# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Reducing workload and bureaucracy for education staff** |
| **DATE**  | **21 October 2024** |
| **BY** | **Lynne Neagle MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education**  |

In November 2023 my predecessor made a statement updating on work to reduce workload and bureaucracy for education staff. I want to update members on the progress made since then.

Refocussed and restructured arrangements commenced at the beginning of 2024 with the establishment of the independently chaired Strategic Workload Coordination Group (SWCG). Membership of the SWCG is drawn from key stakeholders and includes representatives from across the system. Their remit includes providing a strategic review of progress to the Schools Social Partnership Forum. Underpinning the Strategic Group are three working groups focussing on finance; reporting and engagement; and policy development and implementation. These working groups comprise of, and are also independently chaired by, representatives of education unions and school improvement partners.

The Finance Working Group has been focused on simplifying mechanisms for getting funding into schools. Over the last year we have streamlined the monitoring and evaluation of our grants to reduce workload associated with reporting. Reports have reduced from approximately 50 in 2022-23 to just 8 in the current financial year; this will see a significant reduction in workload pressure on both local authorities and schools. The outcome of this can be seen in the current year’s grant awards, where we have simplified and streamlined the funding to local authorities and schools in line with the government’s priority to boost standards. Previously, funding was provided through various grants with around 20 different funding streams, issued to multiple recipients. To simplify national funding mechanisms and reduce the bureaucratic burden, all grants are now issued to local authorities, including the Education Improvement Grant and Regional Consortia Grant. Further work on simplifying funding arrangements is part of the School Funding Review.

Under the Reporting and Engagement Working Group, all partners have proactively shared their own reporting requirements to help the working group focus on high priority areas for change. There has been discussion with partners on statutory reporting requirements for schools, the School Development Report and Governors Reports, as well as reporting requests from local authorities and within schools. The emerging actions are focused on providing clarity of requests and removing duplication. As the group moves into improving the quality of engagement within and between schools, local authorities and the Welsh Government, it will develop agreed principles for positive engagement and reporting. This work aims to facilitate a culture which enables the principles of trust and collaboration set out in the School Improvement Partnership Programme to grow. I expect the new arrangements for school improvement to be less burdensome and more impactful for local authorities, teachers and leaders.

Work under the Policy Development and Implementation Working Group includes progress on workload impact assessments. Since 2023, concrete progress has been made in embedding assessment of new and revised policies across a range of areas, such as 14-16 Learner Entitlement. Moving forward it will include policy developments such as the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, changes to qualifications and the introduction of the new Workload and Wellbeing Charter. A Teacher Reference Group has also been established, comprising classroom teachers and teaching assistants. The Group has already highlighted some key issues such as more flexible approaches to working, supporting teachers to address behaviour issues in school and looking at the workload implications of marking and other forms of assessment.

Estyn has continued to work with its partners to clarify expectations around workload and pre-inspection preparation. In partnership with educational trade unions, they have developed a media campaign to share these messages and to challenge the myths that often arise about their inspection work and expectations of providers.  Estyn’s work with local authorities on supporting schools in a statutory category following inspection is helping to ensure there is a closer link between the school’s post-inspection action plan and the local authority’s statement of action.

The professional development review (PDR) guidance (formerly known as performance management) has been published following engagement with practitioners and key partners.  The guidance brings the arrangements in line with developments in school improvement and professional learning and aims to support the profession to meet the current challenges and to ensure that all learners achieve their potential. Schools will be able to engage with the revised guidance at a time and in a way that will be most effective for them.

I am also listening to workforce feedback on pressure from ALN reform. I have set out the action we are taking on this in a [Written Statement](https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-taking-action-review-and-improve-implementation-additional-learning-needs-aln), including recognising the important role of ALNCO’s by [accepting the recommendations](https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-report-and-recommendations-independent-welsh-pay-review-body-iwprb-3) of the IWPRB’s fifth report.