



TEACHERS AND WORKLOAD

Report of an NUT survey about teachers' views on workload, its impact on teachers and their families and on teacher supply, and the steps needed to make the situation better

This isn't why I became a teacher. This isn't what I want for my family. It's not fair on the pupils, it's not fair on my wife or child, and it's not fair on me.

(Primary teacher, Bexley)

I have no 'me' anymore and, for the children I love to teach, this is devastating. I will not do this for life, I simply cannot.

(Primary teacher, Newham)

There is no such thing as work-life balance in this profession. It's so sad - I want to love this job, but sometimes it's really hard to know how to.

(Secondary teacher, Wandsworth)

I love teaching but it is breaking me.

(Secondary teacher, Hampshire)

This report sets out the views of 16,379 teachers on workload, as expressed to an NUT survey conducted on 25-28 September 2014. By turns challenging, worrying and often distressing, the responses show the scale of frustration and disheartenment felt by teachers about their workload.

Almost half of the teachers (47%) work in primary schools and 41% in secondary schools. The remainder work in other settings, mainly special schools, early years settings and sixth form colleges. 84% of respondents work full time. Responses were received from every single local authority area in the country.

The continuing increase in teachers' working hours has been known since the Government bowed to NUT pressure and published its 2013 Teachers' Working Time survey earlier this year. This report shows the impact that excessive workload is having on teacher retention and on teachers' personal lives. It shows all too clearly that, as a nation, we cannot allow this situation to endure if we want a schools system that serves our children properly.

LEAVING TEACHING

90% have considered leaving teaching in the last two years

87% know at least one teacher who has left because of workload in the last two years

I attended a friend's retirement party where she apologised to her children for not being there for them growing up. That will not be me apologising to my child for putting others before him.

(Primary teacher, Bexley)

I know so many people of all ages and stages of their teaching career who've quit, and I think about it at least 3 times a week ... and I've only been teaching 2 years.

(Secondary teacher, Shropshire)

I love teaching but hate this system I teach in. The moment I find the right opportunity, I will leave this uncaring, fear driven, life-drain that masquerades as a 'profession'.

(Secondary teacher, Suffolk)

3 years in and I think I might become a statistic who leaves before 5 years. Why would I want to do this for another 40 odd years? There's no way I can keep this up and have a family.

(Secondary teacher, Calderdale)

Over one third of respondents say they think about leaving teaching "fairly constantly", with a further 46% saying they consider it "from time to time". One in ten are actively seeking other jobs. Only 10% of respondents say that they never think of leaving teaching.

44% say they know a teacher who has left in the past two years because of workload, and 43% say they know more than one. Only 13% say they do not know another teacher who has left because of workload.

DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY WORKLOAD

96.5% say that workload has negative consequences for family or personal life

I hate the fact that I am sometimes willing my children to go to sleep just so that I can work. It's not right.

(Early years teacher, Cornwall)

I dread my daughter or friend telephoning for a chat in the evening because I have work to do and a schedule to keep.

(Primary teacher, Norfolk)

If I'm seeing friends, I'm only half there.

(Secondary teacher, Doncaster)

I get cross with my toddler if he wants me when I am trying to work, but he wants his Mum and I will never get this time back with him.

(Secondary teacher, Northamptonshire)

The survey asked respondents whether workload caused difficulties for their family and personal life and about the type of difficulties caused. 96.5% said that it did. Only 2% said that it did not.

The difficulties cited were as follows:

- 92% Negative impact on quality of my family or my personal life
- 81% No time for adequate exercise/physical activity
- 40% Often miss important personal commitments or family activities
- 59% Causing stress in my relationship
- 23% Prevents me caring for elderly parents or other dependants as I'd wish
- 78% Hard to keep in touch with friends

30% of respondents cited other difficulties caused by workload.

CAUSES OF WORKLOAD

80% say that marking policy now causes excessive workload

70% cite excessive data entry and analysis requirements

62% point to Ofsted preparations and “mocksteds”

The amount of planning and paperwork required. And then thorough marking - trying to mark 120 books a day is daft.

