



Department  
for Education

# **Government response to the Workload Challenge**

**February 2015**

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## Foreword

**From Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg and Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan**



The hard work and commitment of teachers in this country help millions of pupils to learn and achieve, and develop the skills and confidence they need for life in modern Britain. The past few years have seen a lot of necessary change in education. We have huge respect for the way the teaching profession has responded and worked to raise standards for children.

But we know that too many teachers are spending too much of their time on overly detailed, duplicating or bureaucratic work which can take them away from what matters most – improving teaching and learning. We want that to change. That is why we launched the Workload Challenge, asking teachers across the country to help us review the problem and identify possible solutions. Many thousands of teachers responded, as well as school leaders, support staff and governors, and we would like to thank them for taking the time to send us their experiences, thoughts and ideas.

We want to tackle this problem so that all staff working in schools can focus on what matters most in their jobs, and so that they can continue to be passionate about giving pupils the best possible start in life. We have listened to what teachers have said to us, and we hope that this plan for action will start to address the complex issues which have led to unnecessary workload. There isn't a single answer to these problems and not everything can be achieved overnight, but we want the changes to be real, lasting, and genuinely make a difference to teachers and their pupils.



**Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP  
Deputy Prime Minister**



**Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP  
Secretary of State for Education**

## The Workload Challenge

In October 2014, the Secretary of State and Deputy Prime Minister launched the Department for Education's online Workload Challenge. The consultation ran for a month, and asked three open questions about the unnecessary or unproductive tasks teachers carry out, what strategies work in their schools to manage these, and what more should be done by government, schools or others. A [list of the actions](#) set out in this report is at Annex A.

More than 44,000 people responded to the workload challenge<sup>1</sup>, with more than 20,000 providing answers to the open questions. [An independent report](#) of the findings based on a sample of the responses<sup>2</sup> is published today. Officials from the Department for Education also read and logged every single response. You can read more about [how the evidence was collected and analysed](#) at Annex B.

The Workload Challenge asked about 'unnecessary and unproductive' workload. Teachers and leaders noted that many of the tasks they carry out in schools every day – such as marking, planning and tracking pupil progress – are not 'unnecessary' or 'unproductive', indeed they are essential parts of their jobs. It is the volume, level of duplication, bureaucracy or detail sometimes associated with these tasks that can be unnecessary or unproductive.

The focus of this report is on reducing 'unproductive or unnecessary' workload: that is, work which teachers carry out which **does not** contribute to raising standards for pupils. Tasks should not be cut or reduced if their removal would have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning, or on pupil outcomes. Similarly, it is important to note that the need for accountability and transparency in schools is not in question, nor is the government's commitment to more autonomy and freedom for schools.

## Workload Challenge findings

The reasons for unnecessary or unproductive workload are not straightforward. Ministers want to tackle both the symptoms (the unnecessary or unproductive tasks described to us by teachers), and the causes.

The teachers who contacted us gave detailed responses about the types of tasks they undertook that they believed presented the greatest opportunities to reduce workload. The most frequently cited in our sample of responses were: recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data (56%); marking (53%); lesson and weekly planning

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<sup>1</sup> 43,832 responses to the survey were logged by survey monkey, and more than 250 emails were sent to the dedicated inbox.

<sup>2</sup> An independent research company was commissioned to carry out a detailed analysis of an unbiased sample of 10% of the full responses to the Workload Challenge consultation.

(38%); administrative and support tasks (37%); attending staff meetings (26%); reporting on pupil progress (24%); setting and reviewing pupil targets (21%); and implementing new initiatives (20%). Respondents did not claim that these tasks were unnecessary, but that the way they were sometimes carried out in their schools created extra workload. 63% of sample respondents thought the excessive level of detail required made the tasks burdensome, 45% said that duplication added to the burden of their workload, and 41% mentioned the over-bureaucratic nature of the work.

As teachers recognised, many of these activities play a key role in improving pupil outcomes. However, many also felt that the way in which they were asked to carry out these tasks could have unnecessary or unproductive consequences. For example, we read about teachers being required to use ‘deep’ or dialogic marking (often with several different coloured pens) on every piece of work; being required to write detailed feedback notes in the books of pupils who were too young to read them; and recording when they had given verbal feedback (for example, with ‘VF’ and a comment written by a pupil’s work). Whilst not representative of the work of every teacher, the wide range of tasks described by the survey respondents demonstrates how much variability there can be in teachers’ workload, and indicates that there are multiple causes.

