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# Research into the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workloads



# **Research into the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workloads**

## **Audience:**

Teachers at all levels, especially Head and senior teachers, Local Education Authorities, Welsh Assembly Government staff involved in school policy development, School Governors, Trade Unions representing teachers and staff in the school system, parents and pupils

## **Overview:**

The National Agreement was introduced to help Head teachers, all other teachers and support staff work together to improve standards and tackle workload issues for all teachers in our schools. The Agreement included a seven point plan to help achieve these goals. This research aims to develop a better understanding of the implementation and impact of the National Agreement, and identify appropriate strategies to assist schools in implementing it.

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# 1. Background, aims and methodology

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Welsh Unit was commissioned by the Department for Education, Life-long Learning, and Skills (DCELLS of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in May 2009 to undertake research into the National Agreement.

## 1.1 Project aims and objectives

The project aim was:

*To develop a better understanding of the implementation and impact of the National Agreement.*

*Through examples of effective practice identify appropriate strategies to assist schools in implementing the National Agreement should they encounter difficulties with some aspects.*

The project objectives were to:

- Provide an overall view on progress on implementation of the National Agreement and determine what still needs to be done;
- Explore why the work life balance of head teachers is less satisfactory than that of teachers and what prevents many from receiving dedicated leadership and headship time;
- Identify and detail areas of good practice which could be shared to assist schools in implementing the National Agreement;
- Explore how the impact of the Agreement on pupils is measured and suggest alternative methods of data collection if necessary;
- Draw conclusions and make recommendations where applicable.

## 1.2 Project methodology

The main features of the project methodology were:

- an analysis of the synopsis of relevant literature
- a comprehensive programme of qualitative fieldwork involving several stakeholder groups including Directors of Education, local authority LA officers, regional consortia, trade unions, governors and school-based staff such as school leaders, teachers, and support staff

- presentation of the project findings with recommendations for development in a concise final project report.

The main phases of the project were:

- desk based research and scoping interviews with key WAG personnel (May 2009)
- production of research instruments (May 2009)
- arranging and conducting focus groups with headteachers, workforce trade union representatives, members of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), and personnel from Consortia Cymru (May-July 2009)
- arranging and conducting case-study visits to a representative sample of schools throughout Wales (May-September July 2009) and Local Authorities (September 2009), where interviews were conducted with a range of staff and governors
- analysis and reporting (September – November 2009).

## **2. Supporting implementation**

This chapter considers the effectiveness of structures to support the implementation of the National Agreement and perceptions of the different forms of support.

### **2.1 Range of support**

The main areas of support which had been provided to schools to assist them to implement the process of change implicit in the National Agreement were identified as being:

- training from LAs
- the support provided by LA Change Managers
- the role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) often referred to as local WAMG
- support from professional bodies and trade unions
- peer support.
- WAG/DCSF/Workload Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG guidance).

Of these, the role of LA Change Managers, support from professional bodies and trade unions, and peer support were the ones mentioned most often by stakeholders.

Training previously provided to schools by LAs had usually focused on school remodelling, the transfer of administrative and clerical tasks from teachers, implementing PPA and cover strategies, and the statutory review of staffing structures (undertaken in preparation for implementing Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments). These included day and evening sessions involving school leaders and some governors (usually the chair of governors or a governor with specific responsibility for remodelling).

There was general agreement that the opportunities provided during 2003-04 had been valuable with good liaison between most LAs and schools. Schools believed that there was a need for more training to be provided both for new school leaders and also refresher provision for established ones. However, the cost (both financial and in terms of staff time) of accessing training was a barrier identified by some headteachers. At the same time it was emphasised by school leaders that generic training did not remove the need for individual personalised support, delivered to school leaders on a small group or one-to-one basis.

## 2.2 Advice and guidance

Written guidance from WAG and WAMG had been circulated to schools periodically. However, some schools had received printed circulars from their LAs, an approach which they felt was inadequate and inappropriate; they wanted fewer documents (and less use of jargon), and more personalised support. Several school leaders said that they had not been in post at the time when TLRs were introduced and were not aware of subsequent guidance.

One trade union was concerned about the content of some guidance circulated to schools and believed that it could leave '*schools vulnerable to facing claims and disputes*'. They highlighted the support which they themselves had provided to schools to assist them to implement aspects such as Planning Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time and 'rarely cover', including advice on staff rights and responsibilities, information sheets about PPA, cover arrangements and other issues, and guidance to school leaders. One union specifically referred to guidance which it had produced in response to repeated request from their members for such information.

## 2.3 LA support

The amount of LA support received by school leaders to help them with implementing the early and subsequent phases of the National Agreement varied. Some LAs were felt to have attached a low priority to supporting schools with the implementation of the individual aspects of the National Agreement and schools were not aware that any additional staff had been appointed to support them. For example, in one such LA it was commented that the head of human resources had addressed headteachers and that '*It was up to you to sort it*'. A similar comment was made by headteachers in another part of Wales; a typical comment from that group of headteachers was that '*We were really left to find out our own way*'. This evidence about the variations in support in implementing the agreement and its inconsistency throughout Wales was echoed by several trade unions.

Most LAs had originally appointed Change Managers some of whom were seconded school staff. Their work was valued by the school leaders who had been in post at the time. School leaders valued the initial training which had been delivered by LA officers (and seconded headteachers working with LAs) at the time of remodelling and during the statutory review of staffing structures.

School leaders were concerned that they felt they had received far less support in recent years. At the same time, the role of Change Managers had changed significantly since 2003-04. They were now much less concerned with workforce remodelling and had often been allocated other responsibilities or responsibility for



change management had been added to LA officers' other duties. A typical view was that *'Where LEAs have got a change manager who has a specific responsibility for this they will be a font of knowledge. We don't have this in the LEA or in the consortium.'* This had reduced the amount of support which they were able to provide to schools resulting in a feeling of isolation on the part of some schools. Specifically, schools believed there was a need to ensure that LAs had an officer to lead on remodelling and other issues concerning the National Agreement and that this person should work with link officers who should also be able to support schools on remodelling and National Agreement issues.

Staff, particularly school leaders, emphasised the importance of the role played by the seconded heads. They were felt to have relevant recent experience in schools and to be able to discuss issues with colleagues having had to address a similar range of challenges.

Good practice was observed where seconded headteachers worked alongside LA officers to support schools with the implementation of specific aspects of the National Agreement.

The support given by LA education departments had in some cases been supplemented by LA officers with a personnel background. School leaders and governors considered it to be important that the personnel staff who worked with schools had an understanding of the context in which change in schools was taking place. This would ensure that issues were approached from the standpoint of school improvement and raising standards. School leaders believed that where corporate personnel teams had been established it was important that the personnel staff with whom they worked had the same level of understanding of schools and the context in which they worked as those who had been located in education department's dedicated personnel sections. Some trade unions went further and maintained that LA personnel departments lacked adequate knowledge of the National Agreement and its implications and that this needed to be addressed.

Good practice was observed in LAs where personnel staff had developed an understanding of schools' general staffing needs and issues around remodelling. Where personnel teams had developed an understanding of individual schools' needs they had been able to provide advice that was designed specifically to address their circumstances. It was good practice for personnel teams to liaise with school link officers/improvement officers and change managers to become more aware of individual schools' needs.

Good practice was observed where LA link officers had a responsibility for aspects of the National Agreement and, in particular, remodelling. This ensured a linkage between practice in remodelling and support to improve school performance. For example, in some LAs link officers could be consulted by teachers about how they could use their PPA time to best effect.

Special schools said that they had received consistent and continuous support from their LAs something which may reflect the range of support with which they were provided or the relatively small number of special schools which could be included in research of this nature.

The capacity of LAs to support schools was an issue that was raised as a concern by headteachers and other stakeholders. It was felt that local authorities were in a position of being required to, and of wanting to, support schools while at the same time facing calls to delegate as much funding as possible to the schools themselves. This meant they were trying to provide a level of support and meet expectations in very challenging circumstances. Collaboration between LAs was acknowledged to be one way by which this could be achieved and was a strong feature of earlier consortium activity to support remodelling.

LAs were keen to develop their support to schools. Some thought this would be done by themselves as individual LAs or through consortia (see section 2.4). LAs believed that in future there was a need to link work on school remodelling much more closely to priorities for school improvement, in a way which drew on the lessons learned in remodelling in the past. A similar point was made by Estyn (2009) who noted the need for structures to be re-visited in order to meet the needs of staff and pupils. One suggestion was training LA school link officers in change management and workforce remodelling issues. The need to take a broader view than had been the case in the past was encapsulated by an LA officer who said '*We were quite reactive to the latest problem of PPAs ...rather than addressing the underlying issue which was ensuring that standards were raised*'.

Good practice was observed where LA link officers had a responsibility for aspects of the National Agreement in particular remodelling. This ensured a linkage between practice in remodelling and support to improve school performance. In some LAs link officers could be consulted by teachers about how they could maximise the benefits of PPA time. For example, how to coordinate their time to enable them to plan with colleagues or the possibility of using PPA time to observe good practice or develop different ways of presenting teaching and learning activities (such as experimenting with IT packages, websites, identifying new materials etc).

## **2.4 LSPs**

The impact of the Local Social Partnerships (LSPs) established following the Agreement were felt to be mixed, especially as a number were not currently operational. There was some concern that the officers who were involved in LSPs did not enjoy the same senior status as those who had been involved initially and that the focus of meetings had narrowed to deal solely with compliance issues. The inactivity of some LSPs was highlighted by trade union officers who believed that an audit of the extent to which they were operational was required. Others felt that '*.. it often just duplicates work done by the unions.*'

In those areas where LSPs were operational, there was some evidence of good practice such as in one LA where the LSP had produced guidance on issues such as Dedicated Headship Time (DHT) and work-life balance. In some cases they had been used by headteachers to discuss practical issues and share models of good practice. More recently, however, they felt that the focus had changed with the focus on compliance.

Trade unions felt that LSPs had a potential to bring together relevant stakeholders to monitor the National Agreement and to highlight issues of concern. Unions also believed that this role should be undertaken given the absence of an all-Wales monitoring body. One trade union believed that including all school workforce trade unions in LSPs was required if they were to become effective; they believed that this should include unions who were not signatories to the agreement given that their members were affected by it.

## **2.5 Consortia**

There were variations in the extent to which schools had received support from the regional consortia. In some parts of Wales where the role of the consortia was particularly under-developed, neither LA nor school staff felt that consortia had contributed much to the change processes in schools. However, in one consortium area it was felt by schools that the structure had been a strength and had enabled thorough preparation to be undertaken.

Some school leaders felt that the consortia role could be developed and that they had focused on a limited range of issues such as headteachers' performance management rather than on wider remodelling and workforce issues. They believed that consortia could provide a useful method of supporting schools and that working through them could allow economies of scale to be achieved. LA officers and schools believed that there was a need to strengthen consortium structures significantly before any such responsibilities could be allocated to them.

## **2.6 Other support**

A range of informal local networks had developed to support headteachers and school leaders and issues relating to various aspects of the National Agreement were often a focus of the work of groups such as Professional Headship Induction Programme PHIP and new headteachers' forums. Others had established headteachers' groups to compare and share experiences and to try to maximise the use and circulation of information gleaned from sources such as trade unions. The value of such arrangements was that they brought together practitioners with common experiences and concerns. Some school leaders felt more confident in raising issues in those forums than in more formal meetings or in discussions with

LA officers. In particular school leaders found it beneficial to be able to share experiences with colleagues and to develop an understanding that the challenges they faced were not unique to their school. Such informal discussions differed with those that were held with LA or other external staff who might have a role in monitoring school leaders' performance or in some cases, in assessing the future viability of individual schools.

Good practice was observed where the existing formal and informal headteachers' networks were used as vehicles to share and disseminate ideas and information.

## **2.7 Key Findings**

2.7.1 Initial training opportunities, the support provided by LA Change Managers, LSPs, professional bodies and trade unions, and peer support had been important sources of support for schools in early implementation of the National Agreement.

2.7.2 The support from Change Managers and seconded school staff during workforce remodelling was rated highly by schools. This level of support has diminished in recent years.

2.7.3 Schools had drawn support from LA education and personnel staff. There was some feeling that they approached issues from very different perspectives and that education staff were more inclined to take a broader view of remodelling and the National Agreement, linking it to school standards.

2.7.4 The amount of support provided by individual LAs varied. It was also clear that the level of support provided since 2003-04 had declined as the role of Change Manager had tended to be combined with other duties or altered to focus on other issues.

2.7.5 Specifically, schools believed there was a need to ensure that LAs each had an officer to lead on remodelling and other issues concerning the National Agreement and that this person should work with link officers who should also be able to support schools on remodelling and National Agreement issues.

2.7.6 Schools were concerned about the need to reduce the use of written documentation as a means of supporting schools and to ensure that any produced was clear and jargon free.

2.7.7 LAs were keen to support schools and to link remodelling to school improvement. Some felt the role of school link officers should be developed to enable them to do so.

2.7.8 The LSPs varied in the extent to which they were operational. Some had produced guidance in issues such as work-life balance and dedicated headship time DHT and had been a vehicle to share good practice.

2.7.9 The role and status of LSPs was felt to have changed and that the LA officers concerned were less senior than in the past. Their role had become more focused on compliance and monitoring than in the past. This was perceived by some stakeholders to be an important function.

2.7.10 Some LAs thought there could be an enhanced role for the consortia. Others felt that the consortia needed to be developed further before they could assume such a role.

2.7.11 Existing networks (including informal ones) had contributed to the work of supporting schools to implement the National Agreement.

## 3 The National Agreement in practice

This chapter considers how the National Agreement has been implemented, its provisions, the issues confronted by stakeholders, the changing roles of personnel and good practice in implementing the Agreement.

