



'Educational Excellence Everywhere'

Perspectives from Primary Teachers and Headteachers

Introduction

This report is based on feedback from teachers and headteachers attending the NASUWT Primary Teachers' Conference held on 23 April 2016.

The feedback reflects the views of primary teachers and headteachers about the White Paper, *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, published by the Department for Education in March 2016.

Teachers and headteachers attending the Conference were from primary schools across all regions in England.

More than one in five attendees (22%) confirmed that they were working in a school which was a member of a Teaching School Alliance. Worryingly, nearly one in three teachers/headteachers (32%) were unable to confirm whether their school was a member of a Teaching School Alliance. The remainder (46%) confirmed that their schools were not members of a Teaching School Alliance. None of the participants identified their schools as a designated Teaching School Alliance school.

For the purpose of this report, responses from teachers/headteachers working in a Teaching School Alliance school have been highlighted where there are significant variations from the responses obtained from the generality of respondents.

Current state of CPD in schools

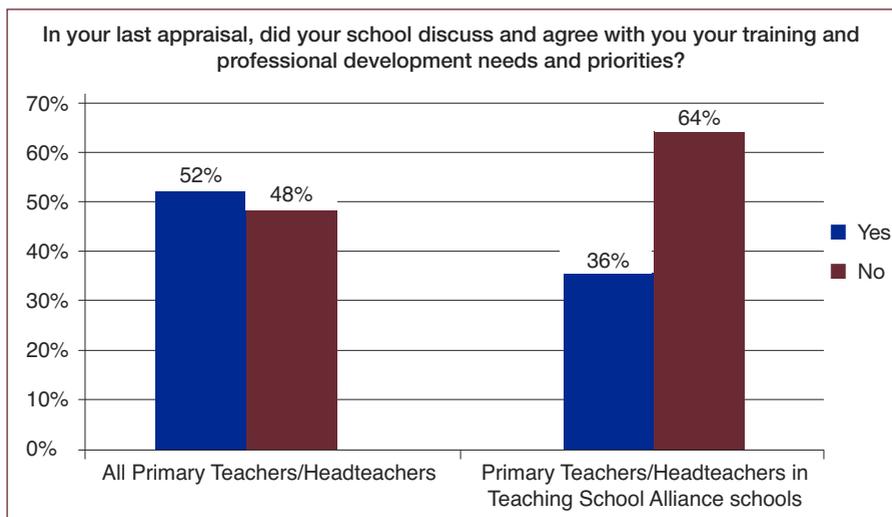
A key ambition of the White Paper is to raise the bar of training and professional development for teachers and to move to a school-based approach to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and continuing professional development (CPD). As a baseline starting point, we sought to explore briefly the current reality of training and CPD provision in primary schools.

Primary teachers and headteachers were asked to rate the value/importance their school currently places on their professional and career development.

Whilst one in ten teachers/headteachers (10%) rated their school's commitment as 'excellent', 38% rated their school's commitment to their professional and career development as 'poor' and a further 6% said that their school's commitment to their professional and career development was 'inadequate' or 'nil'.

Worryingly, the percentage of teachers/headteachers working in schools that are members of a Teaching School Alliance, when answering the same question, rated their school's commitment to teacher development as 'inadequate' (7%). Furthermore, whilst 10% of primary teachers overall rated the value/importance their school places on their professional and career development as 'excellent', no teachers/headteachers working in Teaching School Alliance schools (0%) rated their school's commitment in this regard as 'excellent'.