The education system is a complex network of direct and indirect relationships, with decisions being made at all levels about what happens in schools. A decision taken in one part of the system – from Government to school leadership to classrooms – can affect the other parts, sometimes in ways which are not intended.

Although there has been a move towards far greater autonomy for schools, it is still the case that decisions taken by **Government** affect what happens in schools, from curriculum change to what is inspected by Ofsted: 34% of sample respondents said that policy change at national level was a significant driver of their workload. Ministers accept that this means they must think carefully about any additional work which is caused by their decisions, and work with teachers to reduce it where they can.

**School leaders** have a direct influence on the workload of the staff in their schools. No headteacher wants to cause unnecessary or unproductive work for their teachers. However, responses suggested that this can sometimes be the effect of decisions taken in schools, in part because of pressures headteachers themselves are under. The importance attached to Ofsted’s judgements and the perceived pressures of the accountability system can lead to headteachers requiring additional written evidence from their staff, in the hope of securing a positive judgement – 53% of the sample respondents said that the burden of their workload was created by accountability or perceived pressures of Ofsted. Headteachers are responsible to their employers and governing bodies, who may ask for data in a variety of different formats at different times. They are also responsible to parents, who (rightly) expect very high standards

in schools, but are increasingly demanding of a more personalised service – for example, private meetings with teachers, emails and phone calls to teachers outside working hours. We have heard about headteachers who manage these pressures: email policies which state that parents should not expect responses to emails outside school hours (or a centralised way of dealing with these to take the burden away from teachers); or a policy of assessing the impact of any changes on teacher workload. However, we also understand that some headteachers feel less confident in managing pressures on their own workload, or that of their staff. From the sample, 51% of respondents said their workload was created by tasks set by senior and middle leaders. We want to take action to help and support them.

Finally, we heard from some **teachers** who said that they didn't feel able to challenge or address their workload, because they didn't have the tools available to them. We want to make changes at every level of the system, but also to support teachers to play an active role in managing their own and others' workload. The survey responses also contained a wide range of practical [measures schools have taken to reduce unnecessary workload](#), which are summarised at Annex C.

## Government actions to date

Over the last five years, the Department for Education has reviewed its stock of regulations and duties on schools, to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. This resulted in the removal and simplification of a number of duties, guidance, data collections and bureaucratic tasks impacting on schools. We have flagged important changes so that schools can better plan and prepare, via the termly emails to schools. We have simplified the inspection process and made it clear that neither the Department nor Ofsted expect teachers to produce written lesson plans for every lesson. These are steps in the right direction, but we know that many teachers still routinely carry out tasks they feel to be unnecessary and unproductive, and that there is more to be done.

In recent months, Ministers have discussed workload with teachers, headteachers and with the teaching unions. These discussions have led to a number of additional steps to tackle unnecessary workload, including:

- a new [Ofsted clarification document](#), which brings together a set of statements confirming facts and dispelling myths about what inspectors expect to see in schools;
- additional [departmental advice](#) designed to support schools with the appropriate use of evidence and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy when making appraisal and pay decisions;
- a small qualitative study looking at how schools respond to the current accountability system and the impact on workload; and
- a two-year review which started in October 2014, looking at the health and deployment implications of teachers working to the age of 68, and how these could be mitigated where necessary.

Other recent steps include:

- Publication of new [headteacher standards of excellence](#). Designed by an independent review group of leading headteachers and other educational professionals, the standards set out the knowledge, skills and behaviour headteachers should aspire to. Underpinning the standards is the expectation that headteachers lead by example the professional conduct and practice of teachers, in a way that minimises unnecessary workload and leaves room for high quality continuous professional development for staff.
- [The independent review of Initial Teacher Training \(ITT\)](#) by Sir Andrew Carter, published on 19 January 2015. It states that: “**ITT should set realistic expectations about what is and is not an acceptable workload and should provide some practical strategies for smart working and achieving an appropriate work/life balance**”. The report suggests what the beginnings a framework of core content for ITT might include, and reinforces the importance of including content on time management and resilience. The government has

responded to the Carter Review and set out plans to commission an independent group of sector experts to develop the framework.

