



Department  
for Education

# **Ways to reduce workload in your school(s)**

**Tips and case studies from school  
leaders, teachers and sector experts**

**July 2018, updated March 2019**

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## Introduction

This document was developed by school leaders, teachers, and experts in education technology and initial teacher education, following consultation with schools across the country. It provides tips to remove unnecessary workload and make policies and processes in schools more efficient, including through the effective use of technology. It also links to case studies of how schools have changed their practice.

The document supplements the materials in the Workload Reduction Toolkit, and builds on the principles and recommendations of the 'Making Data Work' report from the Workload Advisory Group and independent review groups on marking, planning and data management.

This document is aimed at school leadership teams, including executives of MATs and other groups of schools, but may also be helpful for governors, middle leaders, teachers and support staff. It takes up to 15 minutes to read. The linked case studies take an additional 15 minutes to read. The hints and tips are not intended to be exhaustive and there is no requirement for schools to use them.

This document was reviewed and revised in spring 2019. We would welcome any comments or suggestions on how to improve this guidance from those working in schools or the education sector. please contact: [workload.solutions@education.gov.uk](mailto:workload.solutions@education.gov.uk).

## Using technology effectively<sup>1</sup>

**Always put teaching first. Technology should not be the starting point for any decisions.** Make your decisions based on what you want to achieve not what the technology can do, and look for the simplest solutions.

**Leaders need to champion the use of the technology, and mandate if necessary.** Messages need to come from the top so that everyone can see that this is viewed as important. Find some tasks that everybody does and make sure these are part of a new system so that people have to go there.

**Time investment in planning is key.** Plan out carefully what you want to achieve and by when. Be realistic in your expectations. Time spent at the implementation stage is important and cannot be rushed. Consider conducting a small-scale trial, seek out teacher feedback, and gradually scale-up the implementation. A key driver for teachers adopting technology is seeing the benefits for other teachers first.

**Winning people over is important.** Find out who the champions in your school are and look for ways to use their knowledge and enthusiasm to support others on their journey. Address why some people view technology as a problem. What is it that has created this feeling and how can you address it?

**Share the vision and actions with parents and carers.** Provide information and offer training where possible to understand the tools being used and how parents can be involved in the process.

**If using cloud-based services, robust infrastructure including sufficient broadband capacity and sitewide wi-fi is vital.** Survey existing physical and wireless network infrastructure, broadband provision and pupil devices and ensure that these have the capacity to manage the expectations of the cloud-based approach.

**Be aware of the time taken for warranty repairs to be undertaken.** Equipment not working can be a massive barrier. If budget allows, it is useful to have 'hotswap' identical devices ready to stand in whilst broken devices are being repaired.

**Audit staff training needs and consider different development needs.** Some may prefer face-to-face training, others online content and fewer meetings. Signpost people to how-to videos, either on sites such as YouTube, or simply made with a tablet or other device. After a CPD event, have a 'go to' person who can support those that need it.

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<sup>1</sup> Further case studies can be found [here](#).

## Feedback and marking<sup>2</sup>

**Consider why you are marking and review your feedback policy.** Use the principles and recommendations from the report on [eliminating unnecessary workload around marking](#) to review your practice and consider carrying out a [feedback and marking workshop](#) with staff. Ignore myths that suggest that spending hours marking makes a better teacher, and that writing pages of feedback makes you more effective: concentrate on feedback which is meaningful, manageable and motivating.

**Consider a range of feedback techniques which are proportionate.** Not all feedback has to be written. Evaluate the time spent on marking by all staff and discuss whether this is proportionate. Consider live class feedback (e.g. audio, photo, video) which can be recorded and added to electronic versions of pupils' work. Tools such as Tapestry, 2Build a Profile and Free Flow Info also allow teachers to match evidence to assessment criteria, include ongoing feedback to parents and can reduce the number of face-to-face meetings. Make sure the type of feedback, language and style are suitable for pupils.

