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for Education

Exploring teachers' admin time

Research report

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CooperGibson Research



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Key terms

- Curriculum support officer - an administrative member of staff allocated to subject departments to support the smooth running of the department and relieve teaching staff within the department(s) from tasks that do not require teaching qualifications.
- Early career framework (ECF) - a set of standards which sets out what early career teachers are entitled to learn about and learn how to do, when they start their careers.
- Early career framework induction programme - a 2-year statutory induction programme for early career teachers designed to help early career teachers develop their practice, knowledge and working habits with support from a dedicated mentor.
- Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) a legal document which describes a child or young person's (aged up to 25) special educational needs, the support they need, and the outcomes they would like to achieve.
- Get information about schools (GIAS) - the Department for Education's register of education establishments in England.
- In-service education and training (INSET) - a series of days, normally 5 per academic year, during which children do not attend and staff receive continuing professional development (CPD) or are given time to complete administrative tasks.
- Personal Education Plan (PEP) - a record of what needs to happen for pupils in care to enable them to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential.
- Planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) - time which is set aside for teachers during a timetabled day to allow them to carry out teaching and learning related tasks.
- Reprographics officer - an administrative member of staff who ensures all printing and copying services are provided to pupils and school staff.
- Round robin – a way of gathering a quick, up to date snapshot of a pupil's overall progress, effort and behaviour.
- School Evaluation Form (SEF) – a school's evaluation of how it is performing in areas such as: effectiveness of leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare; and outcomes for children and other learners.

- Subject Improvement Plans - plans, usually produced annually, outlining developments required in an area of the curriculum and how improvements will be achieved.
- Working walls - an 'interactive' display set up in a classroom, created to encourage pupil / class interaction based on a subject being studied.

Executive summary

To further their work on addressing unnecessary and excessive teacher and senior leader workload, the Department for Education commissioned CooperGibson Research to conduct qualitative research exploring the nature of administrative tasks undertaken in schools. The research aimed to understand the types of administrative tasks teachers and senior leaders undertake, how these tasks are allocated and prioritised within schools, and to explore whether tasks could be carried out more efficiently.

Depth interviews were conducted with 14 senior leaders, 14 middle leaders and 10 teachers in 14 primary and 20 secondary schools across England.¹

Key findings

Common administrative tasks

Teachers most commonly reported carrying out pupil and curriculum focused administrative tasks (typically on a daily or weekly basis), including:

- Recording incidents related to pupil safeguarding and/or health and safety.
- Recording and following up incidents related to pupil attendance and behaviour.
- Responding to requests for information on individual pupils from colleagues and parents/carers.
- Photocopying.
- Recording pupil assessment data.

Across the school year, teachers completed several other administrative tasks:

- Organising school trips.
- Creating class displays/working walls.
- Providing homework and curriculum information.
- Organising outside speakers.
- Writing/providing updates for the school website.

¹ Teachers refers to classroom teachers. Middle leaders include heads of department/subject/key stage, heads of year/phase. Senior leaders include deputy/assistant headteachers, principals/headteachers/heads of school/acting headteachers and executive headteachers/multi-academy trust (MAT) CEOs.

Time spent on administrative tasks

Participating teachers and middle leaders reported spending an average of 2 hours per day on administration, across both primary and secondary phases². Time spent on administrative tasks was variable across the school year. For example, at the start of the school year, additional time was spent on reading and updating policies, curriculum plans and performance management related tasks.

Trends in administrative tasks over time

Five main trends were identified in how administrative tasks had changed over time:

- An increase in tasks associated with the rise in the number of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those receiving SEN support and those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Some participants described an increase in emails from parents/carers and often with an unrealistic expectation of response times since the pandemic.
- Middle leaders and senior leaders reported that there was an increase in administrative tasks and record keeping because of the new early career framework (ECF) based induction programme.
- A shift towards a more pupil focused role for teaching assistants (particularly in the secondary phase), reducing capacity for administration.
- An increase in curriculum focused tasks associated, in part, with the reduction in roles such as the reprographic officer and curriculum support officer (particularly in the secondary phase).

Administrative tasks and workload implications

Several questions were asked on perspectives of administrative tasks in relation to workload. Three main themes emerged. Tasks were identified as:

- Necessary but time consuming. Examples included recording safeguarding incidents, pupil attendance, and behaviour concerns.
- Time consuming and where the outputs do not merit the time spent. Examples included documentation relating to: performance management, extensive

² In the [Teacher Workload Survey 2019](#) teachers and middle leaders reported spending up to 4.8 hours a week on “general admin” with 4.2 hours reported for primary and 4.8 hours for secondary phases. Due to the small sample size in this study hours spent on admin tasks are not directly comparable to the Teacher Workload Survey 2019.

curriculum planning documentation, and mentoring for the ECF based induction programme.

- Necessary, but did not have to be undertaken by teachers. Examples included organising trips, class displays, and printing.

Allocation and prioritisation of administrative tasks

Participants were asked to describe how administrative tasks were allocated and prioritised in their settings and as part of their own practice. Key findings were:

- The size of administrative teams varied within and across school phases and administrative staff often carried out multiple functions. Examples included carrying out reception and medical related duties.
- In general, schools did not have a systematic approach to the allocation of administrative tasks.
- All participants prioritised pupil safeguarding over all other tasks. This was followed by other pupil related tasks and the need to meet deadlines.

Sources of administrative tasks

The sources and drivers of administrative tasks included:

- School statutory requirements. Examples included safeguarding, tasks associated with pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the national curriculum.
- Accountability. Examples included Ofsted and governance requirements.
- Pupils and parents/carers. Examples included record keeping associated with pupil behaviour and dealing with emails from parents/carers.
- The need for communication within the whole school community. Examples included maintaining school websites and online learning platforms.
- Senior leader requirements. Examples included internal accountability processes and changes in senior leadership personnel.

Challenges and mitigations associated with administrative tasks

The following main challenges associated with undertaking administrative tasks were reported:

- The volume and daily accumulation of tasks.
- The importance of most tasks.

- The need for a teacher to complete most tasks.
- Insufficient time to complete tasks.
- Insufficient administrative support for tasks.
- Striking a balance between ensuring accountability and not, unnecessarily, increasing the workload of teachers.

Participants were asked to describe any practices that were implemented in their settings to try and reduce and/or mitigate the impact of administrative tasks. They mentioned the following main practices:

- Use of technology. Examples included software for safeguarding, trips, and automatic emails to parents/carers.
- A supportive senior leadership culture. Examples included minimising administrative tasks going to teachers, school diary planning, and limiting the size of school documentation.
- Delegating responsibility to support staff (on a few occasions).
- Finding additional planning, preparation, and assessment (PPA) time where possible.
- Implementing wellbeing and flexible working practices.

Senior leaders reported that administration was an area that was reviewed regularly, in isolation, or as part of a wider wellbeing agenda. Senior leaders commonly struggled to provide suggestions of further actions, beyond those listed above, that could make a meaningful difference to administrative practices in their schools.

Summary and conclusions

The findings showed that teachers are regularly carrying several pupil, curriculum and personnel focused administrative tasks, that are in addition to all lesson planning, preparation and assessment activities outside of the classroom.

According to participants of this research, most of the tasks need to be carried out daily and took, on average, 2 hours per day. Participants reported an upward trend in the volume and type of administrative tasks that teachers and senior leaders are required to carry-out in recent years, alongside the general loss of support staff, such as, a reprographics officer. They noted that many of the reported tasks were necessary such as safeguarding and SEND legal responsibilities. Administrative tasks related to pupils and the curriculum, were also considered necessary because of their potential to support stronger teaching and learning.

