

Briefing Note: Teachers' Pay

Alongside other public sector workers, teachers have suffered from seven years of Government pay restraint since 2010, which has included a two-year pay freeze from 2011 to 2013 and a one per cent pay cap imposed from 2013 onwards.

There has been a specific dimension, however, to the way teachers have been paid since 2010: that pay flexibilities and discretions have been utilised by schools to withhold pay, in addition to the Government pay cap. Many teachers have had annual pay increases withheld, with research indicating that, for 2016/17, nearly 60 per cent of teachers did not receive any annual pay award. Evidence from this school year shows that many schools are threatening not to make a pay award to some or all of their teachers.

Furthermore, teachers have suffered an additional 3.2 per cent in pension contribution increases since 2010, as well as increases in their National Insurance contributions.

Given this context, teachers have seen a fall in real terms income of between 15 per cent and 18 per cent since 2010, depending on their pay levels. Teachers have seen their wages cut by thousands of pounds a year and, like other working families, have been forced to cut back on food and essential household items, and to become reliant on credit and overdrafts. Teachers are also, day after day, providing at their own expense to increasing numbers of children they teach, food, clothes, equipment and even money.

Many more teachers, particularly teachers who are starting their careers, teachers starting families, or teachers who become ill, are suffering real hardship. Teachers are losing their homes. Teachers are using foodbanks. The NASUWT Benevolent Fund paid out nearly £300,000 in grants to teachers and ex-teachers in poverty last year to enable them to make ends meet.

Teachers are priced out of the housing market in many parts of the country, with young teachers, in particular, sleeping on floors and teachers having to move out of their own communities when they want to buy or rent a house where they can raise a family.

The gender pay gap is a reality for hundreds of thousands of women teachers. On average, women teachers are paid 85 per cent of the wage that male teachers receive.

At the same time, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) pay in the education system has spiralled, with the bonus culture for the highest paid taking off in many academies and the highest paid academy CEO now earning over £420,000 per year.

All of these factors have led to a crisis in teacher morale, motivation and supply, with teacher wastage at its highest ever rate.

In a damning indictment of Government policy on teachers' pay, the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) observed in July this year the following about the crisis in the teaching profession:

- that the number of recruits for teacher training in 2016/17 was less than the overall target set by the Department for Education (DfE) for a fifth successive year;
- that the overall number of vacancies and temporarily filled posts had risen significantly between 2011 and 2015, doubling during this time;
- that the rate of qualified teachers leaving the profession during the last 12 months has continued to increase;
- continued falling retention rates for teachers with between two and five years of service in the last 12 months, with the proportion of teachers remaining in the profession after three and five years both falling.

The STRB has stated that this '*presents a substantial risk to the functioning of an effective education system*'.¹

Teachers' pay and conditions of service are inextricably linked to the provision of high-quality education.

Attacks on teachers' pay and conditions are therefore attacks on the children and young people they teach.

And whilst the recent announcement from the Treasury of the lifting of the pay cap for next year's public sector pay round may be a step in the right direction, it is not an end in itself.

That move alone will not ensure the significant increases in pay which are long overdue. The flexibilities which schools have been given since 2010, which enables them to withhold pay from teachers against the wishes of the STRB, must be addressed.

It is time to end the callous social and economic policies which have heaped misery on so many working people and their families, including teachers.

It is time to end the unfairness, inequality and injustice.

Britain needs fair pay, not low pay, and it needs it now.

¹ School Teachers' Review Body, *27th Report*, 2017, paragraph 5.23.