

# Evidence submitted by NGA to STRB

## December 2024

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees, and governance professionals within the state school system of England. We advocate for all boards, regardless of school type or governing structure, with the overarching goal of enhancing the wellbeing of children and young people by fostering high standards and bolstering the effectiveness of governing boards.
- 1.2. Governing boards play a pivotal role as the accountable entities for academy trusts and schools, offering oversight, strategic direction, and ensuring senior leaders are held accountable. Drawing on insights from our [2024 annual governance survey](#) and extensive experience supporting governing boards across the education sector, NGA remains acutely attuned to the challenges confronting schools and their communities. With nearly a quarter of a million trustees and governors dedicating their time, care, and expertise, these individuals shape the vision, culture, and strategic priorities of educational institutions, making critical decisions to address pressing issues and safeguard the sustainability of trusts and schools.

### 2. NGA's position on teacher and leader pay

- 2.1. NGA welcomed the government's decision to fully fund a 5.5% pay increase for teachers and support staff for 2023/24. The increase aligns with the recommendation made in NGA's previous STRB response that teachers should at least receive an inflationary increase and for this to be fully funded.
- 2.2. NGA views the previous year's pay rise as the first step in a comprehensive, long-term strategy for improving pay and incentives for all staff needed to counteract the existing decade-long structural deterioration and salary deficit.
- 2.3. A [report](#) by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) underscores the significant real-term decline in teachers' pay over the past twelve years, resulting in more experienced teachers seeing a 13% real-terms drop in salaries between 2010 and 2022. The deterioration in the competitiveness of teacher pay compared to the wider labour market was also reported upon by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in their [teacher labour market report](#), with the position of teachers in the income distribution having fallen significantly since 2010/11.
- 2.4. The decade-long decline in funding dating back to 2010 was unquestionably made worse by the cost-of-living crisis of recent years, the effect of which still persists. We note that the CPIH annual rate of inflation rose by 2.6% in the 12 months to September 2024. However, NGA also thinks that the

government must be mindful of falling inflation rates in 2024 not being reflective of the actual cost of living in 2024.

- 2.5. NGA is concerned that the profession has continued to become a less attractive career in part as a result of failure to keep remuneration in line with inflation and the rise in cost of living in previous years. This has been accompanied by other challenges, such as the move of many graduate-level roles towards hybrid working since the pandemic, which has not been possible in teaching, harming the profession’s attractiveness compared to other options. Both the integrity and attractiveness of the profession must be improved and maintained in order to solve problems around both recruitment and retention.
- 2.6. The government now needs to address the urgent tasks of providing both sufficient funding and a realistic, yet ambitious, plan to reverse this historic pay erosion, making the teaching profession suitably competitive to provide the best talented individuals to help realise the potential in children and young people.
- 2.7. NGA accepts that for those entering public service careers, remuneration is rarely the sole determinant of job satisfaction, but appropriate levels of pay do enable people to make a living following a vocational pathway, and it also serves as a symbol of society’s respect for its educators, especially at a time when schools are being leaned upon more than ever to fill the gaps that other societal services are no longer able to provide.
- 2.8. In a snap survey conducted by NGA with our members, the majority (78%) of respondents viewed at least an inflationary increase to be appropriate for next year’s pay award.

