

NASUWT Annual Conference

TEACHERS

– *Of Primary Importance*

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REPORT
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Introduction

1. NASUWT believes that children learn best when teachers are given the time, resources and freedom to make the fullest possible use of their professional talents, skills and knowledge. An education system that does not adopt this belief as a fundamental principle cannot hope to provide young people with the high-quality learning experiences they deserve.
2. Respect for the professionalism of teachers is the hallmark of an education system that is genuinely committed to raising standards and extending educational opportunities. Nowhere is this principle more important than in primary schools if the best possible environment for primary education is to be achieved and sustained. Primary teachers, in carrying out their complex and demanding responsibilities, need the highest levels of support for their skills and expertise from parents, local authorities and central government.
3. However, until the opportunity for change arrived, heralded by the signing of the National Agreement *'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload'*, primary teachers often found themselves working in a system that fell far short of this vision. In many schools, teachers increasingly faced unacceptable workload burdens with damaging effects on their morale and work/life balance. Primary teachers and headteachers worked in an environment created by policies and practices which undermined their professional autonomy and their ability to focus on their core responsibilities for teaching and learning. For many primary teachers, there was a growing sense that their expertise and professional commitment was too often either unrecognised or discounted.
4. In working towards the achievement of the National Agreement, with its benefits for all teachers, NASUWT remained acutely aware of the need to address the concerns of teachers in the primary sector. A key aim of NASUWT's ongoing work, through the national Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG)¹ and the Rewards and Incentives Group (RIG)², has been the delivery of tangible improvements to the working conditions, pay and professional status of primary teachers.
5. This Report sets out NASUWT's view of the key issues that lie at the heart of the debate on the future of primary education. The Report:
 - puts the debate about the future of primary teaching into proper context by looking at key structural changes within the primary education system, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s;
 - assesses the impact of these changes on the work of primary teachers;
 - highlights the central importance of the National Agreement, the wider remodelling agenda and the changes to the national pay structure in delivering a better deal for primary teachers on the key issues of workload, teacher professionalism and pay;
 - indicates where NASUWT believes that further progress is needed to ensure that the educational interests of children and the professional aspirations of classroom teachers will be met in dynamic and positive new ways.
6. It is also important to stress that while the issues considered by this Report are focused largely on the position of primary teachers in England and Wales within the context of the National Agreement, primary colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland share a great deal of common experience.
7. In Northern Ireland, following the publication of the Curran Report, NASUWT is using the framework provided by the National Agreement to press for comparable reforms to tackle issues of workload and the professional duties and responsibilities of primary teachers. In Scotland, while the McCrone reforms represent a distinctive approach, much of the analysis contained within this Report will resonate with teachers working in the Scottish primary sector. Throughout the United Kingdom, there is a clear need to analyse and articulate the concerns of primary teachers within the context of each country's distinct culture and history of educational policy. This is a task that NASUWT is committed to undertake.

¹ The WAMG comprises the signatories to the National Agreement, DfES, Welsh Assembly Government, National Employers, NASUWT, ATL, PAT, NAHT, SHA, UNISON, GMB and T & G.

² The RIG comprises DfES, National Employers, NASUWT, ATL, PAT, SHA and NAHT.

The primary sector in context

8. Conflicts and disputes about the nature of primary teaching and its professional status are not new and date back to the establishment of the maintained school sector.
9. However, by the 1960s, a growing consensus had emerged between government and the teaching profession that the most effective way to meet the educational needs of children was for classroom teachers to have significant professional autonomy in determining curriculum content, teaching methods and pupil assessment techniques. This was supported by views, perhaps expressed most clearly in the 1967 Plowden Report, that teaching should be seen in terms of professional practice rather than task execution.
10. This perspective on the role of the primary classroom teacher came under greater and more sustained challenge during the 1970s and 1980s. Led by reactionary pressure groups, a powerful reassertion of 'traditional' educational beliefs claimed greater influence over government policy making.
11. These beliefs were based on a simple premise. The teaching profession, representing the 'producer interest', had achieved an unacceptable dominance over the education system. Parents and employers, the 'consumer interest', needed to be given more influence and power. The key aim of policy was, therefore, to create an 'educational market' which would use competition to drive up levels of achievement and constrain the autonomy of teachers.

