

Teacher workload survey 2019

Introduction and background

Tackling teacher workload is a high priority for the DfE and the education sector because of its links to teachers' job satisfaction and retention. Retaining teachers is vital to the management of teacher supply, particularly when secondary pupil numbers are rising and the number of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) entering secondary teaching is not keeping up with demand. Teacher workload and working hours are significant factors affecting teacher retention: workload is frequently cited in surveys of ex-teachers as one of the main reasons for leaving the profession.

The Teacher Workload Survey is one of a number of recent initiatives which the Department for Education (DfE) has introduced to tackle workload. It acts as a 'national barometer' of working conditions, providing an evidence base and helping to guide future policy. This survey follows on from the teacher Workload Survey 2016, allowing comparisons over time to be made. A representative sample of 7,287 teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders responded to the 2019 survey.

Key findings

Teachers', middle leaders' and senior leaders' overall working hours

- Teachers report an overall decrease in working hours than since 2016. The average total, self-reported working hours in the reference week for all teachers and middle leaders in 2019 was 49.5 hours, compared to 54.4 hours in 2016. The total number of recorded working hours in the reference week for all primary teachers and middle leaders in the 2019 survey was 50.0 hours per week on average, compared to 55.5 hours reported in 2016. Total working hours for secondary teachers and middle leaders also decreased, from 53.5 in 2016 to 49.1 in 2019.
- As evidenced by previous teacher workload studies, primary teachers and middle leaders work longer hours than their colleagues in secondary schools, although this difference has decreased from 2.0 hours on average per week since 2016, to 0.9 hours.
- Early career teachers (those in their first 5 years of teaching) reported working 2.6 hours more than those who had been in teaching for 6-10 years and 4.7 hours more than those who had been in teaching for more than 10 years. However, some of this difference is accounted for by the fact that early career teachers are more likely to be working full-time.
- Primary teachers and middle leaders reported working an average of 12.5 hours during weekends, evenings or other out-of-school hours, whereas their secondary counterparts reported working an average of 13.1 out-of-school hours. These figures are respectively 5.0 and 3.8 hours lower than in 2016. Furthermore, between 2016 and 2019, the reported time spent working during weekends, evenings or other out-of-school hours fell as a proportion of total working hours. For primary teachers and middle leaders, the proportion of time spent working out-of-school hours fell by 7 percentage points to 25 per cent, and for secondary teachers and middle leaders, it fell by 6 percentage points to 26 per cent.
- Across all schools, senior leaders reported working an average of 55.1 hours in the reference week in 2019. This shows a decrease of 5.4 hours from the 60.52 hours reported in 2016. Total recorded working hours in the reference week for primary senior leaders in the 2019 survey was 54.4 hours per week, compared to the 59.8 hours reported in 2016. Total working hours had also decreased for secondary senior leaders, down 5.7 hours from 62.1 in 2016 to 56.4 in 2019.
- These findings suggest that secondary senior leaders continue to work longer hours, on average, than their counterparts in primary schools. However, the gap has narrowed from 2.3 hours on average in 2016, to 2 hours in 2019.

Hours spent teaching

- Teachers and middle leaders reported spending an average of 21.3 hours teaching in the reference week in 2019 compared to 21.6 hours in 2016. Primary teachers and middle leaders reported spending an average of 22.9 hours on teaching in the reference week. This figure is similar to the 2016 figure of 23.1 hours.
- Secondary teachers and middle leaders reported spending an average of 19.9 hours on teaching in the reference week compared to 20.3 hours reported in 2016.
- Most of the reduction between 2016 and 2019 in teachers' and middle leaders' total reported working hours is therefore due to less time being spent on non-teaching activities, as outlined below.

Hours spent on non-teaching activities

- Compared to 2016, primary and secondary teachers and middle leaders reported spending fewer hours on



'individual planning/preparation of lessons' (down 1.3 hours and 1.1 hours respectively), 'marking/correcting of pupils' work' (down 2.2 hours and 1.7 hours respectively), and 'undertaking pupil supervision and tuition' (down 1.8 hours and 1.3 hours respectively).