### 3.1 Contextual factors

#### The need for informed implementation

Schools recognised that the provisions of the National Agreement were something which was a statutory right for all staff and that they were required to comply with its provisions irrespective of their individual circumstances. However, according to some respondents a range of capacity and interpretational issues had generated scope for local disagreements about the precise meaning of aspects of the agreement, a view which was echoed by several trade unions. The importance of consistency of interpretation of the Agreement was stressed. One director of education said that: *'authorities need national guidance to ensure consistent interpretations, and not to be fighting local bushfires.'* It was also noted that different headteachers often have different interpretations within the same LEA. Some schools believed that there was a need for additional guidance from the WAG that would assist LAs and schools with their work of taking the agenda forward. The matters identified by respondents were the need for:

- updates about the definition and implementation of 'rarely cover'
- common/national job descriptions for support staff
- further consideration of standard pay rates for support staff across Wales.

#### Pressure on practitioners

The demands on schools and LAs were also noted by school leaders, other school staff, trade union representatives and some LA officers. They felt that one major challenge of the National Agreement was to ensure its implementation simultaneously with a number of other educational initiatives. They believed that despite the commitment shown at different levels to implementing the National Agreement, additional workload was still being generated. For example, concern was expressed by trade unions and others about the amount of additional workload caused by factors such as initiatives and policy changes. Issues which were identified included:

- the development of the 14-19 learning pathways agenda and the heavy workload generated by issues such as forging and managing collaborative partnerships and the added workload caused by working across sites
- changes to the curriculum and individual syllabuses, including the need to respond to different examination requirements.
- the additional workload caused by child protection regulations
- the need to participate in discussions about the structure and organisation of the schools system.

While stakeholders welcomed many of the policies and initiatives that had been developed in recent years, they warned that their implementation required a significant time commitment from staff, including school leaders. The solution, according to school leaders, teachers, trade union officers and some LA officers was greater coordination and planning of new policy developments and initiatives to avoid inundating schools and LAs at the same time. Such planning should take account of staff workloads, especially at busy periods. Schools needed time to address what was required of them. The SWAP could have a role in advising and monitoring developments in order to address these issues.

Operational processes were also cited as issues which caused additional workload. The NASUWT (2008) survey found that internal meetings were major factors contributing to their workload along with *'unreasonable levels of in-school workload demands in relation to lesson planning, assessment, behaviour management, classroom observation'* and *'additional, externally imposed burdens arising from the assessment and target setting regimes, school inspection and self-evaluation, the management of SEN'*. Other factors often cited which contributed to workload included change and innovation in education, school management, budget, lack of in-class support and lack of admin support.

## Funding

Funding was an issue that was mentioned across all schools as an issue which had a direct impact on their capacity to meet the requirements of the National Agreement. They were concerned at the quantum available for schools' budgets and a number also voiced concern about the funding mechanisms used by their individual LAs which they felt benefited some schools (e.g. small schools) more than others.

Trade unions echoed the concern expressed about funding. For example, one union stated that the National Agreement was being implemented against the background of reduced budgets and redundancies. Another union was concerned that teaching jobs were being lost because of school budgetary situations, including the need to employ a range of support staff.

One view was that the funding to support remodelling should be clearly discernible and that LSPs should be consulted by LAs on the use of such funds.

## **3.2 Transfer of administrative and clerical tasks**

It was clear that schools had reallocated tasks within schools to comply with the requirement to transfer administrative and clerical tasks and so enable teachers to concentrate on teaching and learning. This had been undertaken initially during the remodelling process and schools had evaluated tasks against the question '*Does a teacher need to do this*'. There was evidence that support staff roles had broadened during the last five years and many felt more valued and central to the school because their potential contribution had been recognised. It had benefited schools by increasing the number of adults who were employed and in several schools it was reported that the appointment of business managers had relieved headteachers (and other school leaders) of management tasks, thus freeing them to focus on teaching and learning. The type of tasks which had been commonly allocated to support staff initially included:

- collecting money
- bulk photocopying
- filing
- classroom displays.

In secondary schools and the larger primary schools a range of duties such as photocopying or collecting money had been allocated to administrative staff. In smaller schools those duties were undertaken by HTLAs or other Teaching and Learning Assistants TAs. Schools reported that they had revisited the allocation of such responsibilities periodically since then. It was noted that some LAs provided limited administrative support for schools (for example, to deal with PLASC requirements). Although welcomed, this was not considered to be adequate. At the same time, there was a strong feeling on the part of one union that this was a major issue in the Welsh-medium sector in cases where the staff deployed by the LA concerned were not fluent in Welsh.

However, there was still concern in some quarters that schools did not take a broad view of the potential role of support staff and that this was impacting on their career development and limiting the contribution they could make. The feeling that their pay and conditions did not match their responsibilities was another view strongly expressed.

## **3.3 PPA**

In the schools visited the National Agreement, as it related to PPA, were fully implemented. The schools visited reported that they had adopted strict timetabling arrangements to guarantee PPA time and these were honoured. Concern was voiced



at a national level by trade union representatives that PPA was not always timetabled and that implementation of the agreement at local level was not robust. For example, they referred to 'ad-hoc' arrangements to give PPA time which could be affected if a school's circumstances changed during the week. One union was concerned that members whose right to PPA time was not being honoured were reluctant to raise the issue or involve their trade unions in discussions with their schools. Such findings were echoed by NASUWT (2008) who noted that *'one in six of all respondents (16%) stated that PPA time was not identified on the timetable. Raising to one in five secondary school respondents for whom this was the case'*. Moreover, although *'guaranteed PPA time is sacrosanct and must not be encroached upon ... more than a third of respondents (37%) said that they were directed to do other activities not related to planning, preparation and assessment during their PPA time'*.

In some schools there was concern that the demand on building space limited what teachers could do during PPA time. Although a few LA centres had been opened for teachers and school leaders the usage was said to be limited in most areas and LA officers said that the facilities needed to be promoted.

### **3.4 Rarely cover**

The research was conducted during the Summer term, 2009 by which time schools had implemented the earlier phases of the cover agreement and were moving towards 'rarely cover' in readiness for statutory implementation from 1 September 2009. Schools were attempting to anticipate workload, absence, and other off-site activities more effectively than in the past, for example by monitoring historic patterns of absence and forecasting what could be expected at different times of the year. This was a challenging process which was yet to be experienced fully over a whole school year.

So far, the impact of 'rarely cover' had been felt more in some schools than others. In primary schools, where it had been more unusual for staff to cover, longstanding arrangements continued where the headteacher (in the case of non-teaching heads) was the first port of call for cover and insurance policies with LAs guaranteed cover after two days' absence. This could add to the workload of primary school headteachers, even in those cases where they only covered a class pending the arrival of a supply teacher. School leaders suggested that this was a way of assessing and monitoring teaching and learning in their school and reported that they would prefer to take a class for the whole day than to face the task of arranging a supply teacher at short notice. However, such practices sat uneasily with the 'rarely cover' aspect of the National Agreement and there was concern that the requirements of this teaching role could limit headteachers' capacity to lead their schools, especially where schools worked in challenging contexts and at a time of change in education. There was a major concern that practices which had been used in the past were no longer possible and that schools would have to pay for cover, putting budgets under further

pressure. Indeed, some small schools were concerned that the new regulations could affect their viability.

There was concern from some stakeholders that some primary schools did not acknowledge the 'doubling up' of classes in primary schools as cover though the research observed no evidence of this in practice.

In secondary schools it had been more common for secondary school staff to be deployed for cover than in the larger primary schools. This could occur at the expense of non-contact time and was a possible source of friction within schools leading to the loss of goodwill. The 'rarely cover' agreement meant that such issues should not arise.

Good practice was observed in the secondary schools which had begun to respond to the 'rarely cover' agenda by defining non-teaching periods which were not earmarked as PPA time as 'mentoring' or 'monitoring' periods. This guaranteed that staff during those periods were not available for class supervision.

One union in particular warned that it would be impossible for schools to implement the requirement of 'rarely cover' without significant additional funding. They referred to the range of activities for which cover could be required (transition courses, vocational provision, examination work etc) all of which required extensive preparatory meetings and non-contact time.

The issue of cover to enable staff to accompany pupils off site, particularly for the above activities (and others such as sport, music and drama where events could be organised at short notice) was a concern echoed by many schools. One union referred to members' concern that 'rarely cover' would affect extra-curricular activities and that goodwill and 'give-and-take' could be lost due to the cost of cover. They were doubtful whether cover, at additional cost could be obtained and said that this was a factor which needed to be managed. One union rejected the notion of using adults other than teachers to provide activities out of class believing that doing so '*undermined the educational nature of the activities*'. Schools were introducing new timetables to cover specific times of the year when pupils would not be pursuing their usual lessons.

Schools were concerned about the need for them to rearrange staff days at short notice to comply with requests to attend meetings convened by outside bodies (LAs, social services and health agencies, exam boards etc) which meant that cover had to be arranged at short notice. Although these issues were a major concern for small schools they also affected the work of larger schools given their impact on timetabling and staff deployment and the fact that all schools had finite resources. Schools were currently working to develop satisfactory solutions that complied with their statutory requirements.

### 3.5 Monitoring the agreement

Teachers' workload was monitored through schools' internal line management arrangements as part of their performance management processes. No issues were identified as causing concern by the teachers interviewed. Support staff were usually line managed by more senior members of the non-teaching staff. The performance management processes were considered to be effective in relation to teachers but less so for support staff. LAs monitored staff indirectly for example by examining staff absence rates, but this was not a direct way of monitoring workload.

The statutory responsibility for monitoring school leaders' workload is the responsibility of the school governing bodies. School leaders were positive about the support they received from governors. Their attitudes were summarised by one headteacher who said *'They support me fully'*. However, few headteachers said that their governors monitored their workload formally and systematically. Examples where a chair of governors would visit the school on a regular basis to meet with staff and discuss workload were rare. Moreover, some school leaders were unsure about how much governors appreciated the extent of their workload. One head commented *'They would probably not be aware of these things as a governing body'*.

It was not a regular item on governors' agendas and it was rare for headteachers to include reference to workload issues in their reports to governors. Where issues were discussed, it was usually through meetings between chairs of governors and individual heads. There was some concern among school leaders about the approach adopted by governors. For example, it was stated that there were *'too many instances where governors believe that the concept of worklife balance for school leaders is not one to be taken seriously'*.

Some headteachers believed there was a need to remind governors of their responsibilities in this respect and to provide training on how to approach their duties and this was echoed by several trade unions.

However, this was a far from universal view. Many headteachers believed that little would be gained from providing training because there was no guarantee that governors, including those who might benefit most, would attend. Governors believed that a great deal depended on the willingness of headteachers to share their concerns with them. For example, it was felt that if headteachers chose not to raise issues about workload either in meetings or in more one-to-one discussions, there was little a governing body could do.

Some headteachers admitted that they did not encourage governors to take too close an interest in their work-life balance as they personally did not consider that to be appropriate. Examples were cited where headteachers sought to have an arms-length relationship with governors over operational matters; workload was considered to be

one such issue. This was also true of staffing structures. For example, one governor noted *‘Governors don’t have a say in the deployment of support staff –it is down to senior managers who report back to governors. ... It’s the managers’ decision which staff you employ and how you manage them. We shouldn’t aim to impose on management decisions’*.

Governors had been involved in discussions about workforce remodelling and issues concerning work-life balance were occasionally raised. There were significant differences in the amount of training (both on workload and other issues) referred to by governors although this could reflect how long they had been in post. Few governors had accessed recent training on workforce or remodelling issues and it was not usual for them to have seen copies of model work-life balance policies. In many cases, school-based remodelling groups set up to administer the process had now been discontinued. Good practice was referred to in those areas where LSPs had circulated information about issues like DHT and work-life balance. However, a great deal depended on whether volunteer governors were able to devote sufficient time to attend training and to take a close interest in the way the schools worked. There was also concern that a great deal rested on the relationship between heads and governors, particularly the chair of governors; good practice was evident where such relationships worked well; however, headteachers in all schools required access to the type of support enjoyed by headteachers in such positions.

### **3.6 Key findings**

3.6.1 Schools recognised that the provisions of the National Agreement, as contained in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document were an entitlement with which they were required to comply. There was some concern that inconsistent support and local interpretation had led to inconsistencies from area to area. Some schools felt there was a need to circulate more central guidance.

3.6.2 Several factors were considered to have added to schools’ workload. These included policy, curriculum, and assessment changes, school reorganisation, legal and social factors.

3.6.3 The implications of funding levels and the requirement on schools to work within tight finite budgets and its impact on what was possible in terms of school staffing structures was raised continually by stakeholders, including school leaders.

3.6.4 All of the schools included in the research met their statutory obligations. They had evaluated tasks to comply with the requirements to free teachers to focus on teaching and learning. The strategies had included appointing business managers, increasing the number of support staff, and extending their role. PPA time for staff was guaranteed.

3.6.5 There was evidence that some teachers took PPA off site, including in LA centres, sometimes due to pressures on space in primary schools.

3.6.6 Schools were complying with their legal responsibilities in respect of 'rarely cover' in respect of teachers but there was concern about the amount of cover being undertaken by headteachers. In primary schools headteachers continued to have an important role in relation to cover. Although they often saw the work of covering lessons as a means of monitoring teaching and learning and of keeping in touch with what was happening in the classroom, there was concern about the workload this generated and the impact it could have on school leadership, DHT etc.

3.6.7 Schools had used data to identify likely periods when cover would be required. Changes to the timetables were also being used to allow for enrichment activities etc.

3.6.8 Respondents identified the need for national guidance on issues such as the exact definition and implementation of 'rarely cover' and the legal and statutory aspects of the agreement.

3.6.9 Schools' existing line management structures were used to monitor teachers and senior support staff were increasingly responsible for monitoring support staff workload.

