing on the weakening state of teacher recruitment (Table 14 and 15, Charts 9 and 10) and yet provide no real analysis of this data – this is a general concern throughout their submission to the IWPRB.
47. On the issue of teacher retention, further worrying data is presented and even cited – for example, *‘since 2020, the proportion has increased each year. In 2023, 3.8% of teachers left the profession.’* (Page 30) but this is not used to build a case to campaign for better pay and conditions.
48. There is only a glib acknowledgement of the difficulty of recruiting into secondary subjects and Welsh-medium schools (Page 29) when the majority of statutory consultees have pointed to strong evidence the state of crisis with recruiting, for example, Maths or Science teachers. Record unfilled positions at both teacher and school leader level are not mentioned.
49. ITE provision (Chapter 5), along with advertising campaigns and student finance are given a positive spin, yet the reality shows that ITE targets have been missed across the curriculum and particularly in Welsh-Medium institutions, leaving individual schools to fight for diminishing numbers of graduate teachers. Their own presented data (Charts 14 and 15) show improvements post-pandemic in terms ITE entrants but this spike is now falling away.
50. In relation to new teachers, we would also like to voice our concerns about the haemorrhaging of young teachers leaving the profession within the first 5 years – the Welsh Government state that this is 28.5% of the profession (almost 3 in 10) without adding any layer of concern (Page 31). We have pointed out, in our evidence submission that high attrition rates amongst the profession, particularly amongst new teachers, is due to weak pay progression and excessive workload and poor wellbeing.
51. Data for older, more experienced teachers indicates much better retention and lower attrition rates (Page 30 Chart 6), but the Welsh Government fail to marry this up with the demographics (Page 28 Table 12) with over 50% of the teaching population over the age of 50. This is a ‘ticking time-bomb’ from an employment structure perspective and the absence of any meaningful presentation regarding flexible working opportunities for older workers offers little in the way of extending careers for those who wish to go part-time and take their pension.
52. With regards to Headteacher Vacancies (Section 4.7), the Welsh Government present a very simplistic synopsis regarding headteacher vacancies and fail to acknowledge the exponential growth in advertisements and unfilled posts since 2021. The delay in presenting the second remit (Leaders conditions and working hours) to May 2025 is an indication of the low priority they place on leadership recruitment and retention.