Apart from the volume of tasks, specific challenges related to the fact that many of them could not be planned for and often accumulated over the day. Tasks often had to be completed on the same day due to time sensitive considerations, for example, recording and reporting safeguarding concerns or incidents.

The following recommendations are provided (see section 7 for further details):

- Participants reported the need to recognise the changing role of teachers in the 21st Century, where administrative tasks are integral to the role and require allocated time. Therefore, the time required for administrative tasks should form part of any review of PPA time at a national level.
- Many participants reported that roles such as a curriculum support and/or reprographics officer had been lost. Apart from funding, an important consideration would be to make this role an attractive one professionally with a clear career structure.
- Senior leaders might seek to review flexible working practices in schools, such as, grouping PPA time to allow teachers (if they wished) to work from home on one occasion during the week. Although this would not directly address the specific time sensitive challenges of many of the tasks, it might contribute to reducing the overall effect of the workload burden.

1. Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) is committed to addressing excessive and unnecessary workload, with the [Recruitment and Retention Strategy \(2019\)](#) placing a reduction in workload as a core strategic priority. Over following years, surveys and qualitative research have helped to build a picture of teachers' working activities, use of time and workload perceptions.

While there is some evidence of improvements in working hours and time spent on some non-teaching activities, [The Teacher Workload Survey \(2019\)](#) found that the majority of teachers and middle leaders reported spending 'too much' time on administration, higher than for any other activity listed.³ The vast majority (over 90%), of teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders, reported spending at least some time on 'general administrative work'⁴. In the reference week of the survey, this equated to 4.2 hours for primary school teachers and middle leaders and 4.8 hours for secondary school teachers and middle leaders. Senior leaders spent more time on 'administration within the school' - 5.9 hours at primary schools and 5.7 hours at secondary schools.⁵

Additionally, analysis of the [TALIS 2018 survey](#) showed that full-time, lower-secondary teachers in England spent, on average, 6.7 hours more on non-teaching tasks per week than the OECD average.⁶ Similarly, a 2020 survey of teachers and leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic found that nearly three-quarters of senior leaders and almost half of teachers reported an increase in general administrative work⁷.

Despite the majority of teachers and senior leaders completing administrative tasks and perceiving the time attributed to them as 'too much', there is limited evidence on the specific types of administrative activities that are being undertaken and how these are allocated within schools. The DfE, therefore, commissioned CooperGibson Research to conduct qualitative research to address these gaps and further explore whether greater support is needed to aid reductions in senior leaders' and teachers' workload.

³ Other research has also found the majority (75%) of teachers and middle leaders reported spending "too much" time on general admin. IFF Research. (2023). Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Wave 1. Available: [Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Wave 1 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ General administrative work was referred to as 'General administrative work (including communication, paperwork, work emails and other clerical duties you undertake in your job as a teacher)'. Walker, M., Worth, J., and Van den Brande, J. (2019). Teacher Workload Survey 2019: Technical report. Available: [Teacher workload survey 2019: technical report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

⁵ Walker, M., Worth, J., and Van den Brande, J. (2019). Teacher Workload Survey 2019: Research report. Available: [Teacher workload survey 2019: research report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

⁶ Jerrim, J. and Sims, S. (2019). The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018: Research report. Available: [TALIS 2018 research \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#).

⁷ IFF Research. (2021). COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey: Research report. Available: [COVID-19 School Snapshot Survey \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

1.1 Research aims and objectives

The research aimed to better understand the nature of administrative tasks undertaken by teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders, and whether these could be carried out more efficiently.⁸

The objectives were to:

- Understand the administrative tasks that teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders undertake and how these are allocated and carried out within schools.
- Understand if teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders think these tasks could be allocated or carried out more efficiently.
- Explore whether greater support would be needed to reduce time spent on unnecessary and/or burdensome administration.

1.2 Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted to explore the administration activities undertaken and experiences of teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders. This involved:

- In-depth interviews with teachers and middle leaders on their individual experiences.
- In-depth interviews with senior leaders on processes at school level, as well as their individual experiences.

The interviews were conducted by telephone or virtually via Microsoft Teams and lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour. See Appendix 2 for the interview topic guides.

1.2.1 Defining administration

The interviews were semi-structured and as such, gave space for participants to define 'administration' themselves. However, some guidance was offered. Interviewers asked participants to focus on 'general administration' and an aide-memoire was used, providing examples of administrative activities (see Appendix 2 for the interview prompt sheet). Presented as examples, participants were asked to consider which of these they carried out, and if there were others not referenced. Additional guidance suggested that planning, marking and data management was outside the scope of this research.

⁸ Teachers refers to classroom teachers. Middle leaders include heads of department/subject/key stage, heads of year/phase. Senior leaders include deputy/assistant headteachers, principals/headteachers/heads of school/acting headteachers and executive headteachers/multi-academy trust (MAT) CEOs.

1.3 Interview and school sample

A sample of 640 schools (320 primary and 320 secondary schools) was randomly selected from the register of schools and colleges in England, 'Get information about schools' (GIAS). This was supported with a few schools known to the research team. All sampled schools were contacted via email (usually addressed to the headteacher or executive leader), to request the participation of either a senior leader, middle leader or teacher.

In total, 38 interviews were completed, involving 14 senior leaders, 14 middle leaders and 10 teachers.⁹ Interviewees worked in 15 primary schools and 23 secondary schools.

Table 1: Interviewee sample

Role	Primary	Secondary	Total
Senior leader	6	8	14
Middle leader	3	11	14
Teacher	6	4	10
Total	15	23	38

Source: Teachers' admin research - interviews

In a small number of cases, more than 1 staff member was interviewed from a school. Where this occurred, staff occupying different roles (senior leader, middle leader, or teacher) were interviewed.

Of the 38 interviews completed, there were 34 schools represented in the sample. This included 14 primary and 20 secondary schools. Multi-academy trusts and single academy trusts dominated the sample, as shown below.¹⁰

⁹ Note that the distinction between teacher and middle leader was sometime less clear at primary phase compared to secondary phase, as many primary school teachers take on additional leadership or management tasks and roles. This is particularly the case in smaller schools.

¹⁰ The sample included 22 academy converters, 4 sponsor led academies, 4 community schools, 1 foundation school, 1 voluntary aided school, 1 voluntary controlled school, and 1 free school.

Table 2: School sample

School type	Primary	Secondary	Total
Local authority (LA) maintained	3	4 ¹¹	7
Supported by a multi academy trust (MAT)	9	6	15
Supported by a single academy trust (SAT)	2	10	12
Total	14	20	34

Source: Teachers' admin research - interviews

The school sample covered all English Government Office Regions and urban and rural locations (see Appendix 1 for further details). Most of schools in the sample (23) were rated 'Good' by Ofsted, with 4 'Outstanding' and 2 rated as 'Requires Improvement'¹².

¹¹ Including one foundation school.

¹² Ofsted rating was not available for five schools in the sample.

2. Administrative tasks

This section describes the administrative tasks regularly undertaken by teachers. It then provides an account of the administrative tasks specific to the role of middle leaders and senior leaders. It ends with perceived estimations of time spent on administrative tasks and perceptions on how administrative tasks might have changed over time.

2.1 Teacher administrative tasks

Teachers most commonly reported carrying out pupil and curriculum focused administrative tasks (typically on a daily or weekly basis), including:

- Recording incidents related to pupil safeguarding and/or health and safety.
- Recording and following up incidents related to pupil attendance and behaviour.
- Responding to requests for information on individual pupils from colleagues and parents/carers.
- Photocopying.
- Recording pupil assessment data.

