



Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP

Secretary of State for Education

Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

12 December 2024

Dear Secretary of State

Teacher and school leader pay

We are writing to you jointly to express our concern over your evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body for the 2025-26 pay award. We strongly feel that the proposals set out in your submission would further damage teacher recruitment and retention in England, and lead to more school cuts.

The unions have been clear that the 5.5% September 2024 pay increase must be only the first in a series of fully funded, above inflation pay increases needed to correct teacher and school leader pay. The value of teacher and school leader pay has been cut by over a fifth against RPI inflation since 2010, even after taking account of the above-inflation September 2024 increase. Our submissions to the STRB set out the overwhelming evidence on the impact of the pay cuts on living standards and on the competitiveness of teacher and school leader pay.

We were therefore deeply disappointed to see that in your evidence to the STRB you propose a pay increase of just 2.8% for teachers and school leaders in September 2025. Current predictions for RPI inflation from the OBR show that such an increase is likely to represent yet another real terms pay cut. Anticipated pay growth in the wider economy next year means that it is also likely to represent a further hit to the competitiveness of teacher and school leader pay.

Your letter to the education workforce¹ set out the Government's aim to build a fairer society and to deliver the best life chances for every child. You also reiterated the Government's commitment to recruiting 6,500 new teachers. In your remit letter to the STRB, you set out a commitment to "supporting teachers to stay in the profession and thrive" and to raising the status of the profession.

All of these objectives will be undermined if the Government continues with the failed Conservative policy of cutting or failing to restore teacher and school leader pay.

Alongside excessive workload, the pay cuts have contributed to the recruitment and retention crisis that is doing such damage to our education service. Recruitment targets are being missed by huge margins and we are losing many experienced teachers and school leaders. Teacher shortages across the school system are damaging pupils' life chances.

The recruitment and retention crisis will not be solved until and unless the Government provides the investment needed to properly value, recruit and retain teachers and school leaders. Pay cuts are the ultimate false economy, because they guarantee the continuation of severe teacher and school leader shortages and undermine the crucial role of our education service in economic prosperity.

In your letter to the STRB, you accepted that most schools will not be able to fund the pay award of teachers without making "efficiencies." Senior leaders already go through a rigorous process of examining every budget line every year, and the reality is that any further "efficiencies" are likely to equate to cuts to provision.

The recent DfE report² looking at school finances, found that just 3% of primary schools and 6% of secondary schools described themselves as "financially secure." The report showed that schools had responded to financial pressure by not replacing staff; reduced hours for teaching and support staff; appointing Early Career Teachers whenever possible; teachers returning to maximum class teaching allocations and middle and senior leadership team restructures. Forcing schools further down this road will reduce the quality of education; increase teachers' workload and further add to the difficulties with staff recruitment and retention. We are further concerned that the publication of your proposals will result in schools making premature decisions that could adversely affect the jobs of teachers and support staff and provision for pupils.

The Government must not cut schools' spending power any further because after 14 years of austerity – England now has the largest class sizes in Europe, the highest secondary class sizes on record and more than a million pupils taught in classes of more than 30.

¹ Letter to the education workforce from Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson – The Education Hub

² DfE, *Schools' responses to financial pressures 2023*, November 2024

We recognise that decisions on public spending are collective Government decisions and we would value the opportunity to discuss with you further how we might work with you to make the case for education to the Treasury and the Prime Minister. We are committed to working in collaboration with the Government to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people and we very much hope that we can find a solution to the issues highlighted in this letter.

Yours sincerely



Daniel Kebede
General Secretary
NEU



Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary
NASUWT



Pepe Di'lasio
General Secretary
ASCL



Paul Whiteman
General Secretary
NAHT