- Publication of a [revised governors' handbook](#): this now highlights the existing statutory role of governors and headteachers in having regard to the work-life balance of headteachers and teachers.
- The [Department for Education](#) and [Health and Safety Executive](#) have produced advice on slimming down overly bureaucratic processes related to educational visits. This makes clear that although some level of administration and paperwork is required for trips to be effective and safe for pupils, not all of these activities require the personal attention of the visit leader. It also clarifies that written permission from parents or carers is not required for the majority of educational visits. This advice will be reviewed and kept updated on our website.

## Government response

Many of the causes of unnecessary workload are deeply entrenched in the culture and practice of schools, which means that the culture change required will not happen overnight. The actions set out in this response are designed to tackle the long term causes of unnecessary and unproductive workload – these changes will necessarily take time to work through and to have a positive impact.

We have set out the actions under three broad headings for ease of reading: actions for government; supporting school leaders; and supporting teachers as professionals. Both the causes and the actions to address them are interrelated, and should not be taken in isolation. Action must be taken at every level, from government to classrooms. A [list of the actions](#) set out in this report is at Annex A.

### 1. Actions for Government

- Department for Education to introduce a minimum lead-in time for significant accountability, curriculum and qualifications changes, and not to make changes to qualifications during a course
- Ofsted commitment not to make substantive changes to the School Inspection Handbook or framework during the academic year
- Tracking of teacher workload through biannual surveys

### National policy changes

There have been significant reforms in education in recent years. These reforms have been necessary to raise standards and help give children the best possible chances in life. However, we recognise that sometimes school leaders and staff have had to respond quickly to introduce new ways of working in their schools. Teachers have told us that schools would welcome more time to prepare for large scale reforms: 22% of respondents suggested reducing the frequency of curriculum, qualification and assessment changes would help to reduce unnecessary workload. They have also said that any communications to schools about what they need to do should be clear, easy to access and sent out in good time. Ministers recognise this, and want to ensure schools have enough time to implement policies effectively to have the best impact on pupil outcomes.

**Ministers will do more to consider the impact on schools when introducing significant policy changes.** The Department has a number of ways of engaging with staff working in schools – including through reference groups, school visits, focus groups, webchats, consultations and Ministerial visits. **As part of our engagement with school leaders and teachers on significant policy changes, the Department**

**will discuss workload implications and implementation issues**, so that when reforms are introduced they are scrutinised as thoroughly as possible, and the necessary support can be provided.

**The Department will introduce a minimum lead-in time of one year for significant changes it makes to accountability, qualifications or the curriculum.** So, for example, the Department would publish subject content and Ofqual would publish its requirements for any new qualifications at least a year in advance of first teaching (with accredited specifications and any sample assessment materials to follow later).

**We will also introduce a commitment not to make substantive changes which will affect pupils during the school year, or in the middle of a course resulting in a qualification.** We will also seek to avoid such changes while pupils are within a key stage, while recognising that there may be occasions when this will not be desirable, for example due to the risk of excessive delay or the creation of additional workload. There will, necessarily, be occasions when changes are urgently required, such as where there is clear evidence of abuse in the system which needs addressing, for example on the advice of the exam regulator Ofqual. For these cases, there will be a Ministerial “override”, which will be transparent – Ministers will publish the reasons for any overrides on an annual basis. This will in turn have implications for the frequency of changes which Ofsted needs to introduce: **Ofsted has committed not to make substantive changes to the School Inspection Handbook or framework during the academic year, except where changes to statute or statutory guidance make it necessary.**

**These changes will be set out in a new departmental protocol, which will be published shortly.**

## **Assessing teacher workload**

It will be important to track teacher workload over the coming years so that action can be taken if needed. **Therefore, we will conduct a large scale, robust survey in early Spring 2016 to find out more detail about teachers’ workload.** This survey will involve teachers in a large sample of schools, and is intended to be comparable to data from the OECD’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) about teacher workload<sup>3</sup>. The survey will be repeated every two years, in order to track the development of this important issue over time. This replaces the previous ‘workload diary survey’ which did not provide international comparisons, had an inconsistent methodology, and a poor response rate in the most recent iteration.

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<sup>3</sup> It is intended that data collected could be compared with TALIS data from 2013 which is the first year that England took part in the survey. As only lower secondary (KS3) teachers were involved, only data on this group of teachers will be comparable. As TALIS was conducted in Spring, the future research will also be conducted at this time to improve comparability.

