

**Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group**  
**A standard for teachers' professional development**  
**16 October 2015**

The NASUWT's submission sets out the Union's views on key issues related to the proposed development of a standard for teachers' professional development.

The NASUWT is the largest teachers' union in the UK representing teachers and school leaders.

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## **Executive summary**

- Core elements of current Government policy are antithetical to a credible national strategy for maintaining and enhancing teacher professionalism, including those dimensions related to the professional development of teachers.
- Ministers should work with the NASUWT and other relevant stakeholders to reassess the Department for Education's (DfE's) understanding of the nature and importance of teacher professionalism and thereby provide the best possible basis upon which to establish revised approaches to professional development.
- Placing a standard for teachers' professional development on a non-statutory footing would allow schools and other state funded settings within which teachers are employed to ignore any or all of its provisions and thereby undermine its potential effectiveness.
- Policy on teacher professional development should ensure that teachers and school leaders can commit to participate in their own ongoing professional learning with a contractual entitlement to regular, effective training and development during their contracted hours. Without such a contractual provision there will never be a coherent and consistent approach to professional development;
- A standard for teachers' professional development should seek to reflect key features of effective practice and help to secure system-wide consensus about these features.
- The Expert Group should work to provide support for schools through the development of materials setting out the issues that they need to consider when securing professional development from external providers.
- The Expert Group should recognise that changes implemented by the DfE to arrangements for the performance management of teachers and the replacement of the previous suite of professional standards by the 2012 Teacher Standards have been profoundly unhelpful. In particular, it has undermined the opportunities available to teachers and school leaders to benefit from high-quality professional training and development by

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removing provisions requiring assessment of teachers' training and development needs.

## **Introduction**

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group on a proposed standard for teachers' professional development in England.
2. The NASUWT's submission addresses the policy areas identified in the Group's remit through consideration of issues related to:
  - the broader context of current Government workforce policy;
  - the nature and composition of a standard for teachers' professional development;
  - the quality of professional development, its provision in schools and the ability of teachers to access meaningful professional development opportunities;
  - the relationship between professional development and arrangements for teachers' performance management.

### **The implications of broader Government workforce policy on teachers' professional development**

3. The NASUWT recognises that the Expert Group has been remitted by the Department for Education (DfE) to develop a 'Standard for Teachers' Professional Development' in England. The Union notes that the DfE's intention to produce such a standard was set out in its consultation, *A World-Class Teaching Profession*, published in December 2014.<sup>1</sup>
4. The NASUWT does not dispute that a standard for professional development may have an important role to play in ensuring that teachers

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (DfE) (2014). *Developing the teaching profession to a world-class standard*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-the-teaching-profession-to-a-world-class-standard>, accessed on 5.10.15.

can benefit from the training and development opportunities on which sustaining an effective and highly skilled teaching workforce depends.

5. Specific issues related to the development of a standard for professional development are considered elsewhere in this submission. However, it is important that the Expert Group takes meaningful account of the broader context of Government workforce policy if it is to consider concerns related to its remit on an appropriately informed basis.
6. The NASUWT is clear that children and young people learn best when teachers are given the time, resources and scope to make the fullest possible use of their professional talents, knowledge and expertise. An education system that does not give practical effect to this core guiding principle cannot expect to provide pupils with the full range of high-quality learning experiences to which they are entitled.<sup>2</sup> Respect for the professionalism of teachers is a hallmark of an education system that is genuinely committed to raising standards and extending educational opportunities for all children and young people.<sup>3</sup>
7. Governments must therefore demonstrate their commitment to teachers in words and deeds and by conferring professional rights on them which affirm their professional status and which are guaranteed across all public education settings.
8. Critically, public policy constituted on this basis will reflect an understanding of teaching as a complex, multifaceted professional activity which is, simultaneously, an art, a science and a craft. The art of teaching is about being responsive and creative and about developing intuitive capabilities. The science of teaching is about using research and other forms of evidence to inform decisions about how to teach. The craft of teaching is about mastering the full range of skills and practices needed by

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<sup>2</sup> NASUWT (2013). *Maintaining World Class Schools*. NASUWT; Birmingham.

<sup>3</sup> ILO/UNESCO (1966). *The ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers*. ILO/UNESCO; Geneva and Paris.

teachers to discharge their professional responsibilities effectively.<sup>4</sup> The NASUWT believes that this broader vision of teaching is central to understanding its status as a profession. Conceptualisations of teacher professionalism that fail to reflect these considerations fully cannot be regarded as a coherent and credible basis upon which to establish an effective national strategy for the teacher workforce.

