

NASUWT

Submission to the Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into Secondary Education – Teacher Retention

SUMMARY

The NASUWT submission highlights a number of key concerns relating to teacher retention in the secondary sector. In addition, it highlights the areas where progress is being made towards resolving the difficulties and others where further action is required.

The NASUWT submission can be summarised as follows.

- There is clear and demonstrable evidence of serious difficulties with the recruitment and retention of teachers.
- At the root of the difficulties are the issues of pay, pupil indiscipline, excessive workload, lack of professional autonomy and the perceived low status of teachers.
- A simple, transparent and fair national pay structure must be introduced which recognises the central importance of the classroom teacher and appropriately rewards those who remain committed to classroom teaching by providing access to higher salaries without either unnecessary barriers and complications or the need to take on additional management responsibilities.
- The Government has recognised the debilitating and demoralising effect on teachers of pupil indiscipline and its consequent impact on recruitment and retention. The introduction of strategies which support teachers and schools in promoting high standards of pupil behaviour have been welcome but these need to be developed and enhanced.

- The implementation of the National Agreement '*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*' has the potential to make a significant contribution to addressing the problems of excessive workload and will refocus the skills and expertise of teachers on the all-important task of teaching.
- Under the terms of the National Agreement, regulations will be made under Section 133 of the Education Act 2002 to protect the pedagogic role of qualified teachers, confirming them in the lead role for teaching and learning activities. This will help to enhance the role and status of teachers.
- Although the Government has a national strategy for CPD, including programmes of early professional development opportunities for teachers two to three years into their careers, the provision within and between schools is patchy. This cannot be coherently addressed until teachers have a contractual entitlement to CPD within working time.
- The regime of testing, performance tables and target setting has undermined professional confidence and led to reduced levels of professional esteem. There is an urgent need to review these issues. In relation to performance tables the Government should follow the example of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and eschew their use.
- With the exception of the pay, positive steps are being taken to address the key factors affecting retention; but there remains more work to be done, particularly in the areas of reinstating professional autonomy and addressing the oppressive systems of accountability.

BACKGROUND

1. That problems exist with teacher recruitment and retention is undeniable. A wealth of information has been produced by a range of organisations, including OFSED, TTA, the University and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) providing data describing the trends in teacher recruitment, particularly Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses.
2. The difficulties in recruiting to ITT courses were evident throughout the 1990s, particularly in relation to secondary courses.
3. In 2002, UCAS released figures which demonstrated that overall applications to higher education had risen by 1.9% compared with the same period in 2001. There were significant increases in applications for many subject areas, particularly law, medicine and history but the number of applications for teacher training courses had barely changed.
4. Analysis of the figures in the 2002 report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) on recruitment to ITT courses compared to ITT places allocated showed a 9% increase in the number of students recruited to secondary ITT courses in 2001-02 but this represented only 92% of the places allocated, a shortfall of 1,500.
5. An OFSTED analysis of recruitment and retention strategies used by LEAs found that a number reported difficulties in recruiting highly qualified teachers and identified that schools were making increasing use of non-specialist teachers or placing teachers on temporary contracts.

6. Data indicating the difficulties of teacher retention is also readily available. A high proportion of entrants to the profession leave in the early years of their career. Between three to five years in the profession is the most common time for departure. A survey of postgraduate teacher training students conducted by Exeter University found that only a third expected to be in the profession after ten years and one in ten planned to spend no more than five years in teaching.
7. A feature of recent years has been the recruitment and retention problems associated with particular subject areas. Whilst some have been more severely affected than others the expansion in the number of subjects defined as shortage demonstrates that problems are not confined to a small number of subjects.
8. There have been serious problems identified by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and OFSTED in english, mathematics, science, modern languages and design and technology. Some areas of the country, notably London and the South East, report problems in all subject areas with the exception of history.
9. There are equally worrying trends associated with the retention of senior staff. Professor John Howson of Education Data Services has conducted an annual analysis of headteacher vacancies since 1985. He states that 2002 had the highest number recorded. In a report in June 2002 OFSTED confirmed that the number of applications for headship was in decline and that there were fewer applicants for senior posts in schools.
10. It is clear from the analysis of this information that there are problems of recruitment and retention at all levels within schools. The issue of teacher supply is compounded by the implications of recruitment and retention problems for equality issues and the age profile of the profession.

