

UCAC's Response to the STRB's 25th Report

April 2015

UCAC | yr undeb sy'n diogelu athrawon a darlithwyr Cymru

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1. Introduction

1.1 UCAC welcomes this opportunity to comment on the STRB's 25th Report.

1.2 UCAC continues to have grave concerns about the current crisis within the profession in terms of poor moral and excessive workload. A workload survey carried out among our members during the 2014 summer term revealed that over 91% felt that they had excessive workload. The number of 'further comments' provided in response to the survey questions was high and comments highlighted frustrations about workload and the insurmountable challenges facing teachers which make it impossible to achieve a work-life balance. A significant number of respondents commented on choosing to work part time and / or giving up extra responsibilities (and the remuneration, of course) in order to be able to have a personal life beyond work. Part time workers commented on working patterns which included, of course, working on their non-contracted days, in order to be able to have time with family at the week-ends. Others noted their intentions to leave the profession soon.

1.3 Workload is a very serious issue affecting the retention of teachers, especially at this point the retention of teachers in full time posts. Pay, is however a significant contributory factor, especially, perhaps, when teachers are considering whether or not to apply for posts with extra responsibilities. They need to know that the remuneration will make it worth their while to take on even more work and stress at a time when the ordinary classroom teacher's workload is excessive.

1.4 UCAC believes that the Secretary of State should consider these serious issues before coming to a decision about the STRB's recommendations.

2. STRB's Recommendations

2.1 A 1% uplift should be applied to the minima of all the pay ranges and allowances in the national pay framework (unqualified teachers' range, main pay range, upper pay range, leading practitioner pay range and the leadership pay range, including the minima of the eight head teacher group ranges), the three levels of Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) allowances.

UCAC believes that the argument for the need for continued pay restraint is debateable. UCAC believes that public sector pay restraint has a serious impact on the economy in Wales. The public sector is an important employer in Wales and public sector jobs contribute a great deal to the local economy.

The cumulative loss in gross pay for teachers from September 2010 to September 2015 is a disincentive both to those within the profession and to those who may be considering teaching as a future career. The workload issues noted above compound the effect of this disincentive. UCAC believes that there is a need for a significant increase in pay to ensure that teaching can

compete with similar professions in attracting and retaining the highest calibre of teachers and school leaders. Another year of a "not for all teachers" 1% increase can only be detrimental to the profession and the education system as a whole.

We are convinced that there is a strong case for an above 1% pay increase across the board. In addition to the significant reduction in take home pay year on year, teachers have had a further increase in pension contributions in April 2015. UCAC believes that there is a strong case for a far higher pay rise for all teachers and that the Coalition Government must fund the pay rise fully, including adjusting the block grant for the Welsh Government to cover all the costs.

UCAC would argue that the pay rise should be awarded regardless of salary progression and that the pay rise should be applicable to all teachers; there can be no real justification for the STRB to recommend a different course of action.

2.2 A 2% uplift should be applied to the maxima of the main pay range.

While UCAC welcomes the 2% uplift to the maxima of the main pay range, we are disappointed that this has not been applied across the board.

A 2% increase for all would be an improvement on the 1% for the minima of the pay range and for other pay ranges.

UCAC does not accept the argument that the majority on the main pay range will receive a pay increase due to pay progression and therefore the 1% can be applied to the minima and the 2% to the maxima only. Pay progression is a performance related payment; this pay increase should be a cost of living increase.

2.3 There should be no increase to the maxima of the eight head teacher group pay ranges.

UCAC is very concerned that the decision that there should be no increase to the maxima of the eight head teacher groups will have a detrimental effect on recruitment and retention of school leaders. This is already a very grave concern for us in Wales and it is our opinion that this will only make a very serious situation even worse.

According to the GTCW Annual Statistical Digest (March 2014) there were fewer Head Teachers in Wales in March 2014 than March 2010 – a reduction of 137 in four years. This can be partly explained by school closures but more worrying is the increasing trend for Head Teachers to be "persuaded" to take responsibility for more than one school due to the inability to appoint to Head Teacher posts in such schools. Approximately half (47.4%) of the current Head Teachers in Wales are over the age of 50; well over a quarter (28%) of all Head Teachers in Wales are over the age of 55 and likely to make a choice about retirement within the next five years.