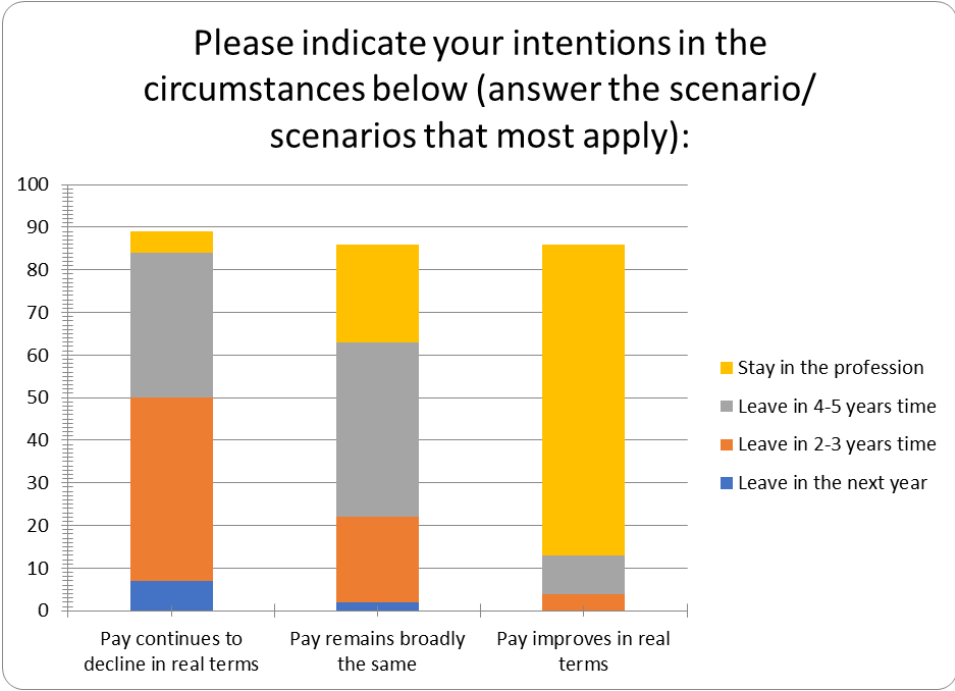
53. The argument regarding the leadership supply pipeline, on the basis of NPQH uptake, is deeply flawed in that the 48 participants will all complete the programme and successfully fill the 47 posts advertised. It is a simplistic and naïve supposition.
54. ASCL Cymru has presented strong and substantial evidence showing how poor pay differentials and unmanageable working conditions are affecting not only recruitment but leadership attrition as well.
55. The concerns regarding the overall quality of school leadership in Wales are not acknowledged in the Welsh Government's submission to the IWPRB. As we have stated in our submission, there is a wealth of academic and educational research which demonstrates that quality of leadership comes second only to high quality classroom teaching in terms of impact on pupil outcomes. Pupil outcomes do not compare well with the other planning regions of the UK⁹.
56. The Welsh Government claim that they have taken a strategic role in the management of supply teachers for maintained schools (Section 5.5) yet our members tell us that they are having to increasingly rely on agency teachers to fill long-term staffing gaps and that the availability of such back-up teachers is weak.
57. We support the concise summary by the WLGA¹⁰ when they state *'recruitment and retention of staff remain a challenge for schools and Local Authorities. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers are failing to meet their recruitment targets which are contributing to school workforce shortages. Ongoing recruitment and retention challenges include the numbers leaving posts after a few years, the age profile of heads and senior leaders is a risk, and there are fewer experienced applicants for senior posts. These issues are further exacerbated within the Welsh Medium sector.*
58. Overall, in terms of teacher recruitment and retention, the data shows that the picture is worse than it was in 2023, and that any post-Covid gains have slumped. The Welsh Government's submission is overly glossy, simplistic and does not recognise the systemic failures to recruit new teachers and hold onto qualified teachers and school leaders. Other statutory consultees present a strong and consistent set of arguments which, if left unaddressed, will lead to further staff shortages, leaderless schools and lower education standards for Welsh Children.
59. There is a strong and obvious correlation between pay and retention. In our ASCL Cymru member survey¹¹ of school leaders in September 2022, when asked if salary had any bearing on their decision to stay in or leave the profession, 67.5% of respondents in Wales said yes (36.4% said yes, a lot, and 31.1% said yes).
60. When also asked about how changes in pay impacted on those intentions, the results were as Figure 2 below:

⁹ IFS Report – Major Challenges for Education in Wales March 2024

¹⁰ WLGA evidence to IWPRB 6th Remit

¹¹ ASCL response to IWPRB 4th Report

Figure Two – ASCL member survey response, September 2022



- 61. From this evidence, it is clear to see the negative impact that further decline in pay would have, but also the huge positive impact that improving pay in real terms would have.
- 62. Therefore, there is a strong argument to suggest that pay is a key driver for school leaders in Wales.

Conclusion

- 63. It is reassuring to see that the Welsh Government shares ASCL’s position that pay awards should at least keep pace with inflation.
- 64. However, we are concerned that they do not understand the urgency to further improve pay and conditions for teachers and school leaders by making reference to affordability (Section 6.5 ‘We have set out above that any pay award leading to an increase in the total pay bill needs to be appropriate and affordable’).
- 65. By being cautious, the Welsh Government are in danger of allowing the education system to collapse and become undeliverable.
- 66. We look forward to discussing all of the pertinent issues with the IWPRB during the oral evidence session in April.

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