

Raising Standards and Tackling Workload

Implementing the National Agreement

October 2003

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Since the beginning of the Autumn term the reports received by the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG)¹ show that a positive start has been made in schools throughout England and Wales in implementing the first phase of the National Agreement. From September 2003, schools were required to implement several contractual changes. These were:

- the transfer of administrative and clerical tasks from teachers to appropriate support staff or ICT (in accordance with the process detailed in WAMG Note 1);
- the introduction of a reasonable work/life balance; and
- the provision of a reasonable amount of time during school sessions to support those with leadership and management responsibilities.

The advice and helplines of the signatories and the National Remodelling Team (NRT) have been busy and indicate that schools are working constructively to manage these changes.

The WAMG is meeting regularly to review progress and to identify issues on which further advice and support may be necessary.

All LEAs in England have identified a lead officer to take forward implementation and a similar exercise is almost complete in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is also discussing with the NRT how its services can be made available to LEAs in Wales.

Extended roles for support staff

Although only teachers have had changes to their contract as a result of the Agreement, its provisions have significant implications for the roles, training and career progression of support staff in schools.

Support staff are integral to the success of the remodelling of the school workforce. It is essential that the introduction of new roles and posts is handled sensitively and in accordance with the process agreed by WAMG and issued to schools in WAMG Note 1.

At all stages support staff should be given the opportunity to discuss any proposed changes and encouraged to take advice from their union. Heads must have regard to the suitability of the task, the impact on workload, whether sufficient time is available or could be freed up and whether additional training is needed. The implications for pay and grading should also be considered.



¹ The Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group is composed of representatives from ATL, DfES, GMB, NAHT, NASUWT, NEOST, PAT, SHA, T&G, UNISON and the Welsh Assembly Government who are all signatories to the Agreement.

Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) update

In September, the DfES and the TTA published Professional Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) setting out what an individual should know, understand and be able to do to be awarded HLTA status. The Standards, and the associated training and assessment, are designed to provide an assurance to teachers, employers and parents about the quality of contribution to pupils' learning that HLTAs can be expected to make.

The TTA is organising national training programmes which will be available from April 2004. These programmes will help teaching assistants to meet the HLTA Standards and will provide assessment against the Standards. They will be informed by a pilot programme that will take place between November 2003 and February 2004.

In practice the training programmes will be made up of:

- an **'assessment only'** route to HLTA status available from April 2004, designed for those candidates who have been judged ready to be assessed against the Standards;
- a **'full training programme'** route to HLTA status, which again will be available from April 2004. This will be available to candidates who have the potential to operate at the level of an HLTA, but who require a training programme that addresses the full range of the Standards before they would be in a position to undertake an assessment; and
- an **'accelerated route'** to HLTA status, for those candidates who do not require a full training programme but are not yet ready to undertake an assessment. This will offer a more tailored programme and will provide targeted support, taking account of candidates' prior achievement. The TTA will develop and pilot this route in 2004/05.

The TTA has begun a process of approving training providers and will publish a list of approved providers in early February 2004. Teaching assistants seeking HLTA status under each of the three routes identified above will be able to apply to their LEA. Information regarding this initiative can be found on the TTA website at www.tta.gov.uk/hlta and will be updated regularly.

Subject to consultation, similar arrangements will be available in Wales.

Work underway

The WAMG has a full programme of work planned for well into the New Year. Current activities include:

- finalising additional guidance on cover supervision;*
- discussing the interim targets for cover to achieve the objective of teachers at a school rarely covering at all;*
- reviewing Circulars 2/98 and 22/98 on reducing bureaucracy in schools, focusing on key issues such as meetings, pupil reports and school closure days;*
- considering the possible impact on remodelling and on the school workforce of the recently published DfES Green Paper "Every Child Matters";*
- working with the NRT and LEAs in supporting a network of "early adopter" schools who will look to accelerate implementation of the next phases of the Agreement and explore more radical solutions to raising standards and tackling workload.*

