



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

21 September 2015

THE WORKLOAD OF TEACHERS

Report of the Director for Children's Services

Open Report

Classification: For Policy and Accountability review and comment

Key Decision: No

Wards Affected: All

Accountable Executive Director: Andrew Christie, Director for Children's Services

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of issues facing teachers in Hammersmith and Fulham which reflect national trends and concerns in relation to their workloads. It reviews the impact that workload has on individuals as well as recruitment and retention more generally. It outlines the roles that key people such as head teachers, school governors and the local authority can play in managing workloads while acknowledging the significant role of external factors, over which local influence is limited.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to review the content of this report and make recommendations as appropriate

3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Concerns about the workload of teachers are well documented. Results of a survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) published in the

Guardian newspaper in February 2015¹ suggested that workload was the main reason that new teachers left the profession. 79% expressed concerns about the impact of workload on work-life balance. A quarter of respondents said they expect to quit in their first five years.

- 3.2. 26% pointed to the added pressures caused by being expected to take part in out of hours work. Just under half reported they work between six and 10 hours at the weekend during term time, with 28% working more than 10 hours.
- 3.3. Factors behind the need to work long hours can include the pressures on schools, head teachers and individual teachers to deliver increasingly challenging examination and test results, the potential impact of a negative Ofsted inspection judgement, the increasing need to demonstrate high levels of individual teacher performance and a general need to complete significant amounts of paperwork and administration.

4. NATIONAL RESPONSES TO CONCERNS ABOUT WORKLOAD

- 4.1. Two recent national developments have sought to respond to concerns that have frequently been raised about teachers' workload. These include a document published by Ofsted in October 2014 "Ofsted inspections – clarification for schools"² known as the "mythbuster" which sought to clarify expectations of schools when being inspected to "dispel myths that can result in unnecessary workloads".
- 4.2. A letter was written by the Secretary of State for Education to the teachers' unions on 4th March 2015³ following the publication of a "Workload Challenge" in October 2014. The letter acknowledged the level of concern about workloads and identified a number of strategies which the Secretary of State felt would address this concern. Strategies included a reference to Ofsted's "mythbuster", ensuring minimum lead-in times for changes to curriculum, qualifications or accountabilities of schools and a commitment not to make substantial changes affecting pupils during the school year or in the middle of a course resulting in a qualification. The letter expressed reservations about the robustness of surveys about teacher workload carried out to date and stated a need to track workload with intentions to run a new, large scale survey every two years.

5. LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTEXT

- 5.1. The degree to which the local authority can control or influence the practice in schools has reduced over recent years. Schools are subject to national

¹ "Workload forcing new teachers out of the profession, survey suggests" The Guardian, 27 January 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/jan/27/workload-new-teachers-work-life-balance>

² Ofsted inspections – clarification for schools 17th October 2014, 11th March 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspections-clarification-for-schools>

³ Letter from Secretary of State to Unions https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/409771/Letter_from_Secretary_of_State_to_unions.pdf

guidelines and expectations which are interpreted and implemented through the leadership and governance provided by head teachers and boards of governors. However, there are a number of mechanisms through which the local authority can seek to influence schools or ensure best practice is shared. This includes through various partnership arrangements such as the head teacher's forum and consultative group. Also the School Improvement function provides advice and challenge on how schools can be managed more effectively and this can include some influence over how workloads are prioritised and managed.

- 5.2. Children's Services and the Human Resources team maintain an overview of recruitment and retention rates and have access to intelligence regarding why staff leave jobs in Hammersmith and Fulham schools. In the year 2014/15, 248 teachers of all grades left the borough's maintained schools and academies. The common reasons for leaving are similar across inner London. Pressures of workload are exacerbated by local shortages of appropriate housing which mean teachers often do not live near to their place of work and have long commutes at either end of their working day. When teachers leave posts in local schools, the trend tends to be that they move to work outside of London where housing is more affordable.]
- 5.3. The education service in the local authority coordinates a range of support for newly qualified staff (NQT) in their first year of teaching. The Guardian/ATL survey identifies this as being a point at which teachers are under significant pressure which can cause them to leave the profession early in their career. The local programme provided for NQTs is well regarded by schools and provides regular training, advice to schools on mentoring and opportunities for NQTs to establish support networks across schools.
- 5.4. The local authority also provides training programmes for Governors, head teachers and staff. This includes a range of courses for teachers at all stages to develop their careers and opportunities in a variety of contexts for school leaders to learn from best practice on being an effective and successful school where teachers would want to work.
- 5.5. The local Housing Strategy "Delivering the Change We Need in Housing" (May 2015) included seeking of views on whether groups, such as 'key workers' (potentially to include teachers) should be given greater priority under the HomeBuy allocation scheme.
- 5.6. At present the Council does not have an agreed definition of which professions might be considered to be 'key workers'. However, the current Housing Allocation Scheme allows the Council to adopt "Local Lettings Plans" in certain circumstances to allocate affordable housing in a different way. This has informed the allocations approach the council is adopting for a number of apartments on Edward Woods Estate. Through this, instead of letting to applicants on the borough's needs-based housing register, first priority was given to applicants who were teachers on the Home Buy Register.