- Smaller reductions were also reported in the 'recording, inputting, monitoring and analysis of pupil data' (down 0.5 hours in the primary phase and 0.6 hours for the secondary phase). Reductions in teachers' and middle leaders' reported working hours are aligned with the areas on which the DfE decided to focus following the 2014 Workload Challenge. It appears that the work of the three independent workload review groups and the subsequent support and guidance for schools, have had an impact.
- Despite these reductions, most primary teachers and middle leaders still said they spent too much time on planning, marking and data management and general administrative work. A majority of secondary teachers and middle leaders also reported spending too much time on marking, data management and general administrative work.
- Primary and secondary teachers tend to spend more time on different tasks. For example, primary teachers and middle leaders were more likely to say they undertook 'communication and co-operation with parents or guardians' (90% of primary teachers vs 84% of secondary teachers and middle leaders). Primary teachers and middle leaders were much less likely to undertake 'pupil supervision and tuition' (64% vs 84% secondary) and 'pupil discipline, including detentions' (46% vs 74% secondary).

Perceptions of workload

- In 2019, 21 per cent of primary respondents and 37 per cent of secondary respondents reported that workload was 'a very serious problem', compared with 49 per cent and 56 per cent in 2016 respectively. Middle leaders were more likely to state workload was a 'very' serious problem (34 per cent compared with 29 per cent of teachers and 20 per cent of senior leaders).
- Although fewer teachers viewed workload as a 'very serious problem' there was an increase in the number of respondents who viewed it as a 'fairly serious problem'.
- Seventy per cent of primary teachers and middle leaders reported that they 'strongly disagreed' with the statement 'I can complete my assigned workload during my contracted hours', while around 3 out of 10 'strongly disagreed' with the statements, 'I have an acceptable workload' (29 per cent) and, 'overall, I achieve a good balance between my work life and my private life' (30 per cent). The equivalent figures for secondary teachers and middle leaders were 76 per cent, 40 per cent, and 38 per cent respectively.
- These findings represent a notable improvement on those reported in 2016. For example, the proportion of primary teachers and middle leaders reporting they 'strongly disagreed' with the statement, 'I have an acceptable workload', dropped by 30 percentage points, down from 59 per cent in 2016.
- Respondents were asked whether the amount of time which they spent on non-teaching tasks over the whole year was 'too much', 'too little' or 'about right'. In many areas the feeling that the time spent was 'too much' had decreased since 2016. Sixty-five per cent felt that too much time was spent on general administrative work, compared to 75 per cent in 2016. Fifty-six per cent felt that too much time was spent on the planning and preparation of lessons, compared to 79 per cent in 2016.

Working environments in schools

- The most common strategies used by schools to manage professional time are statutory protected blocks of non-teaching time and encouraging staff to work collaboratively to plan schemes of work. Senior leaders were much less likely to report having a committee in place that monitors teachers' workloads.
- Most respondents agreed they had the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills needed to perform data recording and analysis tasks, that their schools supported continuing professional development (CPD), and that they had time during their contracted working hours to take part in professional development activities. However, they disagreed that they had enough time to keep informed of changes to guidance and rules affecting professional practice.
- Overall, over half of all respondents agreed that their schools' working environments allow them to collaborate effectively on teaching and learning and to address disciplinary problems, that lesson observations are an effective part of professional development, and that teaching assistants (TAs) are effectively deployed. Respondents in Ofsted-category Good and Outstanding schools are more likely than those in Requires Improvement or Inadequate schools to agree that TAs are deployed effectively, as are those in primaries compared to those in secondaries.
- Most respondents (55 per cent or more) in both primary and secondary schools reported that approaches to data tracking, school behaviour, marking and feedback, and teacher appraisal had all been changed in the last 2 years in order to reduce workload.
- However, in most cases, only a minority (typically around 20% or less) of those working in schools that had changed these approaches felt these changes had resulted in a reduction in their workload, with notable minorities reporting they had actually added to their workload. The one exception was changes to primary schools' marking and feedback policies, which four out of ten primary respondents (40%) reported had resulted in reductions to their workload.

The full document can be downloaded from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-survey-2019>