The effects of increasing central control

12. Although moves to place greater restraint upon teacher autonomy in the primary sector began in the early and mid-1980s, a substantial change in this area was not seen until the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. NASUWT always supported the principle of a national curriculum that ensured access to a common educational entitlement for all young people and although the first version of the National Curriculum was extremely unwieldy and bureaucratic, many teachers felt that it provided a flexible framework within which they could still retain significant autonomy.
13. Nevertheless, the seeming lack of trust of primary teachers on the part of the then government, led to the view that tighter restrictions were needed on the ability of teachers to determine the content of the curriculum. As a result, the introduction of the National Curriculum was closely followed by the setting up of OFSTED to monitor and ensure effective compliance with the government's view of the way in which the National Curriculum should be implemented. This policy ensured that punitive and powerful sanctions could be applied against non-conforming schools and teachers.
14. While NASUWT has never opposed the establishment of a sensible and constructive inspection regime, the form and content of OFSTED inspections put individual class teachers under unacceptable pressure and undermined team approaches to school improvement and development. In primary schools, as a result of their relatively small size, individual class teachers were often easily identified in inspection reports and the consequences for many teachers of demoralising and inaccurate judgements by inspectors damaged the careers of many teachers.
15. These developments were taken a stage further by the introduction of performance tables based on the results of National Curriculum tests. Initially, the Government had intended the Key Stage 2 tests to be marked by teachers. However, NASUWT's legal victory over Wandsworth Council, in defence of the Union's national industrial action on workload, secured the external marking of tests and protected teachers from what would have been a serious deterioration in their working conditions.
16. Performance tables were, and still are, intended to hold schools and teachers publicly accountable for the attainment of pupils in the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Publication of performance tables put increased pressure on schools to conform to centrally imposed curriculum content and demonstrated the Government's determination to bring the work of teachers under even greater control.

17. These central controls have remained largely intact, although devolution has brought some changes to this structure in Wales. In 1998, the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in England was seen as an attempt to enforce even tighter controls on the work of primary classroom teachers. Although the Strategies are not statutory, and many teachers continue to support the principles on which they are based, it became increasingly clear that teachers were to be allowed very limited flexibility in the implementation of the Strategies in their classrooms.
18. Some schools made attempts to resist what many saw as a form of 'pedagogical cloning' by interpreting the Strategies in ways that were seen by schools and teachers as more closely matched to the needs of pupils. Ironically, *Excellence and Enjoyment*, the Government's strategy for primary education published in 2003, praised these schools for their 'innovation'; the same schools that OFSTED had condemned routinely for noncompliance in its earlier evaluations of the implementation and effect of the National Strategies.

Local accountability and governance

19. These changes in educational ideology had profound effects on local education authorities continuing the change in relationships which had been heralded by the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS).
20. Previously, LEAs had been seen as partners with Government and individual schools, in the delivery of local education. The 'new view' of education clearly implicated local education authorities in the 'failure' of previous models of education.
21. Local democracy was replaced by 'consumer power'. LEAs were no longer the local democratic guardians of education but became, instead, the local monitors and enforcers of central policy on primary education. Local education authorities perceived to be failing in this role were threatened with the privatisation of their core functions.
22. These developments led to a fundamental shift in the relationship between LEAs and local schools. LEAs were set performance targets that were to be 'negotiated' with schools. Local advisory services increasingly shifted their priorities towards monitoring compliance and away from supporting schools and teachers in developing their ability to make autonomous decisions. In many instances, local authorities responded to the pressures placed upon them by adding to the workload burdens on schools through placing highly bureaucratic demands on schools and inappropriate, over-complex local implementation of central government initiatives. In addition, many local authorities began to run 'mock OFSTED inspections' to insure themselves against the potential consequences of school failure, thus increasing the burdens on headteachers and teachers.
23. Further complications were created by the fact that, while LEAs were supposed to remain independent monitors of schools within the local education system, Local Management of Schools (LMS) meant that schools were required to purchase services from the local authority. This confused further the relationship between schools and LEAs and acted as a distraction from what many saw as LEAs' core functions.
24. However, in many respects, local education authorities can be seen as engineers of their own destiny. With some justification, it has been pointed out that education authorities failed to make the case for their continued importance and relevance and did not articulate an alternative vision of their role.

The Foundation Stage Profile and LEAs

The experience of early years teachers working with the Foundation Stage Profile shows how, in many cases, local authorities have added to the burdens placed on teachers in primary and nursery schools through ineffective implementation of national initiatives.

The Foundation Stage Profile was welcomed as a replacement for a wide variety of local baseline assessment systems. However, since its introduction, NASUWT members have reported that their workload burdens have increased as a result of unwieldy and bureaucratic models of early years assessment and record keeping developed by local

authorities in 'support' of the profile. Rather than the profile developing as a system of intelligent assessment, as many had hoped, a significant number of teachers have reported that they are expected by their local authorities to amass and collate vast amounts of evidence to support judgements made about pupils.

The experience highlighted by the local implementation of the Foundation Stage Profile emphasises the need to reform the basis on which the relationships between central government, local education authorities and schools are based so that teachers are able to focus on teaching and learning rather than managing bureaucratic accountability processes. In its work with government and other social partners, a key NASUWT objective is to secure changes that lead to more appropriate local management of national policies.