Across the school year, teachers completed several other administrative tasks:

- Organising school trips.
- Creating class displays/working walls.
- Providing homework and curriculum information.
- Organising outside speakers.
- Writing/providing updates for the school website.

2.1.1. Pupil focused administrative tasks

Pupil focused administrative tasks were carried out regularly by teachers. If a teacher had any level of safeguarding concern about a pupil, the teacher's observations and/or concerns were recorded, usually via a safeguarding online platform. This would happen alongside any discussions the teacher had with a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Similarly, teachers described the administration involved with attendance and behaviour incidents. Secondary teachers reported taking an electronic attendance register at the start of lessons, recording if a pupil was late to a lesson or, for example, if they were given permission to go to the toilet during a lesson.

Behaviour incidents such as not completing homework or observing pupils not following school rules in or outside of a lesson, which might or might not merit a detention, were usually logged onto the school's information management system. In addition, it was common that parents/carers were informed of every detention and why it was given. If this did not happen automatically via relevant software, a telephone call or an email was sent by the teacher to parents/carers. Although most teachers reported that detention systems were centralised, it was often their responsibility to follow up on whether the detention was completed.

Responding to requests for information on individual pupils from colleagues was also commonly reported. This often took the form of a 'round robin', which was described as a way of gathering a quick, up to date snapshot of a pupil's overall progress, effort and behaviour. A round robin was usually sent to teachers if a pupil was about to have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) review meeting, a Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting if they are a pupil looked after, or a meeting with parents/carers if there was concern over a pupil's progress. Many teachers reported regularly responding to emails and/or telephone calls from parents/carers with a query about their child or a question about the curriculum.

2.1.2 Curriculum focused administrative tasks

Teachers said they regularly complete several curriculum focused administrative tasks. All reported undertaking photocopying most days; with adapted curriculum materials cited as an example. Interviewees highlighted a distinction between photocopying (e.g., small numbers of copies needed for teaching on that day) and printing (larger print runs for a whole class or year group), where some teachers taught in schools without a reprographics facility and they were photocopying on a larger scale, such as for mock examinations.

Most teachers described time spent entering internal assessment data, for example, termly assessment or mock examination results, into the school management system. Most (but not all) teachers reported spending some time during a term on class displays/working walls and sometimes corridor displays. Additionally, many described time spent writing articles and/or sending information to update the school website on topics such as school trips, sports fixtures or to highlight a class activity. Many teachers reported organising school trips requiring administration, often by completing several tasks through a dedicated trips online platform.

A few teachers mentioned uploading all homework tasks for that week on a platform that can be accessed by parents/carers. In addition, a few teachers said they were required to keep parents/carers up to date by uploading adapted curriculum plans. Inviting speakers into school was associated with administration, such as, organising Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and travel arrangements.

2.2 Middle leader administrative tasks

In addition to completing all the administrative tasks described by teachers, middle leaders reported additional tasks related to their role. It is important to acknowledge the variable nature of middle leader roles and the implications for the types of administrative tasks completed. There were differences in the specific administrative tasks undertaken by a head of year compared with a head of department in a secondary school. Similarly, a subject leader for art in the primary phase was unlikely to undertake the same administrative tasks as an English subject leader. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify tasks that were common to all middle leaders, with noted differences where these were apparent.

It was common for some middle leaders to report that they completed all or almost all of the administrative tasks on the prompt list (see Appendix 2). The most reported administrative tasks carried out routinely by middle leaders were personnel, pupil and curriculum focused. This included:

- Recording and monitoring requirements associated with the ECF based induction programme.
- Arranging curriculum cover for absent members of staff.
- Recording performance management information for line managed staff.
- Following up and recording support for behaviour incidents reported by colleagues.
- Ordering and stock taking of resources (subject leaders).
- Writing and revising curriculum planning documents (subject leaders).
- Ensuring accurate pupil data for external assessments or examinations (subject leaders).

In addition, some middle leaders described:

- Contributing to the revision of school policies.
- Writing reports for governance purposes.
- Supporting recruitment processes for vacant roles in their team in the secondary phase.

2.2.1 Personnel focused tasks

Middle leaders reported regularly completing different personnel focused administrative tasks. In the case of staff absence, middle leaders often arranged the curriculum aspect of cover for an absent colleague. This might mean, for example, arranging photocopying

if a colleague is unexpectedly off school, ensuring all the other necessary teaching materials are available, and if the cover teacher is not an employee, checking in with them to ensure they have all that is needed for the day.

Many middle leaders reported having responsibility for an early career teacher (ECT) and/or a trainee teacher on placement. Both activities were described as requiring administration, such as providing a written record of meetings. Most middle leaders had line management responsibilities which meant completing performance management records at least twice a year. Finally, some middle leaders reported taking part in the recruitment process for new members to a team, which along with taking part in the interview process, might entail reading job applications and revising any job description and associated materials.

2.2.2 Pupil focused tasks

Due to the nature of their responsibilities, middle leaders in a pastoral role reported undertaking more administrative tasks associated with recording and monitoring of pupil focused incidents (as described in section 2.1.1). This might involve adding to a record already started by a teacher or creating a new record following meetings with the pupil and/or their parents/carers. If a middle leader at this level was a member of the safeguarding team, it was their role to read all entries, make decisions on the next steps and record that information.

Subject leaders also reported pupil focused administrative tasks associated with their middle leader role. This might include monitoring and supporting behaviour incidents that took place in lessons and were logged by colleagues in their curriculum team.

2.2.3 Curriculum focused tasks

Middle leaders also talked of curriculum-related administrative tasks. Writing and revising curriculum planning documentation was a commonly reported activity. Similarly, most secondary subject leaders had to complete a subject/department annual improvement plan. Further administrative tasks entailed ordering and stocktaking of departmental resources. A few middle leaders were expected to contribute to relevant policies and write or contribute to reports for governance purposes.

2.3 Senior leader administrative tasks

The senior leaders involved in this study were a varied group, including headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. Nevertheless, it was possible to identify a common core of administrative tasks that were more likely to be carried out by only senior leaders or where they held ultimate responsibility for the task.

Senior leaders, in particular, described the high number of emails they received every day:

I must get about two-hundred and fifty emails a day. It can take two hours to clear. – *Secondary senior leader, SAT*

Emails – they are the blight of my life. – *Secondary senior leader, MAT*

The sources of the emails were varied, such as, from colleagues, parents/carers, matters relating to governance and/or local authority requests. The emails might not always need a response, but many included information and or/updates from, for example, the Department for Education, that needed to be read.

In terms of personnel focused administrative tasks, senior leaders led the process for staff on any support or capability plans, which entailed detailed recording of progress against actions agreed. Senior leaders, particularly headteachers, reported spending a lot of time on ‘communication’ tasks, such as, writing letters and emails for a variety of audiences, including parents/carers as a group and individually, and overseeing the content of the school’s website. Policy writing and report writing for governance meetings were also commonly reported tasks.

In terms of pupil focused administrative tasks, senior leaders said they had responsibility for the administration related to suspensions and permanent exclusions. For those pupils who might require an external referral because of a safeguarding incident or concern, filling in the necessary paperwork was usually completed by senior leaders.

2.4 Time spent on administrative tasks

Teachers and middle leaders reported spending an average of 2 hours per day¹³ on administrative tasks in a ‘typical week’. This was common across both primary and secondary phases:

A good ten hours a week, a good one hour before and after school. – *Primary teacher, MAT*

¹³ In the [Teacher Workload Survey 2019](#) teachers and middle leaders reported spending up to 4.8 hours a week on “general admin” with 4.2 hours reported for primary and 4.8 hours for secondary phases. Due to the small sample size in this study hours spent on admin tasks are not directly comparable to the Teacher Workload Survey 2019.

