
SCHOOL WORKLOAD REDUCTION TOOLKIT PILOT

CONTENTS

Background - national and local context

2

The Workload Reduction Toolkit

3

Process

4

Findings

5

**The workload areas that were addressed
during the pilot**

6

Conclusions

9

Recommendations

10

The logo for hammersmith & fulham, featuring the lowercase letters 'h&f' in a white, sans-serif font. A white wavy line is positioned above the 'f'. Below the 'h&f' text, the words 'hammersmith & fulham' are written in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font.

**LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP**

The Department for Education (DfE) published an online school workload reduction toolkit in July 2018, (updated in October 2019). The extensive toolkit contains practical tools and resources for school leaders and teachers to help review and reduce workload in specific areas. It was produced by school leaders, teachers and other sector experts, together with the DfE. The H&F Learning Partnership decided in January 2019 to work with a group of schools to pilot the DfE toolkit in order to identify successful strategies to reduce workload and improve wellbeing. It was agreed that the findings of the pilot, if successful, would then be shared across all H&F schools. The pilot took place at a time when teacher workload reduction had become a key focus of government policy. The new Ofsted framework includes a focus on helping to reduce workload and reducing the pressures on teachers, particularly where those pressures are associated with inspection.

National context

The DfE Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy published in January 2019 (<https://assets>.

publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786856/DFE_Teacher_Retention_Strategy_Report.pdf) identified excessive workload as one of four main barriers to recruitment and retention. The document reported that the new Ofsted framework would have an active focus on reducing teacher workload, with inspectors considering whether staff workload is unnecessarily high as part of the Leadership and Management judgement, looking unfavourably on schools that have burdensome data practices.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) 2018 report into teacher workforce dynamics in England (https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3111/teacher_workforce_dynamics_in_england_final_report.pdf) identified the key factors driving teacher retention and turnover. The report identified that teachers have the lowest satisfaction with their leisure time, compared to nurses and police officers. Teachers who are unable or unwilling to work long hours to keep up with their workload find their workload becomes unmanageable and are likely to leave the profession.

Unmanageable workload is consistently the most cited reason teachers give for why they leave the profession. The report also notes that the teacher supply challenge in London is particularly acute and that London has considerably more teachers leaving the profession compared to other areas including large cities.

Local context - The H&F Business Plan states:

- We will work to attract and retain good teachers which may include offering support with accommodation.
- The Hammersmith and Fulham Learning Partnership will promote peer to peer learning across our schools both to promote excellence and to help recruit and retain the highest quality teachers at a time when teacher recruitment and retention is challenging.
- We will look at setting up a Teaching Commission with a view to making Hammersmith and Fulham the most attractive borough in the land for teachers and help to tackle recruitment and retention.

THE WORKLOAD REDUCTION TOOLKIT

The toolkit is divided into three parts so that schools can work through each stage, although the tools can also be used as standalone materials too.

Section 1 - Identifying the workload issues in your school

This section has advice and tools to help school leaders and staff identify areas of high workload that could be addressed. Key tools include:

- Workload survey
- Structured conversation template to gather feedback from staff
- Impact graph workshop

Section 2 - Guidance and practical tools to address specific areas.

The resources are grouped into themes that have been identified as issues which could lead to high workload in schools e.g. curriculum planning, data management, feedback and marking etc

Section 3 - Evaluating the Impact

The toolkit includes a checklist to record a quick summary of actions and help evaluate the changes.

The following schools participated in the pilot:

Brackenbury Primary School, John Betts Primary School, Avonmore Primary School, Wendell Park Primary School, Kenmont Primary School and Sir John Lillie Primary School.

Secondary, Special, and Nursery Schools were asked to join the pilot but regrettably were unable to participate for a range of reasons.

Sharon Kearns, the Head of School at Kenmont Primary had already started the process of piloting the toolkit across both Kenmont and Wendell Park Primary as part of her NPQH programme. She kindly agreed to assist the participating schools in delivering the toolkit and drawing together the key findings from the exercise. Sharon helpfully reviewed the extensive DfE toolkit materials and recommended specific materials to use at the first session with staff as follows:

- staff workload survey;
- Identifying the issues in your school using impact graphs;
- structured conversation template;
- teacher workforce dynamics in England, October 2018 NFER report;
- Ways to reduce workload in your school July 2018, updated March 2019 DfE report. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/838687/Tips_for_school_leaders_.pdf

Sharon recommended that schools should distribute the workload survey to teachers before the first structured discussion session takes place to give school leaders an opportunity to assess the key issues in advance e.g. feedback and marking, data collection, planning etc.

