

“The National Agreement – Seven Years On”

Statement from the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group Social Partnership

15th January 2010 marked the seventh anniversary of the signing of the historic National Agreement on school workforce reform – ‘*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*’. And seven years on the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) – a unique social partnership comprising unions, employers and Governments – remains firmly committed to a better deal for everyone working in schools: support staff, teachers, headteachers and, most importantly, pupils.

WAMG was born out of a shared conviction between Governments, Employers and Unions that the school workforce is critical to raising standards and a new and sustainable way of working in schools was required if we were to secure the best possible educational opportunities and outcomes for all children and young people.

The shared vision was a remodelled workforce in which teachers and headteachers, working as part of an education team with qualified support staff, have conditions of service which enable them to focus on their core responsibilities of teaching and leading and managing teaching and learning

The ever changing needs of the education system can only be met through a children’s workforce in schools that is continually evolving through a process of remodelling, building on the workforce reforms that have been implemented over a number of years following the signing of the National Agreement in 2003.

WAMG’s conviction is that the process and principles of remodelling, and the deep culture-change that this promotes in schools, are a pre-requisite for both raising standards still further and for building the capacity of schools to respond effectively to Government initiatives to raise standards and ensure schools are ready for the challenges of the 21st Century.

Since 2003, WAMG has been at the heart of school workforce reforms including remodelling, changes to the teachers’ pay structure, review of whole school staffing structures, and in England, revisions to teachers’ performance management and new professional standards.

The principles on which WAMG works include:

- ⇒ Membership of WAMG is an ongoing commitment;
- ⇒ WAMG works by consensus;
- ⇒ Once agreement is reached, supporting and promoting the agreed position and work together on its implementation;
- ⇒ Giving constructive consideration to all the ideas or issues discussed and working to find solutions.

On the anniversary of the agreement, John Dunford from ASCL said:

“ASCL has been a strong supporter of the workforce reform process in England and Wales over the last 7 years. With the increasing number of responsibilities taken by schools, a wide range of staff roles is now an essential feature of an effective service. The reforms have helped school leaders to focus more directly on the core tasks of teaching and learning, with a major contribution to this coming from the increasing number of business managers and other senior support staff on school leadership teams.”

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, re-emphasised the importance of workforce reform and the role of WAMG. Saying:

“Seven years on, work in this area continues to make a real difference in schools and the Government remains committed to working closely with WAMG on all aspects of DCSF policy and raising standards and tackling workload.”

“WAMG remain key stakeholders, helping us to consider and test the workforce and workload implications for a range of policy developments and providing officials with valuable contributions and advice.”

Brian Strutton at GMB stated

“The National Agreement has made possible an ambitious process of remodelling that completely transforms the way our schools work. More than ever, schools call on the talents and dedication of the entire school workforce, highlighting the vital contribution made by every single member of staff to a safe and successful learning environment.”

Chris Keates from NASUWT added:

“The National Agreement has been an important and unique lever for cultural change in the way in which schools work.”

“It represents a tangible recognition of the central importance of the workforce in securing the highest standards of education for every child and enables the workforce to do this by developing conditions of service which recognise and reward them as highly skilled professionals.”

Sarah Messenger, Employers' Secretary said:

“The National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers acknowledge that the achievement of successful organisational outcomes are helped by national policies and agreements that enable the implementation of appropriate pay and conditions and good employment practice at local level. A major achievement of WAMG is that, through the National Agreement, we have teachers who are more appropriately deployed and who are working in more collaborative ways than ever before with the aim of achieving ever higher standards of pupil attainment. Through continuing the process of remodelling we seek to have a school workforce that is ever more able to facilitate better outcomes for the young people in our schools.”

and Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, commented on the contribution that the National Agreement has made to workforce reform in Wales:

“The policies and strategies set out in the ‘Learning Country’ and the ‘One Wales Programme of Government’ require a skilled, diverse and highly motivated workforce capable of delivering ambitious targets for children and young people in Wales.”

“The National Agreement has been instrumental in creating the conditions to enable teachers and headteachers to focus more on the core purpose of teaching and learning and for schools to make effective use of their skilled and experienced support staff.”

