



Fair Workload Commitment for Schools

Introduction

Reading Borough is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of staff within our schools. As part of this, we have been working with schools and professional associations to establish a framework of guidance, and a core set of principles governing a fair workload charter for staff working in schools. This guidance reflects a commitment to ensuring that workloads are reasonable but that the way this manifests itself is flexible to meet the diverse needs and working patterns of schools and teachers.

The Reading Pledge

The work-life balance of staff in schools is a high priority for school managers, staff, the local authority and also trades unions. It is an area that needs to be monitored and managed, with individual schools feeling supported in finding strategies that work for them.

This pledge has been consulted on with head teachers, the local authority and trades unions to demonstrate a commitment to finding and maintaining a fairer work and life balance for all staff. It provides flexibility for schools to find what works best for their staff and their school ethos.

The aim of our pledge is to achieve a consensus of staff who feel valued and supported, and who feel they have control over managing their workload. This will help support the well-being of staff, and will contribute to the recruitment and retention of staff.

The pledge provides a set of core principles that all parties have committed to, and these are:

- Senior leaders of schools will monitor and review workload, and help staff identify ways to reduce or eliminate unnecessary tasks, including work specifically for senior leaders themselves;
- Any new strategy, for example, a change in the schools' marking policy and approach, will be assessed in the context of the overall workload demand on staff, and any adverse impact will be reduced or removed;
- Staff will be encouraged to manage their own working time, for example by agreeing a reasonable time to go home, and being mindful of individual commitments such as journey times and family;

- Schools have the flexibility to use strategies that fit the staff and the culture of the school;
- Schools are committed to using the guidance from the DfE around marking, planning, and pupil performance data, and to working collaboratively with staff to develop, embed and support these strategies;
- Any member of staff who may be struggling with their workload feels able to discuss this openly with managers. Equally a manager who may have concerns about a member of staff feels able to discuss this constructively;
- Workload will be kept under regular review at individual, team and school level so that any emerging issues that have an impact on workload and working patterns can be handled early.

Good Practice Examples

The following initiatives provide a few examples of current practice that are in place and that have been gathered from head teachers in the Borough, across both primary and secondary schools. Such strategies are offered as examples that may be adopted and adapted to fit the ethos of individual schools, to support a fair workload culture for staff and to promote a positive work-life balance. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and schools will continue to adapt and are free to identify approaches that work for them. These examples include:

- Provision of guideline limits on teacher working time outside of directed time with a focus on quality rather than quantity;
- Encouraging and promoting team planning and the sharing of resources, with clear, identified and sign-posted resources available to support teachers with planning and teaching;
- Organising PPA time in useful blocks of time, and allowing PPA time to be used at home where both possible and practical;
- Scheduled time for shared planning, with lesson planning not being monitored unless there are concerns to be managed;
- Allowing the format of planning to be left to individual teachers and year groups rather than a standard format being dictated by the school;
- Additional non-contact time being provided for activities such as assessment and report writing;
- Limiting staff meetings within a set duration and to one per week, ensuring that meetings are carefully planned and managed to ensure that there is no duplication of discussion elsewhere and that they do not over-run;
- Agreeing guideline times within which e-mails should be sent and responded to;
- Operating a centralised detention system thereby reducing time given by individual teachers to monitoring pupils independently in their own classrooms;

- Building in a system whereby extra days given to work, e.g., covering a class or extra-curricular activity on a Saturday, are off-set by a planned in day off in lieu;
- Looking at marking selected pieces of work rather than everything, or marking in depth a sample of books per lesson and pacing the marking of a cohort's books over a period of time, with the use of symbols or colours used to quick mark;
- Homework being provided which is based on students learning knowledge and not automatically marked by teachers but exploring other ways of valuing and checking, for example, peer reviews; and
- Avoiding the collection or expectation that teachers produce individual lesson plans or teacher planners being completed each day.