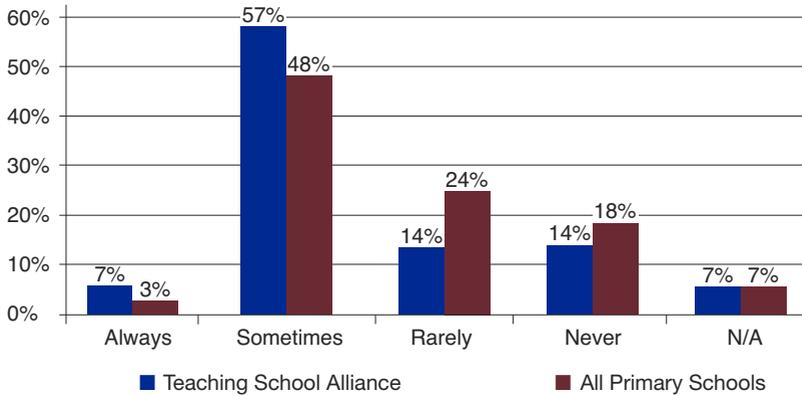
In terms of the practice in primary schools, feedback from teachers/headteachers indicates that the space for a genuine discussion about a teacher’s training and professional development needs and priorities is not a feature of school-level performance appraisal meetings. Working in a school that is a member of a Teaching School Alliance was no guarantee, either, that there would be a better experience for teachers/headteachers, as even fewer benefited from the opportunity to discuss or agree their training and professional development needs during performance appraisal meetings. It should be noted that since 2012, the statutory requirement for appraisal meetings to include discussion about the individual’s professional development no longer applies.



In terms of understanding schools’ current commitment to training and professional development, teachers/headteachers were asked whether they were expected to undertake their training and professional development in their own personal time.

Teachers/headteachers working in a school that is a member of a Teaching School Alliance were twice as likely as the generality to be expected always to undertake training and professional development in their own time (7% and 3% respectively). Indeed, overall, the experience of teachers/headteachers in Teaching School Alliance member schools was generally not better, and in some cases was inferior, to the position of teachers overall in primary schools.

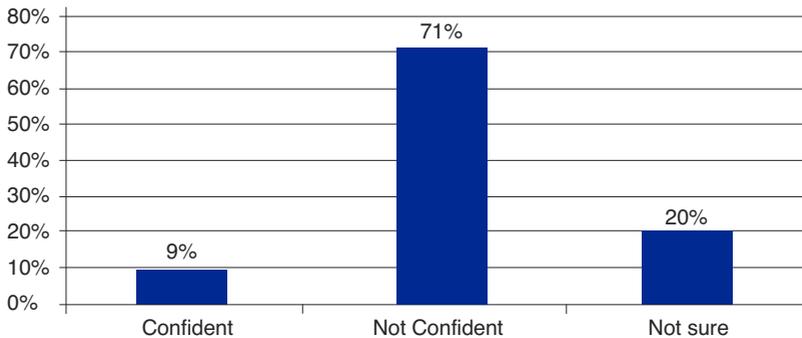
Does your school expect you to undertake training and professional development in your own time?



The survey asked teachers and headteachers to indicate how confident they were about whether their school had access to the support needed to meet the current and future training and CPD needs of themselves and other teachers.

Whilst around one in ten responses were from teachers and headteachers who were confident, over two thirds of teachers and headteachers said that they were not confident that their school had access to the support needed to meet teachers’ training and CPD needs now or in the future. Fewer teachers in Teaching School Alliance schools (7%) expressed confidence in their schools’ access to support to meet current and future CPD needs.

Teachers’ confidence in support to enable schools to meet teachers’ current/future CPD needs



Perspectives on the White Paper

Teachers and headteachers were asked about the specific proposals set out in the White Paper relating to teachers' training and professional development and, specifically, on proposals to replace Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) with a system of school-based teacher accreditation.

Impact of Government policies

The Government's ambition, as set out in the White Paper, is to secure 'great teachers wherever they are needed'. However, feedback overall from primary teachers and headteachers indicated that 90% did not think the proposals contained in the White Paper would contribute to recruiting and retaining great teachers. A slightly higher percentage of teachers and headteachers from schools that are members of a Teaching School Alliance (93%) said that they did not think the Government's proposals would contribute to recruiting and retaining great teachers.

No respondents were of the view that the White Paper would contribute to recruiting and retaining great teachers.

In recent years, schools have been given greater freedom to lead on recruiting, training and developing teachers, as well as having greater discretion over teachers' pay. In this context, primary teachers and headteachers were asked whether they believed that the Government's policies were helping to make teaching more attractive and improving the professional status of teaching.