A couple of hours a day – ten hours a week. Perhaps it can vary between eight and twelve depending on what is happening. – *Secondary middle leader, MAT*

At certain points in the year, more time was spent on administrative tasks. At the start of the school year, for example, additional time was spent on reading updated policies, curriculum plans and performance management tasks:

So, when I go in, in September, there is an awful lot of performance management for me as Head of Chemistry. That is one of my major jobs, writing them up. – *Secondary middle leader, SAT*

The summer term, for example, brings administration concerned with external assessment for Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs) and Advanced (A) Levels.

2.5 Trends in administrative tasks over time

Participants were asked if they had observed any trends or changes with respect to administrative tasks in recent years. Five main trends were identified in the responses.

The first, was an increase in tasks associated with the rise in the number of pupils identified with SEND, including those receiving SEN support and those with an EHCP. Since the pandemic, interviewees noted there had been a sharp growth in referrals for pupils experiencing poor emotional wellbeing and/or mental health. This in turn, meant an increase, in round robin requests and meetings with parents/carers and pupils, for example, which require recording.

Second, some participants described an increase in emails from parents/carers, often with an unrealistic expectation of response times since the pandemic. Home learning during the pandemic, resulted in a rise of two-way communication between home and school. Now that teachers, pupils and parents/carers were more familiar with online learning platforms and its benefits, many of these systems had stayed in place meaning an increase in associated administrative tasks such as uploading homework for the week.

[Online platform] was set up through the pandemic, we didn't have a lot to do with it before then.... and we are still on it afterwards and we are encouraged to communicate with parents, but we also have a class email, so every morning we have to look at the email. We have to respond to each of those emails from parents in the morning. Then you have to do it before you leave as well. This is new since the

pandemic. Up until that point, it was that you could speak to the parents at the door drop off. – *Primary teacher, MAT*

Third, middle leaders and senior leaders also reported that there was an increase in administrative tasks and record keeping because of the new ECF based induction programme.

Fourth, the changing role of teaching assistants, with a greater emphasis on pupil focused work had meant a loss of administrative support for teachers. In addition, term time only contracts meant that teaching assistants were no longer in before or after school to support administration.

Finally, the loss over time of a reprographics facility was a common response with implications for more time spent on photocopying and printing.

3. Administrative tasks and workload implications

Participants were asked several questions on their perspectives of administrative tasks in relation to their workload. Three main themes emerged relating to:

- Necessary but time-consuming tasks.
- Tasks that were overly time consuming and where the extent of the impact did not merit the time spent.
- Tasks that were necessary but did not have to be completed by teachers.

3.1 Necessary but time-consuming administrative tasks

Many pupil focused tasks came under this category. All participants spoke of the importance of reporting safeguarding concerns. However, perceptions of workload pressure were not only associated with the time it can take to complete a task, they also related to the need for a task to be completed on the same day, such as recording safeguarding issues. Teachers explained that this can be challenging if they have, for example, duties, meetings or they are running extra-curricular events at breaktime or after school.

Similarly, administrative tasks associated with pupil attendance and/or behaviour were described as time consuming but necessary. Teachers talked of time spent logging relevant information onto the school system and a time pressure for it to be done that day, along with emailing parents/carers of the incident. It was feasible that a teacher might have to record two or three incidents from the day.

Additionally, participants understood the rationale behind completing a round robin for a pupil but as well as the time spent, the perceived workload demand was also associated with the rise in requests and not knowing when they might come through:

I have not completed a round robin in a while, but it is possible that you could get six in a couple of weeks if all the students were in your classes. – *Secondary middle leader, LA maintained*

Teachers also described trips as necessary but time consuming. Most teachers reported running trips and a small number these, mentioned receiving sufficient administrative support for the time taken as described by 1 primary middle leader:

...so I am going to take the children up to a local park and all I have done is I have filled out the date I want to go, how many children are going, how I want to get there, and that's it. It has taken five minutes. The admin team sort everything else out. So they arrange for the risk

assessments to come through from the place that we are going to, they book the bus, then you get a pack off the admin team with all that information in it signed by the head, the letters ready to go to parents and the class list to collect the money in. – *Primary middle leader, LA maintained*

However, this was not a typical experience for participants who organised trips, even with the use of specific trip organisation software and support of a school trip coordinator. Most teachers reported having to undertake much of the groundwork themselves such as finding venues, calculating entry and travel costs, filling in the risk assessment, writing letters and having them checked and signed off, and finding parent/carer volunteers, if required. One participant noted that completing the trips online form itself took at least 1 hour. Teachers who regularly took pupils out of school such as, for music and sports activities, said that organising trips was very time consuming.

3.2 Overly time-consuming tasks where the output did not merit the time spent

Overly time-consuming tasks were those described as necessary, but it was felt that the extent of the impact, for pupils, parents/carers or teachers, did not merit the time spent on them.

Administration time spent completing performance management records was one such activity described by teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders. Typically, across the year, teachers reported having between two and three meetings and a lesson observation, for which records must be made. As well as the stress of being observed, reported by some of the participants, the contribution of the process to, for example, improving practice or maintaining professional standards were queried:

Performance management also takes a lot of time in meetings and administration and I am not sure the time spent is worthwhile. Teachers are held to account throughout the year through, for example, deep dives and parent evenings. – *Primary senior leader, MAT*

Many middle leaders reported uncertainty about the value of time spent on different types of curriculum planning documents and department improvement plans:

The ones that are really irritating are all of the admin tasks that they make you do that don't add any value to anything that you do. So, we have to do curriculum plans and curriculum maps. Basically, it is just putting the schemes of work and things on different formats. There is

no value in them, it is paperwork for paperwork sake. – *Secondary middle leader, MAT*

Additionally, the increased record keeping and reporting required of mentors as part of the recently introduced national ECF based induction programme was seen by middle leaders and senior leaders as overly time consuming:

If you have an ECT teacher, that causes a bit more workload. The admin having to fill out all of those reports, that would probably be my biggest burden actually. The time for doing these tasks tends to be after-school, because you have to do it with them [the ECT]. – *Primary middle leader, LA maintained*

3.3 Necessary tasks that did not have to be carried out by teachers

It was a challenge for participants to identify any unnecessary tasks, even when using the prompt list of example tasks (see Appendix 2). Teachers felt that most of the tasks either fully, or in some part, needed teacher involvement. Nevertheless, there was consensus that the only tasks reported as not requiring any level of teacher involvement, but were still being carried out regularly by some of the participants were: photocopying; printing and classroom displays:

I mean the photocopying is a constant. And that is for everybody in the department. Tests, test writing and photocopying of the tests is once every five weeks or so, because we do a test about every five weeks internally, and topic tests et cetera. – *Secondary middle leader, SAT*

4. Allocation and prioritisation of administrative tasks

Participants were asked to describe how administrative tasks were allocated and prioritised in their settings and as part of their own practice. Three themes emerged from the analyses:

- The size of administrative teams varied within and across school phases and administrative staff often carried out multiple functions. Examples included carrying out reception and medical related duties.
- In general, schools did not have a systematic approach to the allocation of administrative tasks.
- All participants prioritised pupil safeguarding over all other tasks, followed by other pupil related tasks and the need to meet deadlines.

4.1 Structure of administrative teams

The below list presents a summary of the most reported administration functions carried out by administrative teams. There was a common core of functions across both the primary and secondary phases with some differences such as an examinations officer and work experience officer that were specific to secondary schools. Another common finding was that administrative staff often carried out multiple functions.

