

Rt Hon Gillian Keegan
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

20 September 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

Community Union is privileged to engage, together with our sister unions, with the review process and the School Teachers' Review Body. The body of evidence that we provide is essential in making clear the circumstances that teachers and leaders experience in their workplaces every day. Not only that, but when we provide evidence of the economic, employment and social position we are able to present first-hand, how they are impacting the workforce and are likely to impact the workforce in the future.

We have continued to survey members, gather and analyse data, and compile our evidence and contribute to the process in good faith despite the upsetting situation where we were excluded from direct negotiations. It is our continued intention to do so.

The process this year was also frustrated by the delay in receiving the remit, the Department's inability to meet the original evidence deadline and the continued publication of the report in July – too late for schools to reasonably action. Furthermore, the delayed publication of the Government's own *Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders* report into the health of the workforce was also irritating. This vital piece of research should have been made available for the Review Body earlier and we trust that subsequent evidence releases will be.

Economic picture

The last few years have been full of turmoil – physical, mental and financial, affecting individuals, businesses – the whole economy, and the economic picture continues to be volatile.

Situations such as these require a response that is at least equal to the challenge which is why we recommended a pay award that was restorative. Data quoted by the Review Body



shows that “prices in March 2023 were 18% higher than two years’ earlier”.¹ Therefore, we were frustrated by the Government’s initial offer of 3%, and with the current figures from the ONS showing that regular pay rose “by 7.8% in May to July compared with a year earlier - matching the pace of inflation over the same period”² we were right to be frustrated.

When 20% of respondents to our recent survey note that they are unable to cover their mortgage or household bills, it is clear there is a serious problem, and an uplift of 3% equates to a further significant pay cut. Therefore, we were somewhat pleased to see the Review Body assert its independence and make an acceptable proposal of 6.5%, stating “we have concluded it is necessary to recommend exceeding the increases to teachers’ pay proposed by the Government”³. It was the correct decision for the Department to accept this proposal but the obfuscation around how it would be funded, was a further frustration.

It will be key for the sector for pay to be significantly lifted in the next few years in order to begin the restoration of the value of teacher pay, as the Review Body has noted “The relative value of teachers’ earnings fell throughout the early 2010s and has fallen further than earnings across the economy, the public sector and professional occupations”.⁴ Only concerted effort to address pay, workload and wellbeing will teaching be restored as a viable graduate career.

Workforce

As noted in our evidence submission⁵ “had it been properly handled and implemented, a £30,000 starting salary for teachers could have had a profound impact on the recruitment of new teachers. It could have raised the status of the profession in the eyes of graduates and increased the competitiveness of the salary.” This has now happened, but it was not *in good time*. Not only that but has been implemented in a way which has resulted in a slightly flatter pay range for other main scale teachers which is something that will need to be addressed in the next remit.

¹ School Teachers’ Review Body, 33rd Report, (2023). Paragraph 3.9, page 15.

² BBC News, “Pay matches price rises even as unemployment climbs”
www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-66778178.amp

³ STRB, 33rd Report, 3.46, page 22.

⁴ STRB, 33rd Report, 3.16, page 16.

⁵ Community Union | Written Submission to the School Teachers’ Review Body
<https://community-tu.org/community-tells-strb-teachers-pay-completely-unacceptable/#5264a960>

According to the Review Body, “thirteen secondary subjects did not achieve their target number of recruits in 2022/23.”⁶ They go on to state, “the shortages we see in some subjects do not appear to be simply temporary but are systemic and require focussed remediation with a long-term plan.”⁷ With the Review Body summarising that “this deteriorating recruitment position is in our view linked in part to pay levels. Teachers’ pay has been losing value relative to whole-economy earnings and to other professional occupations. This pre-dates the difficult economic conditions associated with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.”⁸ Community agrees and we believe that immediate action needs to be taken to address this recruitment catastrophe before it begins to seriously impact schools.

Furthermore, this settlement is unlikely to do anything to stem the attrition from the sector with “a quarter of teachers and leaders ... considering leaving the state school sector in the next 12 months for reasons other than retirement.”⁹ Even with the 6.5% uplift our members are struggling.