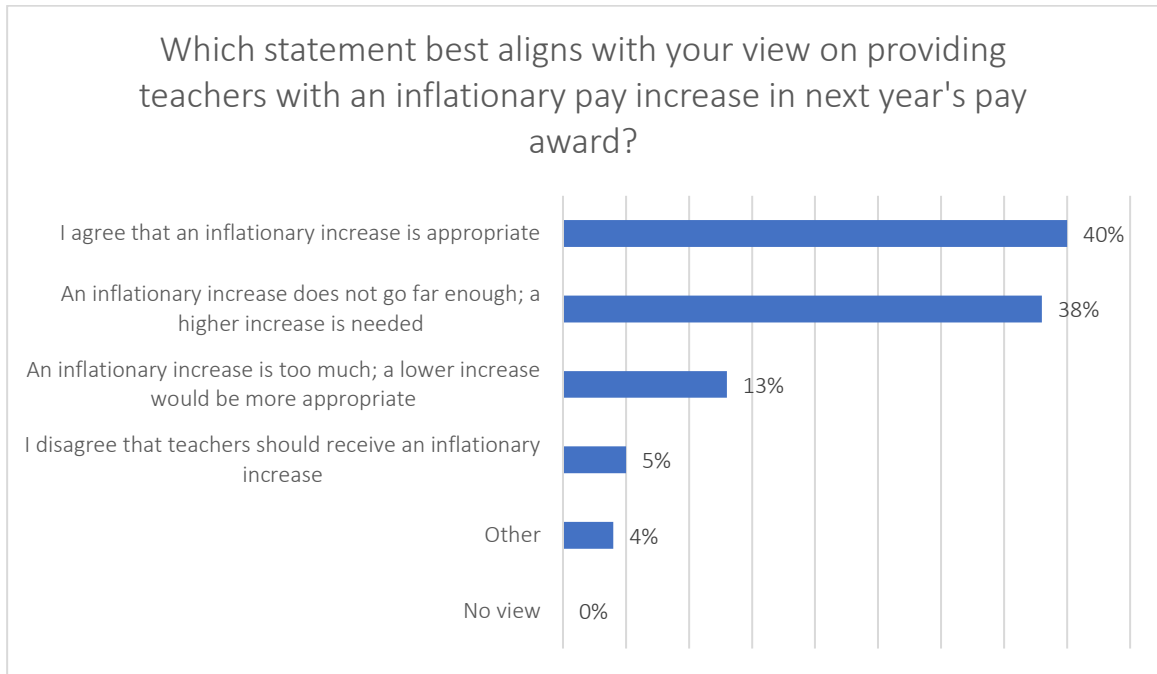


Figure 1: Findings from NGA’s snap survey asking which statement best aligns with your view on providing teachers with an inflationary pay increase in next year’s pay award?

- 2.9. Our stance therefore remains consistent with previous years. We suggest that, as a minimum, an inflationary increase should be the starting point for discussions about this year's pay settlement, but with the STRB also taking a view on the wider evidence of the need for long-term plans for pay restoration, and making the profession more attractive. A sector-wide consultation on how this can be achieved would be sensible. Any pay rises will need to be fully funded by the government.
- 2.10. Moreover, a £30,000 starting salary for teachers has now significantly diminished in value over time compared to when the commitment was initially made, compounded by the well-documented relative increase in salaries across other sectors. There is therefore a strong argument that the starting salary be further increased to remain competitive. This must also be provided with sufficient central funding from government to meet these costs.
- 2.11. NGA would also draw attention to the potential ramifications of differentiated pay awards and diminishing differentials between teacher and leadership pay ranges, exacerbating the decline in retention rates across all categories of school leadership.
- 2.12. NGA advocates for the inclusion of leadership pay scales. Specifically, we advocate for a pay framework that establishes a scale for middle leaders, thereby providing clarity and reducing the necessity for awarding teaching and learning responsibility points for sustained additional responsibilities.
- 2.13. Further, while NGA supports the principle of autonomy in developing pay arrangements, many governing boards continue to express a preference for a level of consistency, with pay spines encompassing all pay ranges to manage pay progression effectively at the school level.

