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a school starter!

Excessive workload was identified in last year's member survey as second only to pay as the issue of greatest concern to members. Teachers' contracts stipulate a 35-hour week and yet EIS surveys show that teachers work on average over 46 hours a week.

As part of the pay deal, it was agreed by **all parties** that measures were required to tackle this issue. One pathway identified is greater teacher agency and autonomy, as part of the empowered schools agenda, as a means of giving practitioners more direct control over workload priorities.

How might that be achieved?

As a first step, we are advocating that schools audit their existing practice and **collectively** agree as to what can be done to reduce workload and bureaucracy. This involves prioritising what is most effective and stopping that which is least.

The basic yardstick for all of us is the statement from the Deputy First Minister: "If it adds no value to the learning and teaching of your pupils, then don't do it."

Other frameworks to guide consideration are existing collective agreements, especially in terms of teachers' contracts:

'The individual and collective work of teachers should be capable of being undertaken within the 35-hour working week.' SNCT Appendix 2.7.

'Teachers will not be asked to undertake administrative and non-teaching duties which are generally undertaken by support staff' SNCT Appendix 2.6

'School improvement plans should set out agreed actions to reduce bureaucracy and tackle workload' SNCT Appendix 2.18

Action required

Collectively, as a staff set up a process to audit practice in your school against the parameters set out in this leaflet.

This approach has been followed in a number of schools already with tangible results for staff in those establishments. The process should be collaborative and collegiate and include all staff.

The additional inset days have proved to be useful starting points – remember, tackling excessive workload is what they were intended for.

School audit committees can play a role in coordinating and overseeing the process, but it is critical that all staff are involved either through whole school activities or departmental groups.

Some starter questions:

Has your school looked seriously at "de-cluttering" the BGE curriculum or is it still overloaded with initiative weeks which increase workload?

Are staff routinely doing administrative tasks they shouldn't be?

Is your school's WTA (Working Time Agreement) realistic in its assessment of the time needed for certain tasks?

Schools may differ in what they see as the key issues, but by way of a starter some commonly identified drivers of excessive workload are set out below (they are not new!)

Forward Planning

Excessively detailed weekly forward plans, and medium term and long-term plans (i.e. school year) are key drivers of excessive workload and unnecessary bureaucracy. The advice is crystal clear, and agreed to by all.

*“Forward planning should support **professional dialogue** rather than simply fulfil an audit function.”*

“Forward planning is a professional tool to assist teaching and learning. Teachers should plan to the level of detail which will work best for their pupils. This will vary with the teacher’s level of experience... so there should not be a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Daily plans should be brief and mainly for teachers’ use (e.g. a diary approach.)” (Tackling Bureaucracy report)

“Weekly/daily forward plans do not need to plan, assess, record and report at the level of each and every Experience and Outcome.” (HM Chief Inspector of Education, 2016)

NB - Whilst a school’s curriculum planning documents may be asked for by HMIE Inspections, individual teachers’ forward plans are **not** required by HMIE.

Action required

In an empowered school forward planning should be driven by professional dialogue rather than auditing or preparing documents. It is neither good nor acceptable practice for weekly planners to be submitted to school management for the purpose of audit. If that is the practice in your school, it needs to be challenged.

An audit should be carried out using the above guidelines and then changes agreed where required.

If necessary, contact should be made with your local association secretary as LNCTs have a role in creating forward planning guidance for teachers and monitoring implementation.

Assessment

Professional judgement should be at the heart of classroom assessment; there needs to be greater trust in teachers and less evidence hording for audit purposes. Over-recording of the assessment of pupils’ work, is time consuming, repetitive and of limited value in raising standards.

“Assessment judgements, particularly within broad general education but also in the senior phase of CfE, should be based on evidence drawn mainly from day-to-day teaching and learning. Tracking pupil progress and moderation is important; however, there is no need to produce large folios of evidence to support this. Assessment within CfE is based on the exercise of professional judgement” (Tacking Bureaucracy report)

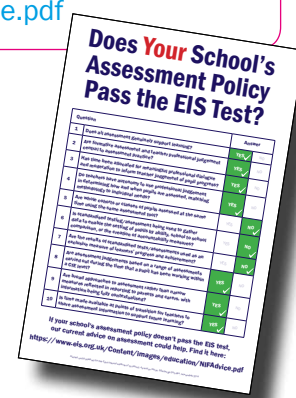
“Avoid spending time on assessment activities which do not help to identify children’s and young people’s next steps in learning. Do not over-assess learners or assess the same content repeatedly in different ways. Do not create large portfolios of evidence.... Avoid duplication and keeping evidence of every detail within the Benchmark.... Avoid spending too much time collecting a wide range of evidence for moderation purposes. Do not track and record progress against individual Es and Os.” (HMIE)

Action required

Initiate a review of you school assessment approaches with the commentary as a guide.