New pressures on headteachers

25. Schools faced serious consequences as a result of these changes in the direction of policy. Headteachers were given more apparent power over school budgets through the introduction of LMS. However, the weakening of the links between individual schools as a result of the diminished role of local education authorities led to fewer incentives for schools to co-operate and meant that headteachers became personally accountable for the performance of their schools to an unprecedented extent.
26. Faced with these considerable new demands, headteachers were encouraged to alter their perceptions of their role from that of 'leading professional' to that of manager or 'chief executive'. This latter view helped to ensure that classroom practice conformed to what was expected of schools by central and local government.
27. In effect, headteachers were expected to be frontline enforcers of a 'culture of compliance'. Previous notions of classroom teacher professionalism sat uneasily with this model given that views of acceptable pedagogy were determined to an increasing extent outside the teacher's sphere of influence. Concerns about teacher workload were of minimal importance in this view of school leadership.
28. Many headteachers disagreed fundamentally with the new orthodoxy, seeing it as incompatible with important principles of professional collegiality, which they believed was the headteacher's responsibility to nurture and support. In the face of considerable external pressure, many headteachers continued to do everything they could to protect the ability of teachers to make professional decisions as reflective and informed practitioners. They remained committed to maintaining a significant element of genuinely consultative and participative decision making and took risks in amending, adapting and sometimes even rejecting external demands made upon their schools and their staff.
29. For primary classroom teachers, there was a direct correlation between changes in their ability to act as autonomous professionals and the increases in workload they faced. Many of the increases in workload involved the carrying out of tasks which teachers did not see as supportive of their professional activities with children and which were undertaken mainly to ensure compliance with externally imposed direction and control.

The impact on primary teachers

30. The evidence provided by NASUWT teacher and headteacher members working in primary schools highlighted four key effects of these profound changes to the education system:
 - excessive workload and the intensification of working practices coupled with initiative overload and frequently inappropriate management of the implementation of these initiatives;
 - the expectation that teachers should carry out an excessive number of tasks and activities not directly related to teaching and learning;

- the impact of changing relationships within schools on the extent to which primary teachers are able to exercise professional autonomy; and
- lack of recognition of and respect for the skills and expertise of primary teachers.

Workload and work intensification

31. Over the past two decades, NASUWT has highlighted the increasingly excessive workload demands faced by primary teachers. The intensification of the Union's activity in this area, through the '*Time for a Limit*' campaign, led to the commissioning by the Government of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Teacher Workload Study in 2001.
32. The PwC Study found that primary teachers were facing severe and growing pressures as a result of workload intensification. The PwC Study's finding that teachers and headteachers in primary schools were regularly working between 50 and 60 hours a week, and often longer, lent support to NASUWT's long-standing concerns. The PwC Study also made clear that these workload pressures were compounded by an almost total absence of non-contact time for the majority of primary teachers.
33. The Foundation Stage Profile, the use of 'optional' SATs, the burdens of inspection preparation, unwieldy internal assessment systems and excessive requirements on teachers to plan schemes of work and individual lessons were all cited as significant causes of excessive workload.
34. The impact of excessive workload on the quality of primary teachers' professional and personal lives has been one of the starkest features of the primary education system over the past two decades. Teachers in the primary sector increasingly felt that they did not have the time to reflect on their practice and lost control of planning, preparing and assessing pupils' work to the extent that they thought appropriate. In effect, primary school teachers were left with an often irreconcilable choice between dedicating an increasing amount of time to their work and exercising their right to time for personal and family life. The toll on primary classroom teachers, in terms of stress and ill health, of excessive workload was widely recognised. For example, the Health and Safety Executive, in a report published in 2000, identified that those working within the education sector in the UK were among the occupational groups most likely to be exposed to the psychosocial hazards that can lead to work-related stress.
35. Much of this workload pressure had its origins in policies developed beyond individual schools and the pressure on all headteachers during this period was considerable. However, it was to the credit of many headteachers and senior staff that they remained committed to minimising the impact of work intensification on teachers. Schools managed in line with long-standing NASUWT principles and beliefs tried consistently to protect teachers from excessive workload burdens. However, headteachers themselves often felt overwhelmed by the increasing burdens of accountability and were under strong pressure to pass these burdens on to school staff.
36. Consequently, in far too many cases, ever-increasing workload burdens were seen as an almost inevitable part of primary school teaching. Many teachers, protesting against excessive workload, were condemned as 'unprofessional' and teachers' time, in a significant number of primary schools, was seen as an unlimited resource, to be consumed with little regard to the human cost and the impact on standards of working in this way.

Tasks not directly related to teaching and learning

37. Increasingly, NASUWT members in primary schools reported that they were expected to undertake an increasing range of tasks that did not require the skills and expertise of a qualified teacher. Such tasks were a distraction from teachers' core responsibilities for teaching and learning and were a source of considerable professional frustration.
38. The increase in the amount of time that primary teachers were required to spend on these 'low-level' tasks was one of the key messages of the PwC Teacher Workload Study. One of the Study's key recommendations pointed to the need to re-evaluate and revise working practices within schools so that teachers could spend more time on activities directly related to teaching and learning.