### **3. The need to ensure feasibility of proposals and cost pressures schools may encounter**

- 3.1. The past year has presented governing boards with very significant financial hurdles. In NGA's annual governance survey 2024, just 19% of schools and trusts perceive themselves as financially sustainable in the medium to long term, with deep-seated concerns about future financial viability growing more severe.
- 3.2. Bar 2021, when NGA did not specifically ask about challenges, balancing the budget has been the top challenge identified by governing boards since we first asked the question in 2018. Notably, this reached its highest level this year with 60% placing it as their top challenge, an increase of 8 percentage points from 2023 and 16 percentage points since 2022. The financial strain was particularly acute amongst nursery and primary schools phases.
- 3.3. When examined by the projections in the medium to long term, those who report their school or trust is financially unsustainable without significant changes has risen by two percentage points since 2023 to 34% in 2024. This means now over one third of governors and trustees fit in this category aligning with the significant downward trend in school finances.
- 3.4. This decline in financial confidence was consistent across all board types, with maintained schools faring the worst – only 52% reported financial sustainability, down from 56% last year. While MAT trustees continue to have a more optimistic outlook than other board types, only 69% believed they were financially sustainable over the next 3 to 5 years, down from 77% last year.

- 3.5. Although per-pupil funding has been restored to 2010 levels, the spending power of most schools and trusts has still diminished over time. The financial strain on schools driven by rising costs, especially those related to energy, SEND and deteriorating estates, remains persistent. Schools are forced to consider efficiency savings while grappling with the repercussions of teacher shortages, posing challenges to provision and standards.
- 3.6. The Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis have had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable pupils and families in our schools and as a result we have witnessed the disadvantage gap increase. Both funding levels and staff pay and CPD need to reflect the reality of this heightened challenge. The government should ensure that funding does not disproportionately benefit schools with less disadvantaged student populations, as was the case in recent years, with [analysis](#) by the IFS showing schools serving disadvantaged children to have faced the biggest funding cuts.
- 3.7. Schools and trusts are also increasingly acting as a 'fourth emergency service', taking on a broader role in supporting young people and families beyond simply providing education, which has been of financial burden. The causes have been well publicised: austerity removing other social safety nets; a worldwide pandemic; and a cost-of-living crisis, all of which have negatively affected child and family poverty. These events have also coincided with an increase in the complexities and life challenges that children and young people face, with behavioural, attendance, and mental health challenges escalating at an alarming rate.
- 3.8. We welcomed the government's announcements on education funding in the autumn budget, including the £2.3billion for core school budgets to deliver the additional teachers promised in the government's election manifesto. However, while a welcome and positive start, we understand that the extent of the challenges facing schools and trusts means that they could never be solved in a single fiscal event.
- 3.9. Staff pay costs are consistently cited as the foremost challenge for governing boards when setting balanced budgets, with 64% choosing this option in 2024. The impact of staffing expenses on overall budgetary considerations was closely followed by other cost pressures in our survey's findings. The cost of supporting pupils with SEND and high needs saw a record increase in selection, rising from 47% in 2022, to 60% in 2024. And projected pupil numbers (45%) was the third biggest challenge to setting a balanced budget this year, an issue we would expect to grow in significance as projections become reality.
- 3.10. Given the extent of the budgetary pressures on schools and trust, and the large proportion of budgets which are spent on staffing, it is clear that any pay award needs to be fully funded, as many schools or trusts would be simply unable to fund pay increases themselves including without needing to rely on depleting reserves.
- 3.11. It is imperative to strike a delicate balance between affordability and beginning to resolve some of the key workforce challenges identified throughout this submission. We propose that the STRB could seek to define aspirational pay levels for the sector, to demonstrate a recognition of the significant recruitment and retention challenges, and set out a clear trajectory for the future. A separate recommendation about what is possible this year given economic conditions and public finances could then accompany this.

