

**RAISING STANDARDS AND TACKLING WORKLOAD: NATIONAL AGREEMENT
PROGRESS REPORT**

1. Background

Colleagues will recall that a Management Information sheet (60/03) was issued in March setting out a summary of the Government's wide-ranging proposals for remodelling the school workforce to raise standards and tackle teachers' workload which followed the consultation document "Time for Standards". The Agreement signified commitment to a programme of change to take effect between September 2003 and September 2005. This report sets out the progress that has been made to date and particularly focuses on the changes to take effect from September 2003. The Education Departmental Management Team has set up a Project Group of Officers to initiate and support the various elements. That Project Group has now met twice.

The Authority has been asked to respond to a whole series of national consultation on various elements of the proposals, e.g. to the Teacher Training Agency on "Standards for Higher Level Teaching Assistants" to the Employers' Organisation and the DfES. Within these responses, I have vigorously drawn attention to a lack of general financial resources and the effect this has on the ability of schools to carry through the proposals. In this respect, colleagues will recall that I had argued for the additional resources that were required to pump prime the introduction of these changes prior to the budget situation this year becoming known.

The other aspect that has concerned us all has been the short timescale for introducing these changes. Even now we have not received the final guidance from the Employers' Organisation for support staff. However, we have undertaken some limited research by personal visits to some schools. These indicate a variation in the level of preparedness of schools.

With these caveats in mind we have started the process of organising the LEA support to schools and Headteachers, as I shall now detail.

2. Next Stages

- Arrangements are in hand to set up consultation groups with Heads, teachers, Governors and the professional associations and trade unions whether teaching or support staff. The consultation groups with Heads meet on 16th and 24th June.
- Proposals will be brought forward to organise this Project in the best way possible using some DfES funds allocated for this process.
- Education Personnel Services are finalising revised job descriptions for school support staff, taking account of draft national guidelines. These will

need to be subject to consultation with the partners described overleaf and graded. These need to be part of a package encompassing career structure/job descriptions/grade/staff development and the necessary qualifications that the relevant job descriptions imply. This is particularly so for the Teaching Assistant job descriptions.

- There has been recognition that there is a need to develop a Performance Management Scheme for support staff. Our current thinking on this is that it needs to be based on a similar framework to the teachers' model.
- The Advisory Service, through the Summer RDA visits, will seek to draw together a picture from Headteachers as to how they were proposing to deal with the "24-named tasks", i.e. those tasks which will be removed by changes in the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document from what can be required of teachers from this September.
- The Advisory Service is also looking at the question of training for school support staff. The current situation is that there has been overwhelming take-up of interest in a 4-day Induction Programme, NVQ Level 3 and Open University courses (at NVQ 3 or 4 levels). We will need to make representations to the DfES and the TTA about the inadequacy of resources to meet demand for this training.
- David Saunders, Well-Being Co-ordinator, is being asked to develop advice on work/life balance as it applies to Headteachers and teachers.
- There is a need to come up with proposals which will facilitate schools making joint appointments along the lines of the arrangements which ICT Solutions make for ICT technicians for groups of schools. This would apply to Bursars and other specialist staff.

Any Headteachers who would be interested in participating in discussions or have examples of good practice where the various elements of the proposals have already been implemented at local level, contact should be made with Bob Hedley, Education Personnel Services.

Bryan Slater
Director of Education

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