- Monitoring and following up attendance.
- Managing data systems.
- Managing internal and external examinations.
- Preparing papers and clerking Governance meetings.
- Human resources.
- Keeping the school website up to date.
- Completing medical records for pupils on daily medication or who have an accident.
- Reception duties.
- Reprographics.
- School trips.
- Work experience.

However, one difference was the number of administrative staff employed by schools to undertake the functions. It was beyond the remit of this research to investigate the

reasons for this difference, but findings suggest it might be that small primary schools, with smaller budgets, are particularly disadvantaged:

I know how lucky we are. I am very fortunate in that I go out and about to other schools, I coach the teachers in other schools, and see situations where they would have one secretary for a school of 300 children. We have four admin staff plus the inclusion team, plus the behaviour team, plus the SEND team, these are staffed by admin people. We have a team approach, with well-being centre. – *Primary middle leader, LA maintained*

As a small school, how is admin support organised? We don't have an admin team. Our office team consists of an office manager, and someone who is part-time in the morning but is also a midday supervisor. – *Primary senior leader, MAT*

A second difference was the variation in practice, between schools, as to what a member of the administration team and a teacher would undertake around the same function. This was most evident for trips and classroom displays. Examples included teachers having the option of putting up displays themselves, in other words, it was not a requirement like in other schools. Similarly, the amount of administrative support for ordering resources varied, even if the process had been moved online. Some teachers took responsibility for organising school trips, and in one case, a trip coordinator had instigated a process and steps for teachers to take. Alternatively, 1 primary middle leader described a high level of support from a member of the administrative team:

The office manager who, if we do a trip, we fill out a form and get a risk assessment, she will call the bus company to get prices, send the parent mail, the office manager calls the venue, they do most of the organising. – *Primary middle leader, LA maintained*

4.2 Allocation of administrative tasks

The analyses showed in general, schools did not have a systematic approach to the allocation of administrative tasks, and/or teachers were not aware of how tasks were allocated. Most teachers and middle leaders commented that the tasks just 'came with the job'. Some felt that administration was part of the role, and as such, they were expected to 'get on with it'. For middle leaders, there were additional tasks associated with their leadership role.

4.3 Prioritisation of administrative tasks

In terms of prioritising administrative tasks, all teachers and leaders reported that any task related to safeguarding was prioritised over all others, so that the school could act swiftly. Pupil focused tasks were then prioritised, for example, completing administration for pupils with SEND, which required paperwork when engaging with external agencies to ensure that appropriate support is achieved.

After pupil focused tasks, participants described the need to meet deadlines, and make sure that photocopying needed for teaching that day was completed:

It's like anybody isn't it, you know what you need to do, you know what your deadlines are for things like data, so you have your big deadlines, you know what you are teaching each week because that is set. You know when your data is set, what the entry deadlines are. You get reminders about that. The other stuff, it is about filtering of your emails each day and deciding right I need to do this today, or that can wait until a couple of days' time, and I'll do that then. But then again, if you are teaching, the admin side is the bit that just has to be done when you can do it. – *Secondary middle leader, MAT*

5. Sources of administrative tasks

Participants were asked about the sources and drivers of administrative tasks. Five key themes were identified in the responses:

- School statutory requirements. Examples included safeguarding, tasks associated with pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the national curriculum.
- Accountability. Examples included Ofsted and governance requirements.
- Pupils and parents/carers. Examples included record keeping associated pupil behaviour and emails from parents/carers.
- The need for communication within the whole school community. Examples included maintaining school websites and online learning platforms.
- Senior leader requirements. Examples included internal accountability processes and changes in senior leadership personnel.

5.1 School statutory requirements

The statutory requirements of schools were a frequently reported source of administrative tasks. It is, for example, a legal requirement of schools to record safeguarding concerns/incidents, as it is to document the needs, specific provision and the progress of pupils with SEND. The national curriculum, including programmes of studies, require curriculum planning documentation to ensure appropriate coverage.

The Department for Education (DfE) rolled out changes to statutory induction for early career teachers (ECTs) across England in September 2021. Headteachers must ensure ECTs have a two-year training programme based on the early career framework, a dedicated mentor and induction tutor, time off timetable for induction activities, regular progress reviews and two assessments against the teacher standards. As previously described, school mentors of ECTs on this programme have record keeping responsibilities.

5.2 Accountability

Participants from all levels and phases described how accountability requirements and pressures were a major source contributing to the amount of administration they carry out. Ofsted was often cited by interviewees as a key source. It was acknowledged that Ofsted had reduced, for example, the need for excessive assessment data recording. However, participants reported that there was still the need for extensive curriculum planning documentation, and some uncertainty about what is required of schools:

Ofsted came [last term] and it was fine...I thought they were reasonable; they didn't ask for the reams and reams of paperwork et cetera. The problem is that the stakes are so high and the exact expectations of what you should have is unclear. There is a thought that it is deliberately unclear because they say it is to allow people flexibility, but actually flexibility doesn't help sometimes. What it means is that some schools are asking you to do astonishing volumes of paperwork in the name of preparing for Ofsted..... What that means is that schools are anxious, often over plan and create more admin. – *Secondary middle leader, MAT*

One thing that has really increased in the last two years is the curriculum work. With the Ofsted shifting the emphasis to the curriculum, where previously it would have been a coordinator role to look at curriculum, and it was fairly low level, now the status and importance of that responsibility has really been elevated. – *Primary teacher, MAT*

School governance requirements and procedures were another example of a formal source of administrative tasks. Middle leaders and senior leaders described how preparing documentation such as the School Evaluation Form (SEF) documentation, Subject Improvement Plans, updating policies and writing termly governance reports, was time consuming. For some, this was seen as overly time consuming in terms of taking away the time teachers need for planning, preparation and assessment.

Another source of accountability was often described as the rise of an accountability culture within schools. The impact of this was to leave schools feeling vulnerable if there was not a 'belt and braces' approach to recording, for example, all pupil behaviour incidents:

Behaviour records and those kinds of things, that is down to accountability. When I first started teaching, you didn't have to write it all down, you had the conversation [with the pupil] and you moved on. Now you have to produce all the written evidence and what has been done about it.... it is not just [school] requirements, it's societal requirements as well, this obsession that everything has to be evidenced and the only way to evidence it is by recording something. – *Primary senior leader, MAT*

5.3 Pupils and parents/carers

Teachers reported that pupil focused tasks were the main source of administrative work. In addition to safeguarding and SEND-related tasks, responding to and following up on behaviour incidents entailed record keeping and informing relevant staff and parents/carers. For schools with elevated numbers of pupils with high SEND needs, teachers reported spending more time on these tasks.

The need to update parents/carers was a common message. Apart from teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders contacting parents/carers about behaviour incidents, they also mentioned responding to parent/carer emails which took time and often generated further administration. The content of these emails ranged from a homework clarification to a formal complaint.

In addition to these regular tasks, participants described administrative tasks associated with ad hoc events such as open evenings and Year 9 options evenings.

5.4 Communication tasks within the school community

The need to communicate information, either about the school or pupils, was an important source of administration. This included writing articles for the school website and providing information for various social media channels. The increased use of online learning platforms offered the possibility of communicating the curriculum in more depth to students and parents/carers. This included updating parents/carers on what pupils have been learning and their progress. In 1 primary school, this was achieved through use of a video montage.

