

Planning and Resources Review Group: Terms of Reference

Context

1. Over-bureaucratic lesson planning (and monitoring of this), was raised by the majority of primary school teachers responding to the Workload Challenge (51%), as well as 27% of secondary school teachers. Some respondents to the Workload Challenge 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.

2. Many respondents noted that the tasks they undertook were not 'unnecessary' or 'unproductive', rather they recognised that they were essential parts of teaching. However, it was the level of detail (63% of respondents); duplication (41%) and bureaucracy (41%) that occurred during these tasks that they felt were the 'unnecessary' or 'unproductive' aspects of them.¹

3. Ofsted have reinforced the point that they do not expect plans to be written in any particular way in their 'clarification to schools' document. This is also contained in the School Inspection Handbook (September 2015, paragraph 28)² where it is made clear that inspectors are interested in the effectiveness of planning rather than the form it takes.

Purpose of the Group

4. This group will consider the impact of approaches to lesson planning and use of resources in schools, and how effective practice can raise standards for pupils, without creating unnecessary workload. The group will meet over a period of up to 6 months, and will be asked to make specific recommendations for action at the end of this period, with a core aim of reducing the overall workload burden on teachers and improving efficiency.

5. In relation to planning and resources in schools, in particular to textbooks, the group will:

- agree a statement of intent to guide their work, drawing on the purpose of the group and the scope of the work;
- review current practices in long, medium and short term planning;
- review the available research in this area, including any international evidence from a range of high performing jurisdictions, and assess any guidance that influences behaviour in schools;
- review the approach to subject content resources used in the best performing schools which also demonstrate effective practice regarding teacher workload, in the state and independent sectors;

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-challenge-analysis-of-teacher-responses>

²<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

- identify effective practice of ‘what works’ in planning, and identify what supports the development of successful practice in schools in the state and independent sectors;
- consider approaches which could reduce the overall workload burden on teachers whilst supporting teacher professionalism and judgement; and
- consider ways in which the outputs of the group can be disseminated and the role for government and its agencies in doing this.

Scope

6. The group will look at practice in schools in England, drawing on evidence from the workload challenge survey results and the knowledge of the members of the group. They will consider any relevant research evidence and examples of successful practice which helps to maximise the impact of time spent planning while minimising the effects on teacher workload.

7. The group will make links to the marking and data management review groups and to developments which might impact on schools’ approaches to planning and resources. The group will also, through the Secretariat and the Chairs, link to the Steering Group convened by the Publishers Association and the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) which is working with the Department to establish industry-wide guidelines for quality textbooks.

8. The group will report regularly to Ministers and to the Department’s teacher and head teacher union roundtable.

Meetings

9. It is expected that the panel will be in place for up to six months. Participation will take the form of face-to-face meetings. These meetings will usually take place in London and be hosted by the department. All correspondence for meetings will be sent via email. The Secretariat will circulate an agenda and papers before each meeting.

10. Discussion at the meetings will be confidential. No public statements on the content of the meeting which could be attributable to an individual member should be made, through any medium, by any member of the group.

Outputs

11. The group will report on progress during the course of their work, and will aim to present a report to the Secretary of State and Ministers in Spring 2016. These should include:

- a set of principles for lesson planning and use of resources in schools to ensure effective and efficient practice, raise standards for pupils and remove unnecessary workload; and
- recommendations about planning and the use of resources and consider whether guidance about effective practice and/or case studies about what works in schools might be necessary.

12. The recommendations must be approved by Ministers before publication.