3.6.10 LAs tended not to have formal methods of monitoring school leaders' workload. Where this was done it was usual for job satisfaction surveys and informal qualitative discussions to be their main source of information.

3.6.11 There was a very mixed position in relation to the extent to which governors monitored headteachers' work-life balance. The issues of concern usually related to factors such as governors' lack of awareness about their roles or lack of recent relevant training, the reluctance of some school leaders to report workload issues to governors, and the way school leaders regarded staffing structures as operational issues beyond the remit of governors.

## 4 Changes to staff deployment

The National Agreement had led to significant changes in the way in which staff were deployed and utilised in schools, issues which are discussed in detail in this chapter.

### 4.1 School leaders

The research found that headteachers' roles had changed significantly in recent years, not least as a result of the National Agreement. Some respondents felt that the management responsibilities were taking over headteachers' roles to the detriment of a focus on teaching and learning.

In particular, many of the primary heads included in the sample reported that they undertook a vast range of tasks in their schools, which were not concerned directly with teaching and learning. These included repair and maintenance, '*climbing up on the roof,*' and '*lollipop and caretaker*' duties.

One headteacher had dispensed with the services of a secretary in order to save money and currently did most of the school administrative work himself, including the photocopying for teachers. The increase in risk assessments was said to be another demand on headteachers. It was also usual for the headteacher to provide the first line of cover for absence in primary schools, which most said they did to avoid spending on supply teachers, and would often occupy whole days during a week. There was concern at how those headteachers were interpreting 'rarely cover' in relation to their own deployment.

The situation of teaching heads in smaller primary schools was particularly acute where the combination of teaching and management duties made the position particularly challenging. For example, in one small school visited, the headteacher was a full-time Year 5-6 teacher with a class of 30 pupils. He said; '*It's quite difficult. I have to get in before eight and never leave before six, as well as work at weekends.*' This head took PPA time as part of his teaching role, but no additional time for DHT.

It was clear that most secondary schools had the resources to appoint senior and administrative staff to share many of the management tasks. School business managers were said to be essential to deal with financial and managerial aspects of running a secondary school. One school visited had appointed a business manager from a non-education background who handled financial, marketing and other administration issues.

However, others believed that there was a need for headteachers to reflect more on how they could arrange their own time to better effect. For example, there was evidence of good practice where line management responsibilities for support staff were delegated to senior support staff. Moreover, headteachers needed to take a step back to consider what responsibilities could be delegated (and to whom) in order to ensure that tasks were allocated to the most appropriate member of staff. This was not easy given the workload confronting school leaders, especially those working in some of the most challenging circumstances. However, it was often essential if schools were to benefit from the leadership and strategic direction which they required.

Good practice was observed in schools where line management responsibility for support staff had been allocated to senior support staff. This relieved headteachers/other school leaders of those responsibilities.

## **4.2 Assessing roles and management arrangements for support staff**

The individual arrangements for the deployment of support staff varied and were usually arranged in ways which took account of factors such as:

- individual school needs, including their choice about combining different roles
- the interests and experience of individual support staff
- personal circumstances and the extent to which individuals wanted to combine different roles, to work part time, and to undertake occasional additional hours.

The increase in support staff following the National Agreement had raised management issues, and different school strategies to address this were identified. In some primary schools the support staff were line-managed by the headteacher, in others by the deputy head. In other cases an HLTA would manage the remainder of the support staff, and be themselves line-managed by the head. It did not appear that any one strategy provided more effective line management and all systems included arrangements for appraisal and identifying training needs. However, school leaders were relieved of those responsibilities where senior support staff were deployed to line manage their colleagues. In secondary schools, support staff tended to be line managed by business managers

In a number of secondary schools senior support staff were members of the schools senior leadership team. This was considered to be good practice given that:

- it ensured that business managers had sufficient status to take responsibility for administrative and managerial aspects of the school's work
- it ensured that business managers were aware of strategic issues concerning all aspects of the school's life (including teaching and learning and pupil needs) and

could convey those to the support staff they line managed, this encouraged whole-school approaches

- it recognised the role of non-teaching staff in schools
- it offered career progression for support staff.

Good practice was observed where support staff were line managed by senior support staff, including ones who were members of school senior leadership teams. This approach assisted in reducing management responsibilities and workload of headteachers and deputy headteachers.

### **4.3 Use of specialist providers**

There was evidence that schools were increasingly using specialists in sessions when teachers were taking PPA time. These included individuals who specialised in:

- Sport
- Art and craft
- Music
- Welsh.

It was emphasised by headteachers and LEA officers that the quality of the classroom experiences provided during PPA time needed close monitoring. In one case, a sports provider was brought in, and while this company offered value in key stage 2, they were unqualified to provide good quality experiences in the Foundation Phase. In the secondary sector, particularly, a number of heads had been disappointed by the quality of the provision made by outside organisations and many were particularly concerned about the continuity of staff.

Some primary schools believed that there could be merit in developing a model of specialist teachers who would deliver a particular subject across a number of schools. Where this had worked well there was qualitative evidence that it had led to improved standards but further research was required before reliable conclusions could be drawn. Although some teachers were content to be relieved of those responsibilities (for example, for areas of the curriculum which they were not confident teaching), this could lead to them being denied opportunities to develop skills in those areas. In the schools where this was raised it was judged by staff to be too early to come to firm judgements about the impact of this on schools.



#### 4.4 Deployment of support staff in classrooms

Estyn (2009) identified that the number of support staff employed in maintained schools had increased since the introduction of the Agreement from 12,717 in 2004 to 16,946 in 2008 as schools responded to the needs of the Agreement and the provision of funding. Numbers of teaching assistants and administrative staff had increased by 58 per cent and 23 per cent respectively.

##### Deployment

In secondary schools, it was usual for HLLA and TAs (other than those who were assigned to particular SEN pupils) to be deployed within faculty groups in order to develop specialist skills. In primary schools their deployment was arranged to allow TAs to specialise in a particular age range. It was noted that the statutory requirements for TAs in the Foundation Phase had led to a move of staff from KS2 to work with younger children; in such instances recruitment and retention of such staff was a concern for some schools.

The use of HLTAs during PPA time was increasing, mainly in primary schools. Perceptions about the extent to which it was appropriate to deploy HLTAs during PPA time (and other sessions) varied considerably. In some of the schools where this had been done, school leaders, staff, and other stakeholders firmly believed that it was beneficial and offered a way for schools to benefit more fully from support staff's skills. A typical comment was '*The way the HLTA has worked has shown it can be a success*'. This was especially true of the Foundation Phase where schools were more likely to deploy HLTAs to do certain types of tasks than in KS2. Even so, this was by no means a universal view. Some schools insisted that a permanent teacher should be deployed during PPA time (a view that was shared by one of the unions). This was increasingly difficult due to financial pressures on schools.

Other schools employed supply teachers to cover PPA although this practice was less evident than in the past. There was some concern about the quality of some supply cover and the impact it could have on the quality of teaching and learning and pupil behaviour. Several schools felt they were now more comfortable deploying HLTAs to cover PPA. They had been able to convince parents and governors of the benefit of having a member of staff who worked in the school, who knew the pupils, and who was in regular touch with the teaching staff, to take responsibility for PPA rather than supply teachers. This was often attributed to the reputation of an individual HLTA and was perceived to represent a gradual culture change in schools.

Even so, some schools remained reluctant to countenance such developments and several TAs felt their role should not be confused with that of teachers. '*I am not a teacher, I am a teaching assistant*' was a comment which reflected those views. Some TAs were concerned that they could be deployed inappropriately for financial reasons rather than their role being maximised, appropriately, based on what they could contribute to schools, including the teaching and learning aspects.

This view was echoed by a teachers' union which said that only qualified teachers should be responsible for whole classes and that the role of teachers and support staff were distinct. They were concerned at the deployment of support staff to take responsibility for whole classes during PPA time and maintained that, in their opinion, the planning and preparation required for such activities often negated the gain from PPA. It was noted *'It is sometimes easier to do something yourself than to explain to another person exactly what's needed, especially when you don't have enough time with that other person.'* The union concerned advocated the appointment of additional teachers to cover PPA who could develop a specialism, in a particular curriculum area or areas. This view was not shared by some other unions, one of which regretted that some teachers were reluctant to allow other professionals to take on such roles.

## **Effective practice**

It was deemed essential for teachers and support staff (especially HLTAs ) to share information, including pupil-level data, and to ensure all practitioners working with a child knew of their needs and potential. It was also considered to be important that teaching and non-teaching staff should be trained to work together. In particular it was important for TAs to have opportunities to plan and to have dedicated time with teachers to discuss future work and how they might contribute to the teaching and learning process. This was perceived to be particularly effective in the Foundation Phase. In some schools staff had used peer mentoring and coaching in order to develop support staff's skills. They had been encouraged to reflect on what their own strengths and interests were and to develop their capabilities in order to enhance their contribution to the school.

Good practice was observed where schools operated on the basis of whole classroom teams and where effective systems had been established to ensure continuity through shared information and joint planning. This led to a seamless experience for pupils and maximised the effectiveness of each team while minimising the impact of any staff absence including for PPA.

Good practice was also identified where in-service training was provided on a whole-school basis in order to foster a corporate, inclusive culture.

Good practice was observed where systems such as peer mentoring and coaching were used to develop the capacity of support staff to enable them to maximise their potential contribution. This included supporting them to develop their own areas of expertise.

Good practice was identified by schools when a team approach was adopted whereby staff planned together, discussed issues, and identified and drew on each other's strengths.

In some schools TAs were allocated their own preparation time and this was considered to be good practice by the staff concerned, especially where there could be some overlap with teachers' own PPA time, in order to facilitate cooperation. Such arrangements, though time consuming, could reduce the pressure of work later on and improve the quality of delivery. In some schools, support staff and school leaders believed there was a need to encourage teachers to consider how they could maximise the role of support staff and to plan accordingly.

Good practice was observed where TAs were given their own planning and preparation time. This could also facilitate discussion and planning with teachers.

Several respondents identified the need for Initial Teacher Training programmes to include an element about how to work with support staff. This would promote teachers' awareness of the potential of support staff, how to work with them, and how they could be deployed to best effect.

#### **4.5 Use of support staff in pastoral systems**

Changes to pastoral support systems had been introduced as a result of remodelling in some secondary schools. For example, the appointment of behaviour or attendance officers was becoming more commonplace and some schools had introduced counsellors or personal support workers. In a minority of instances the Head of Year role had been allocated to a non-teaching member of staff. In other secondary schools, the Head of Year role continued to be undertaken by a teacher but with a member of the non-teaching staff as an Assistant Head of Year. Where non-teaching staff were involved in this work their duties included:

- Dealing with low-level discipline issues
- Organisational and administrative tasks (educational visits, attendance, referrals etc)
- Being the first contact with parents

Schools referred to the benefits of such arrangements. These included the way staff (including middle and senior management) had been relieved of many of the mundane, low-level responsibilities which arose from day to day. The use of support staff with a specific background or expertise relevant to dealing with behaviour, attendance, and personal support issues was also perceived to be beneficial (and there was some evidence that it had reduced the number of exclusions). However, some school leaders remained to be convinced that this approach should be tried in their schools. They believed that teachers should use their experience in identifying individual learning strategies to defuse behaviour issues; few of those schools had direct experience of using HLTAs in such roles and more evidence was required before firm judgements could be made.

Some teachers were concerned that arrangements whereby support staff dealt with routine pastoral issues and were the first point of contact with parents could reduce teachers' involvement with pupils and their parents, thus eroding their awareness of background issues, home circumstances, and pupil needs, which often provided valuable context for teaching and learning. Although this was regretted by other respondents, it was considered inevitable in the light of the demands facing schools in modern society. One way of overcoming such issues was to ensure that effective systems were in place to ensure effective communication between teachers and support staff.

Good practice was observed where support staff had developed a knowledge of the pupils and their background in order to strengthen pastoral systems and inform the planning of teaching and learning. Ensuring effective systems to share information between teachers and support staff was essential if such systems were to prove effective.

#### **4.6 Use of cover supervisors**

Most secondary schools had addressed the need for compliance with 'rarely cover' by appointing cover supervisors. There was some evidence that schools believed this was more effective than buying-in supply teachers not least because cover supervisors were based in school whole-time and were familiar with pupils. There was concern about pupil discipline in cases where the staff deployed to teach them was not a regular member of the school staff and, in particular, the impact on the quality of pupil learning and on school discipline more generally.

Some schools considered there was good practice where school-based cover supervisors were employed. This was felt to have had a positive impact discipline by deploying staff familiar to pupils and it could promote continuity in teaching and learning. However, there was a need for this to be evaluated further when such arrangements were more embedded.

It was emphasised that the role of 'cover supervisor' could and should be developed far more broadly than just to cover for absent teachers. Schools believed that there was a need to develop a system of initial and on-going training for cover supervisors which would maximise the potential of the role and enable it to develop as a central part of schools' operational structures.

In most of those schools cover supervisors were permanent members of the school staff with other responsibilities in the school (such as behaviour officers or members of pastoral teams). This ensured continuity and promoted the status of such staff. The use of cover supervisors also offered opportunities for greater continuity in pupil experiences and teaching and learning because they could plan with colleagues more effectively. Evidence from a trade union stated that '*in secondary schools that have already engaged cover supervisors, teachers report that rarely cover is achievable*'.

The use of cover supervisors was, however, challenged by another union which noted that they believed that the *'most effective strategy in terms of pupil education and discipline was the use of a qualified teacher who had an association with the school'*.

#### **4.7 Deployment of support staff outside the classroom**

Teachers had benefited from earlier aspects of the National Agreement which had enabled them to focus their work on teaching and learning. A range of administrative and clerical tasks (such as collecting money, arranging trips, photocopying, filing etc) were now undertaken by support staff whereas they had previously been undertaken by teachers. This had been of immense benefit to teachers. However, some headteachers continued to undertake some of those tasks themselves.