**Build in live sampling.** Select a sample of work and mark it in front of pupils, e.g. use a visualiser, so students see how work is corrected, enabling them to then make amendments to their own work. Consider ways to display content on a tablet or laptop by mirroring images via tools such as Apple Air Play, Google Chromecast and more.

**Use “sampling for planning”.** Focus on a sample of pupils' work after a lesson and use the understanding gained about progress to inform the planning of the subsequent lesson(s).

**Use low stakes and self-marking tools.** For example: Kahoot, Quizlet, Google Forms and Diagnostic Questions can save teachers time. Prepared questions can be saved and shared, allowing teachers to re-use or adapt the content rather than create something from scratch.

**Use feedback codes where appropriate.** These can be used to draw pupils' attention to common strengths and areas to develop to reduce the need for lengthy responses.

**Prioritise key pieces of work.** Use schemes of work to identify which pieces of work should be prioritised for more detailed feedback.

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<sup>2</sup> Consider [example policies from primary and secondary schools](#) and other [case studies](#).

## Curriculum planning<sup>3</sup>

**Evaluate your curriculum planning.** Start with the principles from the [report on eliminating unnecessary workload around planning and teaching resources](#) to review your planning and consider running a [curriculum planning and resources workshop](#). Consider if your existing plans are clear in relation to pupil progress and attainment in all the relevant subjects, are fully resourced with sequenced lesson planning and high quality curriculum materials, and planned over well-defined blocks of time.

**Plan efficiently.** If developing new schemes of work or revising existing ones, establish a team or staff pairs led by more experienced colleagues. Also consider specialisms and strengths when allocating responsibility. Start with agreed learning objectives over blocks of time, plan sequences of lessons to achieve these objectives and establish the most effective way that pupils will be assessed.

**Choose high quality resources.** First consider the use of commercially produced resources (e.g. textbooks, print and digital resources, subscription services). Assess whether they meet most or all of your curriculum needs, are sufficiently high quality and constitute good value for money. If you decide to develop or adapt resources, factor in teachers' time in searching, development, trialling and quality assurance. Agree on your most trusted sources as a school or department for particular subjects. Make standard tools available to staff/pupils as part of the school's cloud-based platform. Make use of curriculum resources available under the DfE's [copyright licences for schools](#).

**Plan collaboratively and share.** Timetable PPA at a common time where possible, and consider curriculum planning across schools. Create an online user group or shared drive for high quality resources. Use collaborative software such as GoogleDocs, OneDrive or OneNote to enable you to work on the same document at the same time and consider Cloud services such as G-Suite. Agree file naming conventions and folder structures so you can make best use of folders and can find what you want easily.

**Ensure resources and IT systems are accessible.** High quality resources that form part of schemes of work should be accessible at all times, or booking systems in place for physical resources. Having a facility within the school, phase or department to register additional needs as an ongoing document will support teachers in developing and maintaining this.

**Remove the need for paper-based homework planners.** Upload homework to an online platform where pupils and parents can view homework tasks, whilst reducing printing costs and lost homework sheets at the same time.

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<sup>3</sup> Further case studies can be found [here](#).

## Data management and pupil interventions<sup>4</sup>

**Plan and review your data collections.** Use the principles from the [‘Making Data Work’ report from the Workload Advisory Group](#) and consider running a [data management workshop](#) with staff. Ask yourself what the purpose is, what the most efficient and proportionate process is, and how you can ensure the data collected is reliable and valid. Review pastoral data as well as attainment and progress data.

**Consider the design of your systems.** Most data collection systems can now work together so it is important that teachers only enter pupil data once: let the systems do the rest. Consider how many times items of data are handled, how this can be reduced and if technology can support this. If you require it, look for systems which suit your needs, e.g. a system providing data analysis which suggests next steps for teaching or intervention; or a system providing immediate alerts to staff on sensitive issues.

