

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

20 September 2022

Dear Secretary of State

Community Union is privileged to engage, together with our sister unions, with the review process and the School Teachers' Review Body. We feel that the evidence we provide is essential in making clear the circumstances that teachers and leaders experience in their workplaces every day. Not only that, but we provide clear evidence of the economic, employment and social position and how they are impacting the workforce and are likely to impact the workforce in the future.

We understand that this task is vital to ensuring the Review Body has all of the necessary information, in the necessary context, to make a balanced and informed decision about teacher and leadership pay, which is why the 32nd Report makes for such frustrating reading.

Our members have been very clear that they are struggling. When 20% of respondents to our recent survey note that they are unable to cover their mortgage or household bills, it is clear there is a serious problem. The recommendations of the Review Body are insufficient to address this, they do not address the deep crisis within the teaching profession and the Government's decision to accept them without further funding adds insult to injury.

Economic picture

The circumstances in which we write continue to be anything but normal. Situations such as these require a response that is at least equal to the challenge. Teachers and school leaders rallied around and stood together with other public services throughout the pandemic. Their reward? A continuation of the austerity that has persisted in teacher pay since 2010. The real terms pay cuts inflicted on teachers and school leaders since 2010 have already, before this year's spike in inflation, resulted in real terms pay losses of around a fifth compared to pay levels had they matched inflation. And yet, rather than take action to address this in the 32nd Report, the problem has been compounded.

We noted during our oral evidence that the economic situation was just too volatile to make any long-term plans, and yet the Government's evidence resolutely stuck to the fiscal studies and funding envelope of late 2021, and now we note that inflation has reached the highest level for forty years with little indication it is slowing down.



Whilst we acknowledge that the Review Body found it “necessary and appropriate to exceed the Government’s proposed general pay increases for experienced teachers,”¹ this does not go far enough. 85% of respondents to our pay survey said that they considered this offer inadequate. It does not restore, nor even maintain teachers’ and school leaders’ pay, let alone safeguard it for the generations of teachers to come.

Proposals

The 32nd Report of the Review Body recognises that, in the light of continuing recruitment and retention problems and lower teacher pay levels against comparators, “material change is needed to address this situation.”² Yet despite compelling evidence from the teacher and leadership unions, the settlement has resulted in a real terms pay cut.

We stated in our evidence that we are broadly supportive of the concept of a £30,000 starting salary for teachers, but that this should not come at the expense of experienced teachers. We quoted that in their submission to the 30th remit, NEOST noted “the risk of an over-focus on starting pay at the expense of other teachers”, with ASCL adding, “that the increase in starting salaries to £30,000 should be matched across all pay ranges and allowances, maintaining the current differentials between points and ranges”, and Community shares these concerns.

In order to accelerate its progress towards this goal, the Department proposed an uplift of 8.9% to the statutory minimum of the Main Pay Range (MPR) in September 2022. However, even this maximum proposed uplift falls somewhat short of the current level of inflation. And, because of inflation, this much vaunted figure of £30,000, once achieved, will sadly no longer have the value it was expected to and this will need to be continually revisited if it is to maintain parity with other graduate starting salaries.

With the Review Body summarising that retention rates and current levels of recruitment are woefully insufficient to fill vacant positions and acknowledging that “on a number of measures, teachers’ pay continues to fall below that of comparators. We support the conclusion of a range of consultees that material change is needed to address this situation.”³ We must ask, what material change has been implemented? Because it seems to us that nothing is being done to staunch the flow from the teaching profession.

¹ School Teachers’ Review Body, 32nd Report, (2022). Executive Summary vi, Page 1.

² Ibid., paragraph 4.13, page 58.

³ Ibid.

Affordability

Along with our sister unions, we are resolute that the remit of the Review body should not be bound by affordability, but that this is a decision that lies wholly within the gift of the Department.

As noted earlier, the circumstances in which we write are anything but normal. The Department referred to the annual schools' costs analysis for estimates of cost pressures etc. In particular, it noted that "the core funding going to mainstream schools was expected to increase by 6.8% in 2022-23 and 2.8% in 2023-24"⁴, going on to forecast cost increases of 1.8% and 1.2% in 2022-23 and 2023-24. And whilst it is clear that the Department underestimated the cost of wider pressures such as higher energy bills, higher National Insurance contributions and meeting the National Living Wage requirements, no steps were taken either by the Department or the Review Body. Indeed, we note that despite the Department agreeing with the proposal for a larger increase, there is no additional funding granted from the Treasury to address this, leaving schools and academies to pick up the pieces.

This seeming inability to reflect the rapidly changing situation and to remain bound to the diktat of the 2021 Spending Review will cause further damage to the system and may lead to an increase in departures of experienced (and thus expensive) teachers.

