

## SSTA – Teachers Scotland's Future

The Scottish Government is determined to bring about improvements in Education by 'closing the attainment gap' and give all young people the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Government has begun its 'Governance Review' looking at all the agencies and structures involved in education to 'empower teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education'.

Unfortunately, the review does not include the people and the structures in the school that support teaching and learning. The focus on the teacher/pupil relationship is the key to how the structures in the school are developed to support this relationship and will make great strides to 'close the attainment gap'

### The Pupil in the Classroom

The pupil in the classroom relies on a network of people within the school to enable them to engage in the classroom. Besides the class teacher there is the guidance teacher, pupil support teacher, and a whole range of education support staff to support the pupil in the class. Added to this is the teacher with a post of responsibility who works with the family and other services as the establishment contact (ultimately 'named person')

Unfortunately, due to education cuts over a number of years the staff in these areas have been reducing at an alarming rate. The caseload for those left behind and lack of education support staff has in many cases made the workload become unmanageable and demoralising for staff. There needs to be recognition and a control on the caseload and duties of guidance and pupil support teachers. In addition, the establishment contact (or 'named person') teacher needs to be able to focus on their young people and their families and receive sufficient administration support.

The loss of the specialist staff puts additional and avoidable pressure on the classroom teacher. The importance of the work and responsibility undertaken by staff is often not recognised and undervalued. There is a need to look at the contribution staff makes in the school and the impact on 'closing the attainment gap'. There needs to be a pupil support structure that enables engagement for every pupil in every school. This structure should be managed appropriately and the responsibilities acknowledged within the SNCT job-sizing toolkit.

- **An increase in the number of educational support staff**
- **The establishment contact (or 'named person') teacher needs adequate administrative support**
- **The guidance and pupil support teachers' responsibilities need to be recognised within the job-sizing tool kit**

### The Teacher in the Classroom

The subject teacher in a secondary school focuses on establishing the relationship with the pupils. Whilst planning, preparing, delivering and assessing the lesson the teacher also assesses the pupil progress and identifies strengths and weaknesses. The teacher uses their professional judgement and builds on this knowledge in future lessons. Teachers need to focus on teaching and learning and other administrative tasks should be pre-designated.

The subject is the vehicle within which this interaction takes place. However, each teacher in the school is developing materials and strategies for their individual classes. This exercise is taking place in most classrooms across Scotland and is duplicating the work of teachers. A system needs to be found to develop these resources and make them available to all teachers.

Teachers are required to teach up to a maximum of 22.5 hours a week and in the past this was seldom reached allowing some additional time to attempt to complete tasks. However, most teachers are committed to teach close to the maximum. With class size increases and the demands placed on teachers the 22.5 hours teaching time is unrealistic and needs to be reduced. It is also worth noting that subjects regarded as 'practical' with restrictions on class sizes should be expanded as teaching has changed considerably in the last twenty years and more subjects should be regarded as 'practical'.

- **A focus on teaching and learning with a reduction of other tasks**
- **A national subject group for developing teaching resources.**
- **A reduction in 22.5 hours teaching week**
- **More subjects recognised as 'practical' with smaller classes**

### The Subject Specialist

The Principal Teacher of subject in the past was a great strength of the Scottish Education system. Unfortunately, due to changes in schools' management structures over a number of years, the Principal Teacher of subject has been in steady decline. Most schools today do not have a teacher in the school responsible for keeping abreast of subject developments and acting as the leader and manager of a number of subject teachers.

It is unreasonable to expect all subject teachers in a large department, at the same level, to accept responsibility and carry out this function independently. To develop the subject expertise, encourage leadership and rationalise workload there is a need to see a return to the subject specialist in secondary schools.

- **The reintroduction of principal teacher of subjects**

### The Management Structure

There has been a conscious move in many local authorities to move away from principal teacher of subjects to a faculty structure across the school. The appointment of a senior principal teacher to manage a number of subjects is a sensible way forward and gives the teacher a more senior responsibility. This experience enables the post holder to progress to a more senior position in the school.

Unfortunately, in many cases, the teacher in addition to managing a number of departments is given a range of 'whole school' responsibilities. The impact of these additional responsibilities moves the teacher further away from the departments they were appointed to manage without the support of principal teacher of subjects.