## 2. School leadership

- Clarification from Ofsted about what is and is not required by inspectors
- Review how Ofsted reports are written to avoid creating 'fads' in certain practices
- Shorter Ofsted inspections of good schools from September 2015
- Ofsted to consider how to further simplify and shorten the handbook for September 2016, and continue to work to improve the quality of inspections
- Review of leadership training and development opportunities, including current coaching and mentoring offer

Leading a school, or a group of schools, is a challenging and rewarding role. Headteachers, with their governing bodies, are responsible for the learning of their pupils and the workload and professional development of their teachers. We are lucky to have an excellent cadre of school leaders who are committed to providing the best education for their pupils. Headteachers are best placed to make decisions about their own schools. However, the findings of the Workload Challenge suggest that in some instances, headteachers can lack sufficient confidence in the way that they make decisions which affect the workload of teachers in their schools.

### Accountability and inspection

We have been told that the 'high stakes' of the accountability system, particularly through Ofsted inspections, can lead to 'gold plating' and excessive preparation in schools which can cause extra workload. 12% of the sample respondents suggested clearer guidance on Ofsted requirements for evidencing as a solution to unnecessary workload. Ofsted's new [clarification for schools](#) document aims to set out what Ofsted inspectors do and do not expect to see, so that school staff can cut down on any unnecessary work they believe they were doing to prepare for inspections. **Ofsted will keep this document under review, adding any new 'myths and facts' as they arise. Ofsted would welcome feedback from schools if their experience of inspection does not match up to the points set out in that document, and will act if given evidence of inspectors failing to follow the guidance<sup>4</sup>.**

Ofsted has recently concluded a consultation on changes to its school inspection arrangements to be introduced in September 2015. Outstanding schools are already exempt from inspection unless their performance appears to have declined, or significant concerns are raised through, for example, qualifying complaints about schools. Under the new arrangements from September 2015, it is proposed that good schools will continue to be inspected regularly but will have a shorter inspection carried out by a single HMI for a day in a primary school; this will be two HMI for a day in a good secondary school. The intention is that these shorter inspections will be less

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<sup>4</sup> Details of how to contact Ofsted can be found [here](#).

time-consuming for schools that continue to provide a good level of education. Schools that are not yet good will continue to receive full inspections and regular monitoring from HMI until they improve. For September 2016 **Ofsted will seek to reflect the learning from these new shorter inspections in the full section 5 inspection handbook with a view to producing a shorter, simpler handbook so that schools can more easily understand how inspectors will reach their judgements.** As part of the piloting for the new framework for September 2015, Ofsted will also explore how the expectations for inspection can be made more explicit through a range of media which will in turn reduce the amount of written guidance.

It is important that inspections are carried out consistently – so that headteachers can have confidence that their school will be inspected fairly, and in the same way as other schools. Ofsted has already ended the practice of including ‘lay inspectors’ on inspection teams: **all school inspectors are now qualified teachers. Ofsted is also significantly increasing the proportion of inspection teams including serving practitioners (more than 60% in 2013/14) and from September 2015 will contract directly with school inspectors in order to better control their quality and tackle issues when they arise.** Over the Spring and Summer terms **Ofsted will be working with academics and research experts** to develop its plans to continue its drive to improve the quality and consistency of inspection still further.

Some teachers have told us that the way in which Ofsted reports are written can sometimes lead to ‘fads’ in certain practices being adopted by schools if they are particularly praised or criticised. **Ofsted has committed to reviewing a sample of reports during the spring term as part of its routine quality assurance procedures. The review will consider how recommendations are written to avoid encouraging practices that may unwittingly increase unnecessary workload.** Ofsted will discuss workload issues and the impact of inspection at its regular meetings with teacher unions in order to keep this under review.

## **Support for headteachers**

There is a rich history in England of leadership development courses for prospective headteachers. However, the development of leadership skills cannot be viewed as something that happens in isolation on training courses. In order to be effective, training must be linked to career opportunities and work in school. Current headteachers and governing bodies must take responsibility for developing the next generation of school leaders. The country’s best schools and academy chains understand this. They create career pathways and a culture of development for teachers and leaders. However, we know that some schools find it more difficult to effectively navigate the many hundreds of leadership development courses on offer.