Workforce Picture

The latest figures from the School Workforce Census⁵ show that almost a third of teachers leave in the first five years, almost a quarter within three years, and an eighth within a year of starting work. ITT targets continue to be missed across a range of secondary subjects and the graduate labour market recovery makes teaching look less attractive to graduates.

According to the latest ONS data, pay growth in the private sector was 5.9% in the three months April-June 2022.⁶ Growth in public sector earnings was just 1.8% - below the rate of change for the private sector and the whole economy, meaning that private sector pay growth is already ahead of the 5% pay increase proposed for most teachers. Given that last year's reason for pay restraint was in order to maintain parity with the private sector, it is wrong for this to be ignored twelve months later.

We have already expressed broad support for the Department's aspiration for a £30,000 starting salary for teachers if this also leads to commensurate increases in salary for the rest of the workforce. Combined with the derisory offer of a 3% award for all teachers and leaders above the

⁴ STRB 2022, paragraph 2.32, page 15.

⁵ Schools Workforce Census

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

⁶ Office for National Statistics Bulletin

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/averageweeklyearningsingreatbritain/latest>

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Head office: 465c Caledonian Road, London N7 9GX

tel: 020 7420 4000 • email: info@community-tu.org • www.community-tu.org



MPR⁷, the Department believed that its “proposals would retain over 1,000 extra teachers per year from 2023/24 ... in addition to expected increased recruitment through more Initial Teacher Training (ITT) applications and reduced exits after ITT.”⁸ But, even the maximum uplift proposed by the Review Body, falls somewhat short of the current level of inflation and will do little to address the recruitment and retention crisis.

Health & Wellbeing

Excessive workload is a key issue for teachers and school leaders. The Teacher Wellbeing Index indicated that over half of all education staff had considered leaving the sector due to workload. And of those who were not planning on immediately leaving, 57% reported they would like to work fewer hours than they currently do.⁹ The Review Body also note that “Working conditions, including their adverse impact on work-life balance, were seen as the main driver for decisions to leave the profession”.¹⁰

One of the solutions we explore in our *The Future of Education*¹¹ report, is that of increased PPA time. Doubling PPA time would reduce teaching loads and would allow staff to focus their efforts and the planning and feedback aspects of teaching – aspects which we know are burdensome, but which also have a significant impact on improving pupil performance. We note the Review Body have recorded our comments and are expectant that this will be seriously considered in the near future, but, yet again, we are frustrated by the lack of action on this, or indeed any steps to address workload when it is having such a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of the workforce.

As with pay, workload problems require objective and evidence-based analysis of the investment needed to secure effective solutions. Therefore, we are pleased to note that the Review Body will consider the efficacy of performance-related pay (PRP). Together with our sister unions, we are clear, PRP is a failed experiment. It has no foundation in evidence and is opposed across the profession. It needs to be abolished, not reviewed. That being said, we expect the Secretary of State to respond to the STRB’s call for a review of PRP by including this in the remit to the STRB to be issued in Autumn this year.

⁷ STRB 2022, paragraph 2.11, page 11.

⁸ Ibid, paragraph 2.12, page 12.

⁹ Jack Worth, “The Teacher Labour Market in England” (NFER, 2020). page 12

¹⁰ STRB 2022, appendix C, page 80

¹¹ Community Union | Education Section, “The Future of Education” (2020)

<https://community-tu.org/campaigns/sector-campaigns/the-future-of-education/>

Summary

In summary, we feel that this 32nd Report of the School Teachers' Review Body is a disappointment.

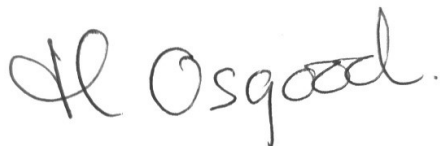
We are disappointed that the 32nd Report was once again published at the end of the summer term, despite the impact this has on the workload of already pressed school leaders, and the unpredictability that this has on staff over the summer break. We have repeatedly stated that this is totally unacceptable, and we would appreciate assurances that this practice does not persist.

We are disappointed that there have been no attempts to clarify the role of the upper pay scale nor TLRs which will continue to be abused by some employers. And that there are no steps to address workload, or to recommend changes to PPA.

And we are disappointed that the pay offer is simply unsustainable for the teachers working in our schools. We acknowledge the independence asserted by the review body when they say, "that a greater increase than the Government proposes is necessary for experienced teachers and school leaders in order to support retention".¹² But this greater increase is of scant benefit when inflation is at an all-time high.

We look forward to discussing these issues for the benefit of all the pupils, students and the whole education workforce.

Kind regards



Helen Osgood

National Officer for Education and Early Years

¹² STRB 2022, paragraph 4.27, page 60