11. There are marked imbalances in the profession in terms of gender and continuing under representation of teachers from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities. There exist clear difficulties relating to the retention and career progression of these groups of teachers which require urgent attention, not least by the introduction of comprehensive and effective equal opportunities monitoring of the school workforce, able to pinpoint precisely the barriers in respect of appointment, retention, professional development and career progression.
12. The imbalance in respect of age profile of the teaching profession must also be addressed. DfES figures published in March 2000 demonstrated that less than one fifth of full-time teachers were aged under thirty and 59% were aged forty or over. This imbalance is a reflection of the inability of the service to attract a wide range of applicants.

ISSUES AFFECTING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

13. Extensive and regular surveys of the attitudes of graduates who are considering their career options and teachers in service invariably highlight that the key reasons for the problems with recruitment and retention are pay, pupil indiscipline, excessive workload, the perceived low status of teachers and lack of professional autonomy. It is, therefore, evident that if the problems of recruitment and retention are to be addressed these issues must be tackled effectively.
14. These concerns are underpinned by an absence of strategic planning across schools and LEAs to encourage retention. Instead, schools have been encouraged to concentrate on developing their own pool of teachers often at the expense of the needs of other schools. Competition between schools has created a system of poaching.

15. High levels of teacher turnover are a feature of many schools, particularly those in more challenging areas.

PAY

16. There are serious weaknesses in the present pay structure.

Recruitment and retention pay incentives

17. The Government's strategy of introducing financial incentives to boost recruitment and retention has not delivered long-term retention of high quality teachers. They are usually either one-off or time-limited payments.
18. Those who benefit from the incentives on offer, particularly those who have received golden hellos/golden handcuffs, do not as a consequence demonstrate a commitment to remaining in the profession beyond the duration of the rewards offered to them.
19. The incentives lack transparency and equity and have been a source of resentment amongst teachers who have been ineligible for them. They have served to add to the complexity of the pay structure and contributed to the dissatisfaction of teachers.

Pay structure

20. The pay structure fails appropriately to reward classroom teachers whose role is fundamental to the provision of high quality education.
21. Too much emphasis is placed on management discretion and flexibility. The existing flexibilities are unduly complex and lack fairness and transparency. The absence of national criteria governing the numbers and levels of payment for additional responsibilities demotivates and demoralises teachers.

22. The Government's current fascination with introducing increasingly higher hurdles for access to higher salaries, greater emphasis on local pay determination and additional incentives for teachers of shortage subjects will not address the pressing issues of:
- the poor position of teachers relative to other graduates on entry and salary progression;
 - the decline in the value of teachers' salaries relative to other non-manual occupations;
 - the failure of current pay levels to provide a durable solution to the current recruitment and retention problems.
23. A simple, transparent and fair national pay structure must be introduced which recognises the central importance of the classroom teacher and appropriately rewards those who remain committed to classroom teaching by providing access to higher salaries without either unnecessary barriers and complications or the need to take on additional management responsibilities.

PUPIL INDISCIPLINE

24. Research conducted by NASUWT confirms the adverse impact of pupil indiscipline on teachers' job satisfaction. The level of pupil indiscipline, violence and increasing levels of verbal abuse have a critical bearing on teacher motivation. These realities of daily life in school have impacted upon the workload of teachers and the stress of work in the classroom.

25. The policy of unqualified inclusivity adopted by some schools and LEAs, and until recently by the Government, has resulted in some pupils with special needs being placed in schools which are ill-equipped to cater for their needs. This places additional pressure on teachers, other pupils and particularly on the individuals with special needs themselves who are unable to access the level of support to which they are entitled.
26. Recent policies adopted by Government to provide more support for schools in dealing with disruptive pupils, particularly the revision of composition of independent appeal panels and the guidance given to them and the DfES-funded LEA projects which focus on behaviour strategies, are all very helpful developments.
27. The landmark victory secured by NASUWT in the House of Lords (P v NASUWT) which affirmed the right of teachers to take appropriate action when faced with violent and disruptive pupils has also done much to raise the morale of teachers in this area of their work.
28. However, more work is needed particularly in securing:
 - the provision of appropriate support for teachers within and across schools;
 - the removal of the unnecessary bureaucracy and prolonged timescales associated with pupils referred for specialist support;
 - consistent application and monitoring of standards of behaviour across schools;
 - high quality off-site support for pupils whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school setting.