Primary school leaders remained to be convinced about the merit of appointing business managers to cover a range of managerial functions across a cluster of primary schools. Some of those headteachers believed that it would be preferable to employ support staff with various roles in a school (with the flexibility to undertake different jobs at different times, such as TAs, providing administrative support, and other duties). This had been attempted in some instances and it was found to work if there was a clear understanding about workload and if the funding was available to sustain people in such roles. In certain cases the arrangements had broken down because the postholders had been allocated a workload that was too heavy or because they had been allocated defined roles which they perceived as being more stable.

It was now rare for teachers to be involved in tasks such as invigilation, which were usually undertaken by support staff or people from outside the school. However, the NASUWT (2008) found that around a quarter of staff reported being required to invigilate external examinations while a fifth had been required to invigilate internal examinations. It was also noted that it remained necessary to deploy a senior member of staff to oversee such activities. More evidence was required about the use of senior support staff to manage the examinations process.

The cost of invigilation was a concern for several stakeholders. These were not confined to external exams but also occurred during 'mock' and internal examinations and was an additional cost which unions felt needed to be recognised. One union emphasised that invigilators in Welsh-medium and bilingual schools should be Welsh-speaking.

There was very little evidence that small schools had entered into federations or had made joint appointments to access the services of support staff. Few headteachers of small schools had experienced such arrangements and many were dubious that such a development would assist them; their main concern was that issues often arose spontaneously and that schools experienced busy periods concurrently.

## 4.8 Key findings

4.8.1 School leaders' work had changed as a result of the National Agreement and there was some concern that they were not focusing sufficiently on teaching and learning and wider school leadership issues.

4.8.2 There was concern about the range of tasks which were still being undertaken by headteachers that were not related to teaching and learning. In some cases these were matters that could be undertaken by support staff. The position in primary schools was highlighted as one which was of particular concern. However, in secondary schools matters were helped by the presence of a larger support staff and specifically by school business managers, although they did not remove altogether the pressures on school heads.

4.8.3 Line management arrangements for support staff varied. In larger schools, senior support staff (including business managers) line managed the support staff. In larger primary schools this was often done by HLTAs. However, the work often fell on headteachers in the smaller primary schools.

4.8.4 The deployment of HLTAs during PPA time was increasing. Several schools who had deployed teachers or employed supply teachers had now abandoned the practice and were using HLTAs. Some remained reluctant to do so. Finance had been an incentive to schools to make greater use of HLTAs in this respect. Several had also been able to convince parents, governors, and staff of the case for doing so through the quality of the HLTAs' work. This was especially the case in the Foundation Phase.

4.8.5 There was some concern about the quality of some supply cover in some areas and a feeling that pupils benefited from alternative cover arrangements.

4.8.6 There was concern about some of the services provided by specialist teams brought in to deliver specific activities and the impact it could have on the quality of teaching and learning and pupil behaviour.

4.8.7 Some TAs were keen to emphasise that their roles were distinct from those of teaching staff. They were concerned that they should not be deployed to undertake work that should be done by teacher.

4.8.8 Several respondents identified the need for Initial Teacher Training programmes to include an element about how to work with support staff. This would promote teachers' awareness of the potential of support staff, how to work with them, and how they could be deployed to best effect.

4.8.9 None of the small schools visited had entered into a federation to share support staff. The school leaders concerned felt there were practical difficulties if they were

to do so. However, given the lack of evidence from schools with experience of such arrangements and the potential for improved access to support for small schools, the possibilities should be explored further.

4.8.10 In primary schools TAs were usually deployed to specialise in working with either the Foundation Phase or KS2 pupils. In secondary schools it was more common for them to work in particular curriculum areas.

4.8.11 Good practice was identified where schools encouraged a whole-staff approach, where staff shared information as far as was possible, and where joint planning and preparation was undertaken. Time for support staff to plan and prepare was also valued.

4.8.12 In secondary schools the use of support staff in pastoral work was increasing. These roles were often concerned with pastoral issues, low level discipline, counselling and personal support, and liaising with parents. Whilst some schools found these arrangements to be effective some staff felt this reduced teachers' knowledge of pupils and their backgrounds but accepted that it was inevitable given the pressures on schools.

4.8.13 Secondary schools were increasingly using cover supervisors. These were often permanent employees who combined the work with other roles. Working in this way encouraged continuity and offered the benefit that the staff and pupils were familiar with each other. This had benefits for curriculum planning/continuity, discipline, and pastoral support.

4.8.14 Examples of good practice included ensuring appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff, enabling support staff to develop their interests and expertise, delivering in-service training on a whole-school basis, offering joint training to TAs and NQTs, encouraging support staff to develop a knowledge of the pupils and their background, and strengthening systems to share information between teachers and support staff.

4.8.15 Schools and LAs were concerned about the limited formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for support staff. This was felt to be an issue which was likely to become more pronounced in future as the number of support staff increased and as they took on new roles.

## 5 Impact of the National Agreement

This chapter considers the impact of the agreement on key groups, including school leaders, teachers, support staff, and pupils.

### 5.1 Context

This research was conducted against the background of evidence that staff in schools work long hours and face high expectations. The Teacher Diary Survey (School Teachers Review Body, STRB, 2008) found that most teachers work more than 50 hours per week and that the figure was higher for school leaders. For school leaders in primary schools this was often due to the need to combine school leadership with teaching commitments. School leaders were concerned about the extent to which they had time to fulfil their roles and primary school leaders in particular felt they were required to undertake work beyond their normal duties (STRB, 2008).

NASUWT (2008) found that nearly two thirds of respondents to their survey believed that teachers had not achieved a reasonable work/life balance. This was most pronounced in secondary schools and among female respondents. Deputy headteachers and TLR holders also had more negative perceptions of their work-life balance. Moreover, NASUWT (2008) identified that teachers were still undertaking tasks such as classroom displays, filing, analysing exam results, typing, and bulk photocopying. The NASUWT (2008) survey highlighted concern about the amount of time allocated for leadership and management time especially in the primary sector, and evidence that the time was not adequately protected.

The NASUWT (2008) were concerned at the amount of time teachers were expected to cover for colleagues (before the requirement for 'rarely cover'). They were concerned that promises for 'downward pressure' on the requirement to cover had not been honoured and that *'fewer than half (46%) of all respondents stated that their schools had a plan in place to ensure that, from September 2009, teachers will only rarely cover. There were no significant differences across school phases'*.

Even so, during the research it became clear that trade unions were generally positive about the impact of the National Agreement. One noted that *'where schools have implemented the statutory contractual provisions arising from the National Agreement, teachers and headteachers have benefited significantly. There are also proven benefits for school support staff in terms of increased employment and career development opportunities'*.

A generally positive view was offered by Estyn (2009) who found that the workload agreement was *'having a very positive effect in schools.'*



## 5.2 Impact on schools

The impact of the National Agreement reported on the working ethos of schools varied. Several schools believed that the Agreement had helped introduce an increased emphasis and focus on teaching and learning and led to improved teamwork across the staff.

One effect on the mode of operation of schools was that the size of the total workforce had grown. The general feeling was that the increase in numbers of adults around the school would be beneficial for pupils. The benefits included:

- the opportunities for greater focus on individual pupils
- the knowledge and expertise brought by additional staff
- reduced workload and stress for all staff in light of the increase in their number
- better monitoring of pupil behaviour and their security.

A practical impact on schools was the pressure on space which an increase in staff often brought. Difficulties in staff parking, seating in staff rooms and providing workspace for all staff were mentioned in several schools. One TA described the problems in her school: *'There's not enough room here for the classroom assistants to do their work properly. I often have to work out in the corridor.'*

### Welsh-medium schools

Schools teaching through the medium of Welsh faced common issues with English-medium institutions. The principal issues specific to the sector were reported as those relating to support staff. Schools in the South-west and North-west of Wales reported that the recruitment of Welsh-speaking teaching and support staff was not a difficulty here where a high proportion of the population were bilingual. The availability of Welsh-medium training provided by schools and LEAs for support staff in these areas varied according to the subject area of the training, but there was generally an attempt to meet this need.

However, Welsh medium schools in the South-east and North-east had considerable difficulties in appointing Welsh-speaking support staff. *'One concern,'* said one headteacher, *'Is that we are tempted to appoint someone just because they can speak Welsh in an Anglicised area, rather than because of their aptitude for the job.'* In the South-east it was not unusual for non-Welsh speaking support staff to be employed where special skills were required, such as secretarial staff.

Another issue raised was the need for support staff to be aware of language policies in the school and possess the skills to implement them. One headteacher said that he *'.. found that new support staff were speaking English to Early Years children from*

*non-Welsh speaking backgrounds, contrary to the school's immersion policy for the age group.'* In this case, training was arranged for the support staff in question.

### **Small and rural schools**

There was a significant contrast in the experience of small and rural schools in comparison with larger establishments. The small and rural schools included in the field sample reported some specific challenges in implementation of the Agreement. Some were linked to funding issues where the money available for remodelling and appointment of support staff was limited by the small pupil numbers at the school. One issue was that the headteachers of small schools were invariably teaching heads which meant that they had to tackle both teaching and administrative responsibilities. *'There's no school leadership team here to share duties, just me,'* said one headteacher. *'It's not possible for me to have any dedicated headship time as teaching and running the school leave no other time.'* Another head of a rural school said that she provided all the cover for absence in the school as they could not afford to buy much supply cover. This made her workload heavier, she thought, than in larger schools. In one school, the availability of secretarial help for just 3.5 hours a week was said to leave a considerable administrative burden with the headteacher.

Another problem of rurality was said to be distance. The sharing of staff and resources in one locality was said to be rendered difficult because there were four miles between the two schools in question. The distance of another school from most of the supply teachers they used was said to be a difficulty in ensuring prompt supply cover from outside instead of using school staff.

### **5.3 Impact on teachers**

The impact of the Agreement on class teachers was very largely positive. Teachers in all sectors had been relieved of administrative tasks by support staff and this was reported by teachers and headteachers to have freed up more time for teaching and learning activity. However, not all teachers had initially been happy with these arrangements. Several schools mentioned that teachers had been reluctant to give up some of their administrative tasks, such as photocopying or wall displays. One deputy headteacher referred to teachers 'losing control' of part of their professional life. In several schools teaching staff still carried out some tasks, such as display work, which they felt were part of their teaching activity.

The other major benefit was the provision of 10 per cent non-teaching, PPA time. In the secondary sector this was not a complete innovation. As one headteacher explained: *'Teachers in secondary schools always had their so-called free periods, but they could lose these any time to supervise classes for exams or for absent staff.'* This was felt to be the major impact of the change for secondary school teachers given that they were guaranteed the time and could now plan how to use their time in the knowledge that they could not be called upon to do something else.

The usual practice in the secondary schools was to guarantee teachers a certain number of PPA periods, usually two or three, equivalent to 10 per cent or more of their teaching timetable while any remaining non-contact periods could be taken for other duties. One secondary school, for example, had defined particular non-PPA periods as 'pastoral', 'mentoring' or with other designations. The knowledge that designated PPA periods could not now be taken for class supervision had helped secondary teachers to plan their weekly workloads better.

In primary schools, the PPA periods were seen as extremely beneficial by teachers and had relieved much stress. *'They have saved us!'* was one comment. Good practice was observed where more than one teacher received PPA time together and were able to collaborate in planning and preparing. Foundation Phase teachers said that they could now use PPA time for the necessary observation of children.

Several teachers cited the long hours which had been spent on school work during the evenings and on weekends. They insisted that PPA had given them valuable added time which had extended much better opportunities for them to do work that had previously been done in their own time. They insisted that evening and weekend work had not disappeared completely.

The research identified that PPA was an increasingly important aspect of teachers' work and that it had helped to promote the notion of 'reflective practitioners'. Most teachers used the time for marking and assessment and suggested that they were able to do so and provide feedback to pupils much more effectively than in the past largely due to the time at their disposal.

A minority of the teachers interviewed used the time to consider broader pedagogical issues. Those who did so made use of their PPA time to consider issues relating to teaching and learning, how activities might be changed or made more effective, how different teaching and learning activities could be incorporated into schemes of work, and how they could be delivered making best use of colleagues' expertise. Stakeholders believed that professional dialogue would help to raise awareness of how teachers could use PPA time most constructively.

The actual use of PPA time by teachers was on the whole not monitored, and headteachers mainly trusted teachers' professionalism. One secondary head said: *'I never ask them how they spend their time in the PPA periods. But all my staff have targets and deadlines to complete tasks, and I expect those to be met. When they actually do the work, in PPA or at home, is immaterial to me.'* A small minority of heads had adopted a different approach to PPA, and one explained that she required her teachers to submit a record of how they spent each hour of their PPA allocation.

The benefits of PPA time were mainly appreciated by older teachers who had worked during the pre-Agreement years. Teachers joining the profession since 2004 had known nothing different, and took their present working conditions for granted.

The work-life balance of teachers had been improved by this aspect of the Agreement. *'If we don't feel so stressed, this must be to the benefit of the pupils,'* remarked one primary teacher. One union's submission reflected a widespread opinion that *'Where it works well it has genuinely made a positive difference. It involves substantial additional cost but is of benefit to the pupils and their teachers'*. One union believed that although 10 per cent PPA time was a step in the right direction, the goal should be a total of 20 per cent non-contact time.

A minority of primary teachers said that even the PPA periods had their disadvantages. For example, they felt that much of their time was spent preparing work for use during PPA time, or had to mark work done by pupils during that time. In schools where the quality of part-time PPA teachers was not high, teachers sometimes had to leave their PPA period to handle disciplinary issues with the class, something which schools needed to plan to avoid given their duty to guarantee PPA for all teachers.