Again, the responses from teachers and headteachers were emphatic. None were of the view that the Government's actions were helping to improve the attractiveness of teaching or to improve the status of teachers. In fact, 98% indicated that they believed that the Government's policies were not helping to improve the attractiveness or status of teaching.

School-led teacher accreditation

A centrepiece of the Government's White Paper proposals is to move to an increasingly school-led system for ITT and the replacement of QTS with a system of school-led teacher accreditation. Feedback indicates that there are serious concerns from primary teachers and headteachers about the Government's proposals in respect of the future of teacher accreditation.

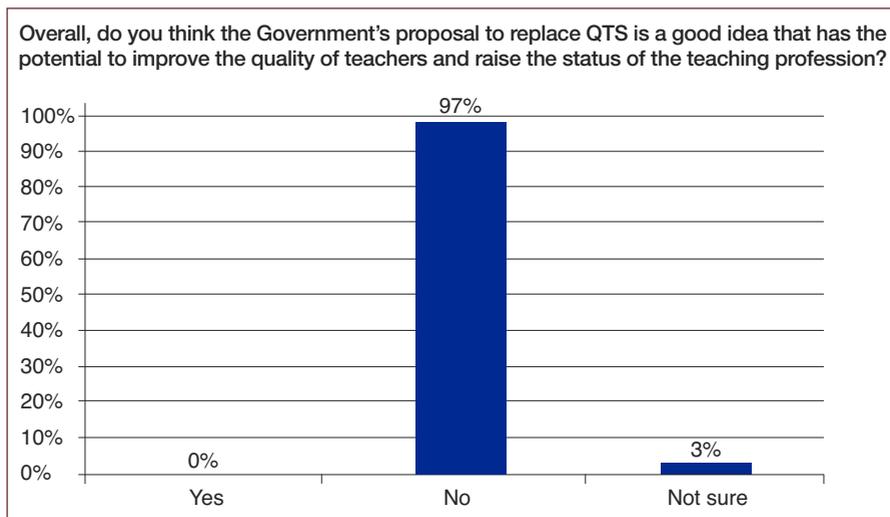
Teachers/headteachers were asked what they felt was the main issue to be addressed in helping to make ITT more school-led. Time and support to make this happen were central to the concerns of teachers and headteachers. This perhaps reflects underlying concerns about the unmanageability of teacher and headteacher workloads. However, it is also clear that teachers and headteachers wanted to see ITT that is underpinned and better supported by effective collaboration with higher education institutions (HEIs)/universities and where schools have access to high-quality, external support and development.

It is noteworthy that, when asked, no respondents felt it was a priority to invest resources into improving the quality of Teaching School Alliances and partnerships in the context of securing the delivery of more effective ITT.

The responses from teachers and headteachers working in schools that are members of Teaching School Alliances suggests that the Government has not done enough to ensure that Teaching School Alliances are resourced sufficiently to enable these schools to deliver effective training and professional development for teachers.

Rank Order	Priority issues to assist in making ITT more school-led
	(All schools)
1	More time to enable teacher-to-teacher/peer-to-peer support (e.g. in-school mentoring)
=2	Improve opportunities for schools and teachers to work with HEIs/universities
=2	Greater external support to help deliver a high-quality ITT curriculum
4	Additional funding to support school-based ITT

On the question of the Government’s proposal to replace QTS with a system of school-led accreditation, based on how schools judge a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom, taking account of an individual’s teaching quality, subject knowledge and application of up-to-date evidence, primary teachers and headteachers were emphatic in rejecting the Government’s proposals.



The overwhelming majority of teachers and headteachers (81%) said that they were not confident that their school had the necessary skills, time and capacity

to deliver fairly and equitably the Government’s proposal for school-based teacher accreditation. The remainder (19%) said that they would need more information about their school’s capacity to deliver and/or about the Government’s proposals in this area.

The feedback from teachers working in schools that were members of a Teaching School Alliance was more bleak, with 93% confirming that their schools lacked skills, time and capacity to deliver this aspect of the Government’s proposals.

Other issues impacting on teacher recruitment and retention

One aspect of the Government’s ambitions, as set out in the White Paper, is to promote flexible working in order to enable more great teachers to stay in the job.