**Consider the number of attainment data collection points.** The Making Data Work report advises that school and trust leaders should not have more than two or three attainment data collection points a year. Interrogate the validity of data collected on pupil attainment and progress, including target setting and predictions.

**Review governors’ use of data.** Making Data Work states that governing boards should normally be prepared to receive information in whatever form it is currently being used in the school. School and trust leaders should agree with their board what high-quality data they need, and when – see [workshop for Governance Boards](#).

**Consider the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR),** in place from 25 May 2018. The GDPR means all organisations handling personal data, including schools, need to have the right governance measures. The [data protection toolkit for schools](#) helps schools to develop processes and respond appropriately to data breaches. You can also watch the [GDPR guidance for schools video](#).

**Develop staff confidence and ability to manage data to inform interventions.** Consider training for staff on the use of relevant systems and the purpose of data collections and monitoring. Provide support for inexperienced staff new to interventions, saving time in planning and maximising impact.

**Conduct an intervention ‘health check’.** Use evidence based, structured interventions with low impact on staff time. Regularly monitor the allocated time commitment of each intervention and plan the frequency, time per session and total duration of the intervention. Be prepared to discard interventions if they are not proven to work.

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<sup>4</sup> Further case studies can be found [here](#).

## Communications

**Consider why you are communicating.** Think about all the communications you make in the day and review if they are making a difference – if not, stop. Establish and publish a [communications policy or protocol](#) planned around pinch points in the year. Start small with little activities that chip away at the time in a working day. Find out which areas of the school generate the most paper, slips or forms and consider if they are necessary, or if alternative systems can be used. Consider running a [communications workshop](#).

**Review staff meetings.** Reduce meeting times. Have clear start and end times with timed agenda items. Consider the number of meetings in place each week and provide flexibility. Have a nominated person look over departmental/phase/staff meeting agendas and reject them if they are not focused on pedagogy. Consider using tools like Google Forms to book meetings online.

**Use a variety of communication channels with parents and carers.** Add frequently asked questions or ‘decision tree’ options to the school website to direct users, e.g. a short email may be as appropriate as a phone call, or a phone/video call could replace a face to face meeting. Apps and software can be used to send letters and reminders home, as well as collecting forms, making payments and booking appointments.

**Consider use of email.** Set out times after which staff should not check, send or reply to work emails (whilst being mindful of urgent needs, for example, in relation to safeguarding). Use distribution lists and functions such as out of office messages and delayed delivery. All emails should have a descriptive heading with a status assigned to it to signify its urgency. Consider a daily/weekly bulletin using cloud services, and alternative messaging tools to reduce emails or categorise messages. See [example email protocol from St Edward’s RC/CoE School](#).

**Review the number and effectiveness of parental events.** Consider the impact on pupil progress of each event as well as attendance from parents, and balance the range of events on offer. Monitor staffing at events – decide on the supervision required and create a rota to reduce the number of events that staff are required to attend. Agree with staff what is a reasonable number of out-of-hours events (taking into account directed time) and prioritise your programme around the capacity you have.

**Review your approach to written reports.** Assess the time and impact of current practice. Explore alternatives to written reports. Compare your current approach with the [requirements for reporting to parents](#) and the considerations in the Making Data Work report. Consider how reports could be made more succinct (e.g. limiting the word count) and meaningful (e.g. focusing on key strengths and areas for development), as well as how the right technology can help to automate reporting where possible.

## Managing change<sup>5</sup>

**Plan ahead, identify and eradicate 'pinch points'.** Time the calendar production in advance of the new school year. Ask a range of staff to review and provide feedback from their perspectives before finalising the calendar. Consider running a '[planning a yearly calendar](#)' workshop. Use assessment and examination calendars to support the school calendar and cross reference against these<sup>6</sup>. Include assessment points and data collection cycles for the year, and check that data will be collected and processed in time for use. Review these points regularly to ensure that all data drops are necessary, and that data is collected when it will be most efficiently used. Share monitoring events, CPD and meeting schedules well in advance. Give regular updates and advance notice of evening and after school events to parents/carers and staff.