9. This understanding of the nature of teacher professionalism invites reflection on the approach to teacher workforce policy adopted by the current Government and the former Coalition Government since May 2010.
10. Specifically, in its White Paper on the teaching profession, *The Importance of Teaching*, published in November 2010, the former Coalition Government confirmed its view that teaching is most appropriately regarded solely as a craft.<sup>5</sup> This view continues to guide the policy direction of the current Government. In light of the understanding of teacher professionalism outlined above, this conceptualisation of teaching downplays to an unacceptable extent the broader dimensions of teacher professionalism through its implication that effective teaching depends only on the development and maintenance of secure subject knowledge and pedagogic skills developed through practical experience.
11. Evidence published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasises that other education systems regarded as high performing and fast improving base the development of teacher workforce policy on a broader understanding of the nature of teacher professionalism than that advanced currently by the Government.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pollard, A. (ed.) (2010). *Professionalism and Pedagogy: A contemporary opportunity*. Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP); London

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education (2010). *The Importance of Teaching*. TSO; London.

<sup>6</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2011). *Building a High Quality Teaching Profession: Lessons from Around the World*. OECD; Paris.

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12. It is therefore entirely unsurprising that this failure on the part of the Government to acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of teaching has been associated with a policy agenda that has worked to undermine rather than enhance teacher professionalism.
13. In particular, the permission granted to state-funded schools to deploy teaching staff without Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), effectively deregulating the teaching profession, and the introduction of revised standards for teachers, in which the professional rigour and breadth of the suite of professional standards they have replaced are substantially absent, have all served to undermine the professional footing upon which teaching had been based previously. The negative implications of these policies have been compounded by the imposition on teachers of specific pedagogic methodologies, for example, the mandating of the use of systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of early reading. This approach highlights the failure of the DfE to fulfil its core function of sustaining and enhancing the capacity of the education system to meet the needs of learners through policies that respect and promote teacher professionalism.
14. The NASUWT has articulated previously to the DfE its view that changes to the statutory framework of terms and conditions for teachers, including those related to their performance management, have undermined significantly prospects for maintaining teaching as a high-status, professional career option for graduates and for retaining and motivating the existing workforce. Specific issues in relation to performance management are addressed in further detail elsewhere in this submission.
15. It is clear that these changes have not only led to significant increases in teacher workload but have also compromised the professionalism of teachers by increasing the extent to which they are obliged to undertake tasks that do not require the skills, talents and expertise of qualified teachers. It is evident that within many schools, teachers are no longer

trusted to act as professionals and are required to comply with unwieldy and burdensome planning, assessment and record-keeping requirements, focused more on scrutiny of their work than supporting the progress and achievement of pupils.<sup>7</sup>

16. It is therefore beyond dispute that core elements of Government policy are antithetical to a credible national strategy for maintaining and enhancing teacher professionalism, including those dimensions related to the professional development of teachers. The fundamental nature of these shortcomings in the Government's workforce-related policy programme serve to confirm that its proposals, for example, to support the establishment of a College of Teaching or to enhance training and development offers for teachers, whatever their merits or otherwise, will not, of themselves, address the risks to the professional status of teaching that this programme continues to create. Similarly, the potential benefits of the introduction of a standard for teachers' professional development cannot be realised fully without significant reform to wider Government workforce policy.

17. These considerations serve to highlight the need for the Expert Group to press the DfE to work with the NASUWT and other relevant stakeholders to reassess official understandings of the nature and importance of teacher professionalism and thereby provide the best possible basis upon which revised approaches to professional development can be established. This reassessment must involve consideration of the ways in which teacher professionalism is most appropriately reflected in key strands of national-level policy as well as a critical evaluation of the extent to which its current policy agenda requires revision to promote and secure the professional status of teaching more effectively.

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<sup>7</sup> DfE (2015). *Workload challenge; analysis of teacher consultation responses*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workload-challenge-analysis-of-teacher-responses>, accessed on 6.10.15.