**We will conduct a review of the current provision of leadership training and development opportunities.** We propose to work with system leaders and the

headteacher and governor associations to determine the most helpful approach and scope of such a review, but we would expect that it should consider the most effective ways for leadership development courses to support the acquisition of the skills and experience needed to be a highly effective school leader.

It is also important that existing and future headteachers have the support they need to carry out their demanding jobs and to learn from the way others work. This is especially the case for new headteachers, but also for others who want to increase their effectiveness by discussing policies and working practices with their peers. Coaching and mentoring support has been shown to be effective in education and other professions<sup>5</sup>. **As part of our review of leadership training and development provision, we will look at the current coaching and mentoring offer.**

Headteachers need to be able easily to navigate the various opportunities to access coaching and mentoring, and we call on headteachers' and teachers' associations to bolster their coaching and mentoring offers to provide school leaders with greater support. This should increase headteachers' confidence to run schools in the ways they judge provide the best outcomes for pupils whilst minimising unnecessary workload. For new headteachers in particular, **we will highlight to school governing bodies the availability of headteacher peer support** through Teaching School Alliances, chains and federations of schools and from National Support Schools, and its importance in helping new school leaders adjust to their role.

### 3. Supporting teachers as professionals

- Build an evidence base for teachers and publish in one place for ease of use
- Develop research schools and publish examples of what is working in schools
- Improve the way data is collected and shared, and establish principles for good data management in schools
- Support work to create a central repository for resources

The teachers we have heard from and spoken to are passionate about their work, and want to do the best possible job for their pupils. However, we heard from some teachers who sometimes felt they were passive recipients of extra workload and didn't feel able to challenge decisions about processes used and decisions taken in their schools. The actions described below are designed to provide teachers with the right evidence and resources to engage in informed conversations about what they are expected to do (and not do), to enable them to focus their work on what really matters for pupils, and reduce unnecessary workload for themselves and their colleagues.

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<sup>5</sup> See reports such as Evaluation of the Impact of NCTL Grants (Sheffield Hallam University, 2013)

## A better evidence base for teachers

Robust professional dialogue can only take place when there is a strong evidence base to build arguments about effective practice. **We will collect evidence and examples to support teaching and learning, and publish these together in one place** so that teachers have access to the latest thinking and can easily find what they are looking for.

The Department is already championing evidence-based teaching. One of our most important commitments in this direction has been the £135 million investment in the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to support schools to have access to robust research to help them make decisions about their schools and teaching practice. Their Teaching and Learning Toolkit is an excellent first step. The Department and the EEF are also keen to understand more about the most effective ways to support teachers to engage with and use research. This is why we invested with the EEF in the **Research Use** trials, to test the effectiveness of different ways of communicating research and engaging teachers with research findings. The outcome of the trials will help the EEF, Government and the sector to support research to have greater impact on practice and pupil outcomes.

The responses to the Workload Challenge suggest that there are gaps both in making clear the practical implications of academic research and in the availability of the evidence. In time, we hope this is a function that might be owned by the profession and undertaken by a College of Teaching. In the meantime, to help improve availability of existing evidence on the most commonly cited tasks that lead to unnecessary workload (including 'deep' marking; written lesson planning; recording, monitoring and analysing data; and reporting on pupil progress) **the EEF will review existing evidence and publish their review**. It is also likely that they will take forward a small number of projects to add to the existing evidence base. **If the evidence review reveals any gaps, the Department for Education will also commission new research on those areas and publish the results.**

The EEF are continuing to develop **the toolkit** with more practical advice, including case studies, which **will include examples of how evidence can be used to inform practice without increasing workload.**

**We are developing a small group of high quality Research Schools**, to help bridge the gap between research and practice by developing innovative practices based on the best evidence and professional expertise, and then support teachers and schools to use and implement these evidence based practices. These schools could examine particular aspects of the way schools operate which lead to unnecessary workload, such as the way they manage data, effective use of technology, and approaches to lesson planning, marking and reporting.

Some of the evidence gathering and research will necessarily take time. So **we will gather and publish examples of what is working in different schools** related to the key areas raised by teachers in the Workload Challenge – including data management, marking, planning, effective use of support staff, and how different schools encourage teachers to make best use of their non-teaching time. For example, we read in many teachers’ responses about the importance of using non-teaching time effectively, to plan and prepare great lessons. Some teachers told us about policies in their schools which enabled them to make the most of this time, like ‘blocking’ longer periods of protected non-teaching time, instead of fragmenting it, to help shared planning. Further examples of practical measures which schools have taken to manage workload are provided at Annex C.