**Implement changes in a structured and staged manner.** Ensure there is adequate time at the planning stage when preparing to make changes, and collaborate with staff on proposals. Make fewer, more strategic decisions. Decide if other existing practices can be stopped or streamlined. Don't make change for the sake of change. Make sure that changes have a specific focus linked to improvement priorities, and have a clear, logical implementation plan. Consider what and when to stop and adopt a one-in, one-out rule for new tasks, encouraging consistency and sustainability.

**Consider how the governing board can support change management.** Consult with the board to agree their involvement. Suggest a [workshop for the board](#) to review and streamline workload and support workload reduction across the school(s).

**Create a shared understanding of the process.** Introduce new skills, knowledge and structures with explicit up-front training, structured collaboration and complementary coaching and mentoring. Build leadership capacity by developing teams. Encourage staff to collaborate with other colleagues in school teams and with colleagues from other schools and external agencies to share and distribute workload.

**Communicate your changes.** Work with governors, parents and carers, and pupils to make sure that the whole school community understands the reasons for change.

**Ask if you do not understand why a process or practice is carried out.** Be clear about how a process or practice is leading to positive impact on pupils. Suggest alternatives if you think better ones exist.

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<sup>5</sup> Further case studies can be found [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-calendar> and <https://www.jcg.org.uk/exams-office/key-dates-and-timetables/>

## Performance management

**Review and streamline your performance management processes.** Link school development priorities to staff appraisal objectives and refer to [updated DfE advice on teacher pay](#) and [appraisal](#) (March 2019).

**Agree Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic objectives.** Make sure teachers have goals that are within their control, that are closely tied to genuinely actionable behaviours, and that are aspirational yet achievable. Objectives and performance management discussions should not be based on teacher generated data and predictions, or solely on the assessment data for a single group of pupils. Note that Ofsted inspectors do not expect school leaders to set teacher performance targets based on commercially produced predictions of pupil achievement, or any other data set, from which they would then hold teachers to account.

**Ensure evidence gathering is proportionate.** Consider the burden of gathering evidence for performance management, and whether the approach is proportionate for all staff, including trainees and newly or recently qualified teachers. Staff should not be expected to provide separate evidence for pupil progress and outcomes – it should be collected from existing data sources. Agree clear success criteria for each objective so that staff are clear what they need to be able to evidence at the end of the cycle.

**Ensure pay progression is fair and robust.** Do not make pay progression dependent on quantitative assessment data, (e.g. test outcomes) for a single group of pupils. Performance management targets can be set in relation to robust assessment data, however, these targets should not be used in isolation and other factors should also be considered when decisions are being made about pay progression.

**Involve staff in assessing their performance.** Use professional dialogue to reduce the workload of the reviewer and allow staff to take ownership of their personal and professional development. Enable staff to collaborate on activities and prepare for review meetings. Ensure that reviewers manage similar numbers of staff, and provide directed time to conduct reviews. Use light-touch interim reviews where appropriate to ensure that staff are on track to achieve objectives, avoiding build-up at the end of the cycle.

**Create clear protocols and expectations.** Agree protocols for staff monitoring, taking into account the impact on workload of these processes. Include these on the school calendar and stick to the timescales.

## Managing behaviour<sup>7</sup>

**Review and, where appropriate, streamline the behaviour policy and practices** alongside the principles from '[Creating a Culture](#)', Tom Bennett's report on effective behaviour management, and consider using the [managing behaviour workshop](#).

**Provide highly consistent behaviour management practices** throughout the school. Communicate these effectively to all staff, pupils and parents. Ensure all staff in the school fully understand them, and their role in implementing them. Provide regular training to help embed a consistent approach.