The participating schools in the pilot were asked to identify:

- 1) Which activities were identified by the questionnaire and in discussions as being particularly high in workload but having less impact on pupil outcomes?
- 2) Which areas have they chosen to prioritise?
- 3) What strategies are they implementing and which resources from the toolkit and other support are being used?

They were asked to lead a second evaluation meeting with teachers in the summer term to discuss what actions were implemented and which strategies successfully reduced workload.

Participating schools agreed to feedback the findings of the pilot so that the local authority could make an assessment of the success of the toolkit and determine whether to promote the toolkit widely to all schools.

The local union representatives were advised that the pilot was taking place and they confirmed their support for the initiative.

Questionnaire

Leaders distributed the model DfE workload survey questionnaire to teachers. The survey is anonymous and takes no more than 10 minutes to complete. Teachers are asked to consider how long they have spent on a range of activities other than teaching - was the time spent too little, about right or too much when considering the impact it had on pupil outcomes. The survey form explains that the school would use teachers' responses to review processes and discuss resulting actions to reduce workload with staff and that they would also use responses over time to review progress. John Betts repeated the survey in the summer term to measure the impact of the changes that were introduced and the second survey identified significant improvements.

Initial conversation

Schools were asked to conduct an initial meeting with staff to discuss workload issues, using the DfE structured conversation template.

Schools reported that they ensured that the discussions took place in an open and supportive environment. They advised that it was evident that staff needed and valued the opportunity to talk together and that the workload discussion was a very useful and cathartic exercise. Staff appreciated being asked their views and having the opportunity to contribute to shaping school policy re workload. One school reported that teachers devised their own solutions to the issues

raised and that the discussion led them to understand that some issues could not be resolved.

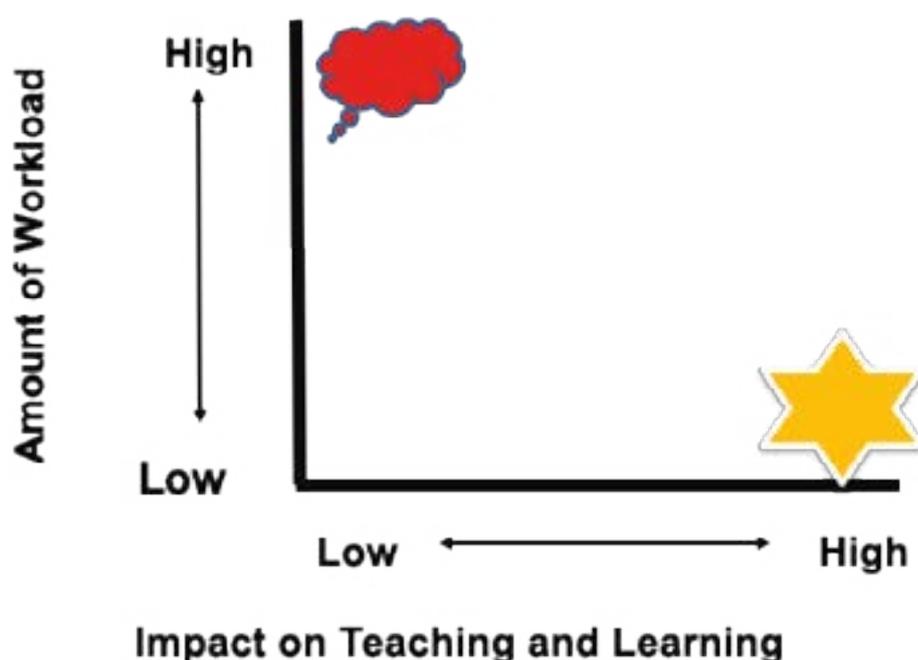
Wendell Park School arranged for SLT to be present at the start of the meeting and then left so that an open discussion could take place and opinions about workload could be shared. Sir John Lillie School asked team leaders to co-ordinate the meeting and SLT did not attend at all. It was made clear that any feedback about existing processes would not be taken personally.

Brackenbury School and Sir John Lillie School used the results of the questionnaire and the discussions about the activities which took up a disproportionate amount of time when considering the impact they have on pupil progress, to produce a table of concerns and

actions - so that there is a clear record of the issues raised and the strategies put in place to resolve them i.e. "you said, we did".

Using impact graphs to prioritise change

An impact graph considers the amount of workload versus the impact on pupil outcomes. If the impact on pupil outcomes is high then the school must consider the possibility that the workload created is worthwhile and so as a staff group, this would not be an area of focus. Results identified as high workload and low impact should be the areas of focus - i.e. schools should consider whether these practices should be stopped, amended to make them less time intensive or refined so they have more impact.