These published examples would not be ‘best practice’, but rather a resource for headteachers and teachers to see what is happening in other schools and discuss how the ideas could be implemented in their own settings. This will be published alongside the other sources of evidence we describe above, so that everything is in one place for teachers to access.

## Sharing resources

Many people have told us that a **central repository for resources** (e.g. lesson plans, worksheets and tests) would be useful to reduce duplication of work across the country. There is an [existing system on the TES website](#), where teachers can share and download resources and adapt them to suit their needs. However, some find it overwhelming to sift through the vast selection – the curation of such a repository is essential for it to be useful to teachers. We do not believe that government is the right organisation to hold a repository of resources, nor to make value decisions about pedagogy or what works in different classrooms. Teachers are best placed to make these judgements. As such, we hope that the new professional body currently being proposed by leading teachers (the “College of Teaching”) could play an important role once it is established.

Some respondents said that high quality textbooks and ‘off the shelf’ schemes of work, especially those which provided detailed lesson plans and adaptable materials, can make a big difference to workload. However, Ministers have spoken about the fact that too few of this country’s current text books are serving pupils and teachers well, and international evidence shows much better use elsewhere – helping teachers spend less time on lesson planning and creating bespoke resources. Our maths hubs are already trialling Singapore-based textbooks in the UK, we are exploring further opportunities for the translation of world class textbooks for use in our schools, and **Ministers are continuing to press representatives of the publishing industry to drive up standards**. It is important that teachers can readily access high quality resources.

## Data management

The management of data about children's attainment and progress is an essential part of how schools conduct their business. However, many respondents told us that the way data entry and management was done in their school was burdensome and, in many cases, unnecessary. They reported spending hours recording data on multiple programmes, analysing, and having to report in different ways for different audiences. Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data was the reported as being burdensome by a majority (56%) of the sample respondents, and 25% suggested reducing the need for data inputting and analysis as a solution to unnecessary workload. We think it is important that there is a shared understanding of what data is necessary from and within schools, and how it should be used, so that headteachers can take appropriate decisions about effective and efficient data collection and management in their schools. **We will establish a data management panel, to work with teachers and others to come up with principles for good in-school data management, including how pupil progress is monitored.**

**We will also review existing evidence about monitoring and analysing data, as well as what data is most useful and necessary to improve pupil outcomes,** and will commission new research if there are any gaps in knowledge.

The Department for Education is exploring how we collect information from schools and local authorities, and how data is transferred between schools and other education settings. The Information Standards Board (ISB) for education, skills and children's services<sup>6</sup> is developing standardised data definitions for the education sector, to make data easier to use and reduce the need for it to be entered repeatedly for different purposes. We want to ensure that data collection systems are modern and flexible, and that we support education technology innovation in this area. **We are looking at ways to reduce the administrative burden that the collection of data can create, enabling data to be sent to where it is needed, when it is needed, with minimum effort. It is our intention to work with a small group of volunteer schools to test out some new approaches in Spring this year.**

The Workload Challenge showed that teachers have a complex relationship with Information and Communications Technology in their schools. Where it is used well it can make a huge difference to workload – teachers told us about data systems which enable them to 'enter once and use many times', computer programmes and apps which help with tracking pupil progress or marking tests. However, others said that the ICT used in their schools is cumbersome, prone to failure, or very basic.

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<sup>6</sup>The ISB, jointly sponsored by DfE and BIS, is the sector-wide authority for information standards. Its remit is to facilitate efficient sharing of data across the sector by developing and approving information standards to aid front line delivery, improve efficiency and reduce costs.

The Education Technology Action Group (ETAG), an independent panel of experts, has developed **recommendations for government, the education sector and industry to overcome the barriers to the effective use of technology in education.** [These recommendations](#) include a strong focus on how infrastructure needs to develop to enable teachers to use technology effectively, how teachers can access high quality CPD and the impact that technology will have on assessment and accountability. Whilst the choice of school technology is rightly a matter for schools themselves, it clearly has a strong part to play in reducing teacher workload, so the **Department is carefully considering the group's recommendations.**

## Supporting teaching and learning

Much of the additional day-to-day support that was requested from respondents was to enable more effective delegation of tasks. In many cases teachers told us that their **teaching assistants** were invaluable in helping them to plan and deliver high quality lessons to all pupils, as well as supporting them with the learning environment. Others spoke of dedicated **data managers, pastoral staff and administrative staff.** Conversely, many teachers said they felt more effective use of support staff would make a huge difference to their workload, but they felt that teaching assistants and other support staff weren't always being well deployed in their schools.