**Focus support at an early stage.** Workload can increase if issues escalate so behaviour can be addressed more effectively when support is given as early as possible. Consider points in the year when, where and with whom behaviour might be more challenging and focus support on these areas, for example, when exclusions peak and take action to mitigate.

**Consider whether a central point in the school could be responsible for out-of-class behaviour management, or tracking and understanding behaviour data.** This can allow patterns to be spotted and reduce the burden on teachers. Consider, for example, running centralised detentions where possible to free up teachers' time and to allow data to be managed from a single point.

**Review or implement simple systems to log behaviour incidents, detentions and other pastoral information** during the normal working day. Use appropriate technology to support straightforward data entry, issuing detentions and reporting behaviour incidents to parents to avoid duplication for different audiences.

**Consider the amount of text that is logged when recording behaviour incidents.** Consider who and what the text will be used for whilst ensuring key information is still recorded, and ask whether it will make a difference. Decide the amount of text needed for more serious and complex incidents to ensure there is a proportionate amount of detail. Behaviour codes should be aligned with the behaviour policy and limited in number. Use as few codes as possible to streamline data entry - simple systems such as Red, Amber and Gold or C1, C2 and C3 have been used by schools.

**Manage expectations of parents and carers** about the level of detail to expect when reporting behaviour incidents, through the behaviour policy or other communications with parents. Consider how pupils, rather than the teacher, can be responsible for their behaviour, for example, by informing their parents and carers and writing reports for their teacher about their behaviour.

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<sup>7</sup> Further practical tools can be found [here](#).

## Additional materials and support

The [workload reduction toolkit](#) contains materials for identifying workload issues in your school(s) and taking action to manage them.

The 'Making Data Work' [report](#) from the Workload Advisory Group includes principles and considerations for school leaders in relation to effective and efficient data management, building on the report from the independent workload review group on [data management](#).

Reports from independent teacher workload review groups on [marking](#) and [planning and resources](#) provide principles and recommendations to help eliminate unnecessary workload.

[Project reports](#) and a [summary report](#) from collaborative projects into reducing workload have also been published.

[Ofsted school inspection guidance](#) explains what inspectors do and do not expect to see when they inspect a school.

The main points from the reports and Ofsted myths and facts have been highlighted in [a pamphlet and poster for teachers](#) endorsed by DfE, teaching unions and Ofsted.

Consider case studies of setting up a [wellbeing group or protocol](#) and options for external support such as:

- the [Education Support Partnership](#) offer (see below or contact [info@edsupport.org](mailto:info@edsupport.org)):
  - **Free Telephone support & counselling:** BACP accredited counsellors are available on 08000 562 561.
  - [Confidential Grant Service](#): A confidential grants service to help manage financial and money concerns.
  - [Training & Development Fund](#): The fund has been created to assist staff in education with the cost of education-related training and former education staff to re-enter the education sector or to transition to a new career.
- The [Talking Toolkit from the Health and Safety Executive](#) to help school leaders start the conversation about stress at work as a first step toward preventing work-related stress and setting out actions employers need to take to comply with the law.

## Requirements to address workload

School leaders and governance boards are required to have regard to the work life balance of their staff.

The [Governance handbook for academies, multi-academy trusts and maintained schools](#) states '*all boards and executive leaders should ensure that they adhere to the working limits set out*' in [legislation](#). The [Competency Framework for Governance](#) states that all members of the Board should pay '*due regard to ensuring that leaders and teachers are able to have a satisfactory work life balance*' and the school staffing [regulations](#) set out the duty on governing bodies to have regard to headteachers' work life balance.

The [School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document](#) states '*Governing bodies and headteachers, in carrying out their duties, must have regard to the need for the headteacher and teachers at the school to be able to achieve a satisfactory balance between the time required to discharge their professional duties .....and the time required to pursue their personal interests outside work. In having regard to this, governing bodies and headteachers should ensure that they adhere to the working limits set out in the [Working Time Regulations 1998](#)*'.



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