# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Update - reducing workload and bureaucracy for school staff** |
| **DATE**  | **09 November 2023** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language**  |

Following my statement of 13 July 2023, we have made significant progress on proposals to tackle staff workload and reduce bureaucracy. Positive discussions have continued with our education leadership and teacher unions, local authorities, regional partnerships, Estyn and other key stakeholders which is summarised below:

Workload impact assessment

We have continued to develop the workload impact assessment intended to ensure any new Welsh Government policies consider potential impact on teacher workload. The final impact assessment will be agreed by the end of November and will then be piloted immediately. Feedback and review of the workload impact assessment will be considered with further development of the final assessment process expected to be completed by the end of May 2024. We have made progress in developing the digital tool to enable headteachers to evidence causes of workload and this will be available by the end of this autumn term. The feedback will support the ongoing workload impact assessment and feed into policy development and implementation

The professional learning programme for Welsh Government Education Directorate policy makers will commence this November. We have commitment from the Leadership and Teacher Unions to support and attend this professional learning, which will enable policy makers to develop a better understanding of the impact of new policies on the workload of education staff.

More widely, we have agreed with stakeholders to explore a workload and wellbeing charter, building on the previous workload charter and other wellbeing initiatives. We will set up a development group to consider and provide advice and recommendations on content and a communication plan, by autumn 2024. This should include a forward plan that links in with the annual timetable of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body’s consideration of teachers’ statutory terms and conditions.

Reporting and engagement

We will refocus and streamline our efforts across the sector. We will publish an updated school improvement policy framework in early 2024 which will set out a clear shared direction for schools, support providers, and local and national government. This has been shared with Education unions and other partners. We will focus on collaboration between schools and clusters to achieve these shared objectives, and as the basis for self-evaluation, improvement, engagement and reporting. This will streamline and focus our collective efforts to support schools to improve.

We are reviewing the statutory reporting and information regulations to ensure that expectations are clear, aligned with policy, and not duplicative. Further work is continuing and we expect a final proposal in summer 2024.

The policy framework will underpin our updated school improvement guidance which we will publish for consultation in 2024 pending the outcome of the review into school improvement I announced in July.

Estyn

In my Oral Statement to the Senedd on 16 May 2023, I referred to the need to end the practice of mock or mini-inspections and more generally discouraging schools and the consortia from over- preparing for Estyn inspections. It is clear from recent discussions with Estyn’s Chief Inspector that the practice continues, and it must end. The Chief Inspector and I believe strongly that mock or mini inspections is not a good use of practitioners’ or school improvement advisers’ time, does not develop professional practice or support headteacher and teacher wellbeing.

Estyn has continued to work with the unions, local authorities, regional consortia and school improvement partners to clarify and highlight their expectations in terms of pre-inspection preparation. These include streamlining the information provided by school improvement services and local authorities pre-inspection; and schools not preparing any documentation specifically for inspection, for example policy documents and lesson plans. Estyn is developing a media campaign to share these messages and to challenge the myths that often arise about their inspection work and expectations of providers.

Estyn is also working with local authorities to develop a more efficient and effective approach to supporting schools in statutory category following inspection. This includes ensuring a close link between the school’s post-inspection action plan and the local authority’s statement of action. In the best practice, these plans combine into a single dynamic improvement plan that clearly identifies the actions, responsibilities, timescales, and success criteria for each partner. Many schools and local authorities are adopting this approach successfully.

Professional development and review

We have worked with practitioners and education workforce unions to develop revised performance management guidance which will be published by the end of the year. Revised guidance will set out a flexible process in which practitioners take responsibility for their own development and the school provides the time and space required through effective use of the professional learning grant.

As set out in the National Professional Learning Entitlement, I want to ensure that all practitioners in Wales have access to consistent and high-quality professional learning throughout their career. To deliver on this commitment in September, I announced [new arrangements to quality assure professional learning](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Fwritten-statement-new-arrangements-ensure-high-quality-professional-learning-all-education&data=05%7C01%7CSarah.Reid%40gov.wales%7Cfd9ac4fa93044464d53808dbdafcb2d0%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C638344551081422139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9NkQ1E7gXTsINs1oRjuJxXJL5WvnSH28sVgiNHdd8uY%3D&reserved=0) in Wales.  Following the successful appointment of Professor Ken Jones as independent expert chair for a new National Endorsement Panel, the process to recruit panel members is now well underway.  The panel will include a range of key stakeholders including the Education Workforce Council, the National Academy for Educational Leadership, education consortia and partnerships, Higher Education Institutions, as well as school leaders and practitioners.  The first panel meeting will be held this term.

To ensure development opportunities for educational practitioners are easily accessible, in September this year, [a new professional learning area](https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-learning/) launched on Hwb.  This provides a single point of access to high quality, professional learning resources. This approach has been developed by practitioners, for practitioners and is currently available in Beta format, with opportunities for further refinement in light of ongoing feedback from the wider system.