#### **4. The national state of teacher and school leader supply**

- 4.1. As it is governing boards who will be the legal employer or the body exercising employer responsibility in state schools and trusts, our annual survey of over 3,000 governors and trustees devotes significant attention to workforce issues. Attracting high quality teaching staff remains one of the top five challenges facing boards in the 2024 survey, selected by 21% of respondents and rising to one of the top three challenges in secondary phase settings at 39%.
- 4.2. Further, 19% of boards identified developing and retaining staff was one of their top three strategic priorities, making it the fifth most common strategic priority chosen by respondents. Again, this varied greatly by phase, with 9% of primary phase respondents identifying this as one of their top three strategic priorities compared to 31% of secondary phase respondents.
- 4.3. The biggest challenges with regards to staffing were addressing workload and wellbeing issues (45%), recruitment (41%), maintaining the current staff structure (38%), retention (29%) and pay (26%). In terms of phase, recruitment (66%) and retention (43%) were the biggest challenges cited by those governing in secondary schools compared to 28% and 22% respectively for primary schools. Our survey also showed that recruitment and retention challenges were greatest in London, with 52% and 38% of respondents selecting them respectively. The South East and South West were the two other regions most likely to report these challenges compared to other parts of the country.
- 4.4. Lack of suitable candidates (64%), offering competitive pay and benefits (37%), and managing workload and wellbeing (33%) are the top three reasons chosen as the biggest challenges to recruiting and retaining quality staff. Factors with drastic change this year include a seven-percentage point decrease in offering competitive pay and benefits and a five-percentage point increase in those choosing locality (22%).
- 4.5. Teaching posts (32%) and support staff (32%) were reported as the most difficult to recruit and retain according to our survey respondents. In comparison, only 7% said leadership positions, 4% said other senior posts and 3% said business professionals. This differs slightly from the previous year where we found that support staff were the most difficult group to recruit (35%) and retain (34%).
- 4.6. There has also been a six-percentage point increase in governors and trustees who report either their headteacher or CEO has resigned in the past two years (29%). This may still reflect the surge in departures following the pandemic, so it will be interesting to compare figures next year.
- 4.7. There is a significant amount of other data that puts the issue of recruitment and retention into a wider context and will be of concern to all those governing. The statistics on teacher retention in the most recent [DfE school workforce data](#) show less than 9 in 10 (88.7%) teachers were still teaching one year after qualification, under three quarters (74.1%) after three years, and fewer than 6 in 10 (57.8%) after ten years. The majority (92%) of teachers who left did so due to leaving the state-funded sector in England rather than retirement, with the rate of teachers leaving due to retirement continuing to decrease.
- 4.8. Issues with recruitment and retention are of even more concern in subject specific shortage areas. Evidence from a [House of Commons report](#) estimated that about 40% to 50% of early career physics teachers were likely to leave during the first five years as well as 40% of modern foreign languages teachers. We would emphasise the point that recruitment and retention challenges are not faced by all schools equally, with the extent of the challenges dependent on subject, phase and geography. The

issue of geography in particular has significant implications for the government's mission of breaking down barriers to opportunity.

- 4.9. Further, government statistics have shown a consistent failure to meet initial teacher training (ITT) targets. The ITT Census in [2024](#) found that 62% of the recruitment target for secondary subjects was met, and in [2023](#) this was only 50%. Also, a drop to 88% of the target for primary subjects was reached in the latest 2024 data. DfE school workforce data also shows that teacher vacancies has more than doubled in the last three years.
- 4.10. There have been recent national policy changes around performance-related pay and we will be tracking the extent to which this new flexibility is utilised by employers, and the consequences for both pay levels and workload. Our current expectation is that these changes are unlikely to significantly affect either pay levels or workload, but we will be monitoring this as the academic year progresses.
- 4.11. Unless meaningful action is taken at national and regional level, then it is difficult to see what governing boards can do to effectively staff their schools when the problems exist across the sector. Even if individual schools and trusts are successful in recruiting and retaining the staff they need, unless the workforce expands, this success will be at the expense of another school or trust and its pupils.