“The delivery of this challenging agenda reflects the strength of partnership working that has characterised the work of WAMG. I look forward to building further on these achievements as we continue, in partnership, to improve our provision for learners.”

The National Agreement - what has been achieved?

The school workforce is being transformed – strengthening the quality of school leadership, working practises which enable teachers and headteachers to focus on their core role of teaching and leading and managing teaching and learning, and recognition that support staff are qualified professionals in their own right undertaking enhanced roles, from teaching assistants to bursars

The National Agreement has resulted in:

A series of changes to the teachers' contract to enable teachers and headteachers to work more effectively to raise standards. The changes include:

- an entitlement to a minimum 10 per cent of timetabled teaching time for planning preparation and assessment;
- time to carry out leadership and management responsibilities;
- roles that used to be undertaken by teachers now being undertaken by support staff, e.g. exam officers, behaviour managers;
- an entitlement for headteachers to dedicated headship time;
- an expectation that teachers will cover only rarely;
- teachers and headteachers no longer routinely required to undertake admin or clerical tasks, or to invigilate external exams;
- a requirement that schools have regard to teachers' work life balance;

The development of the education team around the child enhancing the role of support staff by:

- Introducing new and enhanced roles, e.g. Higher Level Teaching assistants (HLTAs), Teaching Assistants (TAs), School Business Managers (BMs), cover supervisors;
- career opportunities and progression (linked to the above) for support staff;
- a renewed commitment to ensuring all staff are managed in accordance with their contractual entitlements; and
- in England, establishment of a statutory national negotiating body for school support staff.

In addition to these changes, over the last seven years WAMG has also supported the development and implementation of a range of other provisions, including:

- teaching and learning responsibility payments;
- new professional standards for teachers (England);
- revised performance management arrangements (England); and
- changes to the pay system

National WAMG is also mirrored in local social partnerships working at local level. They have a crucial role to play by offering support and challenge to the implementation of the workforce reform that is both aligned to WAMG's programme and priorities and responsive to the local situation.

What next ?

Key parts of the remodelling and reform agenda have now been implemented, including the three phases of contractual change for teachers and headteachers set out in the National Agreement. A key priority for WAMG is to ensure that across all schools staff are receiving their entitlements and sustain, broaden and deepen this change.

Recent government policies in England and Wales have significant implications for the workforce and will help to develop further the workforce reform agenda in schools. Within this context the contribution of the workforce, working as a team around the child, is central to the success of the reforms. (WAMG note 25)

WAMG agreed priorities for the coming months are linked to the following core themes: Recruitment; Development; New Professionalism; Deployment; CPD and Pay and conditions, including leadership standards and pay and further work on tackling workload and excessive working hours. WAMG have been developing work priorities into a detailed work plan.

We

- have an enormous and challenging agenda.
- must have sustainability of achievements.
- Are committed to delivering agreements reached
- must develop the details of the new agenda.

More information about WAMG can be found at <http://www.socialpartnership.org>

Editor's Notes

Background

On 15 January 2003 Government, employers and school workforce unions signed an historic [National Agreement](#) that has raised standards in schools by tackling workload and freeing Teachers and headteachers to focus on their core roles of teaching and leading and managing teaching and learning. Together they meet to monitor the implementation of the National Agreement.

WAMG is a unique partnership of organisations representing employers, the government and school workforce unions...made up of

- Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)
- The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- GMB
- National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- NASUWT the teachers' union
- National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers (NEOST)
- Unite
- UNISON
- VOICE
- Department for Children, Schools and Families; and
- Welsh Assembly Government.

The partnership works through a series of weekly meetings. These are currently held every Wednesday and partners share their facilities to support the work of the partnership's.. All business is conducted on a confidential and strictly privileged basis and partners support and promote the agreements reached.

The partnership structure is supported by two sub groups 1) the Rewards and Incentives Group (RIG) which focuses on the pay and conditions of teachers and headteachers and 2) the Support Staff Group which undertakes detailed work on support staff issues.

This press notice relates to 'England and Wales'

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