39. At one level, it was possible to identify certain types of task that teachers should not be required to undertake on a routine basis. Bulk photocopying, copying out lists, collecting money and many other similar tasks had, by the time of the study, become integral parts of the day-to-day activity of many primary classroom teachers. The first phase of the implementation of the National Agreement '*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*' provided important contractual protection in this respect.
40. However, analysis of teachers' working patterns pointed to more complex issues that emphasised the need for more sustained remodelling of the work of primary teachers.
41. The nature of lesson and curriculum planning carried out by many primary teachers was an obvious and serious example. It is beyond dispute that the planning of coherent and effective learning opportunities is an essential teacher activity. In this sense, planning can be seen as a core professional activity, centred on the teaching and learning needs of pupils.
42. Nevertheless, for many teachers, the learning-focused aspects of planning were obscured by burdensome and increasingly unproductive planning-related bureaucracy. Planning was, in many instances, the production of paperwork in order to provide a means by which school management teams and external verifiers of school performance could hold teachers to account. Planning formats were frequently externally imposed, as were requirements on teachers in terms of content, structure and detail. Many primary teachers found that the demands forced on them by this model of planning, which focused on the external *appearance and acceptability* of planning, detracted from giving an appropriate degree of attention to the *substance* of planning as a necessary professional activity that adds value to pupils' learning.

Professional autonomy and internal school relationships

43. The idea of the teacher as an autonomous professional, taking action and making decisions based on the exercise of extensive skills and expertise, is often contrasted with that of the teacher as a technician, merely carrying out instructions and tasks imposed from above.
44. While these two models of teaching can be seen as extremes at either end of a continuum, as a teacher's role will necessarily involve some aspects of both, it has been the experience of many NASUWT members in primary schools that ways of working increasingly moved away from commonly held notions of professional autonomy.
45. The undermining of professional autonomy served to generate a sense of powerlessness and lack of control and ownership on the part of many primary teachers. This shift in teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy was one of the most significant findings of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Study.
46. Unfortunately, many of the primary schools where NASUWT members worked saw the development of an increasingly entrenched managerialist ethos, driven by inappropriate and unconstructive systems of accountability, which served to concentrate professional knowledge and decision making in the hands of a small group of senior managers. The effect of this trend was to undermine the scope for a large number of primary teachers to make autonomous professional judgements and act upon them.
47. NASUWT members reported that constraints on their professional autonomy through the assertion of overbearing managerial control could take a number of forms, including:
 - the imposition of whole-school schemes of work and policies with little or no meaningful consultation with members of teaching staff beyond the senior management team;
 - excessive and unnecessarily intrusive classroom monitoring, intended to secure compliance with imposed methods of working rather than professional observation used as a means to assist professional development or to gain meaningful information about pupil progress;
 - staff meetings becoming a way of imparting instructions to be followed rather than a means by which important school issues can be discussed openly among professionals;
 - the use of crude assessment data to monitor and hold individual teachers to account, underpinned by the threat of sanctions if targets are not met;
 - intolerance of the expression by teachers of dissenting professional views;
 - over-frequent scrutiny of teachers' planning, assessment and record keeping to ensure teachers' compliance with imposed policies and practices.

48. It is vitally important to stress that the extent to which teachers' professional autonomy was undermined varied, to a significant degree in some instances, depending on the way in which important internal school decisions were reached and acted upon. While facing external pressures to establish increasingly hierarchical internal structures, many headteachers remained as committed as possible to collaborative and participative decision making and received unreserved support from NASUWT for their stance.
49. The Government recognised this culture of compliance, with its oppressive restrictions on the ability of teachers to make the fullest possible use of their professionalism, as a priority for change. In launching the New Relationship with Schools, the former Minister for School Standards at the Department for Education and Skills, David Miliband, spoke of the need to 'rid schools of the culture where many people are always looking upwards for permission to do things.'
50. Nevertheless, the nature of the professional relationships that many primary teachers experience in their schools shows that there is not only a need to develop a new relationship between Government and schools, but also an equally pressing need to put in place new relationships between those who work in many primary schools.

Lack of recognition of the skills and expertise of primary teachers

51. Linked to the issues of workload, tasks not directly related to teaching and learning, and the undermining of professional autonomy was a growing sense among primary teachers that their work was not valued or held in the same esteem as other comparable professions or even within the profession.
52. Much of the decline in applications for primary initial teacher training places, seen during the early to mid-1990s but recently reversed, was linked by many to this lack of wider recognition of the skills and expertise of primary teachers.
53. Many primary teachers leaving the profession reported that this disparity of esteem with other professions was a serious motivating factor. For those who stayed, the impact on morale was significant.
54. Rather than promoting primary teaching as a skilful job for skilful people, little was done to raise the status of primary teaching; the "Mums' Army" suggestion of John Major's Government, based on the idea that primary teaching could be undertaken by unqualified people or even volunteers with some informal experience of working with children, was the most obvious example of the failure of the Government to enhance the status of primary teaching.
55. Rewards and incentives played an important role in exacerbating negative perceptions about primary teaching. Many primary teachers were undertaking tasks directly related to teaching and learning, such as subject co-ordination, without receiving management allowances for taking on extra responsibilities; a situation that NASUWT has called attention to through its joint work on RIG on proposals to reform the current system of management allowances to ensure that teaching and learning-related payments reward teachers for teaching and learning-related responsibilities.