Are there procedures which are more about evidence gathering than assessment for learning? What could you not do?

Use the EIS assessment checklist, as part of your audit. You can find it here: www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/education/NIFAdvice.pdf



SQA Assessment, Verification and Marking

Changes to SQA examination courses have driven additional workload and stress. Often, these changes have been exacerbated due to late notification – sometimes whilst the course is live.

Much of the challenge to SQA will require to come at a national level but there are areas for schools to consider for example, internal verification and both marking and cross marking should be minimized; and schools should identify how duties in other areas might be alleviated to free up time for teachers to adapt planning and resources to accommodate changes

Additional pressure has been created for many classroom teachers by the creation of Faculties, which in some instances has meant work previously carried out by a subject PT has been “delegated” to main grade teachers.

The EIS favours subject PTs as a management model and is clear that this significant flaw in the operation of faculties should be challenged. Include this area in your audit.

Action required

Has your school reviewed its SQA procedures to minimise workload implications? If not, it should.

Where there are national changes, such as in the recent changes in the specifications for Physics and Biology, the EIS will engage with the SQA – feedback from members is critical to evidencing concerns.

At a school level, are verification procedures excessive? Is there overdemand around evidence gathering? Are unit qualifications still being “banked”, adding to the marking burden? Is sufficient time allocated within your WTA for marking, taking into account varying demands across subjects?

Tracking and Monitoring

Excessive recording of pupils’ progress is one of the clearest drivers of workload. This may include creating large portfolios of evidence, inputting large amounts of data in computerised (ICT) record systems (e.g. SEEMIS) or disproportionate demands about evidencing marking of pupil work.

Some record systems/portfolios track and record progress against every E & O, despite advice to the contrary, and/or over-complicate progress tracking by using terms such as ‘developing, consolidating, secure’ for each level. ICT systems can require a lot of effort and time from teachers but lead to little actual impact on teaching and learning or guidance for pupils.

Action required

As part of your audit, using the question “Does this add to pupil learning?”, assess whether your reporting and recording are excessively complex or onerous, and seek to agree ways in which they may be streamlined or improved.

Where ICT increases workload, then its use should be reviewed within the Empowered School.

Is there a need at LNCT level to review guidance on proportionate reporting systems for early years settings, primary and secondary schools? If so, raise this with the Local Association Secretary.

School Culture / Management Style

Whilst the policy of seeking and promoting a collegiate culture within Scottish schools is long established, many members do not describe their own school as “collegiate”.

Where a school (or part thereof) is not collegiate then workload is often controlled by headteacher/SMTs and teachers often cannot target their time or have a team approach to planning or assessing work. It is worth noting that previous EIS surveys have revealed a positive correlation between teacher wellbeing and school collegiality.

The SNCT’s Code of Practice on Collegiality states:

“The collegiate school utilises and develops the skills, talents and interests of all staff and involves all staff in the key decisions affecting the life of the school as a whole.”

As far back as 2015 the Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy stated in its follow-up report:

“The most significant progress in tackling bureaucracy is through taking a collegiate approach. Professional dialogue is essential to agreeing the actions that need to be taken to tackle unnecessary bureaucracy and judging their success. If Headteachers have not already done so, they should discuss with their staff how best to tackle bureaucracy and include agreed actions in School Improvement Plans.”

Action required

Teacher agency is a key element of an empowered school.

Is the lack of collegial working a factor in excessive workload in your school? Do you have genuine consultative processes? Are you able to challenge school practice? If not, what needs to change?

This is not an adversarial campaign – all staff members at all grades face unacceptable levels of workload and we strongly advocate a collaborative and collegiate approach through the empowerment agenda to this issue.