Most participating schools reported that the opportunity to look at tasks on the impact graph enabled teachers to reflect and understand that some of their most time-consuming tasks had the greatest positive impact on pupil outcomes.

THE WORKLOAD AREAS THAT WERE ADDRESSED DURING THE PILOT

The participating schools chose to prioritise and address the following areas:

Reviewing and streamlining feedback and marking practice

At Kenmont School, the initial surveys sent out to teachers prior to the meeting demonstrated that there was a consensus that in KS2, marking/feedback was the most time-consuming task. SLT and teachers reviewed current education research which demonstrated that in-lesson verbal feedback had the greater impact on pupil outcomes (Visible Learning Feedback, John Hattie and Shirley Clarke provided action research results as professional reading for teachers). School policy was re-written to support this research and this change had a significant and positive impact on post-lesson marking and reduced workload. The school noted that there was no negative impact on pupils' progress as a result of the changes.

Kenmont School reported that they are looking at more opportunities for self-marking by the children. For next academic year they are also going to trial using comparison judgements alongside their usual assessment process to see if that is a time saving measure which also maintains their accuracy of judgements.

Brackenbury school designated a member of SLT as the "marking expert" that teachers could seek advice from. A marking policy was devised to clarify expectations with staff and

set out a range of feedback techniques. Reading records were reviewed with the aim of simplifying the marking process. Clarification was provided on how to mark homework i.e. symbols, stamp of praise (excellent homework, great effort), three tick system, pink highlighter (identify exceptional aspects of a child's learning), green highlighter (to set next steps) etc. The marking policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it is clear and effective.

Sir John Lillie School agreed to introduce conference marking whereby traditional marking is replaced with one-to-one "conferences" between teachers and pupils. Sir John Lillie had an Ofsted inspection last week and during feedback, the leadership team were informed that staff had told the inspectors that marking had been reduced and that this had a positive impact on their workload. The inspectors were very positive about this feedback from staff.

Lesson planning and resources

John Betts primary school reported that in February 2019 when they completed the questionnaire, 67% of teachers identified that they spent too much time on planning and preparation. In response, the school made changes to expectations re planning, ensuring that the changes did not have a negative impact on the pupil's outcomes. Apart from NQTs all lesson planning is flipchart based. Provided

that there is evidence of pupil progress, teachers can use this model but if progress is not apparent, the situation reverts. In May 2019, 78% of teachers identified that the time spent planning and preparing lessons was "about right" which is a significant improvement.

Brackenbury School identified that a great deal of time was being spent copying and pasting from flip charts to planning formats. In response a new planning format was created to ease the problem. The school ceased the requirement to email plans to SLT – all planning is now saved in the central folder on the network.

Kenmont School agreed that teachers would be allocated additional time of an extra half day for planning and resourcing at the end of each half term in the light of curriculum changes and the new Ofsted framework.

John Betts School reassured teachers that assemblies did not need to be complex performances i.e. there is no pressure to 'put on a show'.

Measuring pupil progress and managing the data

Wendell Park School reported that their end of key stage outcomes have improved. The largest proportion of a teacher's time is now dedicated to providing high quality resources. Additional planning time has been given teachers. The work on metacognition, making explicit to learners how they learn best,

underpins the school's teaching and learning and their curriculum and teaching and learning ethos. This has impacted positively on pupil outcomes and behaviour for learning.

Supporting work-life balance

One school implemented the closure of the school to staff after 5.30pm daily and encouraged staff to leave early at least twice a week. This practice is also modelled by SLT who lead by example.

Planning a yearly calendar to avoid "pinch points"

Kenmont School reported that pinch points in the year such as assessment, planning and resourcing were the aspects of the job that were the most time-consuming and workload heavy.

Sir John Lillie School identified that school wide events e.g. book looks, observations, disco, twilights, themed weeks and assessments have sometimes been arranged in the same week, which impacts on workload. The school committed to ensuring that workload heavy tasks are well-spaced out across the school year in future.

Sir John Lillie School also reported open mornings, mufti days etc were often announced via newsletters or texts to parents and children before staff are informed. It was agreed that the purpose and timing of each activity should be clear to everyone and that staff

would be notified of events in advance of parents and children.

John Betts School confirmed that at pinch points, e.g. data collection, generic lessons are delivered in order to ease the pressure on teachers.

Avonmore School advised that SLT now co-ordinate the annual cycle of school events to ensure they are evenly spread throughout the year. They check with staff first before arranging an event to ensure that there are no conflicts i.e., they do not make assumptions. SLT ensure all events are clearly communicated.