6. THE VIEW OF THE TEACHERS' UNIONS

- 6.1. Representatives from the main teaching unions were consulted about their experience of workload issues and the way that these are managed at the regular SJNC meeting in June 2015. They pointed to a number of factors which either exacerbate or reduce the pressures caused by workload.
- 6.2. It was felt that key developments such as the Ofsted “mythbuster” were not always actively considered and responded to by schools and that some schools continued to make demands of staff to meet requirements which were no longer expected by external bodies. This included policies on marking and planning which were seen by the union representatives as sometimes being bureaucratic and not contributing to better teaching and learning outcomes. It was suggested that staff working bodies should be set up in individual schools to consider and progress relevant guidance as it emerges nationally.
- 6.3. The union representatives also suggested there were examples of where changes in staffing or staff responsibilities had led to increased workloads. Reorganisations to achieve savings had reduced staff numbers, particular affecting the number of support staff, which led to remaining staff being required to take on some of the responsibilities previously held by staff who had left. It was also felt that support staff could have a greater role in general staff discussions, policy development and consultation, given their role in taking on the wider workload of schools.
- 6.4. Measures aimed at reducing workloads were interpreted differently by schools. There were local good practice examples of how some schools had maximised use of “Planning, Preparation and Assessment” time by enabling teachers to use this more flexibly. However, examples were cited of where the concept of “gained time” (which reduces timetable demands on staff who teach GCSE courses after examinations have finished) had been responded to in some schools by expecting the teachers affected to carry out non-teaching work during these periods.
- 6.5. Staff attitude and wellbeing surveys were seen as important tools to understand and inform responses to workload issues. However, it was felt that these were rarely carried out. Union representatives also highlighted the importance of schools having a clear complaints procedure as there was a perception amongst their members that it was often “not worth” complaining when expectations of staff were felt to be too great. Finally, the use of exit interviews may help to better understand reasons why staff leave particular schools although consideration needs to be given as to how these might best be best conducted.

7. OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

- 7.1. The Healthy Schools programme provides opportunities to raise the profile of staff welfare and implement measures which can ensure additional support to alleviate the stress that can result from workload. To achieve the Bronze Award schools need to demonstrate action to meet the needs of staff. This include identifying staff continuing professional development needs for health and wellbeing and then providing appropriate responses to meet such needs. This might include subject release time, staff social opportunities, induction

programmes and buddy programmes for all new members of staff, encouragement to get involved in staff yoga or fitness training, access to occupational health and counselling services and a Teacher Support Network.

- 7.2. As at June 2015, 19 Hammersmith & schools were engaged and working towards the Healthy Schools Bronze award. 20 schools had already achieved the award. Also 5 schools had achieved the Silver award with one (Wood Lane School) achieving the Gold award. To date, only 10 schools have achieved Healthy Schools Gold status in London.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. Managing the workload of teachers is an ongoing challenge for schools which are under significant pressures to perform under a range of indicators and need to recruit and retain high quality staff to deliver the best teaching and learning for children. This has been acknowledged at the national level with recent announcements from the Government which seek to address some of the related issues in the future. Locally teacher recruitment and retention has also been identified as a priority by schools, and links to managing teacher well being and workload have been made.
- 8.2. While the leadership and management of local schools is largely the responsibility of head teachers and governors, the local authority seeks to influence how workload is managed both through direct relations with individual schools as well as wider partnership arrangements and continuing professional development and support. Teaching unions in the borough have suggested a number of activities which may help reduce pressures upon teachers.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1. This report includes a summary of issues raised at a regular consultation meeting which takes place between teachers' unions and council officers which is reflected in section 6.

10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. As this report is not recommending any specific actions, there are no equality implications. Any actions which may result from this report will need to be considered in relation to their impact on people with protected characteristics and the profile of the local teaching workforce.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. There are no direct legal implications resulting from this report. Implications verified by: Kevin Beale, Head of Social Care and Litigation, Legal Services, 020 8753 2740

12. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report

Implications verified by: Andrew Tagg, Head of Resources, Children's Finance,
020 7361 2258

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

None.