



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

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4 March 2015

Dear All,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your constructive engagement in the programme of talks over the last twelve months.

Following the publication of the government's Workload Challenge action plan and your letter of 9 February, I want to reflect on the progress that has been made during our engagement through the programme of talks, where teacher workload and a number of other issues have been discussed.

### **Teacher workload**

I agree that teacher workload must remain a central focus for this government and I have been clear that reducing unnecessary workload in schools is a priority for me. Following our major call for evidence, the Workload Challenge, which I launched in October, [our response was published on 6 February](#). Through the programme of talks we have included unions in regular discussions around the problem analysis, evidence base, and potential solutions. Thank you for the evidence and proposals you have put forward during this process. We have listened to what unions and teachers have said to us, and we hope that our plan for action will start to address the complex issues which have led to unnecessary workload.

The [independent analysis of the Workload Challenge](#) suggested a range of drivers for high workloads. Our response aims to tackle both the symptoms and the causes of unnecessary workload. It includes a comprehensive programme of actions to be taken at every level in the school system – from Government to classrooms – which we believe will make a difference to the workload of teachers. We are clear, however, that the issues are complex and change will not happen overnight.

I am pleased that you welcome some of the points in our response including our plans to set out minimum lead-in times for significant curriculum, qualifications and accountability changes and the commitment not to make substantial changes affecting pupils during the school year or in the middle of a course resulting in a qualification.

The actions taken on by Ofsted show they too are committed to helping reduce unnecessary workload in schools. In the autumn term, following consultation with unions, Ofsted published the document '[Ofsted inspections – Clarification for schools](#)' to clarify what inspectors do and don't expect from schools. Ofsted have committed to keeping this up to date and have said they will act on any evidence of the document not being used by inspectors. Their commitment to review the way that inspection reports are written to avoid creating 'fads' in certain practices will also support leaders and teachers.

As we have discussed in the programme of talks, it is also important to track teacher workload over the coming years. You will recognise that the previous 'workload diary survey' had an inconsistent methodology, a poor response rate in the most recent iteration, and did not provide international comparisons. The department has therefore committed to running a new large scale, robust survey that will be repeated every two years. This will replace the 'workload diary survey' and allow for comparability with the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS).

We have committed to supporting teachers in their professional practice through the building of a better evidence base for teachers and reviewing leadership training and development opportunities.

As a result of the programme of talks, we carried out a small qualitative study looking at how schools respond to the current accountability system and the impact on workload, with input from an advisory group made up of union representatives. We considered the findings of this study alongside those of the Workload Challenge and used them to inform our action plan.

We have also sent a [communication to schools](#) which clarifies a number of points raised by unions about the implementation of our SEN reforms.

## **Pensions**

Through the talks, my officials have had a great deal of engagement with you about the Teachers' Pension Scheme. This has included giving you access to monthly data on rates of opt-out from the scheme, which has shown continued very high levels of participation in the scheme. We have also collected further data on the numbers of scheme members who fall within each of the groups of protected characteristics. That data has reconciled well with the data that we already held on the scheme membership, and we will continue to build the dataset through annual surveys and it will inform our assessment of the equality implications of scheme reforms.

We have agreed to [a two-year review into the health and deployment](#)

[implications of teachers working to the age of 68](#). This is a tripartite review between DfE, unions and employers, which began in October and is making good progress. We have discussed the issue of involving actuaries in the review and confirmed that there will be a tender process for research which actuaries are welcome to bid for. Unions are also free to employ their own actuary to support them and monitor the evidence from the review.

### **Pay and conditions**

I am pleased that we were able to develop [additional guidance](#), which was published last year, to help schools and governing bodies develop their approach to teachers' and leadership pay. This covered: the use of evidence in appraisal and pay decisions; managing appeals against pay determination; and equalities considerations as part of the appraisal and pay determination process.

We are writing further guidance for schools which will clarify a number of points on pay and conditions raised by unions. We hope to publish this guidance shortly.

### **Trade disputes**

I am glad that we have been able to make good progress in looking at implementation issues in each of these areas. Thank you again for the time you have invested in engaging with my Department through the talks.

As we agreed at their inception, the scope of the programme of talks has always been focussed on policy implementation. As I and my predecessor have set out on a number of occasions, the direction of policy on teachers' pay and pensions is set: it has not and will not change. Changes to teachers' pay arrangements were recommended by the independent School Teachers' Review Body and there was full consultation with unions. Pension changes are being made as part of wider reform of public sector pensions following independent recommendations, and there have been extensive discussions to ensure that the Teachers' Pension Scheme is sustainable, affordable and continues to provide an attractive package for teachers.

Four years have passed since all open trade disputes began and the educational landscape has changed significantly since they began. I therefore hope that those unions in dispute with me will consider resolving their disputes as soon as possible.

I remain strongly committed to engaging with the teaching profession, including all teaching unions, and I hope the final programme of talks meeting on 11 March proves constructive.



RT HON NICKY MORGAN MP