

# **UCAC's response to the STRB's consultation on the Remit on the 2015-2016 Pay Award (25th Remit)**

October 2014

**UCAC** | yr undeb sy'n diogelu athrawon a darlithwyr Cymru

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## Introduction

1. UCAC welcomes this opportunity to present written evidence to the STRB following the letter dated 10 September 2014 from the Secretary of State on matters relating to the recommendations on the 2015-2016 pay award.
2. UCAC is an education union which represents 5,000 teachers, head teachers and lecturers across all sectors in Wales.

## Background Evidence

The real value of teachers' pay has without doubt diminished significantly since the pay award of 2.3% in September 2010 as a result of a two year pay freeze and the imposed, meagre 1% increase over the last two year. Over the same period of time the cumulative increase in inflation is well over 10%. The instruction to cap the 2015-2016 pay award at 1% will result in a further below inflation increase to pay which, in reality, constitutes a further pay cut for teachers.

UCAC is not convinced by the argument that public sector pay restraint can help the UK to return to sustainable, balanced growth. We believe that a substantially higher than 1% pay increase would help public sector workers to deal with ever rising costs and encourage economic growth as an increase in the spending power of workers, e.g. teachers, would help the private sector.

UCAC believes that it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of the public sector for the success of the private sector in Wales. The public sector (e.g. the local school) provides an important source of employment and disposable income in all our communities and this is particularly important in areas of social deprivation and in some of our rural communities where a mixture of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises and farming communities sit side by side. Teachers travelling to work in rural schools or living in rural communities support local shops and businesses; further restrictions on the disposable income of teachers will affect their spending power in these communities.

UCAC believes it is important for the STRB to take into account the changes in recent years to the level of contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. Teachers have faced annual increases in pension contributions since April 2012 up to and including the introduction of the new teachers' pension scheme in 2015. The introduction of the Single Tier State Pension in April 2016 will result in the loss of the current contracting-out allowance against teachers' National Insurance contributions. This has been calculated as an increase in contributions of around £390pa for those on a salary of £40,000. While salaries do not keep pace with inflation year on year, teachers will not be able to afford such levels of contribution and maintain an acceptable standard of living.

Teaching is now a graduate profession and the majority of teachers also have a post graduate certificate. Historically it has taken at least a further ten years for these graduates to reach what is now referred to as the maximum on the Upper Pay Range (£37,964 in Wales). As a result of the changes imposed from September 2013 there is far less likelihood of achieving this level of salary within ten years. Not all teachers who perform satisfactorily will reach this level at the same time. Experienced teachers who do not take on significant extra responsibilities do not normally earn more than the maximum quoted and this may well be even less likely in future.

Furthermore, UCAC is concerned that the changes to teachers' pay introduced for the 2013-14 school year is already undermining teaching as a profession. Changes in the pay structure have created uncertainty within the profession as teachers fear that they will not be able to meet their current financial commitments and it will be more difficult to fulfil ambitions such as buying a house and raising a family while they remain in their chosen career. Already we see some schools electing not to apply salary progression for what seems arbitrary reasons. Such uncertainties will make the profession less attractive to possible new entrants and make it equally difficult to retain experienced teachers.

## Teaching vacancies in Wales

Employers continue to experience difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in shortage subjects for Welsh medium settings, and this is exacerbated by the view that teaching is becoming a more demanding and less rewarding career. UCAC carried out a workload survey among its members during the 2014 summer term. The number of responses received exceeded expectations with many teachers eager to express their frustrations at the unreasonable demands of their posts. Schools will not be able to recruit and retain staff in such a negative climate and the depreciation of the value of salaries will do little to boost morale.

In January 2014 there were 24,823 FTE teachers in service with Local Authorities (a small increase on the previous year's figures but still considerably lower than the numbers in January 2009). Data on teacher vacancies is no longer available but reports from schools indicate that the number of applicants for vacant posts continue to be small with many posts having to be readvertised.

The Welsh Government's data shows that, overall, there was a slight increase in pupil numbers in Wales by 2014. Numbers of pupils under 5 rose for the eighth year in succession and there was a 5000 increase (from 195,604 to 200,580) in the 5-10 age range. These figures will inevitably lead to a significant rise in the secondary sector from 2016 onwards.

The projections for the period 2012/13 to 2021/22 foresee the usage of all available ITT entrants and a significant reliance on a large number of re-entrants to the profession to fill all positions, particularly in the primary sector in Wales. This will make it essential for teaching to appeal to additional, potential entrants.

UCAC is concerned about the decline in enrolments for ITT courses in Wales in recent years, a drop of 25% between 2005/6 and 2011/12. Data on ITT published in March 2014 covered the period 2012/13. While enrolment for that year was only down by 1% the number completing ITT courses was 11% lower. It is obvious that such students, having experienced the reality of the job, found the profession much less appealing in reality than first anticipated and undoubtedly found the pay to be much less than that currently offered in other comparable professions.

Teachers in Wales are often influenced in their choice of career by the language medium of the school. They will choose to teach in a school which teaches predominantly or wholly through the medium of Welsh or conversely will choose an English medium school. We face a shortage of teachers in certain subject areas and in particular those who can teach specific subjects through the medium of Welsh.