The way forward

56. NASUWT, through its understanding of the causes and effects of the key pressures on primary schools and teachers, played a key role in generating momentum for change. This led to the signing of the National Agreement '*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*' and the opportunity to set out a more positive future for primary schools, children and teachers.
57. The new approach signalled by the National Agreement demonstrates that improvements to teachers' working conditions and professionalism can be advanced alongside developments designed to raise standards. Rather than being seen as contradictory aspirations, the National Agreement demonstrates NASUWT's long-held position that, in fact, improving the employment and professional environment of primary teachers is central to improving the education on offer within primary schools.
58. As a result, recent Government policy has begun to address issues of workload, the ability of teachers to focus on tasks directly related to teaching and learning and has taken seriously the need to enhance the professional status of primary teachers.

59. It is therefore important to consider how these positive developments have the potential to yield effective change in the primary sector.

Workload

60. The changes introduced by the National Agreement are significant for all primary teachers:
- the ending of the requirement on primary teachers to undertake a wide range of time-consuming administrative and clerical tasks on a routine basis should already be helping to ensure that a better work/life balance can be achieved and that teachers can concentrate on their core responsibilities for teaching and learning;
 - initial limits on cover, with eventual elimination as a clear target, will greatly reduce the negative impact on primary teachers, headteachers and pupils of the widespread 'splitting-up' of classes when colleagues are absent;
 - the introduction from September 2005 of guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, equal to 10% of the taught timetable, will ensure that, for the first time in most cases, primary school teachers are given non-contact time during the school day to undertake professional activities;
 - the Implementation Review Unit (IRU), established as part of the National Agreement, is making sure that the national initiatives and policies are monitored for their potential impact on the workload of primary classroom teachers;
 - schools are now required to make provision for teachers' entitlement to a reasonable work/life balance;
 - time allocated within school sessions for teachers to undertake leadership and management responsibilities is making sure that workload burdens are reduced and that teaching and learning can be managed more effectively;
 - the removal of the requirement for teachers to invigilate external examinations, including SATs, will allow teachers' time to be used more effectively;
 - the introduction of dedicated headship time will protect headteachers, particularly in small schools, and will provide additional support to the management of teaching and learning within schools.
61. Primary schools will continue to face pressures for change. The challenges posed, for example by the Children's Services Agenda including proposals to set up extended schools and to co-locate more children's services on school sites, are particularly significant and far-reaching.
62. However, the National Agreement and the social partnership upon which it is based will ensure that the potential impact of new policies on primary teacher workload will no longer be neglected or treated as an unimportant afterthought. The framework put in place by the National Agreement sets a context and way of working, and gives reassurance to teachers that the planning of future initiatives must take full account of the potential impact on primary teacher workload before implementation can proceed.

Letting teachers teach

63. The work of the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) and the National Remodelling Team (NRT), the change agent which supports the work of WAMG, has shown that schools can redesign and refocus the work of primary teachers so that they can concentrate more effectively on their core responsibilities for teaching and learning.
64. The removal of the requirement to undertake administrative tasks on a routine basis is critical in this respect. The work schools must now carry out on remodelling cover and providing PPA time has also begun to act as an impetus for change. The many examples of current and developing good practice in primary schools disprove claims that genuine remodelling will have a limited impact.
65. The pay reforms put forward by NASUWT and its social partners on the Rewards and Incentives Group (RIG) are also important in supporting the ability of teachers to focus on teaching and learning. By ensuring that additional payments to teachers will be based solely on the contribution made by teachers to teaching and learning, teachers will at last be rewarded for doing what they do best.

The Remodelled School of the Future

NASUWT's vision of the remodelled primary school of the future looks to the school as an organisation where teachers will have the freedom and scope to make full use of their professional skills and talents, unencumbered by tasks which are a distraction from this core role. Working in partnership with the wider school workforce, primary teachers in the remodelled school will be at the heart of a team of trained and qualified support staff, leading on teaching and learning, benefiting from the improvements in their working conditions, underwritten by the National Agreement, which will ensure that they can establish a better work/life balance while continuing to develop the range and quality of educational opportunities offered to pupils.

NASUWT believes that teachers working in remodelled schools will be liberated from the pressures that have led to workload being cited as the major reason for primary teachers leaving the profession and will end the loss of talent caused by too many newly qualified teachers leaving the profession early on in their careers. The refocus on the professionalism of teachers will also encourage high-quality graduates to choose teaching as a career option.

Remodelling is not a 'quick fix'. It must be an ongoing process, involving the whole school team in positive and sustainable change. Many schools are already beginning this process, taking practical steps towards the vision of the future, as the following examples of real change from primary schools show.

- *Enhancing the role of teaching assistants in areas such as display, managing attendance and supporting learning.*
- *Using ICT to develop collaboration within and beyond individual schools.*
- *Redesigning school environments to provide teachers with space to work away from the classroom.*
- *Developing team-teaching approaches to reducing planning burdens.*
- *Bursar training for school administrators.*
- *Specialist coaches to extend curriculum enrichment activities for pupils.*

Internal school relationships and professional autonomy

66. The work of the WAMG, RIG and NRT in guiding and assisting the process of remodelling in primary schools has started to point schools towards new, more effective ways of working. Teachers in the primary sector will receive the support and guidance they have long sought on developing their professional practice so that they can focus on their core responsibilities for teaching and learning without the obstacles generated by the unconstructive policies and expectations of the past. Not only will the position and skills of teaching assistants and other members of the school workforce be given much more significance and status, it is also becoming clear that managerial models based on top-down, command and control compliance will not deliver sustainable benefits.
67. In order to put in place an effective remodelling process, schools will have to develop and extend collegiate and collaborative decision making. Remodelling requires the views of teachers as professionals to be given a much higher profile and degree of influence within schools. Built upon in future, this process will help to support the development of a set of values that gives more prominence to the autonomy and professionalism of primary classroom teachers.