We continue to have grave fears for the School Workforce. Pay is not enough to recruit, it is not enough to retain, and the recruitment and retention strategy lies in tatters.¹⁰

According to the latest ONS data, pay growth in the private sector was 7.8% in the three months May-July 2023.¹¹ Growth in public sector earnings was up at 6.6%, but this means that the teacher pay award is below both private sector growth and *average* public sector pay, again holding teacher pay back. Without restorative pay awards to make teaching more attractive not only will we fail to recruit the best graduates into the sector, but we will continue to fail to recruit at all.

Workload, Wellbeing and Personal Development

As noted in our submission, excessive workload continues to be a key issue for teachers and school leaders. The Review Body concur saying, “workload is one of the primary reasons teachers leave the profession. Excessive workload persists in being the major

⁶ STRB, 33rd Report, 3.23, page 18.

⁷ STRB, 33rd Report, 3.27, page 19.

⁸ STRB, 33rd Report, 3.39, page 21.

⁹ Department for Education (2023) Working lives of teachers and leaders – wave 1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-1>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/sep/12/only-half-of-required-number-of-trainee-secondary-teachers-in-england-recruited>

¹¹ Office for National Statistics Bulletin

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/averageweeklyearningsingreatbritain/latest>

concern of the profession and has been a theme of evidence from all consultees for some years ... We recognise there are existing initiatives aimed at addressing the issue but more is needed. The problem is not being solved and is made more pressing by the profession's worsening recruitment and retention position.”¹²

We are pleased to note that the Review Body identify action to deliver a meaningful reduction in workload is an immediate priority. We are also pleased to see that the statutory requirement for Performance Related Pay is recommended for removal as an action to address workload. “... the obligation on schools to use the current model should be removed ... the Government offered to take this approach as part of a settlement to the current pay dispute. We see this as a pragmatic approach.”¹³ Together with our sister unions, we are clear, PRP is a failed experiment. It has no foundation in evidence and is opposed across the profession. Therefore, we are dismayed that this recommendation has not formed a part of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document for 2023 and would appreciate an explanation to understand why this should be the case.

The Review Body has previously noted that the implementation of the pay framework lacks clarity and consistency. This has led to an inconsistency of application and a framework that is unnecessarily difficult for teachers and leaders to navigate.¹⁴ Therefore we are saddened that recommendations have not been made to remedy this.

Finally, we are dismayed that yet again there has been little comment or consideration of our recommendation to increase PPA time, despite evidence from trials by Teach First. Doubling PPA time would reduce teaching loads and would allow staff to focus their efforts and the planning and feedback aspects of teaching – aspects which we know are burdensome, but which also have a significant impact on improving pupil performance.

¹² STRB, 33rd Report, 3.54, page 23.

¹³ STRB, 33rd Report, 3.53, page 22.

¹⁴ STRB, 33rd Report, 4.10, page 27.

Summary

In summary, we feel that this 33rd Report of the School Teachers' Review Body shows some improvement over last year. Despite the fact that it does not restore, nor even maintain teachers' and school leaders' pay, Community members voted 9:1 in favour of accepting the proffered pay award. But we still have concerns that it does not go far enough to begin to address the issues facing the sector nor does it safeguard the profession for the generations of teachers to come.

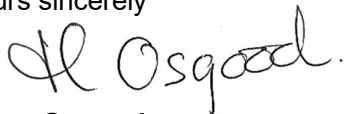
We are disappointed, that despite the overwhelming evidence of the Government's own *Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders* survey, more is not being done through the pay and conditions framework to address recruitment and retention of school staff. Things that could have easily been included include the restoration of the 21 tasks that teachers are not expected to undertake, and the removal of statutory Performance Related Pay.

We are also disappointed that the 33rd Report was once again published by Government at the end of the summer term, despite the fact that the Review Body submitted their report in May, as requested. We have repeatedly stated that this is totally unacceptable due to the workload implications it has for already pressed school leaders, and the unpredictability that this has on staff over the summer break, and we would appreciate assurances that this practice does not persist.

Finally, although it was acknowledged we are disappointed that there have been no attempts to clarify the role of the upper pay scale nor TLRs which will continue to be abused by some employers. And that there are no real steps to address workload, or to recommend changes to PPA.

We want to make things better and look forward to discussing these issues for the benefit of all the pupils, students and the whole education workforce.

Yours sincerely



Helen Osgood

National Officer for Education & Early Years