5.5 Senior leader requirements

Most participants recognised that requests from senior leaders were usually due to statutory and accountability responsibilities. As described in section 6, a common theme throughout was the role that senior and often middle leaders took in protecting teachers, wherever possible, from unnecessary administrative tasks. However, there were some comments which associated administrative requirements with decisions made by senior leaders, including preparing for an Ofsted visit:

Internal audits like a mini Ofsted, quality assurance they call it. They come around and they will have a focus that the SLT have decided, like sixth form or disadvantaged students or something..... They are looking for consistency. In essence it is a light touch Ofsted. Regardless of however much anybody says it is light touch, it is still stress and consternation throughout the department caused by it. It

isn't just a question of having your policies in place for them to look at, there's a lot more admin because we have to go on learning walks with the SLT, do extra observations, there is a lot more admin created and a lot of writing up of these things. It does generate a lot of extra work. – *Secondary middle leader, SAT*

In addition, a change in personnel within a senior leadership team might also bring additional administration, as changes in practice or procedures could be introduced. Similarly, senior leaders with different whole school responsibilities in a setting might require information for one of their areas, literacy was given as an example, at the same time as requests from other members of the leadership team.

6. Challenges and solutions

The following section presents the main challenges that participants associated with administrative tasks and ways in which schools tried to reduce or mitigate these challenges.

6.1 Challenges of completing administrative tasks

Participants reported the following main challenges associated with undertaking administrative tasks:

- The volume and daily accumulation of tasks.
- The importance of most tasks and the need for a teacher to complete most tasks.
- Insufficient time to complete tasks.
- Insufficient administrative support for tasks.
- Striking a balance between ensuring accountability and not, unnecessarily, increasing the workload of teachers.

6.1.1 Volume and daily accumulation of tasks

One of the main challenges for all participants was the volume and frequency of tasks. Although many of the tasks were described as quick to carry out, interviewees noted that they could quickly accumulate over a day.

The challenge in terms of admin work is the sheer volume. It is a time issue. I think that things like detention incidents, behaviour, [safeguarding software], the systems are there in terms of where you put the information, but in terms of the volume that you have to deal with, that can be more difficult. – *Secondary senior leader, LA*

It was not possible for teachers to plan for many of the tasks, they were responsive to what happened and/or came in through email on the day. This was particularly the case in relation to pupil and parent/carer focused tasks.

6.1.2 The importance of administrative tasks that only teachers can complete

Overwhelmingly, participants recognised that many of the tasks were important because of, for example, the potential impact on pupil wellbeing and achievement. This rationale was particularly the case for tasks associated with keeping pupils safe. Overall, there appeared to be a recognition that this work was part of a teaching role in the 21st Century

and that the nature of many of the tasks meant that only the teacher could complete them:

But there are some things that teachers just have to do, for example you have to do the attendance, you have to do your behaviour logs on [safeguarding software], nobody else can do that for you if you were the person who has dealt with that. – *Primary senior leader, SAT*

6.1.3 Insufficient time for administrative tasks

Insufficient time to complete the tasks was widely reported as an issue, and that the time needed to complete many of the tasks was not fully recognised under the directed time allocated to teachers. It was beyond the remit of the research to investigate systematically the number of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) hours allocated to participants. There was as sense, however, that curriculum and assessment related work was either left to evenings and/or weekends, in order to address administrative tasks and/or attend whole staff or informally arranged meetings with colleagues.

6.1.4 Insufficient administrative support

For tasks that teachers could allocate to a member of the administrative team, the challenge was that the support was not available, such as a reprographics facility. Interviewees noted this was primarily due to resourcing constraints or the size of a school. However, even if the resources were available, some participants reported recruitment challenges to administrative roles. Teachers, therefore, were aware that administrative colleagues were similarly stretched and were reluctant to ask them to do more.

The changing nature of the teaching assistant role meant that their role was very much pupil focused. However, there was some evidence that in primary schools, teaching assistants did carry out some administrative tasks, such as supporting display work.

6.1.5 Managing accountability pressures

For senior leaders there was a significant challenge in striking a balance between ensuring accountability and not, unnecessarily, increasing the workload of teachers.

Many leaders identified areas of *need*, for example, to ask staff to record most additional interactions with parents/carers and/or pupils. Leaders described these records as being supportive of good practice and useful for making evidence-informed decisions about pupils, as they were able to examine trends over time. This practice also meant there

was a record or evidence 'just in case' it was required at a future date to demonstrate that all appropriate actions had been taken, in case of a parent/carer enquiry or formal complaint.

Senior leaders reported that the extent of recording pupil related incidents was strongly associated with making sure that they were not leaving the school vulnerable to additional or unexpected scrutiny, such as a pupil permanent exclusion decision going to an external panel for review.

Similarly, senior leaders were faced with the challenge of balancing teacher workload with having the knowledge and evidence around the quality of teaching and learning in their schools, for school improvement purposes, governance and Ofsted.

Finally, a small number of participants reported the challenge of having to duplicate data entry. Although many of the specific software packages were reported as helping to streamline administrative tasks, it did mean becoming familiar with and moving between many packages (such as for safeguarding, trips, learning platforms, school information systems, recording performance management and continuing professional development), which took time. In addition, some participants described that not all the systems were compatible and necessitated data entry duplication.

6.2 Examples of reducing and/or mitigating the impact of administrative challenges

Participants were asked to describe any practices that were implemented in their settings to try to reduce and/or mitigate the impact of administrative tasks. They reported the following main practices:

- Use of technology. Examples included software for safeguarding, trips and technology that automatically sent emails to parents/carers.
- A supportive senior leadership culture. Examples included minimising administrative tasks going to teachers, school diary planning and limiting the size of school documentation.
- Delegating responsibility to support staff.
- Finding additional planning, preparation, and assessment (PPA) time where possible.
- Implementing wellbeing and flexible working practices.

6.2.1 Use of technology

Overall, although software packages and systems did not necessarily reduce the amount of time spent on administrative tasks, they were described as helpful in ensuring greater clarity and consistency to practice. However, a few participants described the additional time needed for navigating systems when multiple software packages were used in a setting.

Dedicated software packages, such as those used for safeguarding, also supported safer practice by, for example, clearly indicating the information that needed to be submitted when raising a pupil safeguarding concern. Similarly, although time consuming, school trip software had brought planning into one place and provided greater consistency and safer practice. In addition, software packages that let parents/carers pay online meant school trip money no longer had to be collected by teachers or administrative staff. Some staff reported that these same systems also collected parental/carer consent for school trips.

Software systems that automatically reported pupil information, such as merits and behaviour points when entered, were well received by teachers, and saved logging onto school management systems to find a parent/carer email to send a message. The use of software to book online appointments for online parent/carer evenings had helped to ensure that these evenings kept to time.

6.2.2 A supportive senior leadership culture

Senior leaders were reported by all groups of teachers as playing an important role in helping to reduce or at least mitigate some of the impact of administrative tasks. Senior leaders and middle leaders described how they only requested tasks to be completed that they thought were necessary. Some middle leaders explained how they tried to act as a buffer between tasks requested by senior leaders and teachers. This was also recognised by a few of the teachers who were aware of being protected from administrative tasks as much as possible.

Most senior leaders spent time reviewing the school planner for the year ahead to try to avoid pinch points wherever possible. However, there was recognition that it was not always possible to eliminate all diary clashes, especially around assessment dates. The culture established by senior leaders, that meaningfully, even if in small ways, prioritised staff wellbeing was appreciated by participants. One example described was a senior leadership team that showed flexibility over deadlines if a teacher's workload was particularly demanding at that time. Other examples were, limiting department improvement plans to 2 sides of paper and streamlining school policies:

Rather than having a history policy or geography policy, we have a curriculum policy that was written for the whole staff with governor input. The different subjects, instead of a policy, have an intent, implementation and impact curriculum statement. – *Primary senior leader, SAT*

Finally, some of the headteachers interviewed chose not to have their own personal assistant to maximise staffing budgets and administrative support for the whole school.