The Remodelling Process

The National Agreement was the lever for change for the remodelling process. Remodelling is a structured change process that empowers whole school teams to tackle their own key issues in a way that reflects their individual circumstances.

A growing number of primary classroom teachers are seeing the profound and sustainable benefits offered by remodelling. Remodelling is not only a practical route to improving teachers' work/life balance and their ability to focus more on teaching, it also encourages, and depends upon, a more collaborative approach to school development.

The NRT's five key elements of successful change reflect the need for high levels of co-operation and joint working both within and between schools:

- *The school change team contains representatives from all staff levels within the school.*
- *Political, emotional and practical factors are considered for each prospective change.*
- *There is a willingness to collaborate, both within the school and with other schools and bodies outside the school.*
- *School representatives attend regional remodelling events.*
- *An external mentor, usually a Remodelling Consultant, is engaged as a 'critical friend', to give an outside perspective and additional insight on the changes proposed.*

Key areas for further reform

68. The National Agreement and the wider remodelling agenda are starting to tackle some of the deep-seated problems identified in this Report. However, it is also clear that there remains a need for significant changes in other areas of Government policy if further progress is to be made. NASUWT believes that the delivery of even greater sustainable and effective progress will depend upon reform in a number of key areas.

High-stakes accountability

69. Performance tables can be seen as a pillar of the 'old relationship with schools'. They have produced a skewing of the curriculum, an unacceptable level of pressure and workload on schools and have led to the entrenchment of a competitive rather than collaborative culture between schools. They are also responsible for many of the pressures that inhibit the ability of teachers to exercise autonomous professional judgements.
70. NASUWT believes that performance tables, and other systems of high-stakes accountability, will continue to act as a brake on the development of a new relationship with schools, given that they are a direct cause of the compliance culture that the Government seeks to overcome.
71. For NASUWT, the tests themselves do not lie at the heart of the problem. Put into an appropriate context, tests can provide useful summative assessment information on pupil progress and can support the process of formative 'assessment for learning', with pupils becoming more involved in the setting of their own learning goals and targets.
72. However, the use of tests to generate performance tables has seriously affected the potential value of tests as an educational tool and has given them a prominence within the primary system that distorts the real contribution they can make to children's learning.

73. It is for this reason that NASUWT has expressed serious reservations about calls to replace end of Key Stage testing with a system of externally moderated teacher assessment. Proponents of this view often fail to appreciate that many of the problems associated with testing relate to the high-stakes environment within which end of Key Stage assessment takes place not the tests themselves. Notwithstanding the potential workload consequences of increased teacher assessment, there is a danger that such an approach would result only in the replacement of one high-stakes assessment system with another. The problems identified in this Report cannot be tackled without measures to deal with the fundamental causes of the high-stakes accountability environment.
74. There is little evidence that performance tables have contributed to raising standards of attainment. A growing number of international studies show that other comparable countries have reached and maintained high educational standards without use of the crude systems of school accountability that have become a negative feature of the system in England in particular. NASUWT believes that a much closer look at alternative systems used elsewhere would be a positive first step in developing a more progressive and supportive system of accountability and school improvement in the primary sector.

Inspection

75. It should be acknowledged that the Government has sought to improve some of the worst aspects of the inspection system. NASUWT has welcomed proposals to shorten the inspection timescale and to reduce the bureaucratic burdens placed on schools. The greater involvement of HMIs in inspection and the beginnings of a greater emphasis on school improvement are also positive developments.
76. However, inspection will always remain a snapshot of primary schools and their work with pupils. Many teachers remain concerned that from this necessarily brief picture many primary schools will still be threatened with 'special measures' – bringing an overwhelming pressure to conform alongside dire consequences for 'failure'.
77. NASUWT believes that there should be a more meaningful debate about the purpose of inspection. School inspection is a vital part of the management of the education service. Governments need information about the effectiveness of the overall system and on ways in which provision can be enhanced. OFSTED should continue to sample primary schools to examine and report on different aspects of the primary schooling system as a whole. Inspection should also provide information about the achievement of pupils in all areas of the curriculum so that progress can be monitored.
78. Nonetheless, a root-and-branch overhaul of the way that this information is collected and reported needs to be undertaken if the significant problems associated with current models of inspection are to be tackled. As with performance tables, NASUWT believes that lessons can be learned from other countries. Many countries appear able to have effective overall monitoring of the education system, evidence-based support for school improvement and politically acceptable public accountability without the negative impacts for learners and teachers of the current OFSTED regime.
79. NASUWT plans to undertake further research into these systems to examine if more constructive models could be applied in the UK. Exploring the principles and practices that underpin these alternative models must be a priority if a genuinely new relationship with schools is to become a reality.