#### **5.4 Impact on headteachers**

As noted above, headteachers' work-life balance was a major concern. The entitlement to DHT for strategic thinking and planning was generally not taken by headteachers. Indeed, Estyn (2009) found that the main area of difficulty in implementing the points of the Agreement was the provision of dedicated leadership and management time for headteachers. When pressed during interviews as to why they did not claim DHT, the two main reasons offered were a) the constant stream of demands in a school made it impossible to withdraw for a weekly period of strategic thinking, and b) lack of funding to cover that strategic time. For example, one primary school leader said: *'If I take leadership time, I'd have to release my deputy head to cover my responsibilities. But we couldn't afford a supply to cover the deputy in her class.'* Another said that in any choice between paying for cover for headship time or a new computer she would always choose the computer. The attitude of headteachers was that they had to be available to everyone at all times. One head's comment in a focus group was that: *'We're firefighters, not strategists'*, reflected a widespread feeling and highlighted the threat to the quality of strategic leadership in schools if current practices continued and the need to support school leaders to enable them to work in different ways.

The same respondent found equally worrying the feeling that the Agreement had not improved the lot of headteachers or made the job more appealing. She noted that the numbers of applicants for new headship posts in her area was continuing to decline every year.

Nevertheless, headteachers said that strategic planning did, of course, take place in the school, in staff meetings, or, in secondary schools, in regular, timetabled meetings of the school leadership team. It was their personal time for strategic

reflection which went largely unclaimed. A member of one focus group said that an LEA survey had revealed that DHT taken varied from *'nil to one.'* Most heads said that the constant demands of issues in the school and from outside made the taking of 'leadership time' impossible. One experienced secondary head declared: *'I don't want dedicated headship time. I want to be close to the day-to-day action in the school.'* Some believed there was a need for a much clearer definition of DHT and for headteachers to review who did what in their schools and to avoid developing coping strategies (and a culture of 'acceptance'). Headteachers seemed to accept that a substantial or excessive workload was just part of the culture, *'We make it work'* and other notions of the 'hero head' were noted.

Examples were given of a culture of long hours, involving extensive weekend and evening work, and if an acceptance of a situation whereby little time was available for anything other than work related to the school. Indeed, some headteachers were of the view that such a workload could be expected by aspiring headteachers. *'It is what being a head is about ... it goes with the territory'* was one typical comment. There was a concern about the long-term effects of such practices and the National Assembly Enterprise and Learning Committee (2008) specifically referred to the 'stress and ill-health which may result' when headteacher work/life balance is unsatisfactory and the big rise in working hours for deputy heads in 2008.

One trade union view was that:

*'in the round, the National Agreement has impacted to no greater or lesser extent on headteachers and other members of the leadership/senior management team than on teachers'.*

However, the research found that the positive impact of the National Agreement was observed least amongst headteachers. Barely a single one thought that their workload had been reduced by the Agreement, and the majority, especially in the primary sector, declared that it had grown heavier. There was concern among many stakeholders that workload issues could affect the quality of school leadership in future and, potentially, it could reduce the number aspiring to become school leaders, particularly headteachers.

Ironically, the implementation of the Agreement itself was one cause of increased workload, as a more numerous workforce brought more ongoing management issues and the initial remodelling and re-allocation of responsibilities had necessitated considerable planning and discussion.

The strategies in response to such situations ranged from appointing part-time administrative staff in small rural schools where no such staff had been employed in the past to augmenting the support staff in large secondary schools. This included the appointment of senior support staff (such as business managers) although the exact nomenclatures differed across schools.

Respondents referred to the appointment of additional technical/admin staff funded through a contribution from each school as good practice. Such staff could deal with specific tasks, such as work associated with schools' software systems. This had relieved school leaders of the need to deal with IT and software issues and ensured that data input tasks were undertaken by people who were experienced in doing so and familiar with what was required.

Good practice was observed where an LA had helped its schools to broaden their senior leadership teams, especially in the primary sector, so as to promote distributed leadership. This helped to allocate responsibilities more widely and alleviate the head's workload.

One primary head in an area with many social problems said that the number of meetings and case conferences she was required to attend with other local authority departments had increased considerably. *'We make it work because we care,'* commented another headteacher.

Good practice was observed where LA health and welfare officers looked at work-life balance in their brief when visiting schools.

Schools recognised the need to free school leaders from operational tasks. It was recognised that this was important in order to achieve better strategic leadership. Good practice was observed where this had led to a cultural change in schools where headteachers focused on leading teaching and learning.

On the whole, the workload and work-life balance of secondary school heads appeared less a cause of grievance than those of their primary colleagues. Deputy and assistant heads helped form leadership teams and heads were able to delegate responsibilities. However, the pressures on secondary heads were still considerable. They referred to issues which arose from day to day, the need to respond to initiatives and demands from outside bodies, and the number of meetings (especially those called at short notice) which they were required to attend.

There was concern that some such arrangements were not sustainable. One view was that leadership and management time and DHT should be timetabled in the same way as PPA time. Failure to do so was attributed in some quarters to a *'failure to remodel'* and to individuals' work priorities. A union noted that where good practice was evident it had led to positive developments.

In primary schools the leadership team is invariably smaller, with only a deputy head to share responsibility, and few primary schools were said to be in a position to afford a bursar and appoint business managers

Many stakeholders were concerned that school leaders had a limited understanding of what DHT was and how it could contribute to schools' effectiveness. In a number of cases headteachers believed that all or most of their time was DHT and

consequently used it for operational tasks and to cope with the pressures they faced rather than to use it as an opportunity for more strategic work. This was a concern for LAs and some trade unions who felt that the lack of attention to strategy and an approach that was too geared towards meeting day-to-day needs meant heads could not devote enough time to consider issues such as the strategic direction of their schools, how to meet pupils' needs, and how to improve teaching and learning. This was a matter of considerable concern in schools operating in challenging contexts.

One view was that heads needed to become more effective at organising their working day and to become more adept at delegating and developing the role of support staff. Another view was that such solutions were not sufficient and that the current situation could potentially have a negative effect on the quality of school leadership.

Good practice was observed where work-life balance was included within performance management discussions and where this applied to headteachers as well as other staff. Some LAs had developed work-life balance policies for staff and headteachers. These set out the non-contact entitlement for headteachers.

## **5.5 Impact on support staff**

On balance, the effect of the Agreement on support staff was judged to be positive. The numbers of support staff of all types had grown since 2003, the roles they undertook in schools had diversified, and there were greater opportunities for training, professional development and personal promotion. For example, one Special School had trained two HLTAs so that one was now leading pastoral care in the school and another was the inclusion coordinator.

Support staff and teachers said that there was now a greater sense of a united workforce in schools, whatever the person's status. Staff rooms were generally shared and pupils showed similar respect to a teacher, TA or secretary. This had on the whole raised the self-esteem of support staff. In some schools they were also included more in curriculum and other planning. One working in a secondary school explained: *'When the department has a meeting we're always there. We can discuss different issues with the head of department and the teachers. They listen to us.'* Several examples of collaboration between teachers and TAs were described during the research. One situation involved the visits of a speech therapist to a school where TAs would attend the therapist's sessions with pupils as professional training.

The participation of support staff in full school staff meetings varied. When meetings were held after 3.30 pm, support staff's contractual hours often did not permit them to attend. In some cases, HLTAs would attend staff meetings and report back to the body of support staff.

There was continued concern about the terms and conditions enjoyed by school support staff. Previous research highlighted the very wide range of differences in the contractual arrangements for support staff, an issue which was considered by Powell et al (NFER, 2008) who identified key considerations for a national structure for support staff. This remained an issue which needed to be resolved and a number of anomalies were raised by support staff during discussions in schools. There was some evidence that they felt uneasy about their terms and conditions in comparison to those afforded to teachers. In particular, they referred to differences such as the practice whereby they were paid during term time only. It was suggested that job evaluation would lead to greater consistency and that this could be linked to a national structure. Schools and LAs were concerned about the limited formal CPD for support staff. This was felt to be an issue which was likely to become more pronounced in future as the number of support staff increased and as they took on new roles.

Good practice was observed where schools and LAs ensured appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff, including support staff. For example, where LA arranged three training days per year for all its support staff. This helped ensure consistency in expectations, skills and practice amongst the support staff. This included enabling support staff to develop their interests and expertise, for example by pursuing courses on dyslexia, behaviour, counselling etc.

Although they were generally encouraged to gain new qualifications, there was often a lack of posts for better qualified people, for example, HLTAs, unless they moved to other establishments. One secondary headteacher did not mind this: *'I want to help people to improve themselves. If we can't offer them posts in our school once they gain the qualifications, they will move on. That's fine. We'll train new ones.'* Other heads, however, admitted to some discomfort that they encouraged support staff to take courses but could not then offer them higher status or remuneration.

Although support staff were often urged to take up training courses, there was some concern that many were insufficiently trained for the tasks allocated to them. One union felt definitely that much more training was required to equip support staff to meet the demands put on them. For example, increasing pastoral and medical roles called for considerable expertise, and training was essential for this. There was some feeling amongst teachers, too, that TAs, for example, were not trained to the same professional level as teachers and that areas such as pupil control and discipline could be problematic for them. One teacher believed that: *'Some TAs are not ready, they shouldn't have too much responsibility. It could break them.'*

The views of support staff themselves towards their role varied. Some saw the job as temporary while they applied for other posts, but many considered it to be their chosen career and looked for long-term security. A number of them, especially those employed in classrooms, referred to the sense of fulfilment which came from working with children and young people. However, this did not eradicate a number of concerns which they had.



One grievance of some support staff, especially in primary schools, was a lack of adequate space and facilities for them to prepare their work. The growth in their numbers had often exacerbated this situation. Another issue, particularly raised by HLTAs, was the need for their own PPA time to prepare work and to collaborate with teachers in planning and preparation. One commented: *'We're being asked to do more and more different things, cover classes, assess pupils, prepare materials, we're becoming more like teachers. We ought to have PPA time to help us.'* Another HLTA in a secondary school warned that HLTAs were *'threatened with burn-out'* because of their workload.

Recruitment of support staff was not usually an issue for schools. In many areas the job was said to be quite desirable and applications were said to be plentiful. However, as mentioned above, Welsh-speaking applicants were scarce in the eastern parts of Wales for Welsh-medium schools there. Some schools also had difficulties in obtaining staff with particular skills, such as IT and financial expertise. One practical difficulty in appointing support staff was the time required to carry out CRB checks, which could take several months and delay necessary appointments.

## **5.6 Impact on pupils**

Schools and LEAs found it difficult to produce hard data to demonstrate the impact of the National Agreement on pupils and their attainment. It was also said to be difficult to isolate the effect of the Agreement from that of other initiatives in schools aimed at improving pupil outcomes. As one primary head explained: *'You could attribute better results to teachers having more preparation time or more TAs, but it could also be because the curriculum has become more interesting or we've appointed better teachers. You can't disentangle them.'*

Nevertheless, some schools could point to possible evidence. Reference was made to Estyn reports since the Agreement in which the proportion of lessons graded 1 or 2 had increased, and headteachers suggested that this could be due to better preparation in PPA time. Many qualitative comments were made describing the impact of work done in PPA periods on the quality of later teaching and learning. One Consortium representative said that their link officers had reported that assessment in schools in that area had improved. A Special School headteacher commented that specialist courses for more support staff there had improved the support they were able to give pupils.

The growth in the number of adults working in schools, specifically TAs and HLTAs was also considered to be a positive development. One deputy head reported: *'We now have more TAs in the Early Years, so we can split the children into smaller groups and use the TAs to lead oral work. This has boosted the children's oral skills.'* Another gain was that more staff meant a greater number of perspectives on pupils for assessment. This was particularly in evidence in primary schools.

There was a view among some stakeholders that the National Agreement had benefited pupils by enabling the development of ‘teams around the child’ and that this could promote pupil progression and achievement. In secondary schools there was emerging evidence that the appointment of support staff to pastoral roles had strengthened their systems to monitor and ensure pupils’ wellbeing, academically and more generally. In particular, appointing support staff to such roles had improved their accessibility and meant they could focus on that role. However, there was a need for further research before robust conclusions could be drawn.

There was some support for the suggestion that LA link officers and other staff could monitor the National Agreement’s impact on pupils. This could take into account a range of factors including the nature and extent of marking and assessment activities, the use of broader teaching and learning strategies, and the quality of pastoral systems.

## **5.7 Key findings**

5.7.1 Previous recent research has highlighted the long hours worked by school staff including headteachers and other school leaders.

5.7.2 It was noted that the context in which schools operated (including policy, social, and educational changes) generated an ever-changing set of circumstances for staff which, together with the changing teaching and learning needs and practices, generated the need for ongoing remodelling.

5.7.3 Although judgements about the impact of the National Agreement varied, it was viewed as positive. In particular, it was felt to have placed a stronger emphasis and focus on teaching and learning and led to improved collaboration and teamwork. The total school staff had increased and this had brought benefits. However, this had also resulted in more line management and general management work for senior staff. Good practice was observed where senior support staff line managed other support staff. It had also generated more demand on school space.

5.7.4 Welsh-medium schools in predominately English-speaking areas experienced challenges in recruiting support staff. This could adversely affect the implementation of schools’ language policies.

5.7.5 Small schools often lacked the resources to employ certain types of support staff (especially administration staff). There was a major concern about the workload of teaching heads and their capacity to lead their schools effectively in the light of their teaching responsibilities.

5.7.6 The agreement’s impact on teachers had been positive although there was evidence that long hours and a heavy workload remained. The positive impact was

felt especially in primary schools where PPA was a valued extra dimension for teachers and also in secondary schools where the guarantee on PPA had ring-fenced the time.