## 5. Equalities impact

- 5.1. It is clear that much more needs to be done to tackle the gender pay gap. A [2023 analysis of the gender pay gap in education](#) shows that difference between female and male secondary head teachers was the largest in 12 years, with women earning £3,908 less on average than their male counterparts. The gap for primary heads has continued to narrow but still stands at £2,181 less for women, on average. This is despite the existence of a 'national pay framework'.
- 5.2. The gender pay gap begins to increase from age 35-39, with the difference in average salaries more than doubling by the next age group (40-44), from £3,596 to £7,819. Last year, the difference by age 60 and over for heads reached an average of £15,961.
- 5.3. The pay gap may be even worse for women of colour or those with disabilities – unfortunately we still do not have the national data needed to track this. We call on the government and the school sector to take this issue seriously and act on several key recommendations following the analysis, including the call for a comprehensive review of the equality implications of the pay framework for both classroom teachers and leaders and for the government to improve their data monitoring to include other pay gaps, for example on ethnicity or disability.

## 6. Non-Pay Matters

- 6.1. Governing boards acknowledge that staff, particularly teachers, are a school or trust's greatest asset and are pivotal in realising the organisation's vision for student outcomes. Accordingly, boards invest considerable time, effort, and resources into fostering conducive work environments by cultivating positive leadership cultures, prioritising continuous professional development (CPD), and implementing policies to promote manageable workloads and wellbeing.
- 6.2. While governing boards endeavor to be exemplary employers and positively influence recruitment and retention, their efforts are often impeded by systemic issues beyond their control. Frequent policy

changes, stringent accountability measures, and reduced support services for children and families contribute to workload intensification and limit professional discretion, particularly for school leaders. These challenges, compounded by feelings of undervaluation due to inadequate remuneration, have profound impacts as we have seen on recruitment and retention.

- 6.3. In our snap survey, 72% of members thought that pay was equally important to working conditions (e.g. workload and wellbeing) in increasing the attractiveness of the profession. A further 20% responded that pay was somewhat less important than working conditions.
- 6.4. Our annual survey also revealed that the biggest challenge relating to staffing was addressing workload and wellbeing issues (45%). Meanwhile, just over a quarter (26%) of respondents identified pay as one of their top challenges concerning staffing, which reduced by eight percentage points compared to last year.
- 6.5. Further, in our snap survey, in response to the question of what pay and working conditions are necessary to make the teaching profession more attractive, accessible and sustainable, the top response at 25% was improving career benefits. This included offering higher pay and also flexible working and development opportunities. The next three largest themes at 16% each were to reduce workload, increase funding, and increase support for schools.
- 6.6. Increased funding was seen as needed to afford the teachers and support staff needed to deliver the curriculum as well as to fully cover pay rises. A member commented that *"this should not be expected to come from school budgets which are already stretched and if this occurs then working conditions will reduce due to lack of resources"*. Responses on increased support for schools focused on behaviour management of both pupils and parents as well as SEND needs – *"Better SEND support for schools to effectively support and manage additional needs without significant impacts on classes generally or teacher wellbeing"*.
- 6.7. High teacher and leader workload is widely considered to be a key contributor to teacher attrition – for teachers and leaders considering leaving the state sector in the [working lives of teachers and leaders report](#), high workload was the most commonly reported reason, with 94% saying it was an important factor. Despite the efforts made to reduce workload over the years, this remains an area of concern, and we call on the new government to make concerted efforts to continue to reduce teacher workload. Comments from our snap survey include *"Workload is the most important factor in disillusioning young teachers. If this was addressed then more would remain in the profession"* and the factors behind high workload as *"Curriculum demands are increasing, in-class ability ranges are widening with associated expectations that every child will receive a "tailored" education are rising, and we are seeing an explosion in the number of children with extreme needs that demand 1:1 attention."*
- 6.8. Reducing workload should be particularly considered with regard to workload associated with accountability measures. As the national body for school and trust governance, NGA recognise the importance of accountability but believe some elements of the current framework create unnecessary strain. 51% of respondents to our annual survey either strongly agreed or agreed that Ofsted is the biggest factor influencing practice in their school or trust. Removing the one-word Ofsted judgement was a significant step towards ending the high-stakes accountability and fear culture that has led to such workload pressures. NGA emphasises that this should be seen as the beginning of a broader and holistic reform process that places greater value on the wellbeing of staff and leaders which is needed to make the profession more attractive and sustainable.