EXCESSIVE WORKLOAD

29. The problems of excessive workload of teachers have been well documented and illustrated in a range of reports and studies. The Office of Manpower Economics (OME) produces an annual report for the STRB which has demonstrated year-on-year increases in teachers' working hours. Excessive workload and working hours have impacted adversely on recruitment and retention and has affected morale and job satisfaction.
30. The National Agreement '*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*' signed in January 2003 by the Government, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Employers, ATL, NASUWT, PAT, SHA, NAHT, T&G, UNISON and GMB represents a significant breakthrough in addressing this major contributory factor to the problems of teacher recruitment and retention.
31. At the heart of the Agreement is the concept of teachers being released from tasks which do not require the expertise of a qualified teacher in order to allow them to focus on the all-important role of teaching. For the first time the link between high quality teaching and the need for time to plan, prepare and assess pupil progress has been recognised formally. Amendments to the teacher's contract will provide crucial levers for change.
32. Although, disappointingly, no overall limit has been set on teachers' working hours the introduction of a contractual entitlement to a work/life balance, combined with other key strategies in the Agreement to reduce workload, should exert downward pressure on working hours. Working hours will continue to be monitored by the OME and the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) which consists of signatories to the Agreement.

33. Strategies to reduce workload introduced in the past have invariably failed because of the lack of appropriate levers for change and the continuing stream of new initiatives emanating from a national and local level which were introduced without any mechanism for assessing their potential to increase the bureaucratic burdens on teachers and schools. Integral to the National Agreement is the establishment of an Implementation Review Unit which will operate a 'gatekeeper' role, reviewing existing and new policies and initiatives generated by a range of national bodies. Tackling bureaucracy in schools is an important strategy for teacher retention.
34. All of these strategies have the potential to make a positive impact on the issues which affect retention. However, there is still work to be done to secure the implementation of the Agreement and rigorous monitoring of its impact will be necessary.

THE ROLE AND STATUS OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS

35. Lack of professional autonomy is seen by many teachers as a diminution of their role and status. The regime of testing, performance tables and target setting has undermined professional confidence and led to reduced levels of professional esteem. The level of external accountability causes immense pressure and stress. Although the new flexibilities recently announced by Government in relation to Key Stage 1 are welcome they do not go far enough. Real progress will not be made until the Government follows the example of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland and eschews performance league tables.
36. Castigation of teachers and schools by OFSTED, the media and at times by Government have left their mark on the profession. Many graduates are influenced by such criticism and deterred from joining the profession. Teachers in service become more demoralised and disillusioned by persistently adverse comments.

37. Support for teachers in their early years in the profession has not been consistent. Schools are increasingly responsible for induction and early professional development. Yet it is evident that the standard of provision is variable and that some schools do not have the capacity to provide the support needed by newly qualified teachers.
38. The issue of the inability of some schools to offer appropriate support is of particular concern for teachers from minority ethnic groups. There is evidence that these teachers are more likely to leave the profession than their white counterparts, citing racism and discrimination in career decisions as the reasons. Teachers from other groups such as women or teachers with disabilities also appear to face similar problems of discrimination which impacts on job satisfaction and long-term retention.
39. The position of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in schools is unsatisfactory for the majority of teachers. Despite the Government's introduction of a National Strategy, the access of teachers to appropriate training is extremely variable due to a number of factors including:
- a lack of contractual entitlement to CPD within working time;
 - inequality of provision within and across schools and LEAs;
 - variations in the provision of funding;
 - restriction of aspects of the national strategy to small numbers of teachers.
40. In principle the National CPD Strategy has much to commend it. In practice it will make little impact on the majority of teachers until it is linked to the pay and performance structure along the lines of the Chartered Teacher Scheme in Scotland and teachers have a contractual entitlement to time to access CPD.

Conclusion

That there are difficulties with recruitment and retention is evident. There is no single solution which will resolve the problems. It is clear that the strategies adopted must target improvements in conditions of service, including pay and the restriction of professional autonomy and self-esteem.