(Primary teacher, Wakefield)

Pink comment for good aspects, green comment for improvements ... half the children can't read the comments but hey, I'm sure Ofsted enjoy the colours.

(Primary teacher, Kirklees)

It's not one thing. It's lots of little things added together that create the workload.

(Primary teacher, Tower Hamlets)

Data! Data! Data! No one is interested in teachers and pupils anymore, just numbers on a piece of paper!

(Primary teacher, Cardiff)

Respondents were asked whether they personally experience unsustainable workload demands as a result of a range of commonly cited issues in schools.

The responses were as follows:

- 80% Excessive expectations on marking work / excessive book scrutiny
- 70% Unrealistic expectations about data entry / unnecessary data analysis
- 62% Preparation for an Ofsted inspection, including 'mocksteds'
- 55% Preparing / providing evidence for performance management purposes
- 41% Unreasonable lesson planning requirements
- 39% Too much observation
- 39% Too many DfE initiatives

28% cited other specific tasks which they felt generated excessive workload in their school or college.

ACTION TO REDUCE WORKLOAD

82% say more trust in teachers will help persuade teachers thinking of leaving to stay in the profession

70% are calling for less overall scrutiny of teachers

68% want more achievable targets, 67% want more PPA time and 65% want smaller classes

Data, Ofsted, data, Ofsted . . . INSANE accountability which fosters a culture of blame, rock bottom morale and teachers often found crying in corners.

(Primary teacher, Nottingham)

I don't blame my school - they are responding to the excessive expectations from the Government which doesn't trust those who work in education.

(Secondary teacher, Kirklees)

Everything has to be perfect and documented, in case somebody looks at it. People don't realise that things do not go to plan in schools.

(Primary teacher, Enfield)

The lack of trust in teachers to do what is best for their students is astounding

(Secondary teacher, Haringey)

The survey proves beyond doubt that the biggest single issue of concern is the perceived lack of trust in teachers. Over 80% say that increased trust in teachers will encourage those thinking of leaving to stay in the profession – and almost every respondent to the survey is in that latter category.

The next most important issue is that of scrutiny. 70% say that reducing the level of scrutiny would help retention.

Two thirds of respondents also cite one or more of the following – more achievable appraisal targets; more PPA time to prepare for lessons and assess work; and smaller classes. Over 40% say that reducing the level and pressure of lesson observations would help teacher retention.

CONCLUSION

90% have considered leaving teaching in the last two years

96.5% say workload has negative consequences for family or personal life

82% say more trust in teachers will help retention

I have 3 young boys who I barely spend time with any more. Just writing that sentence upset me deeply.

(Primary teacher, Bury)

This is no life. I love teaching, but all I want to do is leave. It no longer feels like a profession. I feel like a slave. I don't feel valued or trusted at all.

(Secondary teacher, West Sussex)

I am no longer sure I even want to be a teacher. I used to believe it is what I was made for.

(Secondary teacher, Oxfordshire)

I am fed up of seeing my colleagues near to breaking point, and there isn't a week goes by where I don't see someone crying. This has to stop.

(Primary teacher, Trafford)

This report makes for utterly depressing reading and is a clear justification of the NUT's continuing campaign on teacher workload. Anyone concerned about the education of our children will be alarmed at the low levels of morale and exhaustion within the profession.

Teaching is one of the most important jobs in the world but if politicians continue with their current approach we will see many more teachers leaving and those who remain will be worn into the ground. This is unsustainable and in the long run will be disastrous for children and young people.

Much of the workload is completely unnecessary and is a result of accountability measures. It is driven from the top by the way politicians and Ofsted run down teachers. Hours spent providing evidence that they are doing their job takes away from the time teachers have for creating exciting and memorable lessons. Utterly unsustainable demands on for example 'deep marking' are not leading to better feedback for students, just to exhausted teachers.

If we want to maintain a world class education system, of which politicians often speak, we have to start by making teaching an attractive profession as laid out in the NUT Manifesto for Education.

With a General Election around the corner politicians can no longer keep ignoring the crisis happening in our schools. It is time for politicians to act. They need to take urgent steps to reform accountability so that is based on trust, and to take immediate action to reduce working hours.