- 6.9. We also think that it should be recognised that line management as an additional duty requires a significant amount of time both for managers and teachers and it is important that the integrity of line management duties can be maintained with appropriate levels of time. Line managers must be entitled to a reasonable amount of time during school sessions in order to undertake those responsibilities.
- 6.10. Flexible working arrangements can significantly enhance recruitment, retention, and wellbeing within schools and trusts. NGA has championed flexible working practices and encourages governing boards to embed them in their policies and practices. Nonetheless, teaching still lags behind other graduate roles in offering flexibility, diminishing its attractiveness as a career choice and so more needs to be done to increase opportunities for flexible working in schools. We also recognise that the teaching profession is unable to fully compete with the degree of flexibility offered in other sectors and so there is a case for pay levels to be increased to compensate for this – NFER research estimates 1.8% to be appropriate considering the current disparity between teaching and the wider graduate labour market.
- 6.11. CPD plays a pivotal role in fostering an attractive and sustainable career in education. Investing in CPD entails not only financial resources but also allocating time, presenting further resourcing implications. Therefore, we advocate for additional investment to support schools and trusts in developing and delivering coordinated workforce and talent strategies that positively impact recruitment and retention and that support progression.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1. In conclusion, significantly enhancing pay and ensuring effective pay progression for teachers and school leaders serve as foundational steps toward fostering an attractive and sustainable career in education.
- 7.2. NGA's view is therefore that there exists a compelling case for granting a pay increase for teachers and leaders at the very minimum in line with inflation, and that consideration also needs to be given to the need to compensate for the losses of previous years in order to address the escalating recruitment and retention crisis.
- 7.3. Given the state of school and trust budgets, any pay award would need to be fully funded by the government. Further, in anticipation of any additional employer costs to schools due to the Employment Rights Bill, the government must also ensure this would be covered through increases to funding, not further left to schools to cover.
- 7.4. Given the national finances, it is unlikely to be possible to resolve all of the pay challenges in a single STRB cycle. NGA propose that STRB should consider whether they are able to propose an aspirational level of pay for the government and sector to work towards as national finances improve, in addition to a specific award for this year. Doing so would help to reassure the sector that the extent of the challenges are being recognised, and that there is a clear trajectory for resolving them, even if there are natural limits to what is possible this year.
- 7.5. NGA continues to urge the government to consider the pay of the teaching profession in relation to the long-term sustainability of attracting and retaining talented individuals in the classroom. This should encompass broader initiatives beyond financial considerations, aimed at tackling matters such as workload, wellbeing, flexible working, and professional development.



- 7.6. It is also paramount that the government takes a leading role in addressing inequalities in recruitment, retention, and development, starting from the entry stage into the profession and extending to leadership positions.

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## Annex

# NGA Annual Governance Survey report 2024:

<https://www.nga.org.uk/knowledge-centre/annual-governance-survey-2024/>

The record provided of views and experiences of governors and trustees in England, spanning a 14- year period, is unparalleled by any other survey or dataset. Over this extended timeframe, NGA's annual school governance survey has consistently stood as a surrogate for official data, delving far deeper into the evolution of governance and the prevailing issues within boardrooms.

### Methodology

The survey was disseminated predominantly through NGA's communication channels. Respondents do not need to be members of NGA, but 80% reported that they are. This year, the survey was conducted from 15 April to 27 May 2024 and over 3,000 people took part. The total number of responses varies across the survey according to question requirements and/or target subgroups.

The survey was hosted and analysed using Edurio's research-based survey platform. Data analysis identified trends and variations based on region, school type, phase, and other respondent demographics.

The proportion of survey respondents from different school structures is similar to that of state schools in England with half of respondents governing in trusts in 2024.