6.2.3 Delegation of administrative tasks to support staff

As described in previous sections, some administrative tasks, where it was felt possible, were shared with or delegated to administration and support staff teams, such as office managers, teaching assistants or trip coordinators. An additional example is shown below, which helped to alleviate the pressure of preparing classrooms.

Delegating to support staff

The school employed a marketing manager, who was paid for 2 additional weeks over the summer break, to set up classroom and school displays, as well as other tasks. This person continues to maintain displays throughout the year.

Secondary senior leader, LA maintained

6.2.4 Finding additional PPA time for administrative tasks

Most senior leaders actively sought to find additional PPA time, where possible. Examples reported by participants included, planning in some time for administrative tasks strategically across the year either in meetings and/or INSET days. More ad hoc arrangements, especially in primary schools where there is often a dedicated PPA teacher, was to use any 'spare' time that the PPA teacher might have, if not taken for cover. The exemplar below describes how 1 primary school plans PPA time and finds additional time strategically throughout the year.

Planning of and additional PPA time in a primary school

Teachers in the primary school have much of their PPA time combined in the week so that 1 half day a week can be spent working at home. One full day a year is allocated off timetable to write the annual pupil reports. Middle leaders get 1 full day every half term out of class, to complete role-related tasks. Teachers can choose to work from home for these activities if they wish.

Primary middle leader, LA maintained

6.2.5 Wellbeing and flexible working practices

Senior leaders described how the wider school wellbeing and flexible working initiatives in their settings went some way, but not sufficiently, in trying to mitigate the administration workload impact. The examples described included for example: revised marking policies; Friday 'shout outs'; and one or two 'personal' days in the year if covered by colleagues in the same department. A few of the senior leaders reported using the [School Workload Reduction Toolkit](#) in the past when first devising their wellbeing policy.

The exemplar below describes how 1 secondary senior leader implemented a flexible working policy that went some way to support teachers with all their work, including administrative tasks.

Implementation of a flexible working policy in a secondary school

The school had a flexible working policy in place for four years, that was continuing to evolve. Teaching staff were not required to be in school to work if they were not teaching. This was made possible by making sure that lunch and break duties were not timetabled before and after PPA time to allow for a longer non-interrupted period. Non-teaching administrative staff, could identify 1 day per week to work from home if they wished. One effect of the policy has been a steep rise in the number of applications for support staff roles, as the flexible working pattern is very popular with applicants.

Secondary senior leader, LA maintained

6.3 Suggestions for reducing and/or mitigating the impact of administrative tasks

There was a consensus from participants that beyond increasing PPA time for teachers and the numbers of administrative support staff, they were at a loss as to other suggestions that would make a meaningful difference. This was primarily because of the volume of administrative tasks carried out, that most of the tasks were seen as necessary, and that it would be difficult for many of them to be completed by anyone else:

There needs to be an appreciation of how schools have changed over the past 5, 10 and 15 years. This is for the better, but the administration is a much bigger part of a teacher's role and only they can do many of these tasks e.g., complete a round robin, phone a parent. – *Secondary senior leader, SAT*

...it feels a bit like an iceberg, the tip of it at the top is me being in front of the kids, me being a teacher for the kids, but the massive iceberg below the surface is all of the jobs that I have to do just to be able to be in front of the set of kids. All of that admin, safeguarding, referrals et cetera. – *Primary teacher, MAT*

Senior leaders reported that administration was an area that schools regularly reviewed, in isolation, or as part of the wider wellbeing agenda in their setting and apart from some minor improvements, they were unsure that anything else might be done.

7. Summary and conclusions

The research aimed to understand the types of administrative tasks that senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers undertake, how these tasks are undertaken and prioritised within schools, and to explore whether these can be carried out more efficiently. Depth interviews were conducted with 14 senior leaders, 14 middle leaders and 10 teachers in 14 primary and 20 secondary schools across England.

The findings showed that teachers are regularly carrying several, pupil, curriculum and personnel focused administrative tasks, that are in addition to all lesson planning, preparation and assessment activities outside of the classroom. According to participants in this research, most of the tasks need to be carried out daily and took, on average, 2 hours per day.

Participants reported an upward trend in the volume and type of administrative tasks that teachers and leaders are required to carry-out in recent years, alongside the general loss of support staff such as a reprographics officer. Participants noted that many of the reported tasks were necessary, such as, safeguarding and SEND legal responsibilities. The administrative tasks focused on pupils and the curriculum, were also necessary because of their potential to support stronger teaching and learning.

Apart from the volume of tasks, specific challenges related to the fact that many of them could not be planned for and often accumulated over the day. Tasks often had to be completed on the same day due to time sensitive considerations, such as quickly recording and reporting safeguarding concerns or incidents.

A strong finding was that many thought that several of the tasks could only be completed by the teacher as they had direct involvement, for example, entering a pupil behaviour incident on the school information management system or responding to an email from a parent/carer.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are provided:

- Participants reported the need to recognise the changing role of teachers in the 21st century, where administrative tasks are integral to the role and required allocated time to complete. Therefore, the time required for administrative tasks should form part of any review of PPA time at a national level.
- Many participants reported that roles such as a curriculum support and/or reprographics officer had been lost. A curriculum support officer, like a laboratory or design technology technician replicated in other subject areas, could undertake many of the reported administrative tasks such as photocopying, printing, displays, organising trips, organising cover, entering assessment data and preparing lesson materials, that do not require the direct involvement of teachers. Apart from

funding, an important consideration would be to make this role an attractive one professionally with, for example, a clear career structure. Administrative roles in the higher education sector provide clear career progression pathways to, if desired, very senior roles.

- Senior leaders might seek to review flexible working practices in schools, such as, grouping PPA time to allow teachers to work from home on one occasion during the week. Although this would not directly address the specific time sensitive challenges of many of the administrative tasks described in this report, it might contribute to reducing the overall effect of the workload burden.

Appendix 1: Sample details

Table 3: School sample - region

Region	Number of schools
East Midlands	4
East of England	5
London	6
North East	2
North West	1
South East	5
South West	4
West Midlands	1
Yorkshire and the Humber	6
Total	34

Source: Teachers' admin research - interviews

Table 4: School sample - location

Location	Number of schools
Rural town and fringe	3
Rural village	2
Urban city and town	15
Urban major conurbation	10
Urban minor conurbation	4
Total	34

Source: Teachers' admin research - interviews

Appendix 2: Interview topic guides

Interview topic guide - Senior leader

Experience

1. Can we clarify first...

Job title/role	
Years in role	
Years in teaching	
Years at current school	

Administrative tasks undertaken in your setting

2. I previously shared with you a list of admin tasks that teachers might carry out.
 - To what extent are these tasks common in your setting?
 - Are some more common than others?
 - What are the key sources of admin tasks e.g., pupil related?

Allocation and prioritisation of admin tasks

3. Could we explore more about the allocation and prioritisation of administrative tasks at different levels (individual, department/phase)?
 - How is administrative support organised in your setting?
 - Is it possible to identify how they are allocated? If so, why is this in place? (e.g., is it a requirement to have a system to manage admin, is it too complicated to manage without a system?)
 - How are administrative tasks prioritised? Why?
 - Are administrative tasks allocated evenly or disproportionately?
 - Do certain administrative tasks require certain levels of access? (i.e., they cannot be delegated to support staff and must be addressed at a more senior level)?

Effectiveness & necessity

4. Can we explore your perspectives on these tasks in terms of workload?

- Who or what drives these tasks, why do you do them?
- Are any of these tasks unnecessary/less important/not appropriate use of time?
- Which tasks might be overly burdensome?
- Are certain tasks necessary/important but overly burdensome (e.g., taking too much time?)
- Are some an important use of time?
- What are the challenges of completing the tasks?
- Are there times in the year where there are more admin tasks?
- Have you noticed any recent trends, i.e. are there some tasks that you are being asked to do more or some that you are being asked to do less?