Additional learning needs

I continue to listen to workforce feedback on pressure from the ALN reforms and take action. I have already [previously announced additional funding for schools and an extension to the implementation of the ALN system from three years to four years](https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act-2018-implementation).

At my request, Estyn has undertaken the first of two thematic reviews, which was published on 29 September: [The new Additional Learning Needs system | Estyn (gov.wales).](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2023-09/The%20new%20additional%20learning%20needs%20system_0.pdf) This report found that ALNCos that took part in this review were enthusiastic and committed. It also found that it is critically important that ALNCos were a strategic role within senior leadership teams to champion ALN across all aspects of the work of the school, including teaching, the curriculum and quality assurance. Estyn recognised the considerable change to their role, with an increased workload and increased responsibility. A key recommendation from Estyn’s report was that schools should ensure that ALNCos have sufficient time and resource to carry out their duties.

In response to Estyn’s report I wrote to all Directors of Education to ask that they review the report and carefully consider and take forward the recommendations. My officials also held a workshop with all 22 local authorities to highlight the recommendations from Estyn and continue to engage with delivery partners to reiterate the importance of ensuring that ALNCo’s have the time to deliver upon their role.

The ALNCo task and finish group continues to meet and is currently drafting their report to review and provide recommendations on ALNCo pay and non-contact time. This will be finalised by December 2023.

I intend to say more about ALN implementation and next steps later in November.

Strategic Group

We have begun to restructure and refocus our current engagement arrangements around a new Strategic Group. This Group will oversee all issues relating to reducing workload and bureaucracy to ensure a consistent and achievable approach. The Group remit, appointment of an independent Chair and agreed membership will be in place by the end of December 2023, with the first meeting taking place no later than early February 2024.

Underneath this group will be a small number of new working groups focussing on the key priority areas of workload in relation to Finance and Resources; Reporting; Engagement; and Policy Development and Implementation. There will also be a short-term group focussing on Learning Support Workers which will update learning support worker representatives on the agreements and discussions which have taken place since April 2023. We will establish remits and membership and all of these working groups will have held their first meeting by the end of January 2024.

School funding

We have already commenced streamlining the monitoring and evaluation of our grants and this can be seen in this year’s grant awards. We are considering taking further action ahead of the 2024-25 financial year and are currently working through our grants alongside the draft budget preparation with the aim of reducing the burden on our local authorities and schools, as well as providing them with more flexibility going forward. This will, in turn, ensure our grant processes are less complex and more transparent, supporting our trusted local authority partners in delivering the best possible outcomes with the resources available to them, and cutting out unnecessary bureaucracy.

We are also currently working through the recommendations made within the School Funding Review. This includes a piece of work reviewing local authority school funding formulas which we aim to complete by the end of the current financial year. This, along with other work we are undertaking, will help inform changes to the School Funding Regulations. We know school funding in Wales is complex, as highlighted in the School Funding Review, and that much work is needed to make improvements and develop our funding system to be more transparent, fairer, and one that puts the outcomes of learners at its centre.

School improvement: the role and responsibilities of education partners

On 12 July 2023 I announced a [review into the role and responsibilities of education partners](https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-school-improvement-role-and-responsibilities-education-partners).  This will provide the means to consider in a collective, timely and transparent way what the system needs as we look to the future and provide an opportunity to support the creation of space for positive, supportive, purpose-driven collaboration through reducing unnecessary bureaucracy. Over recent months I know that the review team, led by Professor Dylan E Jones, has been engaging directly with the education sector with the first phase focussed on hearing from as wide a range of schools as possible. I look forward to reading the conclusions and it is on track to report by the end of March 2024.

Conditions of service

As agreed, we have included a list of administrative and clerical tasks not to be carried out routinely by teachers in the STPC(W)D 2023 from September 2023. We will ask the IWPRB to consider whether any other administrative and clerical tasks should be added to this list and/or a need for the potential inclusion of specific reference to school leaders. We have also agreed that consideration of conditions of service for school leaders will be specifically referenced as part of the IWPRB Pay Review Remit for 2024/25.

Alongside the discussions on tackling staff workload and reducing bureaucracy, the IWPRB has continued with its strategic review of pay and conditions and I expect it to report to me in December. The report and its recommendations will be subject to detailed consideration and discussed with teacher unions and employers. This tripartite partnership approach will allow all relevant recommendations to be introduced as soon as possible, with related statutory requirements implemented from September 2024.

Ongoing commitment

By reducing unnecessary workload and bureaucracy for education staff we can free them up to spend more time on what they do best, which is supporting our learners and improving standards and outcomes across our schools system. We will continue our constructive discussions with stakeholders and work in partnership so that we can deliver the practical changes that all partners want to see.