We are undertaking [a review of Teaching Assistants' standards.](#) **We will ensure that the results of the review reflect workload implications, for both teachers and teaching assistants,** and consider the effective deployment of teaching assistants by headteachers. The review will be published in the coming weeks.

More widely, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is concluding an independent review of the evidence base on effective deployment of teaching assistants. **The EEF will shortly publish a guidance report for schools summarising the existing research and offering evidence-based guidance on ways in which teaching assistants and teachers can work together more effectively.**

There are also a number of apprenticeships available that could be offered in schools for clerical, financial and administrative roles, and we would suggest that schools consider this route when considering workforce issues and building capacity. [Government advice on employing apprentices](#) provides more information.

## Conclusion

Ministers have spoken widely about the importance of conducting the Workload Challenge, and would like to thank all the teachers, middle and senior leaders, headteachers, governors, support staff and others who responded to the survey. The Department has been able to build the largest body of evidence it has ever had on the issue of workload, and officials and ministers will use this to inform the policy development process, and ensure that significant policy changes are better implemented in schools. Unnecessary workload must be addressed at every level, to give teachers the time and space to deliver the best lessons for their pupils.

This response is part of a wide range of activities which should help to reduce the amount of unnecessary and unproductive work teachers do. We hope that the introduction of the College of Teaching – to be established and run by the profession, for the profession – will be an important step. As the evidence base grows, and teachers have better access to it, we hope action in schools will result in more efficient practice, and that those ideas are shared around the system. Tracking teacher workload over the coming years will help us assess the impact of policies and actions, and act on the findings. Emerging technologies are developing at pace and will affect the way schools run, supporting teachers in their work. We hope that the government's response will make a difference as part of these wider developments, and we look forward to working with the profession to make sure those dedicating their lives to children's learning have the support they need.

## Annex A: government action plan

	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>When</b>
1	<p>National policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfE protocol setting out minimum lead-in times for significant curriculum, qualifications and accountability changes and not changing qualifications mid-course</li> <li>• Ofsted commitment not to change the inspection handbook or framework during the school year</li> </ul>	From Spring 2015 and ongoing
2	<p>Assessing teacher workload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-annual survey to find out more detail about teacher workload over time</li> </ul>	First survey carried out in Spring 2016
3	<p>Actions for Ofsted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification from Ofsted about what is and is not required by inspectors</li> <li>• Review of how Ofsted reports are written to avoid creating 'fads' in certain practices</li> <li>• Shorter Ofsted inspections of good schools from September 2015</li> <li>• Ofsted will consider how to further simplify and shorten the handbook for September 2016, and work to improve the quality and consistency of inspections</li> </ul>	From Spring 2015
4	<p>Support for school leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of leadership training and development opportunities, including assessment of current coaching and mentoring offer</li> </ul>	From Summer 2015
5	<p>A better evidence base for teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build an evidence base for teachers and publish in one place for ease of use</li> <li>• Develop research schools and publish examples of what is working in schools</li> <li>• Support work to create a central repository for teaching and learning resources</li> </ul>	From Spring 2015
6	<p>Data and ICT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfE will establish a panel to develop principles for good data management in schools</li> <li>• DfE will work with the EEF to review existing evidence about monitoring and analysing data, and commission new research if there are any gaps in knowledge</li> <li>• DfE will look to improve how data is shared between schools and from schools to employers/government</li> </ul>	From Summer 2015

# Annex B: collecting and analysing the evidence

## 1. Consultation and analysis

The Workload Challenge consultation on the TES website ran between 22 October and 21 November 2014, and asked three open questions:

1. Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time. Where do these come from?
2. Send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload – what works well in your school?
3. What do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload – by government, by schools or by others?