The primary curriculum

80. The National Curriculum must set out an entitlement for children to receive a broad and balanced curriculum, allowing a variety of curricular areas to be studied and a range of skills and knowledge to be acquired. While different approaches to enabling effective curricular entitlement have been tried (subject-based, cross-curricular, etc.), the majority of primary teachers have always believed that commitment to a well-balanced curriculum should be an underpinning principle.
81. NASUWT shares the Government's concern with the narrowing of the primary curriculum, seen most recently in its strategy paper *Excellence and Enjoyment*, but the pressures on primary schools and teachers to 'deliver' in the core subjects remain overwhelming. The ability of teachers to use professional

judgements about the learning needs of pupils within the context of a broad and diverse National Curriculum has been weakened considerably. The positive vision described in *Excellence and Enjoyment* will founder unless more is done to address the overemphasis on core subjects and the constraints on the exercise of teacher professionalism that an assessment-driven curriculum creates.

82. NASUWT is clear that effective action to tackle inappropriate systems of accountability would have an immediate impact on the curriculum that schools are able to offer and the ability of teachers to use their skills and expertise to meet the needs of pupils. As part of an overall review of the purpose of the primary curriculum, ways of allowing teachers to use their professional judgement to deliver broader and more engaging learning opportunities must be put in place.

Partnership and collaboration between primary schools

83. The Government has identified the need to develop greater collaboration between schools so that the development of expertise and good practice can be shared more widely to the benefit of all pupils and teachers in local communities. It is widely acknowledged that the most successful and sustained improvements in inter-school collaboration have been in the development of enhanced transition arrangements between primary and secondary schools. NASUWT believes that this is due to the fact that schools in different sectors are not subject to the culture of competition that arises through the performance table/inspection-based comparisons between schools that are made within the primary sector.
84. Therefore, NASUWT believes that action to end the 'false market' in primary education must be a significant part of the effort to tackle the problems identified in this Report. Not only would strong and effective school networks contribute to positive change for primary teachers, they would also allow local primary schools to become a genuinely co-operative community resource where schools would be encouraged to act in the interests of all local pupils and teachers. No longer should schools be debilitated by the need to ensure that their position in performance tables and the results of their OFSTED inspections will not lead to unfavourable comparisons with other schools.
85. Federations of primary schools within which resources, staff and expertise can be shared highlight the potential of school networks. The economies of scale primary networks would generate, through sharing the staff costs of specialists providing curriculum enrichment or bursars easing the administrative burdens on schools and adding powerful external expertise, would provide great support to the remodelling process.
86. Such a move away from an outdated, competitive set of relationships between schools would also start to repair the damage done by casting parents as 'consumers' of education. The new agenda for primary schools would encourage parents to engage fully in the education of their children. It would establish their rights and responsibilities clearly and be based on a positive collaboration which respects the professional autonomy of the teacher.

Building and sustaining new relationships within schools

87. In his speech to the 2004 North of England Education Conference, the former Minister for School Standards David Miliband signalled the need to establish a New Relationship with Schools. The aim of this new relationship is to streamline and improve schools' relationships with local and central government, schools' self-evaluation and planning, data collection from schools and communications with schools.
88. Much is made within the New Relationship with Schools agenda of the need to decentralise decision making to individual schools. There are many compelling reasons for doing this where it can be demonstrated that it will lead to benefits for teachers and pupils.
89. Nevertheless, decentralisation of power, within an existing, multi-layered educational hierarchy and within an ongoing culture of compliance, has many dangers. To simply pass more and more educational decision-making authority to primary schools where NASUWT members report highly stratified, non-consultative and non-collaborative decision-making systems would make no difference to the culture of

compliance where it matters most – in the classroom. Teachers in these schools will still be compelled to act and perform in certain ways because they are told to; not because they necessarily believe what they are being told – a culture of compliance recast in another form.

90. The New Relationship with Schools will only work if it is accompanied by action to create new relationships within schools – based on collegiality, on building positive co-operation and professional respect between all members of the school team and, most importantly, on supporting a management and leadership style which re-emphasises the role of school leaders as leading professionals, focused on supporting the professionalism, talents and skills of classroom teachers. These new relationships will help to ensure that the full involvement of teachers in the processes of school-level change becomes an embedded practice and that the powerful educational benefits of overcoming the culture of compliance can be realised fully.
91. The advantages of working in this way are clear. On behaviour, for example, many primary teachers feel that pupil indiscipline has come to be seen as an issue for individual class teachers to address and resolve alone. A collaborative and collegiate approach, seeing pupil indiscipline in a particular class as an issue for everyone involved in the life of the school, would lead to more sustainable and supportive approaches. In a wider context, the value of school change teams in sustaining and developing remodelling within primary schools through the active involvement of all appropriate constituencies within the school is already being seen on an increasing basis.
92. Central government has a key role to play in driving forward the changes that will produce all the benefits that the remodelling agenda promises. It has already been seen, through the National Agreement, that contractual and statutory change, redefining the rights and responsibilities of those involved in education, can be very effective. There is, therefore, a need to consider whether further changes in the statutory and contractual duties on schools could provide further support for the far-reaching changes in culture and practice that effective change will require.