Potential for future development

5. How might the tasks we have discussed be allocated and/or carried out more effectively?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of admin support in your setting?
 - What other approaches would be useful in supporting a reduction in teachers'/leaders' time spent on admin tasks?
 - Could certain tasks be better undertaken by other members of staff within the school?
 - Could tasks be made less burdensome by other methods, e.g. using education technology (EdTech) to automate them?
 - What could happen at a local/MAT and national (DfE) level that might help to reduce the burden?
 - What are the challenges for the school in addressing any unnecessary or overly burdensome admin?
6. Have you/your school been involved in any DfE initiatives (such as using the School Workload Reduction Toolkit) or any other school initiatives that have been helpful in reducing time spent on admin tasks?

Interviewer: focus on admin, not marking, data management, planning

7. Can we now look (briefly) at administrative tasks and workload in terms of your SLT role?

- What are the administrative tasks that you perform which you see as necessary or unnecessary but are overly burdensome?
- What might be done internally, local /MAT level/ or nationally (DfE) to reduce this workload element?

8. Are there any other points that you would like to include?

Interview topic guide - Middle Leader

About your role and administrative tasks undertaken

1. Can we clarify first...

Job title/role	
Years in role	
Years in teaching	
Years at current school	

2. Can we start with you identifying the administrative tasks you undertake as part of your role? This might include some of those on the list of example admin tasks I shared with you previously, or there might be others not on the list.

Interviewer: Just want a list at this stage – not the amount of time spent or perspectives

Interviewer: Allow admin tasks related to other areas (e.g., data inputting) but keep to admin not other workload issues e.g. data analysis, marking, planning

Interviewer: if response is 'I do all on the list', follow up with for example:

- Are there any others which are not on the list?
 - Are there some you do more than others?
 - Is this what you expected to spend your admin time doing?
 - What are the main sources of administrative tasks (e.g. pupil, curriculum)?
3. Which of those tasks do you see as particularly associated with your middle leader role and those that are common for all teachers?

Interviewer: please explore why they may be different, e.g., do middle leaders undertake different admin tasks due to levels of access?

4. Can you say (approximately) how much of your time is taken with these admin tasks across a week?
 - How variable is it week by week and throughout school year

Allocation and prioritisation of admin tasks

5. Are you able to comment on how tasks are allocated to you as a teacher and middle leader?

- Where is the requirement coming from and who decides who should complete the tasks?
- Do you have a role in allocating tasks for teachers?
- How do you prioritise administrative tasks?

Interviewer: Recognise allocation comments/view might be difficult as this is often a SLT decision

Interviewer: Looking to see which tasks they see as the most important (not how they manage it – later question)

Effectiveness & necessity

6. Can we explore your views and experiences with these tasks from a workload perspective?

- Are any of these tasks unnecessary/less important/not appropriate use of time?
- Which tasks might be overly burdensome?
- Are certain tasks necessary/important but overly burdensome (e.g., taking too much time?)
- Is the time spent proportionate to the importance of the task?
- What are the challenges of completing the task?
- Are there times in the year where there are more admin tasks?
- Have you noticed any recent trends, i.e. are there some tasks that you are being asked to do more or some that you are being asked to do less?

Potential for future development

7. How might the tasks we have discussed be allocated and/or carried out more effectively both in your role as a teacher and middle leader?

- What administrative support already happens in your school which you find helpful?
- What other support would be useful in reducing teachers' time spent on admin tasks?

- Could certain tasks be better undertaken by other members of staff within the school?
 - Could tasks be made less burdensome by other methods, e.g., using education technology (EdTech) to automate them?
 - What could happen at a local/MAT and national (DfE) level that might help to reduce the burden?
8. Have you/your school been involved in any DfE initiatives (such as using the School Workload Reduction Toolkit) or any other school initiatives that have been helpful in reducing **time** spent on admin tasks?

Interviewer: focus on admin, not marking, data management, planning

9. Are there any other points that you would like to include?

Interview topic guide - Teacher

Role and administrative tasks undertaken

9. Can we clarify first...

Job title/role	
Years in role	
Years in teaching	
Years at current school	

10. Can we start with you identifying the administrative tasks you undertake as part of your role? This might include some of those on the list of example admin tasks I shared with you previously, or there might be others not on the list.

Interviewer: Just want a list at this stage – not the amount of time spent or perspectives

Interviewer: Allow admin tasks related to other areas (e.g., data inputting) but keep to admin not other workload issues e.g. data analysis, marking, planning

Interviewer: if response is 'I do all on the list', follow up with for example:

- Are there any others which are not on the list?
- Are there some you do more than others?
- Is this what you expected to spend your admin time doing?
- What are the main sources of administrative tasks (e.g. pupil, curriculum)?

11. Can you say (approximately) how much of your time is taken with these admin tasks across a week?

- How variable is it week by week and throughout school year

Allocation and prioritisation of admin tasks

12. Are you able to comment on how tasks are allocated to you in your setting?

- Where is the requirement coming from and who decides who should complete the tasks?

- How do you prioritise administrative tasks?

Interviewer: Recognise allocation comments/view might be difficult as this is often a SLT decision

Interviewer: Looking to see which tasks they see as the most important (not how they manage it – later question)

Effectiveness & necessity

13. Can we explore your views and experiences with these tasks from a workload perspective?

- Are any of these tasks unnecessary/less important/not appropriate use of time?
- Which tasks might be overly burdensome?
- Are certain tasks necessary/important but overly burdensome (e.g., taking too much time?)
- Is the time spent proportionate to the importance of the task?
- What are the challenges of completing the task?
- Are there times in the year where there are more admin tasks?
- Have you noticed any recent trends, i.e. are there some tasks that you are being asked to do more or some that you are being asked to do less?

Potential for future development

14. How might the tasks we have discussed be allocated and/or carried out more effectively?

- What administrative support already happens in your school which you find helpful?
- What other support would be useful in reducing teachers' time spent on admin tasks?
- Could certain tasks be better undertaken by other members of staff within the school?
- Could tasks be made less burdensome by other methods, e.g., using education technology (EdTech) to automate them?
- What could happen at a local/MAT and national (DfE) level that might help to reduce the burden?

15. Have you/your school been involved in any DfE initiatives (such as using the School Workload Reduction Toolkit) or any other school initiatives that have been helpful in reducing time spent on admin tasks?

Interviewer: focus on admin, not marking, data management, planning

16. Are there any other points that you would like to include?

Interview prompt sheet - Examples of administrative tasks

Pupil focused

- Behaviour/detention incidents
- Safeguarding e.g., CPOMS
- Making internal referrals for support
- Attendance (registers, following up)
- Trips
- Work experience
- Pupil information e.g., round robins
- School management system e.g., SIMs
- Internal exams/tests
- External exams

Classrooms

- Displays
- Setting up classrooms
- Stock taking
- Ordering resources
- Maintaining equipment

Curriculum

- Department plans/self-evaluations
- Accreditation requirements
- Outside speakers

Personnel

- Maintaining your performance management records/those you line manage
- Staff recruitment, references
- Mentoring/coaching e.g. ECTs
- Supervising staff on action plans
- Staff absence – being away or requesting absence

Other

- Emails

- Writing/updating policies
- Writing letters
- Filing
- Photocopying
- Recording meetings/phone calls e.g., with parents/carers
- Financial records
- General health and safety
- Reports e.g., for governors
- Writing for school website/newsletter



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