43,832 responses to the survey were logged by Survey Monkey. Of these, 20,533 respondents provided substantive answers to one or more of the three key survey questions, generating over 57,000 separate answers. We also received over 250 emails, which received personal responses. It should be noted that respondents to the survey were self-selecting, so the results should not be read as being representative of the overall school workforce.

An independent research company was commissioned to carry out a detailed analysis of an unbiased sample of 10% of the full responses to the Workload Challenge consultation, equating to 1,685 survey respondents<sup>7</sup>. The sample was broadly representative of the type of institution and type of job role of the whole survey cohort. The researchers developed a coding framework of key themes with which to classify each response. The [full report of their findings](#) has been published today.

In addition to the independent report, the Department for Education carried out an internal exercise to read and log every substantive response to the survey. Teachers had taken the time to write in, and we felt it was important to read all of their responses. Nearly 60 members of the Department volunteered to read, analyse and log the responses and emails. They highlighted responses which did not fit into the identified key themes, as well as noting possible case studies and good practice examples. This provided an additional level of analysis, and a wider benefit to the Department.

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<sup>7</sup> The sample was taken from those respondents who answered **all three** of the substantive survey questions. The sample also excludes respondents from sixth form colleges, as these are being considered separately.

## **2. Qualitative study on accountability and workload**

The Department for Education completed a small qualitative study in the autumn term of 2014 to look at how schools currently evidence their work for accountability purposes and the impact this has on workload. This involved visits to schools to interview headteachers and teaching staff, focus groups and a review of relevant research. Schools took part on the understanding that their responses would be confidential, so we will not be publishing a separate report from this exercise. The evidence from the study, which reflected similar themes to the key findings of the workload challenge, has been discussed alongside the results of the survey and used to inform this action plan.

## **3. Discussing the findings**

Ministers and officials discussed the findings of the workload challenge and qualitative study with trade unions, and with a group of teachers, headteachers and support staff (drawn from existing departmental reference groups) acting as a 'sector challenge panel'. We also invited a number of teachers and headteachers who responded to the Workload Challenge survey to a focus group at the Department to discuss their suggested solutions in more detail. All of these discussions, and the results of the analysis, fed into this action plan.

## **4. Responses from other groups**

The vast majority of respondents to the workload survey were classroom teachers and leaders in mainstream primary and secondary schools, including academies, and the findings strongly reflect their views. In the coming weeks we will also be conducting further analysis to better understand the key issues raised by those members of support staff who responded to the survey. When these results are available we will discuss them with support staff associations.

We received a small number of responses from teachers working in Further Education (FE) and have shared these with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) as the lead department for these organisations. Many of the issues raised for FE were very similar to those in schools. BIS will discuss these findings further with FE representative bodies. This includes the Education and Training Foundation, which is the independent sector-led organisation responsible for improving standards in FE.

## **Annex C: strategies for tackling workload in schools**

Many respondents gave examples of the practical measures their schools have taken to reduce unnecessary workload. We would encourage teachers and headteachers to discuss whether any of these ideas could help reduce workload in their schools.

### **Curriculum and planning**

- Reduction in written lesson plans (e.g. introduction of the '5 minute' lesson plan).
- Shared / longer blocks of protected non-teaching time to plan lessons and mark work.
- Collaboration (including across phases and schools) to plan / develop new schemes of work, and dedicated time in subject / phase teams to find and share resources.
- 'Off the shelf' schemes of work with detailed lesson plans and adaptable materials.

### **Assessment and data (reporting / monitoring)**

- More peer and self-assessment.
- Sparing use of more detailed marking and written feedback, appropriate to children's age and stage.
- Effective use of whole school data management system / registers (including training for staff).
- Use of software for marking, homework and tracking pupil progress.
- Use of tablets for planning, assessment and recording lesson notes.

### **Support and professional development**

- Effective use of support staff e.g. removing administrative tasks from pupil-facing roles, employing attendance officers and pastoral support workers, sharing data managers with partner schools.
- Peer observations with specific focus to prompt professional dialogue.
- Teacher-led CPD with focus on improving practice rather than disseminating information.

### **School administration and management**

- Minimising number/length of meetings.
- Use of email for information, allowing meetings to focus on learning and teaching.
- Incorporating staff work-life balance into the school development plan.
- Use of online tools for administrative processes (e.g. logging behaviour issues, organising school trips, updating school policies).
- Prioritising tasks that have the greatest impact on pupils' learning.



Department  
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