5.7.7 PPA was valued by teachers and had made a big difference in the primary phase. It was assisting staff to reflect on their practice. It was valuable in helping relieve teachers of weekend and evening work, although several said that this had not disappeared completely.

5.7.8 In PPA time marking was the main activity undertaken by those teachers interviewed. They were also being encouraged through professional dialogue with colleagues to use it to develop new teaching and learning activities including maximising the use of ICT etc.

5.7.9 School leaders respected teachers' professionalism in the way in which they used their PPA time.

5.7.10 Headteachers and other school leaders generally felt that the National Agreement had done little to reduce their workload and many of them felt that it had increased. This was attributed to working cultures and the need to support school leaders to address the challenges confronting them. The appointment of school business managers and the existence of larger management teams assisted secondary school headteachers to some extent. However, there was a major concern about headteachers in smaller schools, especially in primary schools. Their work had increased with more planning and management responsibilities and many shouldered cover and teaching responsibilities as well.

5.7.11 There was evidence that few school leaders took DHT, that school leaders were not clear what was intended by it, that it was often used for day-to-day issues rather than strategic leadership, and that there was a culture of long hours and of acceptance that was unavoidable but unsustainable.

5.7.12 Budgetary and time pressures were major factors cited by headteachers as reasons why they did not take DHT.

5.7.13 The position of headteachers with significant teaching loads (over 50 per cent) was a major concern. Many of these difficulties were attributed to funding and also to the challenges of working in small schools or schools in challenging environments. The work-life balance of school leaders was a source of concern and many felt that it could impact on the quality of school leadership, especially in primary schools. There was a concern that some headteachers tried to do too much themselves and that this generated a culture where too much was left to the head. This in itself generated additional workload.

5.7.14 The number of support staff in schools had increased significantly since 2003 and they generally felt that the impact of the National Agreement had been positive.

There was some evidence that support staff felt more valued and that they were included by teachers in planning, discussion and other activities related to teaching and learning.

5.7.15 The number of HLTAs and the number of such posts varied from area to area.

5.7.16 There was concern about the terms and conditions of support staff, the type of work which they were expected to undertake, and the need for more effective job evaluation. Stakeholders also referred to the need for common/national job descriptions for support staff and standard pay rates for support staff across Wales.

5.7.17 There was concern that TAs in particular should be deployed appropriately and they should receive adequate appropriate training in order to perform their roles. Failure to do so could result in issues concerning behaviour, discipline and the way those staff were perceived by pupils. 5.7.18 Schools and LAs found it extremely difficult to measure the impact of the National Agreement on pupil standards and attainment. Positive qualitative evidence was available and included the benefits of having more adults in schools, more detailed marking, and the possibility for greater consistency in support. However, specific benefits of the National Agreement had to be considered in the light of the other initiatives being implemented in schools aimed at improving standards.

5.7.19 Estyn judgements on the quality of the work in some schools had improved. Again however it was difficult to apportion specific impact to the influence of the National Agreement.

5.7.20 The National Agreement had enabled schools to increase the size and effectiveness of their pastoral teams. They had therefore been able to develop teams around the child through the increased school personnel.

5.7.21 There was some scope to extend formal monitoring by LAs of the National Agreement's impact on school standards and pupil experiences, especially as those effects became clearer over time.

## 6 Future developments and needs

Schools visited displayed different attitudes to the remodelling agenda. Some felt that it was an ongoing issue to be revisited continuously, whereas others implied that remodelling had been finished and that other priorities were claiming their attention. *'It's part of our culture now,'* commented one headteacher.

The ADEW group of directors believed that they were facing the need to continue to support remodelling to meet new needs as they arise and to support schools to comply with the legislation. The most urgent immediate need, at the time of the field research was for LEAs and schools to devise strategies to implement the 'rarely cover' requirement. This would have to be reconciled with other current initiatives, such as the School Effectiveness Framework and 14-19 Learning Pathways. Some directors thought that the Learning Pathways called for a flexible use of the workforce, possibly across institutions, which the 'rarely cover' demands would not facilitate.

There was a strong message from a range of respondents that there was a need to monitor headteachers' workload and to provide them with examples and models of good practice of how to work to best effect, both in terms of written guidance and through the personal support provided by LA officers, professional networks and other stakeholders such as trade unions. Some stakeholders believed the use of dedicated strategic sessions as a means of providing time for strategic leadership and DHT were required. Ideas for the use of off-site activities needed to be explored.

However, allocating time was likely only to be effective if school leaders considered their own roles alongside those of colleagues in a way which ensured that tasks were allocated appropriately and that *'the right people do the right jobs'*. This involved continuous assessment of roles and responsibilities in schools based on a culture which was open to the possibility of delegating tasks. This could be undertaken in ways which facilitated the professional development of teachers and maximised the role of support staff.

One union also believed that WAG should have strengthened its support to schools by establishing an overarching body to monitor the agreement and support its implementation, similar to the TDA in England.

Several other priorities were also highlighted by respondents in the research. The school calendar was becoming a key document. Because of the need to produce tight annual calendars to plan for teacher absence from school on courses, etc., collaboration between schools and external bodies such as local authorities, examination boards, the Welsh Assembly Government and other agencies was

essential to ensure more forward planning. One deputy headteacher explained the position: *'The LEA won't be able to write to heads of department a fortnight in advance to invite them to a training course. They'll have to liaise with me as the professional tutor who plans the whole calendar, and do that at the start of the year.'* Some respondents thought that the only way ahead for INSET training or markers' conferences would be to pay teachers to attend at weekends as day release would be too difficult. This would have financial implications. Other local authority departments would be unable to count on the release of teachers to attend pastoral meetings at short notice. Concern was also expressed that the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) examination timetables are not published until January, whereas the dates of examinations will be required further in advance to plan supervision.

The training needs of school leaders, teachers and support staff were increasing because their roles were or had the potential to evolve and because of the need to respond to the changing contexts in which schools worked. School leaders believed that although initial remodelling training was provided, much more could be done to support and sustain experienced heads through LAs and regional consortia. This should focus on issues such as what to consider when remodelling, what strategies had proved effective in different contexts, and how remodelling related to school effectiveness and the standards agenda. It was recommended strongly by one union that school leaders' professional qualifications should include more coverage of issues such as workforce remodelling, the workload agreement and other related issues.

Teachers, particularly new entrants, were said to be sometimes unsure about how to interact with support staff, and particularly how to manage them, which could lead to tensions in schools. Regarding support staff, a headteacher in one focus group said: *'Their roles are expanding and their numbers have been escalating. We need a lot more targeted training for all types of support staff.'* The corollary of this was greater recognition for support staff, in terms of salary and posts, commensurate with their enhanced qualifications and skills.

However, other informants foresaw a reduction in support staff numbers in future. One factor was that the initial extra funding for the Foundation Phase piloting had been terminated and this had enabled many appointments in primary schools. The demographic decline in many areas would also lead to reduced funding for many schools, although it was unclear whether schools might choose to shed teachers rather than support staff because of the salary difference.

One widespread feeling was that it was now time to revisit the whole remodelling agenda and issues of compliance with the National Agreement. It was said by several headteachers that awareness of the conditions and implications of the Agreement was probably lower now in schools and local authorities since its introduction with the initial wave of training. A new phase of training would be particularly relevant and beneficial for those school leaders and teachers who had come into post in recent years.

There was a need to evaluate the impact of initiatives such as the creation of behaviour teams the use of support staff as cover supervisors and the broader impact of the National Agreement over a longer period of time.

## **Key findings**

6.1 The research identified a continued need for support to assist schools to meet their obligations in relation to the National Agreement in a way which linked it to school improvement.

6.2 There was a particular need to monitor headteachers' work-life balance and to ensure that DHT was used as a means of providing effective strategic leadership. Examples of good practice and personal support from LAs, professional networks, and trade unions were required.

6.3 The implementation of the National Agreement should be accompanied by a continuous process to evaluate school structures to ensure they met schools' needs. School leaders needed to assess their own roles as part of such reviews and should seek to maximise the professional development of all staff. This should be supported by LAs who should ensure that all staff working with schools were aware of the context in which they worked and the challenges they faced.

6.4 Forward planning in schools and the anticipation of demands on staff time were becoming increasingly important. There was a need for new initiatives/policies to be planned so as to take account of other pressures on schools.

6.5 LAs and regional consortia had important roles in supporting schools and sharing good practice in different contexts based on what they identified as local needs.

6.6 There was a need to ensure that teachers, particularly new entrants, were trained about how to work with support staff to best effect. There was also a need to enable support staff and teachers to plan together and for classroom-based support staff to be given their own planning and preparation time where appropriate.

6.7 There were major concerns about the sustainability of staffing levels in the light of budgetary pressures.

## **7. Summary of main findings, conclusions and recommendations**

This section contains the key findings presented at the end of each chapter in the report. The numbers at the beginning of each paragraph correspond to those in the key findings in order to provide an easy cross-reference.

### **7.1 Summary of key findings**

2.7.1 Initial training opportunities, the support provided by LA Change Managers, LSPs, professional bodies and trade unions, and peer support had been important sources of support for schools in early implementation of the National Agreement.

2.7.2 The support from Change Managers and seconded school staff during workforce remodelling was rated highly by schools. This level of support has diminished in recent years.

2.7.3 Schools had drawn support from LA education and personnel staff. There was some feeling that they approached issues from very different perspectives and that education staff were more inclined to take a broader view of remodelling and the National Agreement, linking it to school standards.

2.7.4 The amount of support provided by individual LAs varied. It was also clear that the level of support provided since 2003-04 had declined as the role of Change Manager had tended to be combined with other duties or altered to focus on other issues.

2.7.5 Specifically, schools believed there was a need to ensure that LAs each had an officer to lead on remodelling and other issues concerning the National Agreement and that this person should work with link officers who should also be able to support schools on remodelling and National Agreement issues.

2.7.6 Schools were concerned about the need to reduce the use of written documentation as a means of supporting schools and to ensure that any produced was clear and jargon free.

2.7.7 LAs were keen to support schools and to link remodelling to school improvement. Some felt the role of school link officers should be developed to enable them to do so.



2.7.8 The LSPs varied in the extent to which they were operational. Some had produced guidance in issues such as work-life balance and dedicated headship time DHT and had been a vehicle to share good practice.

2.7.9 The role and status of LSPs was felt to have changed and that the LA officers concerned were less senior than in the past. Their role had become more focused on compliance and monitoring than in the past. This was perceived by some stakeholders to be an important function.

2.7.10 Some LAs thought there could be an enhanced role for the consortia. Others felt that the consortia needed to be developed further before they could assume such a role.

2.7.11 Existing networks (including informal ones) had contributed to the work of supporting schools to implement the National Agreement.

3.6.1 Schools recognised that the provisions of the National Agreement, as contained in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document were an entitlement with which they were required to comply. There was some concern that inconsistent support and local interpretation had led to inconsistencies from area to area. Some schools felt there was a need to circulate more central guidance.

3.6.2 Several factors were considered to have added to schools' workload. These included policy, curriculum, and assessment changes, school reorganisation, legal and social factors.

3.6.3 The implications of funding levels and the requirement on schools to work within tight finite budgets and its impact on what was possible in terms of school staffing structures was raised continually by stakeholders, including school leaders.

3.6.4 All of the schools included in the research met their statutory obligations. They had evaluated tasks to comply with the requirements to free teachers to focus on teaching and learning. The strategies had included appointing business managers, increasing the number of support staff, and extending their role. PPA time for staff was guaranteed.

3.6.5 There was evidence that some teachers took PPA off site, including in LA centres, sometimes due to pressures on space in primary schools.

3.6.6 Schools were complying with their legal responsibilities in respect of 'rarely cover' in respect of teachers but there was concern about the amount of cover being undertaken by headteachers. In primary schools headteachers continued to have an important role in relation to cover. Although they often saw the work of covering lessons as a means of monitoring teaching and learning and of keeping in touch with what was happening in the classroom, there was concern about the workload this generated and the impact it could have on school leadership, DHT etc.

3.6.7 Schools had used data to identify likely periods when cover would be required. Changes to the timetables were also being used to allow for enrichment activities etc.

3.6.8 Respondents identified the need for national guidance on issues such as the exact definition and implementation of 'rarely cover' and the legal and statutory aspects of the agreement.

3.6.9 Schools' existing line management structures were used to monitor teachers and senior support staff were increasingly responsible for monitoring support staff workload.

3.6.10 LAs tended not to have formal methods of monitoring school leaders' workload. Where this was done it was usual for job satisfaction surveys and informal qualitative discussions to be their main source of information.

3.6.11 There was a very mixed position in relation to the extent to which governors monitored headteachers' work-life balance. The issues of concern usually related to factors such as governors' lack of awareness about their roles or lack of recent relevant training, the reluctance of some school leaders to report workload issues to governors, and the way school leaders regarded staffing structures as operational issues beyond the remit of governors.

4.8.1 School leaders' work had changed as a result of the National Agreement and there was some concern that they were not focusing sufficiently on teaching and learning and wider school leadership issues.

4.8.2 There was concern about the range of tasks which were still being undertaken by headteachers that were not related to teaching and learning. In some cases these were matters that could be undertaken by support staff. The position in primary schools was highlighted as one which was of particular concern. However, in secondary schools matters were helped by the presence of a larger support staff and specifically by school business managers, although they did not remove altogether the pressures on school heads.

4.8.3 Line management arrangements for support staff varied. In larger schools, senior support staff (including business managers) line managed the support staff. In larger primary schools this was often done by HLTAs. However, the work often fell on headteachers in the smaller primary schools.