The change in structure has created a 'major' step from being a subject teacher to a principal teacher managing a number of subjects. This step is viewed by most teachers as a 'step too far'. There are very few opportunities for teachers to gain experience to enable them to move into middle leadership positions. The main focus of the principal teacher who manages a number of subject areas is supporting teaching and learning in those areas.

As for teachers who undertake a range of 'whole school responsibilities,' these should be accommodated within a more senior position in the school and seen as a 'stepping stone' to gain knowledge and experience before aspiring to become a depute headteacher.

The senior positions in the school need to be focussed on leading teaching and learning. It is essential that the support systems provided by the local authority are there to remove tasks that do not require the skills and expertise of leaders of teaching and learning.

Many functions that dissuade teachers to aspire to Depute and Headteachers could be managed more successfully if local authorities provided support staff in (and outside) the school to reduce the burden. The system needs to develop teachers to move into senior positions that focus on teaching and learning and are manageable. All teachers need a sensible work life balance.

- **The main focus of the principal teacher who manages a number of subject areas is supporting teaching and learning in those areas.**
- **The establishment of posts that manage a number of 'whole school' responsibilities**
- **Depute and Headteachers have manageable posts with additional support**

### Supply Teachers

Supply Teachers are an important and essential part of the education service. Schools are unable to function without an experienced and professional group of teachers. The supply teacher shortage has been as a direct result of the lack of understanding and respect of the importance of supply teachers.

The supply teacher should be a valued member of the school community and must have an entitlement to proper contracts of employment with salaries that reflects the importance of the role, and access to continued professional development.

- **The restoration of supply teacher pay levels**
- **A national register of qualified supply teachers**

### Teacher vacancies, stress and work life balance

The burden of new qualifications, excessive internal assessment, the lack of available applicants to fill vacancies and the lack of supply teachers have resulted in the majority of teachers working in conditions of severe long term stress with a significantly poorer work life balance. Unfortunately, there exists a wide range of practices that in many cases are punitive rather than supportive.

Addressing teacher workload and introducing a supportive national sickness absence management policy would ensure that early intervention takes place to develop strategies to enhance work life balance and retain teachers in work.

- **supportive national sickness absence management policy**

### The Scottish Teacher Retention and Recruitment Crisis

Scotland is facing a deepening crisis in retaining and recruiting teachers and headteachers in its schools. The Scottish Government needs to acknowledge that teachers working conditions and remuneration have failed to keep pace with the rapidly changing education environment. Schools and teachers needs to adapt to meet the demands of a modern education system.

As a consequence teaching is increasingly perceived as an unattractive profession with an impossible workload demand, restricted career path and an uncompetitive salary scale. Addressing the structure of schools and its workforce are essential elements in the Scottish Government challenge to 'close the attainment gap'.

### The Teacher Career Structure

The removal of the Chartered Teacher scale (originally intended to keep good teachers in classroom) has created a 'glass ceiling' that new teachers reach relatively quickly. There is little opportunity for advancement which is creating a problem in keeping and motivating these teachers in the profession. The numbers of posts of responsibility have reduced over a number of years which has closed down the opportunities to gain experience, responsibility, career advancement and incentives to remain in teaching.

The normal promotional ladder expects classroom teachers to become principal teacher managing a number of departments without any subject management experience. Once promoted to principal teacher managing a number of departments the next move is to the post of depute headteacher.

The only other way to get promotion is through the pastoral and pupil support route but unfortunately this has limited posts of responsibility and increasingly unmanageable workload.

The difficulties in recruiting new headteachers reflects the unmanageability of the post and the reluctance from experienced depute headteachers who have identified the scale of the problem.

- **A need for a career structure that gives opportunities to gain experience and responsibility that recognises the commitment of the teacher**

### Teacher Salaries (the facts)

The salary scales for teachers and headteachers have become uncompetitive and do not recognise the value, commitment and importance of the teacher workforce in Scotland.

An unpromoted teacher at the top of the main scale has a salary of £35,763 (point 6). Due the removal of the Charter teacher scale the teacher could have reached a salary of £43,845 (a difference of £8,028).

An unpromoted teacher in England at the top of the upper pay spine has a salary of £38,250 (a difference of £2,487). An unpromoted FE Lecturer in Scotland, following the latest pay agreement, can reach a salary of £40,026 (a difference of £4,263).

A headteacher in Scotland can aspire to a maximum salary of £86,319 whilst a headteacher in England outside of London can aspire to a maximum salary of £108,283 (a difference of £21,964).

- **A salary scale that is competitive and retains and recruits teachers**