

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Schools should be held accountable for the right things in the right ways. For example, it is right that schools should be accountable for how they spend public money and taxpayers have a right to know that their money is being spent appropriately.

Whilst schools should be accountable for ensuring that every pupil receives a high-quality education that meets their needs, others, including governments, are also responsible for ensuring that every child receives a high-quality education that meets their needs.

Across the UK, **hierarchical accountability** is the dominant form of school accountability. For example, governments/administrations use inspection, test and examination data, and in England, published performance tables to hold schools to account. The hierarchical approach that dominates external systems of accountability is often replicated through accountability systems that operate within individual schools, such as the performance management of teachers.

Principles of accountability

The NASUWT believes there are ten principles that should underpin national and school-level systems of school accountability. Applying these principles would engender public confidence and help teachers and school leaders to focus appropriately on providing high-quality teaching and learning for every pupil.

Systems of school accountability should:

Trust teachers as professionals;

Systems of accountability must not be designed to operate in ways that could undermine teachers' professional status, integrity or commitment.

Accountability systems should also recognise that, as professionals, teachers have particular expertise which means that they may be best placed to make judgements about the quality and effectiveness of particular aspects of education.

Support schools to provide a curriculum that is broad, balanced and meets the needs of all learners;

Accountability systems should value the range of ways in which schools help learners to engage in learning, progress and achieve. Teachers should be actively engaged in decisions about the design and implementation of curricula and assessment and the related accountability arrangements.

Support schools to maintain high educational standards;

Accountability judgements should be holistic. Teachers and school leaders should contribute to decisions about improving the quality of provision for pupils.

Support teachers and school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning;

Accountability arrangements should complement efforts to improve progress and outcomes of pupils. Teachers and school leaders should have an entitlement to high-quality CPD and time within the working day to access such CPD.

Accountability should recognise teachers' professional knowledge and expertise rather than focus on penalising teachers.

Encourage and support teachers and school leaders to work co-operatively and collaboratively;

Teachers should be encouraged to work together to develop and share effective practice. Collaborative working, within and beyond the school, should be recognised as an important form of CPD.

Be fair and equitable;

Teachers should not be penalised because, for example, they are inclusive or work with learners who have challenging or complex needs. Furthermore, teachers should not be penalised because they do not teach a 'core' subject.

Ensure that teachers and school leaders are supported to engage in dialogue and collaborative decision-making;

The collective voice of teachers should be recognised as being of critical importance when forming judgements about the quality and effectiveness of education provision.

Ensure that the needs and priorities of learners and parents are considered and taken into account appropriately in decision-making;

'Pupil voice' should not be used in ways which undermine the professional status, integrity or judgements of teachers and school leaders.

Be streamlined and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and workload;

Accountability systems should not place unnecessary or excessive workload and bureaucratic burdens on teachers and school leaders.

Be rigorous, reasonable and valid. The public and the teaching profession should have confidence in the judgements made.

Improving school accountability

The NASUWT's principles challenge the notion that school accountability should simply be hierarchical. They recognise that accountability may also be 'professional', peer-to-peer and 'bottom up'.

The NASUWT has produced a range of guidance for teachers and school leaders on inspection and performance management on the use of pupil performance data.