Communications

Avonmore School reduced the overall number of staff meetings and took steps to ensure that all meetings are relevant and impactful – i.e. they do not take too long and there are not too many of them. It became apparent that SLT was arranging competing meetings for staff and that there needed to be a coordinated approach. Instead of hour-long team meetings, the school introduced 30-minute meetings, followed by 30 minutes to go and plan/do. They reported that this workload change had the biggest impact of the pilot and was hugely appreciated by staff.

The school do not have meetings at 'pinch points' for example data input, writing moderation, report writing. The school is going to check that they have not missed any further opportunities to balance workload at these points in the year (for example planning of themed weeks by subject leaders).

Brackenbury School agreed to reduce the overall number of meetings and to use email to communicate more, to reduce time taken away from other activities.

Re parental events, Sir John Lillie School reduced the number of nursery parents' consultations from termly to twice a year.

Avonmore School reported that they start parent consultations early in the day to ensure they are finished at a more reasonable time.

Administration

Brackenbury School identified that SEN paperwork was very time consuming, and it was agreed that internal referral forms would be completed during pupil progress by the inclusion lead. Regarding outside support forms and EHCP, the Inclusion manager reviewed external forms to endeavour to streamline the process.

Regarding photocopying, Brackenbury School devised a system so that folders of copying are given to the school office with at least 2 days' notice. It was agreed that all staff must report any printer or photocopiers defects immediately so that an engineer can be called promptly. The school agreed to look at replacing machines with better quality ones when contracts are renewed in the light of feedback about unreliable and broken equipment and the impact on staff.

Kenmont School ensured that photocopiers were always

supplied with paper, which was a quick fix.

Brackenbury School allocate staff meeting time to the task of entering data for foundation subjects on the system.

Regarding displays and the time taken to update and maintain them, Brackenbury School agreed that classrooms would have one maths and one writing working wall. In addition, one topic display (which could also be the shared area display), and a board for maths facts and French.

Sir John Lillie School agreed a clear system for requesting approval via SLT for bookings, trips, workshops and courses in order to speed up decision making and avoid wasting time chasing approval.

Monitoring

Brackenbury School identified that there was a great deal of monitoring being delivered to teachers by different people e.g. coach, SLT, subject leader, which then involved lots of feedback and action points. The school reviewed and rationalised monitoring to eliminate doubling up i.e. less feedback from multiple sources.

John Betts School advised that monitoring is “little and often” and that book look takes place every other week.

Kenmont School undertake monitoring within staff meetings whereby staff look at each other’s books and discuss.

CONCLUSIONS

The participating schools identified clear benefits of using the Workload Reduction Toolkit resources.

They particularly highlighted the positive impact of the following:

1. Engaging with staff to review workload.

Leaders identified the benefit of having an open and honest conversation with staff, listening to their concerns and preparing a list of the issues that cause particularly high workload for staff.

2. The use of the impact graph to assess tasks in the context of the amount of workload versus the impact on pupil outcomes.

This received very positive feedback in that the graph helped teachers understand that some of their most time-consuming tasks had the greatest impact on pupil outcomes.

3. Making a plan and deciding with staff what activities to keep, tweak or eliminate.

Teachers appreciated the opportunity to contribute to/ shape the school workload policy.

4. Putting the plan into action.

The creation of tables i.e. “you said, we did” demonstrated to staff that their feedback was taken seriously and acted upon which helps to create a supportive school culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The findings of the pilot should be communicated with school leaders so that best practice is shared via e.g. a thematic meeting, and the most useful and relevant areas of the toolkit are highlighted.
 - Sharon Kearns should be invited to present the findings alongside other school leaders who participated in the pilot.
 - The participating schools should be asked to further evaluate the impact of the exercise i.e. impact on pupil results; whether the measures have influenced teacher retention, turnover and a reduction in sickness absence.
 - None of the participating schools chose to address pupil behaviour – consideration should be given to asking a school to tackle this issue.
 - No secondary schools participated in the pilot – consideration to be given to piloting the scheme in a secondary setting.
- Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a statement on the H&F recruitment website re LA support of the workload reduction initiative/ how LA is committed to tackling workload.
 - Consideration should be given to the NFER recommendation that schools should have a governor responsible for staff welfare or a member of the management team with specific time and responsibilities in this area.
 - H&F monitor changes to R&R.
 - H&F maintain a central log (e.g. on Governor hub or other accessible place of examples of practice (as shown above)).
 - H&F consider carrying out the survey across the borough (using Citizen Space/Microsoft forms for example) to obtain school by school and thematic issues so that LA can give strategic or targeted support.

Clare Mapstone
Schools HR Business Partner