## **The status of an effective standard for teacher professional development**

18. The NASUWT accepts that as part of a reformed approach to teacher workforce policy, a standard for teacher professional development could play an important role in setting expectations among teachers, school leaders, professional development providers and other stakeholders about the features of effective practice.
19. However, it is important to recognise that were such a standard to be developed, the DfE's assertion that it should only be introduced on a non-statutory basis would serve only to undermine its practical effectiveness.
20. A key purpose of an effective standard for teachers' professional development must be to set out the basis upon which relevant and meaningful professional development opportunities should be made available to teachers. Placing such a standard on a non-statutory footing would allow schools and other state funded settings within which teachers are employed to ignore any or all of its provisions.
21. The NASUWT can identify no reason why a standard could not be established on a statutory basis. The Union notes in this respect that the Government has been prepared to place other professionally-related standards, most notably the 2012 Teacher Standards, on a statutory footing.
22. Notwithstanding the terms of its remit, the Expert Group should recommend to Ministers that any standard would need to have statutory force in order to ensure its adoption across the education system. The Expert Group should also note that the mandatory nature of a standard could be reinforced by its incorporation into the provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and academy and free school funding agreements.

23. While a statutory standard has the potential to contribute to a coherent national teacher workforce policy, it is clear that any potentially positive impact in this respect would be hindered significantly by the ongoing denial to teachers of an entitlement to professional development.

24. International evidence confirms that effective education systems can only maintain and sustain world-class education systems by taking steps to assure for all teachers an entitlement and access to high-quality professional development. This should include including longer programmes that upgrade qualifications and involve ongoing research into improving teacher effectiveness.<sup>8</sup>

25. The NASUWT is therefore clear that policy on teacher professional development should ensure that teachers and school leaders can commit to participate in their own ongoing professional learning with an entitlement to regular, effective training and development during their contracted hours. This training and development should enable all teachers to consolidate and enhance their professional knowledge and expertise, including through opportunities to contribute to educational research and development. The Expert Group should therefore recommend the introduction of such an entitlement to Ministers.

### **Quality, procurement and access issues**

26. A standard for teachers' professional development should seek to reflect key features of effective practice and help to secure system-wide consensus about these features.

27. This consideration serves to emphasise evidence that teachers in England are less satisfied with their experience of professional development than teachers in other jurisdictions regarded as high performing or fast

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<sup>8</sup> NASUWT (2013). *op.cit.*

improving. This reflects a longstanding feature of teachers' perceptions of their engagement with professional development.<sup>9</sup>

28. The NASUWT believes that the Expert Group has a clear opportunity to set out the basis upon which effective professional development frameworks are based. This includes ensuring that:

- there is a long-term, planned approach to professional development in schools in which participants are given meaningful opportunities to reflect on their practice;
- there is a clear, agreed focus on the objectives that professional development is intended to secure shared by participants, senior leaders and those responsible for leading or supporting activities and programmes;
- approaches to professional development activities and programmes are relevant to participants and are tailored sufficiently to their individual needs and interests;
- professional development is led and supported by personnel, from within and beyond participants' schools, with appropriate skills and experience;
- professional development is informed by high quality evidence about effective teaching and learning;
- programmes and activities take effective account of the existing knowledge and experience of participants; and
- professional development is subject to meaningful and rigorous evaluation.

29. Ensuring that a standard for teachers' professional development reflects the principles upon which effective provision is based is also important in circumstances where schools have principal responsibility for procuring

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<sup>9</sup> Mickelwright, J.; Jerrim, J.; Vignoles, A.; Jenkins, A.; Allen, R.; Ilie, S.; Bellarbre, E.; Barrera, F.; and Hein, C. (2014). *Teachers in England's Secondary Schools: Evidence from TALIS 2013*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/322896/RB302\\_-\\_TALIS\\_report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322896/RB302_-_TALIS_report.pdf), accessed on 6.10.15.

and organising provision. Schools must be in a position to act as informed consumers of professional development if it is to provide teachers with access to relevant and purposeful opportunities to develop and enhance their skills and expertise.