Anecdotally Head Teacher members are telling us of concerns about increasing workloads, difficulties achieving a work life balance and intentions to retire early. While re-advertising headship posts in small schools has been the norm in rural Wales for some years, the re-advertising of headship posts in secondary schools and larger primary schools is becoming common place. It is of concern that there seems to be an increasing number of schools led by

acting heads. Such people are often of high calibre and more than capable of undertaking the role permanently but have elected to fulfil a caretaking role while the employer secures a permanent appointment, which can take well over a year in some situations.

It is important for the STRB to consider the importance of keeping teachers in the profession and ensuring that we still have a range of highly skilled people to become our school leaders of the future. It is too early to comment on the impact of the changes on the leadership pay structure introduced in 2014 but we question whether the new flexibility will, in reality, address the shortage of high calibre candidates applying for school headship. Recruitment issues seem to stem, in the main, from the status of the teaching profession in general and the blame culture and excessive accountability associated with the role of school leader.

UCAC believes that while the satisfaction of promotion and career development is considerable, it is not sufficient in itself. In order for more teachers to take this important step in their careers there must be a clear financial incentive, when one considers the added workload and responsibilities.

2.4 An uplift of 1% should be applied to the maxima of all other pay ranges and allowances in the national pay framework (unqualified teachers' range, upper pay range, leading practitioner pay range, the three levels of Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) allowances).

UCAC believes that the pay rise should be applicable to all teachers and that there can be no real justification for the STRB to recommend a different course of action. The Welsh Government submission clearly supported this view and requested that the *.. 'imposed 1% pay increase is added to all salaries of teachers and school leaders and corresponding allowances to ensure an equitable and fair distribution across the whole workforce'*.

UCAC agrees with the argument put forward that it is important to maintain pay differentials and ensure an appropriate level of reward for those in receipt of additional allowances. We would also reaffirm that many teachers are relinquishing additional responsibilities because of the excessive workload and diminishing value of their remuneration.

It is clear that only the Department for Education's evidence asks for an increase in the minima and maxima alone, allowing schools to come to their own decisions on individual cases. UCAC believes that this a very unrealistic and impractical approach to what is, in fact, a pay rise based on the cost of living. Furthermore, UCAC supports the view of the Welsh Government that local/school determined pay is a less cost effective way of administering pay.

This recommendation does nothing to ensure that those teachers who are not on the minima or maxima of the pay range or minima or maxima of the TLR / SEN Allowance, etc, receive a pay rise. for them there will be no certainties.

3. Conclusion

From our experience as a union, the move from the framework that existed in 2012 with 6 points on the main pay scale and 3 points on the upper pay scale, to the current system of providing pay ranges with a minimum and maximum, has added to the workload of head

teachers and school governors and it has also added to the workload of Local Authority officers who maybe called on to advise on remuneration.

UCAC believes that the changes have failed to deliver on what was claimed by the Department and the STRB to be an initial aim of the reforms to the pay framework, i.e. to simplify the pay system; these changes have made the pay system more complex - rather than simplified it. There have been challenges in establishing fair pay policies at a local level increasing workload at a school and local authority level at a time when resources are already at full stretch.

We reassert our belief that the a pay rise should be awarded across the board as a cost of living pay rise. This payment should have nothing to do with performance and should be significantly higher than 1%.

UCAC believes that individual points should be re-introduced or at least the discretionary reference points should be published. We are disappointed that the STRB has not recommended this and has failed to recognise the usefulness of the reference points to school governors who have had little or no training in issues concerning remuneration and have little or no access to expert advice on remuneration. We believe that the failure to recommend the publication of reference points undermines point (d) of the Secretary of State's Remit letter, i.e. *The need to ensure that any proposals are not difficult or onerous for schools to implement.*

The STRB recognises that there is "*a substantial body of evidence that recruitment of good teachers is becoming harder,*" with evidence also of retention problems after three years in the profession. Improvements in the economy are also identified as drivers of higher starting salaries and more job opportunities available for graduates. UCAC supports the STRB's view that "*a fuller review of the pay framework should be considered as soon as possible,*" and that this review should be completely independent and unimpeded by constraints identified by Government in its Remit.

UCAC, April 2015



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