

Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

ELLS(2) 12-06(p1) Annex F

School Teachers' Review Body Written Evidence From the Welsh Assembly Government Teachers' Professional Role and Responsibilities August 2006

Introduction

1. This document sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) on teachers' professional role and responsibilities. It relates to issues which the STRB detailed in a note issued in May 2006 and invited us to comment on by 1 September.
2. We noted in our evidence on teachers' pay and conditions submitted in July 2006 that we would respond separately on the issue of teachers' professional role and responsibilities. This evidence concentrates solely on that issue, but the STRB will wish to note that the background matters set out in paragraphs 5-12 of our previous evidence apply equally in considering this matter.
3. Although conditions of service are non-devolved, the questions raised by the STRB go beyond the purely non-devolved aspects. In particular, the STRB asks about the relationship between descriptions of teachers' professional duties currently in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and other published professional standards. These include the devolved standards for Qualified Teacher Status and Induction.
4. Additionally, we think that the potential consequences of not having the descriptions of teachers' professional duties currently in the STPCD could have an adverse impact on schools (and therefore standards) in Wales. We consider it appropriate, therefore, to comment on issues raised by the STRB about teachers' professional role and responsibilities.

Views

5. Schools need to have a fair, appropriate and transparent basis for making pay decisions which applies to all. The performance of teachers in relation to their responsibilities (or duties) should be a key component in pay decisions.
6. A description of teachers' professional role and responsibilities is needed. The lack of a background structure of professional responsibilities which applies to all schools would be highly undesirable, introducing considerable scope for a perceived lack of fairness in pay decisions. It would also have adverse workload implications for schools in having to manage

- individual teacher responsibilities with no supporting structure or guidance; and introduce potential uncertainties into teacher recruitment, with no all-encompassing baseline for what teachers would know was expected of them.
7. The description should have a consistent application across Wales and England. Although individual teachers will have particular responsibilities, a background structure of professional responsibilities with a common and consistent application across Wales and England would help to avoid uncertainty and inconsistency of in what we expect teachers to deliver. It would allow local variations to be applied in a fair and open way.
 8. Professional standards cannot act as a replacement for a description of teachers' professional responsibilities and duties, but relate to it. We think that the description of teachers' professional responsibilities, the statutory pay standards and the variety of professional standards cover different but related areas. (Although not mentioned in the STRB's questions to consider, these professional standards would include the Welsh Qualified Teacher Status Standards and End of Induction Standards – the draft standards published by the Training and Development Agency for Schools cover only England in respect of these areas.) The professional responsibilities should set out the baseline requirements for all teachers in a particular group, describing their principal functions and what is required of them, as distinct from specific job descriptions of individuals, which would draw on this underpinning material.
 9. The pay standards and other professional standards, on the other hand, set out what teachers must show that they know, understand and be able to do at particular points in their career. They are more specific to the individual and set standards to be met (or not) rather than duties or responsibilities which all must meet from day to day. The Statement of Professional Values and Practice of the General Teaching Council for Wales seeks to set out standards of professional conduct and practice to which registered teachers aspire. Its aim is to act as a supportive document which assists teachers in their normal working lives and in the process of maintaining and raising standards of conduct and practice, but operates on the basis of general principles not specific professional duties and is not a statutory document.
 10. A description of teachers' professional role and responsibilities is needed within the STPCD to ensure a firm legal status. A legislative framework provides certainty in making local decisions on the pay and conditions of teachers and ensures a common and consistent application. Teachers' pay, pay standards, and related other professional standards (QTS and Induction) are all set out on a statutory basis. Professional duties or responsibilities play a part in this process and need to have the same legal basis.

Potential changes

11. We have noted the evidence submitted by the Rewards and Incentives Group (RIG) in which they say that the duties as currently drafted need revision to take account of issues such as the focus on teaching and learning and the new professionalism agenda. We await the opportunity to see and comment on revised duties, but should underscore the point that any changes to teachers' duties (particularly ones which attempt to reflect the new professionalism agenda and wider workforce reforms) should be done in a way which can be applied equally and fairly to both Wales and England; and which take proper account of any issues which relate to devolved areas.