4.8.4 The deployment of HLTAs during PPA time was increasing. Several schools who had deployed teachers or employed supply teachers had now abandoned the practice and were using HLTAs. Some remained reluctant to do so. Finance had been an incentive to schools to make greater use of HLTAs in this respect. Several had also been able to convince parents, governors, and staff of the case for doing so through the quality of the HLTAs' work. This was especially the case in the Foundation Phase.

4.8.5 There was some concern about the quality of some supply cover in some areas and a feeling that pupils benefited from alternative cover arrangements.

4.8.6 There was concern about some of the services provided by specialist teams brought in to deliver specific activities and the impact it could have on the quality of teaching and learning and pupil behaviour.

4.8.7 Some TAs were keen to emphasise that their roles were distinct from those of teaching staff. They were concerned that they should not be deployed to undertake work that should be done by teacher.

4.8.8 Several respondents identified the need for Initial Teacher Training programmes to include an element about how to work with support staff. This would promote teachers' awareness of the potential of support staff, how to work with them, and how they could be deployed to best effect.

4.8.9 None of the small schools visited had entered into a federation to share support staff. The school leaders concerned felt there were practical difficulties if they were to do so. However, given the lack of evidence from schools with experience of such arrangements and the potential for improved access to support for small schools, the possibilities should be explored further.

4.8.10 In primary schools TAs were usually deployed to specialise in working with either the Foundation Phase or KS2 pupils. In secondary schools it was more common for them to work in particular curriculum areas.

4.8.11 Good practice was identified where schools encouraged a whole-staff approach, where staff shared information as far as was possible, and where joint planning and preparation was undertaken. Time for support staff to plan and prepare was also valued.

4.8.12 In secondary schools the use of support staff in pastoral work was increasing. These roles were often concerned with pastoral issues, low level discipline, counselling and personal support, and liaising with parents. Whilst some schools found these arrangements to be effective some staff felt this reduced teachers' knowledge of pupils and their backgrounds but accepted that it was inevitable given the pressures on schools.

4.8.13 Secondary schools were increasingly using cover supervisors. These were often permanent employees who combined the work with other roles. Working in this way encouraged continuity and offered the benefit that the staff and pupils were familiar with each other. This had benefits for curriculum planning/continuity, discipline, and pastoral support.

4.8.14 Examples of good practice included ensuring appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff, enabling support staff to develop their

interests and expertise, delivering in-service training on a whole-school basis, offering joint training to TAs and NQTs, encouraging support staff to develop a knowledge of the pupils and their background, and strengthening systems to share information between teachers and support staff.

4.8.15 Schools and LAs were concerned about the limited formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for support staff. This was felt to be an issue which was likely to become more pronounced in future as the number of support staff increased and as they took on new roles.

5.7.1 Previous recent research has highlighted the long hours worked by school staff including headteachers and other school leaders.

5.7.2 It was noted that the context in which schools operated (including policy, social, and educational changes) generated an ever-changing set of circumstances for staff which, together with the changing teaching and learning needs and practices, generated the need for ongoing remodelling.

5.7.3 Although judgements about the impact of the National Agreement varied, it was viewed as positive. In particular, it was felt to have placed a stronger emphasis and focus on teaching and learning and led to improved collaboration and teamwork. The total school staff had increased and this had brought benefits. However, this had also resulted in more line management and general management work for senior staff. Good practice was observed where senior support staff line managed other support staff. It had also generated more demand on school space.

5.7.4 Welsh-medium schools in predominately English-speaking areas experienced challenges in recruiting support staff. This could adversely affect the implementation of schools' language policies.

5.7.5 Small schools often lacked the resources to employ certain types of support staff (especially administration staff). There was a major concern about the workload of teaching heads and their capacity to lead their schools effectively in the light of their teaching responsibilities.

5.7.6 The agreement's impact on teachers had been positive although there was evidence that long hours and a heavy workload remained. The positive impact was felt especially in primary schools where PPA was a valued extra dimension for teachers and also in secondary schools where the guarantee on PPA had ring-fenced the time.

5.7.7 PPA was valued by teachers and had made a big difference in the primary phase. It was assisting staff to reflect on their practice. It was valuable in helping relieve teachers of weekend and evening work, although several said that this had not disappeared completely.

5.7.8 In PPA time marking was the main activity undertaken by those teachers interviewed. They were also being encouraged through professional dialogue with colleagues to use it to develop new teaching and learning activities including maximising the use of ICT etc.

5.7.9 School leaders respected teachers' professionalism in the way in which they used their PPA time.

5.7.10 Headteachers and other school leaders generally felt that the National Agreement had done little to reduce their workload and many of them felt that it had increased. This was attributed to working cultures and the need to support school leaders to address the challenges confronting them. The appointment of school business managers and the existence of larger management teams assisted secondary school headteachers to some extent. However, there was a major concern about headteachers in smaller schools, especially in primary schools. Their work had increased with more planning and management responsibilities and many shouldered cover and teaching responsibilities as well.

5.7.11 There was evidence that few school leaders took DHT, that school leaders were not clear what was intended by it, that it was often used for day-to-day issues rather than strategic leadership, and that there was a culture of long hours and of acceptance that was unavoidable but unsustainable.

5.7.12 Budgetary and time pressures were major factors cited by headteachers as reasons why they did not take DHT.

5.7.13 The position of headteachers with significant teaching loads (over 50 per cent) was a major concern. Many of these difficulties were attributed to funding and also to the challenges of working in small schools or schools in challenging environments. The work-life balance of school leaders was a source of concern and many felt that it could impact on the quality of school leadership, especially in primary schools. There was a concern that some headteachers tried to do too much themselves and that this generated a culture where too much was left to the head. This in itself generated additional workload.

5.7.14 The number of support staff in schools had increased significantly since 2003 and they generally felt that the impact of the National Agreement had been positive. There was some evidence that support staff felt more valued and that they were included by teachers in planning, discussion and other activities related to teaching and learning.

5.7.15 The number of HLTAs and the number of such posts varied from area to area.

5.7.16 There was concern about the terms and conditions of support staff, the type of work which they were expected to undertake, and the need for more effective job

evaluation. Stakeholders also referred to the need for common/national job descriptions for support staff and standard pay rates for support staff across Wales.

5.7.17 There was concern that TAs in particular should be deployed appropriately and they should receive adequate appropriate training in order to perform their roles. Failure to do so could result in issues concerning behaviour, discipline and the way those staff were perceived by pupils. 5.7.18 Schools and LAs found it extremely difficult to measure the impact of the National Agreement on pupil standards and attainment. Positive qualitative evidence was available and included the benefits of having more adults in schools, more detailed marking, and the possibility for greater consistency in support. However, specific benefits of the National Agreement had to be considered in the light of the other initiatives being implemented in schools aimed at improving standards.

5.7.19 Estyn judgements on the quality of the work in some schools had improved. Again however it was difficult to apportion specific impact to the influence of the National Agreement.

5.7.20 The National Agreement had enabled schools to increase the size and effectiveness of their pastoral teams. They had therefore been able to develop teams around the child through the increased school personnel.

5.7.21 There was some scope to extend formal monitoring by LAs of the National Agreement's impact on school standards and pupil experiences, especially as those effects became clearer over time.

6.1 The research identified a continued need for support to assist schools to meet their obligations in relation to the National Agreement in a way which linked it to school improvement.

6.2 There was a particular need to monitor headteachers' work-life balance and to ensure that DHT was used as a means of providing effective strategic leadership.

6.3 The implementation of the National Agreement should be accompanied by a continuous process to evaluate school structures to ensure they met schools' needs. This should be supported by LAs who should ensure that all staff working with schools were aware of the context in which they worked and the challenges they faced.

6.4 Forward planning in schools and the anticipation of demands on staff time were becoming increasingly important. There was a need for new initiatives/policies to be planned so as to take account of other pressures on schools.

6.5 LAs and regional consortia had important roles in supporting schools and sharing good practice in different contexts based on what they identified as local needs.

6.6 There was a need to ensure that teachers, particularly new entrants, were trained about how to work with support staff to best effect. There was also a need to enable support staff and teachers to plan together and for classroom-based support staff to be given their own planning and preparation time where appropriate.

6.7 There were major concerns about the sustainability of staffing levels in the light of budgetary pressures.

## **7.2 Conclusions**

### **Provide an overall view on progress on implementation of the National Agreement and determine what still needs to be done.**

7.2.1 At least 10 per cent PPA time is a statutory entitlement for all teaching staff. All schools included in the research complied with this requirement. In most schools support staff have taken administrative and other non-teaching duties which may previously have been undertaken by teachers though a significant proportion of these tasks still lie with headteachers. The transfer of these tasks and PPA time has had a major impact on primary schools, less so in secondary schools where non-teaching time was a feature of schools' life before the agreement. There was evidence that PPA assisted staff, especially more newly qualified ones, to become more reflective practitioners.

7.2.2 At the time of writing schools were preparing for the full implementation of 'rarely cover'. So far, its impact on teachers has been felt more in secondary than in primary schools given that it was more common for secondary school teachers to take responsibility for cover than primary school teachers. Primary school heads continue to provide cover, giving rise to concerns about compliance. Many secondary schools have addressed the need for compliance by appointing cover supervisors. There was some evidence that schools believed this was more effective than buying-in supply teachers not least because cover supervisors were based in school whole-time and were familiar with pupils.

7.2.3 Teachers benefited from their entitlements in relation to PPA and 'rarely cover'. However, middle managers in both primary and secondary schools still shouldered a heavy workload. This was recognised in the time they were allocated to undertake their additional responsibilities over and above PPA. However, despite this additional time, they referred to challenges encountered in completing their work in the time allocated.

7.2.4 Schools were attempting to develop appropriate strategies to ensure that a range of out-of-school activities could be delivered during school time in a way that took account of the requirement to comply with 'rarely cover'

7.2.5 The National Agreement had a major impact on the working life and expectations of TAs. There was concern about the limited opportunities for training for TAs and about the quality of some of what was provided. There was concern that they did not have enough time to prepare or to discuss with teachers. Good practice was observed where TAs were allocated their own preparation time and where they had time to plan and prepare lessons with teacher colleagues. This could result in less work and pressure for both teachers and TAs in the longer term. There was evidence that some teachers needed to develop an awareness of how to work with TAs to best effect.

7.2.6 There was evidence that cooperation between TAs and teachers was improving overall and especially where they had time to plan and prepare together. Although there was some evidence to suggest a 'them and us' culture remains in a minority of schools this was felt to be less evident than in the past, not least because of the new working relationships and practices introduced in response to the National Agreement. This was especially the case where schools actively promoted team building. However, TAs contrasted their terms and conditions to those enjoyed by teachers and emphasised that their roles were distinct and should not be confused with those of teachers.

7.2.7 There was evidence that marking and assessment were important aspects of PPA time. Teachers pointed to the way they had time to give more detailed feedback than in the past. It was unclear how much of this was work that had previously been undertaken out of school hours. Some teachers specifically referred to the way PPA time had allowed them time to undertake work that would otherwise have been done during the evenings or on weekends.

7.2.8 It was difficult to ascribe direct improvements in learners' experiences and attainment to PPA time. However, it was viewed as something which had a positive impact on schools by allowing dedicated non-contact time for teachers which they could use at their own professional discretion.

7.2.9 Stakeholders believed that pupils benefited from having contact with a greater number of adults. They also stated that there was a need to plan to ensure continuity and progression.

7.2.10 Schools had developed structures whereby a member of support staff (e.g. a TA) or a specialist instructor was able to specialise in a particular curriculum area such as art or drama, and where they specialised in particular age groups, or where the specialist was brought in from outside the school.

7.2.11 In some secondary schools the appointment of non teaching staff as Heads of Year or Assistant Heads of Year had enabled schools to strengthen their pastoral work. In some examples this had resulted in fewer exclusions. However, the effectiveness of such systems needed to be evaluated further before firm conclusions could be drawn.



7.2.12 In some schools, staff were concerned that available facilities for teachers' PPA time was limited. Some LAs had sought to promote the use of off-site centres by headteachers and many had dedicated resource centres for teachers. Take-up and the effectiveness of such arrangements had not been evaluated.

7.2.13 The level of support provided by LAs to schools varied. Within several LAs the role of Change Manager had changed since they were introduced, as the role had been combined with other responsibilities or the issues they addressed (e.g. the implementation of WAG initiatives requiring change) were different from their initial focus. This was assumed by some to be due to an erroneous assumption that the Change Manager was a 'task and finish' role. In some cases Change Managers were still involved in implementing the NA. However, the role had weakened in those cases where Change Managers had been given other roles.

7.2.14 Some headteachers felt that the training they had received on remodelling had been insufficient. In some LAs headteachers were not aware if any models of good practice had been disseminated by their LAs. Unions had often filled the gap by providing training and advice. Headteachers referred to the value of being supported by practitioners with recent experience in the classroom and of a 'holistic approach' where issues were considered strategically.

7.2.15 Some LAs wanted to encourage schools to review their structures on a regular basis in order to ensure they were fit for purpose. Some LA officers thought that schools were giving more thought to their structures now than when the process started. Schools also felt that this should be a priority and felt they needed support to be able to implement revised structures or sustain a culture of regular revision.

7.2.16 Several LAs were linking school structures to the SEF and school improvement priorities. Some Change Managers believed there was a case for developing the role of link officer/school improvement officer so they could take on the Change Manager role given the link between structures and implementing school improvement policies. That would require training for LA staff.

7.2.17 There was some evidence that Change Manager networks had been effective in sharing good practice. The role of the regional consortia varied. Some were much further ahead than others and at present not all consortia were considered strong enough to take on the role of supporting the implementation of the NA.

7.2.18 Similarly, LSPs varied in the extent to which they were active and could support the implementation of the NA.

7.2.19 Good practice was observed where HLTAs and other support staff working with pupils were allocated their own time for planning and preparation.

