



IMMEDIATE

22 July 2021

Education unions react to publication of STRB report on pay

Teachers and school leaders are united in their opposition to the Government's pay freeze.

Teachers and school leaders are key workers who have contributed enormously to the country's response to the pandemic. They deserve a significant pay increase, to begin to restore the huge pay cuts against inflation since 2010. Instead, with inflation expected to head towards 4% by the end of the year, the pay freeze will result in yet another significant cut to the value of their pay against inflation.

The pay freeze will add to the damage caused by below-inflation pay increases for teachers and school leaders since 2010. Those attacks on teacher pay contributed to the major recruitment and retention problems of the last decade, as teacher pay declined relative to the cost of living and to other graduate professions. Teachers and school leaders in England see their pay frozen, at the same time as other graduate professionals including teachers in other countries receive pay increases.

With the economy recovering from the pandemic and earnings across the economy rising significantly, teachers and school leaders are being left behind. As well as being unfair and undervaluing teachers and school leaders, this will inevitably create new recruitment and retention problems to add to the existing ones.

The Government is totally out of touch with teachers and school leaders. Its attempt to use the pandemic to seek to justify the pay freeze, despite the huge contribution made by teachers and school leaders to the national response to the pandemic, has caused great anger in the profession. The Government did not even include consideration of a pay increase in the STRB's remit, because it knows that the evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of the significant pay increase for which we have called.

The STRB has not asserted its independent status by recommending the significant pay increase required to begin the restoration of pay losses since 2010 that is desperately needed.

In addition to competitive pay levels, we need a fair pay structure with mandatory pay points for progression on all pay ranges and the abolition of performance-related pay (PRP). This should include mandatory pay points for all pay ranges, with the points regarded as a minimum entitlement for all teachers and school leaders. Teachers and school leaders are united in rejecting PRP - it is unfair, unjustified and causes serious teacher workload and supply problems.

Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of the National Education Union, said: "The Government's pay freeze for teachers is demoralising and presages further teacher and recruitment difficulties as we come out of the pandemic. Any government that truly values education would also value educators; this Government doesn't."

Paul Whiteman, General Secretary of school leaders' union NAHT, said: "School leaders and teachers will be rightly angry that the government's pay freeze will deliver yet another a 3-4% real terms pay cut next year, based on the Treasury's own predictions of inflation. This pay cut risks further eroding leadership supply, and risks prompting an exodus of leaders when the pandemic finally lifts. A slap in the face doesn't begin to describe it."

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Lecturers, said: "A pay freeze is not only deeply insulting to teachers and leaders after all they have done to keep education going during the pandemic but is also potentially damaging to teacher recruitment and retention and may therefore undermine educational standards and recovery."

Deborah Lawson, Community Assistant General Secretary of Voice Community Section, said: "Failure to recommend a pay increase for most, and small increases which don't even equal inflation for some, is a body blow for an already demoralised and exhausted profession crushed by the ongoing weight of workload and the huge demands made of them, both at the height of the pandemic and to deliver education recovery."