



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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25 March 2014

Dear all,

Thank you for your constructive engagement with me and my officials in the programme of talks about policy implementation. I am aware that you are devoting considerable time and effort to the process.

I have been following the progress of the weekly talks closely and am encouraged by reports from the meetings so far. I hope you also feel that we are making good progress.

On the substance of what has been discussed so far, I can see the case for a number of the arguments you have put forward. In particular, I am keen to ensure that we tackle any unnecessary bureaucracy, which I know is an aim that you share given your concerns about workload. I am committed to reducing further the bureaucratic burdens on teachers and am grateful for your views and ideas on how this can be achieved.

At this point in the talks, I thought it would be helpful if I set out in writing the areas where I am happy for my officials to take forward your suggestions.

Pay

The reforms to teachers' pay are about ensuring that schools have the processes in place to pay the best teachers more and we would expect schools to use the flexibilities resulting from these reforms to do that. I know schools have made good progress in revising their pay and appraisal policies and putting in place systems to support the reformed arrangements for

teachers' pay. I do recognise that it will take time for more mature and flexible systems to be embedded fully.

The programme of talks has been useful in clarifying thoughts on a range of issues. I therefore propose to issue additional Departmental Advice to support schools as they move into the crucial phase of preparing for appraisals and decisions on pay progression. The additional advice will cover the following:

- the need for schools to balance the requirement for robust evidence with the need for proportionality when preparing for appraisal and pay decisions;
- the expectation that schools operate a “no surprises” policy at the end of the reporting year in the context of appraisal and pay determinations, whilst acknowledging that there are responsibilities on the part of individual teachers as well as their line manager in terms of producing appropriate and proportionate evidence to support appraisal and pay discussions;
- the range of evidence that schools could use when making assessments of performance;
- an expectation that governing bodies and school leaders ensure as far as possible that external providers or materials used to support appraisal and pay processes provide appropriate value for money and do not increase bureaucracy disproportionately;
- practical support for governing bodies on pay appeal processes and key issues for consideration when handling pay appeals;
- reminding schools of their responsibilities in relation to equalities issues when making pay decisions.

In addition to this suite of additional advice to support schools I would also be happy for the Department to explore the viability of conducting joint monitoring and evaluation of pay reform implementation with a particular focus on the impact on recruitment and retention, workload, mobility and equalities issues.

Accountability

I am happy for my officials to work with you and your members on a piece of work over the coming months that considers the impact of schools' response to the accountability system on teacher workload, with a key aim of reducing bureaucracy.

You have asked for advice or exemplars from Ofsted clarifying what inspectors do and do not expect to see, in areas including lesson planning, data and lesson observations. As you know, Ofsted has recently published on its web site a myth-busting Q&A and Mike Cladingbowl has also clarified Ofsted expectations about lesson observations in the media. Of course, Ofsted is an independent body so cannot be directed by me or the Department, but my officials will review with Ofsted other areas that could be covered in the future.

My officials have discussed with Ofsted your point about implementation of Progress 8 from 2016 and transitional protection for schools in 2016. When a school falls below the floor, Ofsted looks at a range of data to see whether an inspection should be triggered. Ofsted will

ensure inspectors are properly briefed so that they understand why the Progress 8 measure might place different schools below the floor from 2016. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the extent to which variations in results relate to transitional issues as opposed to school performance.

Finally, Ofsted have confirmed that they have no plans to change their inspection framework before autumn 2014.

Pensions

I am happy for my officials to work with you on a joint study into the health and deployment implications of working until 68, with the aim of considering what more can be done to support teachers working to this age.

I hope this letter is helpful in clarifying the progress made so far in the talks and in underlining my commitment to this process.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Gove". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

MICHAEL GOVE