UCAC believes that the above data demonstrate how important it is to ensure that teaching is seen as an attractive profession for graduates; remuneration is an important aspect of this. It is important for graduates to have at least some certainty about their future pay. UCAC believes that the STRB's recommendations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Report removed too many certainties. We believe that teachers in service and those considering entering the profession need to have the certainty that a cost of living pay rise will apply to all teachers governed by the rules of the STPCD, when it is awarded.

For some years, incentive grants have been available in Wales to entice ITT students in shortage subjects and for recruiting high calibre candidates. Priority subjects are: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Modern Foreign Languages, ICT and Welsh. In some of these subjects as many as 44.7% (Chemistry) and 50.9% (Physics) of teachers currently teaching the subjects are not subject specialists. Those students with a first class degree in mathematics or chemistry (or a 2:1 in Physics) will receive the highest grant of £20,000, while £15 000 is available in the other three areas listed. Those with a first class honours degree in other subjects will receive a grant of £3000. An additional £2000 supplement is offered to postgraduate for primary courses with a degree in English, Welsh or mathematics.

The necessity for incentive grants shows clearly that some graduates need to be persuaded that teaching is a good career choice. UCAC believes that it should be seen as an attractive career option for all graduates with a genuine interest and talent for teaching. Securing good pay that keeps pace with inflation is essential to achieve this.

## **Recruitment and Retention of School Leaders**

According to the GTCW Annual Statistical Digest (March 2014) there were fewer Head Teachers in Wales in March 2014 than March 2010 – a reduction of 137 in four years. This can be partly explained by school closures but more worrying is the increasing trend for Head Teachers to be coerced into taking responsibility for more than one school due to the inability to appoint to Head Teacher posts in such schools. Approximately half (47.4%) of the current Head Teachers in Wales are over the age of 50 and well over a quarter (28%) of all Head Teachers in Wales are over the age of 55 and likely to make a choice about retirement within the next five years.

Anecdotally Head Teacher members are telling us of concerns about increasing workloads, difficulties achieving a work life balance and intentions to retire early. While the re-advertising of headship posts in small schools has been the norm in rural Wales for some years, the headships posts in secondary schools and larger primary schools are becoming common place. It is of concern that there seems to be an increasing number of schools led by acting heads. Such people are often of high calibre and more than capable of undertaking the role permanently but have elected to fulfil a caretaking role while the employer secures a permanent appointment, which can take well over a year in some situations.

It is important for the STRB to consider the importance of keeping teachers in the profession and ensuring that we still have a range of people with high quality skills to become our school leaders of the future. It is too early to comment on the impact of the changes on the leadership pay structure introduced in 2014 but we question whether the new flexibility will, in reality, address the shortage of high calibre candidates applying for school headship. Recruitment issues seem to stem, in the main, from the status of the teaching profession in general and the blame culture and excessive accountability associated with the role of school leader.

### **Matters for Recommendation**

#### **What adjustments should be made to the salary scales for classroom teachers and unqualified teachers and school leaders to reflect the 1 per cent pay award for public sector workers?**

It is essential that every teacher receive the same percentage pay rise. If the Government decides to award only the 1% average pay rise it should be awarded to everyone on the main and upper pay range and not just awarded to the maxima and minima. Such an award would be seen as a cost of living increase and, as such, it should be applied equally to all and not be related in any way to pay progression.

As teachers' allowances have been subject to the same freeze as all other aspects of pay, any pay award should apply to the whole of a teacher's remuneration, including any specific allowances. Such allowances are paid for additional responsibilities and schools are finding it increasingly difficult to attract teachers to undertake such duties because the remuneration for the additional workload is already disproportionately small.

Similarly those paid on the Leadership Pay Range should also have the same pay rise applied to their salary. UCAC believes that there can be no real justification for the STRB to recommend a different cost of living pay award for different groups within the teaching profession. Any attempt to award the 1% pay rise to only a particular group(s) of teachers will undoubtedly affect working relationships and dynamics within the workforce.

There is clear evidence that women within the profession and those who work part time are paid less, on average, and are less likely to be promoted, and there is a clear issue about the data available for other groups that may be affected by discrimination. UCAC believes that if this cost of living increase is not applied across the board there will be more pay challenges based on equality issues.

UCAC, however, firmly believes that the proposed 1% increase is totally inappropriate. We believe that the pay rise should be at least in line with inflation, taking into account the two year pay freeze and the 2013 and 2014 below inflation pay rises. It is clear that teachers' remuneration is falling behind that of other professionals and will continue to fall if inflation increases over the next two years at the level predicted by the Bank of England. Teachers' pay has been eroded and we believe this is already affecting morale and we will soon face a more widespread challenge to recruitment and retention.

We would, therefore, urge the STRB to take a leaf out of the book of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) and report independently on what would be an appropriate pay award for the profession taking into account the income of those in comparable professions.

The remit given by the Secretary of State has already determined to a large extent what the Review Body is able to consider and this calls into question the role of the STRB and the Government's understanding of how the Pay Review Body system is meant to work. From the beginning we have seen the Secretary of State ignore the accepted protocols, and this is a further example of the Government undermining the work of the STRB, by limiting its decisions before the Review Body has even had an opportunity to gather evidence.

**October 2014**



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