30. The NASUWT draws to the Committee's attention that the professional development programmes made available by the Union to its members reflect these principles and aim to ensure that participants receive a high quality experience that reflects their identified needs and interests. The NASUWT would welcome the opportunity to share further information about its professional development activities with the Group in more detail.
31. The Expert Group should therefore seek to provide support for schools through the development of materials setting out the issues that they need to consider when securing professional development from external providers. Schools should also be supported to engage with providers in ways that ensure that teachers can access tailored professional development programmes and activities and that avoid the use of generic packages if it is likely that they would fail to address adequately the individual needs of teachers or of the settings within which they work.
32. It is important that schools demonstrate an active understanding of the need to ensure that all teachers are able to access professional development opportunities on an equitable basis and in ways that do not result in excessive workload burdens or risks to their ability to secure a reasonable work-life balance. Schools must give specific attention to the barriers to participation that provision of programmes and activities outside school hours can create for teachers, particularly for those with significant family or caring responsibilities. Evidence from the OECD's *Teaching and Learning International Study* (TALIS) confirms, for example, that teachers in England with young children are less able to access professional development opportunities than other colleagues.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mickelwright, J. *et.al.* (2014). *op.cit.*

33. The NASUWT is also concerned by the barriers to accessing professional development encountered by supply teachers. A survey of supply teachers undertaken by the NASUWT during February and March 2015 found that more than four in ten (43%) of respondents had no access to professional development. Of those supply teachers with such access, over half (53%) indicated that they were required to participate in activities and programmes in their own time, at their own expense or on an unpaid basis.
34. The NASUWT would welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Expert Group on ways in which schools might be supported more effectively to make appropriate choices about the professional development they make available to teachers.

### **Professional development and performance management**

35. It is important that the Expert Group gives sufficient attention in its work to the relationship between professional development and the performance management of teachers.
36. In particular, the Expert Group should note that changes implemented to arrangements for the performance management of teachers and the replacement of the previous suite of professional standards with the DfE's Teachers' Standards have undermined the opportunities available to teachers and school leaders to benefit from high-quality professional training and development.
37. As the NASUWT has emphasised consistently to the DfE, the arrangements for performance management in place prior to the introduction by the former Coalition Government of the Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012, placed an unambiguous requirement on schools to consider the training and development needs of teachers. This statutory framework for performance management was

supported by a progressive system of national professional standards that served as a backdrop to the appraisal process.

38. Teachers and school leaders were thereby provided with a means by which they could engage in informed, constructive and professional dialogue about their training and development that related directly to their pay and career aspirations, their reflections on their professional practice and interests, and the strategic teaching and learning-related priorities of their schools.
39. Evidence confirms that this approach to enhancing teachers' experience of professional development through effective performance management arrangements had begun to secure important improvements to the quality and range of provision across the education system. Specifically, it is evident that this framework assisted schools in aligning the professional development needs of individual teachers with whole-school improvement planning, thereby delivering demonstrable benefits for pupils as well as the workforce.<sup>11</sup>
40. The removal of the key features of a performance management framework that promoted more effective approaches to professional development must therefore be regarded as highly inappropriate. Combined with the ongoing refusal of the Government to provide teachers with a statutory and contractual entitlement to professional development, it is clear that these policies have led to serious constraints on the ability of teachers not only to access appropriate opportunities but also to be involved actively in identifying their own development needs and interests.

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<sup>11</sup> Walker, M.; Jeffes, J.; Hart, R.; Lord, P. and Kinder, K. (2011). *Making the links between teachers' professional standards, induction, performance management and continuing professional development*. DfE Research Report DfE-RR075. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/182227/DFE-RR075.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182227/DFE-RR075.pdf), accessed on 2.10.15.

41. Teachers report that in some schools, access to professional development continues to be restricted although, notwithstanding the reduced support available to them, they are still expected to demonstrate that they have enhanced their skills, knowledge and expertise.
42. It is also increasingly evident that performance management arrangements in schools are increasingly characterised by teachers being assigned targets they are expected to achieve without being given the opportunity to engage in the forms of effective professional dialogue about their practice that allow training and development needs to be identified and met appropriately.
43. Such systems appear in many respects to be designed principally to block pay progression or to identify and address perceived poor teaching practice rather than to help teachers sustain and develop their skills and expertise.
44. It is clear that Government policy has created significant barriers to ensuring that all teachers and school leaders are able to benefit from effective arrangements for the provision of professional development.
45. As part of the reformed approach to national teacher workforce policy advocated in this submission, the Expert Group should therefore recommend to Ministers that the DfE work with the NASUWT and other relevant stakeholders to identify alternative approaches to professional development, teacher standards and support for the provision of consistently high-quality professional development in all schools. This revised approach should seek to ensure that professional development works more effectively to not only meet the legitimate work-related needs and aspirations of teachers and school leaders, but also to support their ability to continue to provide high-quality learning experiences for all pupils.