## **Explore why the work life balance of head teachers is less satisfactory than that of teachers and what prevents many from receiving dedicated leadership and headship time;**

7.2.20 The research found that there was a strong body of opinion among school leaders in Wales that their workload had not reduced as a result of the National Agreement and many believed that it had increased significantly. This was echoed in other research examined in the scoping phase of the project. A lot of their time was spent planning for day to day matters and responding to issues that arose unexpectedly. (including planning to enable staff to take PPA, implementing 'rarely cover' etc). School leaders described strategies which they had introduced to manage their time, which included a culture of long hours, evening, and vacation work. However, many of these were ways of coping with workload rather than strategies to deal with the issue.

7.2.21 There was little evidence that school leaders, particularly headteachers, felt able to take the dedicated strategic leadership/headship time to which they were entitled and which had been allocated to them in order for them to fulfil their roles. This was because of the pressure on their time and the tasks which they felt they had to undertake in order to meet day-to-day requirements in their schools. There was a concern that this could reduce opportunities for strategic thinking, especially in those schools which faced the most challenging circumstances, given the extent of demands on staff time.

7.2.22 School leaders referred to work which they undertook including administrative tasks, being available to staff and parents, and dealing with pupil-related issues, such as discipline and illness. This was evident in primary schools especially, where headteachers were often the first to provide cover or were required to provide cover pending the arrival of a supply teacher. Many school leaders felt that the pressure of work which they faced was not recognised by others in school and in the wider educational system.

7.2.23 A range of factors were identified by school leaders as contributing to their workload. These included parents' visits (especially in primary schools), lack of dedicated admin staff in primary schools, the requirement to attend strategic-level meetings (partnerships, LA meetings etc), the demands of external agencies, the need to attend meetings called at short notice (e.g. social services' meetings), new initiatives, and having to respond to tight deadlines (e.g. for assessment purposes, exam board deadlines etc).

7.2.24 The workload expected of teaching heads in small or even medium-sized primary schools was highlighted as being particularly heavy.

7.2.25 There was a feeling among some headteachers that schools had not been supported adequately in the practical aspects of implementing the agreement. In some areas they highlighted the need for stronger guidance on matters such as job

specifications, conditions of service etc. There had been wide variation in practice where schools lacked guidance which could be a basis for confusion and disagreement.

7.2.26 There was concern that the initial training and support for new heads did not address the need for time for strategic leadership and prepare them sufficiently to have an appropriate work-life balance. At the same time, the pressure of time prevented SLT members from leaving school to attend training, where such opportunities were provided by LAs/consortia.

7.2.27 The research team probed to see the extent to which alternative approaches to managing workload had been considered by headteachers. They highlighted the need for more information about costing models, funding arrangements etc. However, there was some evidence that school leaders needed support to take a step back to consider various models/structures and that this was difficult in the pressured and hectic environments in which they often worked. LA Change Managers had supported school leaders to do so initially and stakeholders identified the need for such support, be it from LA Change Managers or from other structures such as the regional consortia.

7.2.28 Governing bodies generally did not monitor headteachers' work/life balance and most were unaware of their responsibilities. Some had not had sight of the circular from WAG outlining their responsibilities. Some Chairs of Governors were unsure as to what they could do to address an issue with the headteacher's workload. Many said they would be reluctant to bring such an issue to the attention of anyone outside the school unless there was a very serious problem and there was a limit to the extent to which they themselves could influence headteachers. There was some evidence of weaknesses in the extent to which governors were trained in their roles.

7.2.29 Headteachers questioned whether appointing shared administrative staff in small primary schools was practical. The main concern was that busy periods occurred at the same time and that such an arrangement would therefore not be appropriate. Most primary schools had employed part-time administrative support staff; in some cases the role was combined with other duties in the school.

### **Identify and detail areas of good practice which could be shared to assist schools in implementing the National Agreement;**

7.2.30 Some schools were experimenting with the notion of SMT meeting off-site during the school day to discuss strategic issues and good practice was observed where that had happened. The staff concerned felt that these could be productive as long as the focus was on strategy rather than how to deal with day-to-day issues.

7.2.31 Headteachers valued advice and guidance about issues such as job specifications, conditions of service etc. This would help to overcome variations in terms and conditions which could be a cause of friction.

7.2.32 Support staff had been employed to deal with low level discipline issues in secondary schools. In some schools support staff had taken on the HoY roles from teachers. There was evidence of good practice where mentoring schemes had been run by non-teaching staff because it increased the number of adults working with the child and also because non-teaching staff's relationships with pupils were different from those of teachers. This could add a further dimension to such mentoring schemes.

7.2.34 It was more commonplace for in-service training to be delivered to support staff and teachers together, than had been the case in the past. This was especially true where a whole-school approach was being developed to address a particular issue or implement change. This nurtured a common professionalism and mutual understanding of each other's roles and potential contribution.

7.2.35 Some schools had found it advantageous to offer joint training sessions to NQTs and TAs on the grounds that both groups worked with children and would benefit from developing shared professional knowledge. Joint planning sessions that included both teachers and TAs were seen as beneficial for the same reason.

7.2.36 School staff believed it was important that where possible pupil-level information was shared between teachers and TAs as this enhanced professional dialogue and encouraged both TAs and teachers to think about a child's needs.

7.2.37 Schools found it beneficial to assess when teachers needed to be with the pupils, when it was desirable, and when other adults could better be deployed. Headteachers had considered who should supervise pupils when they moved sites, went off-site, and when they were preparing for activities like PE and practical sessions.

7.2.38 Some schools said that standards in some curriculum areas (e.g. Art) had improved after an Art specialist from outside the school had been appointed to take classes during PPA time. However, the practice was not always successful due to variations in the quality of the service provided.

**Explore how the impact of the Agreement on pupils is measured and suggest alternative methods of data collection if necessary;**

7.2.39 There was little direct evidence of schools measuring impact through linkages between the National Agreement and school standards/pupil experiences. However, it was reported that it had freed teachers to focus on teaching and learning and had given them time to plan, prepare and undertake marking and assessment activities. These were perceived to have benefited pupils and were acknowledged by some Estyn judgements.

7.2.40 LAs need to work more closely with schools to monitor the impact of the National Agreement focusing on issues like the impact of PPA on teaching and learning and the effectiveness of pastoral systems and the use of cover supervisors, as experience to date had indicated that the quality of such services varied.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

7.3.1 LA and WAG guidance should emphasise the need to use school structures in order to promote standards in teaching and learning/SEF . Remodelling should be viewed as part of a process of review to drive school improvement. Schools should be encouraged and supported adequately in order for this to occur by LAs or consortium arrangements.

7.3.2 LAs should consider the possibility of linking a responsibility for supporting remodelling to the work undertaken by all school support officers/link officers. At the same time, the limited capacity of some LAs to support such work should also be addressed. The potential of the regional consortia to develop this role should be developed. This should be done in a way which builds on the capacity of LA link officers and also the work previously undertaken by LA Change Managers. The focus should be on assisting schools to remodel as part of the process to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning and pastoral care building on the good practice evident in some consortia.

7.3.3 WAG and LAs should provide schools with appropriate information and remodelling tools to enable them to develop draft structures that meet their needs. WAG should provide advice and guidance about issues such as job specifications, conditions of service, and the importance of DHT etc. The piloting of toolkits and materials to enable them to do so should be considered. The WAG should consider the extent to which national materials can be disseminated in order to secure economies of scale.

7.3.4 LAs in conjunction with consortia should continue to provide schools with support.

7.3.5 LAs and consortia should encourage schools to take a holistic approach when considering their structures. It is essential that LAs ensure that good practice is disseminated widely.

7.3.6 LAs and consortia should encourage schools to examine the arrangements for providing cover and for staffing PPA time to ensure they make the most appropriate use of skills and resources.

7.3.7 Schools should build on good practice in planning to ensure continuity in learners' experiences. They should consider how timetables could be arranged to ensure appropriate continuity of staff.

7.3.8 WAG, LAs and schools should continue to encourage support staff to undertake appropriate CPD. This should be part of a national structure for support staff (as recommended in previous research by the NFER). WAG and LAs should oversee professional development programmes in order to strengthen and maximise the skills and potential of all staff, including support staff. Schools should be encouraged to promote team building. Such training could be delivered by consortia of LAs.

7.3.9 Specifically, schools and LAs/consortia should encourage and support relevant support staff to develop specialist skills alongside more generic skills. In secondary schools these could be linked to curriculum areas in secondary schools and curriculum areas or phases in primary schools. This would strengthen their ability to contribute to the teaching and learning processes in those areas. It could build on good practice identified where specialists (including TAs) had used their skills to support teaching and learning in areas such as Art, sport etc.

7.3.10 Schools should consider including senior support staff in school leadership teams. The transferability of the practice more widespread in secondary schools to primary schools should be considered. Primary schools could facilitate access to such services through collaborative arrangements.

7.3.11 LAs/consortia should evaluate the take-up and effectiveness of opportunities for staff to be able to undertake PPA and leadership activities off-site in order to identify good practice.

7.3.12 Schools should ensure that TAs are given adequate time for preparation and to plan with teachers. This would enable them to utilise their skills to maximum effect and could reduce stress and workload in the longer term. Teachers should be supported to build on their work with support staff drawing on existing good practice.

7.3.13 WAG should encourage the inclusion of how to work with support staff as part of initial teacher training. This could maximise awareness of their potential contribution and what constitutes appropriate expectations and ways of working.

7.3.14 WAG should evaluate the deployment of support staff in secondary schools to address matters such as low-level discipline issues and the tracking of particular pupils. This should be considered in the light of the positive evidence collected from some schools during this research and its impact should be measured over a period of time.

7.3.15 LAs and schools should encourage teachers to consider the use of PPA time as an opportunity to develop new pedagogic approaches alongside the current focus on assessment. LAs and WAG should consider how to maximise awareness of

existing materials describing what types of activities might be undertaken during PPA.

7.3.16 Headteachers and other school leaders should be encouraged to ensure that they have time for strategic thinking and school leadership. Governors and LA staff should encourage and monitor such arrangements. The use of 'blocked time', off-site opportunities, and other focused sessions should be encouraged. Performance management and other review processes should be used to emphasise the need for strategic leadership to be given priority despite the other pressures facing headteachers.

7.3.17 WAG and LAs should remind schools that DHT is an entitlement for all headteachers. WAG and LAs should issue guidance to ensure that school leaders were aware of what was intended by DHT and how it could contribute to their wellbeing and the work of schools. Its importance and contribution to school effectiveness should be highlighted in documentation and in discussions between LA link officers and headteachers.

7.3.18 Regional consortia, LA link officers and other networks (headteachers' associations, NPQH, induction processes and professional bodies) should promote the use of DHT as a means of promoting school improvement and as an opportunity to deal with strategic rather than operational issues. The need for such time for reflection and strategy should be emphasised for all schools but especially for those operating in more challenging circumstances.

7.3.19 LAs (or consortia) should evaluate the impact of the National Agreement (and specific aspects such as PPA) and the use of support staff as cover supervisors and in pastoral teams to monitor their impact over time on staff and pupils.

7.3.20 WAG should consider how initial training through the NPQH and support for new headteachers could include a focus on issues such as work-life balance, time management, delegation strategies, and the central place of strategic thinking, school structures and leadership in a headteacher's role. This should be set against promoting awareness of how remodelling can be effectively used to address such issues.

7.3.21 Governors should ensure that they understand and discharge their duties in relation to the National Agreement, specifically their duty to monitor headteachers' work-life balance.

7.3.22 WAG should ensure that governor training on their responsibilities, including monitoring headteachers' work-life balance, should be strengthened.

7.3.23 Schools should develop the use of dedicated strategic SMT meetings in order to monitor the extent to which they contributed to more effective school leadership.

7.3.24 LAs and Schools should consider whether the sharing of admin or other support staff between schools or the use of school staff in multiple roles would help them to address workload issues (especially for school leaders) and overcome problems associated with recruiting staff due to rurality or where there were shortages of Welsh speakers.

7.3.25 WAG, LAs and other stakeholders should consider how to ensure that those working with schools take account of the pressures faced by schools and the implications of issues such as 'rarely cover' when arranging their own work. Such considerations should inform decisions about issues such as the timing of meetings and the notice which should be given. The SWAP could have a role in advising and monitoring this aspect.

7.3.26 The WAG and LAs should monitor Estyn evidence about school standards in order to measure the impact of changed working practices introduced as a result of the National Agreement. Schools and LAs should be encouraged to monitor the impact of deploying additional adults in schools. This should include specific evaluation of the impact of HLTAs, the use of support staff in pastoral roles (e.g. Heads of Year/Assistant Heads of Year in secondary schools, behaviour teams etc.).

7.3.27 Schools should monitor the extent to which teachers collaborate with other teachers and support staff, including evidence about the way they plan together with other teachers/HLTAs in order to support continuity and effective teaching and learning.



## 8 Appendixes

### 8.1 Scope of the research

Following scoping discussions with DCELLS, field interviews were held as follows:

- focus group discussion with trade unions, with opportunities to submit additional evidence by e-mail subsequently
- discussions with ADEW, SWAP, and Consortia Cymru
- 5 headteachers' focus groups in different locations throughout Wales
- 8 interviews with local authority personnel
- Case study visits to 12 schools.

### 8.2 Glossary of main acronyms used

ADEW	Association of Directors of Education (Wales)
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DCELLS	Department for Children, Education, Lifelong-learning and Skills
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DHT	Dedicated Headship Time
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
LAs	Local Authorities
LSPs	Local Social Partnerships
NASUWT	National Union of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment time
STRB	School Teachers Review Body
TA	Teaching Assistant
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility payments
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

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*Raising Standards and Tackling Workload –A Resource Pack for Schools* (2006)

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND SKILLS *The Learning Country 2: Delivering the Promise*. Welsh Assembly Government. 2006.

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