The Government has noted with concern the relative absence of flexible working arrangements in schools compared with other sectors of the economy. For example, currently, around 26% of women teachers work part time compared to 42% of women across the workforce nationally; and just 8% of men teachers work part time compared to 13% of men in the workforce nationally.

Primary teachers and headteachers were asked to identify actions that they believed would do most to assist schools in building a diverse workforce with better opportunities to work flexibly, including through part-time work and job-share.

In response, teachers identified as their top priority the need to provide a contractual right for all teachers to flexible working. Whilst teachers and headteachers recognised that there was a right to request flexible working, this was not regarded as sufficient by teachers in securing a more inclusive, diverse and sustainable workforce for the future. Indeed, it is noteworthy that teachers and headteachers identified as their second priority the need for measures to challenge prejudice and discriminatory practices by schools which operate to the detriment of flexible working.

Teacher and headteacher priorities for securing flexible working in schools (Rank Order)	
1	Extend the contractual right of teachers to flexible working
2	Challenge prejudice and discrimination by schools against part-time/job-share teachers
3	Provide financial assistance to schools to support part-time and job-share working
4	Encourage more part-time/job-share school leadership roles
5	Publish practical guidance on part-time and job-share working
6	Promote the benefits of flexible and part-time/job-share working
=7	Improve collaboration between schools on staffing matters
=7	Other action

The survey asked primary teachers and headteachers to identify what they felt was the single most important factor that would help to tackle the current recruitment and retention challenge/crisis in the teaching profession. Teachers were given nine options to select from.

It is notable that no respondent identified the following issues/proposals as being a priority in the context of the current recruitment and retention challenge/crisis:

Ideas/proposals receiving zero support from primary teachers/ headteachers

- Replace QTS with school-based teacher accreditation
- Introduce a new standard for teachers' professional development
- Introduce training and accreditation for school leaders and governors
- Roll out the National Teaching Service to develop 'elite teachers'
- Publish a peer-reviewed British education research journal for teachers

The following ideas/proposals were supported by teachers, with one – reducing workload and working hours – receiving the predominant support of primary teachers and headteachers.

Ideas/proposals to tackle the recruitment and retention challenge/ crisis in the teaching profession	Support (%)
Provide teachers with a contractual entitlement to paid time for CPD	4%
Establish an independent College of Teaching	4%
Reduce the workload and working hours of teachers and headteachers	69%
Improve the overall level of teachers' pay	22%

It is noteworthy, too, that amongst those working in Teaching School Alliance schools, the need to reduce the workload and working hours of teachers and headteachers was the idea/proposal that received universal (100%) support from all teachers and headteachers working in these schools.

Conclusion

The NASUWT is committed to the provision of world-class schools which recognise the critical importance and centrality of teachers and headteachers. The issues set out in the White Paper – *Educational Excellence Everywhere* – have, as their stated intention, a desire for world-class education to be secured in part through reforms to teacher preparation, training and professional development. However, as the findings from this survey of primary teachers and headteachers suggest, the success of the White Paper reforms depends critically on the support of teachers and headteachers, as well as whether there is sufficient and appropriate capacity in schools and across the system to deliver the Government’s reform ambitions.

The responses from teachers and headteachers suggest that there is a significant gap between the expressed ambitions of Government and the day-to-day reality in schools vis-à-vis the provision of training and CPD for teachers and headteachers.

A central issue affecting the realisation of the Government’s ambitions will be the continuing impact of excessive workload which primary teachers once again confirm to be the main barrier to the Government’s reform agenda and to securing improvements in the system.

The capacity challenge within schools also highlights the need for the Government to recognise and address the importance of additional investment and funding to aid delivery, securing better access to high-quality external support, and having the desire to introduce an appropriate level of challenge which can help to ensure that schools model the right kinds of behaviour that support rather than negate the development of teachers. This would include, for example, ensuring that schools discuss and take seriously teachers’ views about their training and development needs and priorities, as well as ensuring that schools encourage and are receptive to the desire of teachers and headteachers for flexible working.

The NASUWT is committed to working with the Government to secure a programme of reform that supports school improvement and which takes account of the issues raised by teachers and headteachers in primary schools.

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