What role might central government play in quality assuring the establishment and development of new relationships within schools?

What additional support and intervention will central government need to consider so that school leaders can be supported effectively during this process?

Is the existing system for training and developing school leaders able to meet the challenge of these necessary and extensive changes in approaches to leadership or will it also need to be radically overhauled?

93. The role of governors in new relationships within schools must also be considered. Enhanced training and support would allow governors to fulfil their responsibilities in a way that supports collegiate models of working, which respects the professionalism, and has the confidence, of all members of the school workforce.
94. NASUWT believes that finding effective answers to these and other important questions will be essential if the values of respect for teacher professionalism and constructive professional partnerships are to be found in every primary school.

Equality and diversity impact

95. Ensuring equality of opportunity and access for all, while valuing diversity, are key NASUWT priorities.
96. Tackling workload issues in the primary sector and enhancing the profile and status of the profession have important equality and diversity implications for teachers and headteachers in primary schools.
97. NASUWT recognises that, until recently, while the majority of primary teachers are women, only half of all primary headteacher posts were filled by women. NASUWT believes that the composition of the teaching profession needs to become more representative of the society it serves and that action must be taken to widen the opportunities offered to women within the primary sector.

98. The aims set out in this Report will, NASUWT believes, make an important contribution in this respect. It has been well established that a failure to allow employees to establish an appropriate work/life balance has a disproportionate effect on the working and personal lives of women. The action that NASUWT proposes and supports on tackling workload will work to address these problems within teaching and will assist in overcoming an ethos, reported by many female primary teachers, that advancement and career development require submission to a 'long hours' culture as a way of demonstrating professional commitment and dedication.
99. Action to raise the status of teaching, by allowing teachers to focus more on teaching and learning and by enhancing professional autonomy, also has an important equality and diversity dimension. The work of primary teaching, carried out by a largely female workforce, will be associated more clearly with the demands and expectations of an important and highly skilled profession.
100. Such action will also ensure that steps can be taken to establish a more appropriate gender balance within the primary teacher workforce and to enable it to become more inclusive of traditionally underrepresented groups.

Conclusion

101. NASUWT seeks a future for primary teachers where their professional and personal lives are not undermined by excessive workload, where they are not diverted from their core professional responsibilities by the need to undertake responsibilities that do not require the skills and talents of a qualified teacher, and where they are able to participate fully in the life of their schools, guided by the principles of professional collegiality and collaborative leadership.
102. This Report has shown the negative consequences of much of the 'old relationship with schools' for primary teachers. NASUWT has a clear agenda for the future of primary schooling, an agenda it shall pursue rigorously and directly in the interests of all its members in the primary sector.
103. However, the clear lesson to be drawn from the experience of primary teachers is that these issues have a significant wider importance. All those seeking to protect and enhance teacher professionalism and the provision of high-quality education for learners of all ages will need to engage with this debate and with the future action that positive change will require.

Recommendations

1. The work of the Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group and the National Remodelling Team in developing and extending the wider remodelling agenda should continue to receive the fullest possible support from all National Agreement stakeholders.
2. NASUWT must continue to monitor closely the effects of new and existing local and central government initiatives in primary education, including moves to co-locate children's services on school sites, in terms of their impact on teacher and headteacher workload and professional autonomy, taking appropriate steps to defend members where necessary.
3. NASUWT continues its campaign for performance table-based systems of primary school accountability to be abolished and replaced by more effective and less punitive systems developed in partnership with all key stakeholders.
4. A wide-ranging review of current systems of inspection must be undertaken as a matter of urgency in order to put in place more constructive arrangements that support school development and provide a more accurate picture of the work that primary schools do with their pupils.
5. NASUWT should develop more detailed proposals on alternative systems of school accountability, based on existing Union policy and informed by models of effective practice in other countries.
6. NASUWT should press the Government to revise the Foundation Stage, National Curriculum Key Stages 1 and 2 and the Primary National Strategy to ensure that they do not place unnecessary workload burdens on teachers and that they allow greater use of primary teachers' professional autonomy.
7. Within the context of more appropriate school accountability systems, NASUWT should press for structures to be developed to encourage greater collaboration between primary schools and their teaching and support staff.
8. Local education authorities should be given a clearer role in developing more co-operative networks between primary schools and in supporting, rather than simply monitoring, school development and achievement.
9. Through local education authorities, or other appropriate bodies, more work needs to be undertaken to audit and support the development of greater professional collegiality within schools and to develop internal school structures which support greater participation in decision making by all members of individual school teams.
10. School leadership training should place a much greater stress on collaborative decision making within schools, and evidence of developing and sustaining collegiate decision-making structures within schools should be a requirement for the award of all NCSL leadership qualifications.
11. NASUWT should undertake a similar analysis to the one in this Report of issues facing primary teachers in all parts of the UK and develop policies appropriate to address the specific concerns of primary teachers in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



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National **A**ssociation of **S**choolmasters **U**nion of **W**omen **T**eachers

The largest union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK