



National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers

NEOST response to the consultation on the Government's response to the School Teachers' Review Body's 34th Report and the draft 2024 School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

Introduction

1. The National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers (NEOST) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Government's response to the School Teachers' Review Body's (STRB) 34th Report, the draft 2024 School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and the Pay Order 2024.

Executive Summary

2. Our headline responses to the consultation are as follows.

NEOST:

- Welcomes the decision to fully implement the STRB recommendations for teachers' pay 2024/25.
- Welcomes the Government's decision to provide additional funding of almost 1.1 billion to cover 'at a national level, the teacher pay award and the support staff pay offer in the financial year 2024-25, over and above the available headroom in schools' existing budgets' and asks that the Government continues to provide adequate financial support so that all schools can fully implement the pay award without having to make significant adjustments that are likely to affect the quality of education.
- Asks that next year's STRB remit includes a review of the upper pay range (UPR) and salary safeguarding provisions, as well as meaningful consultation with employers on any proposed changes to the STPCD.
- Supports the Government's decision to publish the STRB's remit for 2025 on 30 September, which is earlier than in recent cycles and (we hope) will enable final decisions to be made by the Government on next year's pay award in good time, avoiding the need to consult employers during school holidays.

About NEOST

3. NEOST is a statutory consultee to the STRB process and is the employer representative body invited to respond. The NEOST membership is drawn from the Local Government Association, the National Society (Church of England and Church in Wales) for the Promotion of Education, the Catholic Education Service, and the Confederation of School Trusts. The LGA provides the secretariat.
4. NEOST also represents the employer side for the national collective agreement on conditions outside the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD), commonly known as the Burgundy Book. This agreement continues to apply in Wales, and therefore, the Welsh Local Government Association remains a member of NEOST despite teacher pay being devolved to the Welsh Government.
5. As the role of the local authority (LA) in relation to school employment matters is easily misunderstood, it is always helpful to provide a reminder. School pay decisions are delegated to individual schools in regulations under the Education Act 2002. However, LAs are the employers of teachers in community and voluntary controlled schools. This affords them certain advisory rights in relation to school employment decisions and creates liabilities under general employment law. For example, under the Teachers' Pensions Scheme and generally the Local Government Pension Scheme, the LA is deemed the employer in all maintained schools. In Foundation and Voluntary-Aided schools, the governing body is the employer of school staff, as is the trust for academy schools.

Our consultation with stakeholders

6. As reported in the [2023 School Workforce Census](#), there were 468,693 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers, an increase of 300 FTE teachers since 2022 that are potentially in scope for this proposed pay award. NEOST notes that while academies can determine pay outside of the STPCD, many still follow it.
7. The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on councils to improve the well-being of young children in their areas and reduce inequalities, including in relation to education. School leaders and teachers have a huge part to play at the school level in that improvement process, and NEOST brings employers together from across the school system to speak as one voice, responding to proposed pay awards and changes to terms and conditions each year. To inform this year's response, the NEOST secretariat consulted all education authorities, Employer Link (the LGA subscription service for academy trusts), the National Society (Church of England and Church in Wales) for the promotion of Education, the Catholic Education Service, and the Confederation of School Trusts.
8. As is customary the LGA undertook an online survey to inform this response. One hundred and fifty-two LAs were invited to complete the consultation, of which 74 responded (49 per cent response rate, compared to 40 per cent in 2023). The 74 LAs represent 5802 maintained school employers, which is 55 per cent of all

maintained schools in England. Please refer to Appendix A for the full LA results of the survey.

9. The same survey was sent to the Confederation of School Trust members and Employer Link academy trust subscribers, which resulted in 61 (20 in 2023, a threefold increase) academy trusts (ATs) responding. Please refer to Appendix B for the full results.
10. We achieved a total of 135 responses (up from 80 in 2023), demonstrating a very significant increase (69 per cent) in the level of engagement from all schools, especially given the tight timescale again over the summer holiday period. The combined survey results can be found in Appendix C. Please note where we found significant differences in opinions between LAs and ATs; we have highlighted these within the report below.
11. Academy Trusts and LAs also provided views based on a combination of their own knowledge and experience and feedback provided by schools where circumstances allowed. In addition, we have received feedback to inform this submission from ten regional school HR networks, whose members support both maintained and academy schools, and a national sounding board of LA school HR practitioners from every English region. We also took soundings via the Employer Link national network of HR leads in Multi Academy Trusts (MATs); this covers approximately 425 MATS and over 4,250 academies.

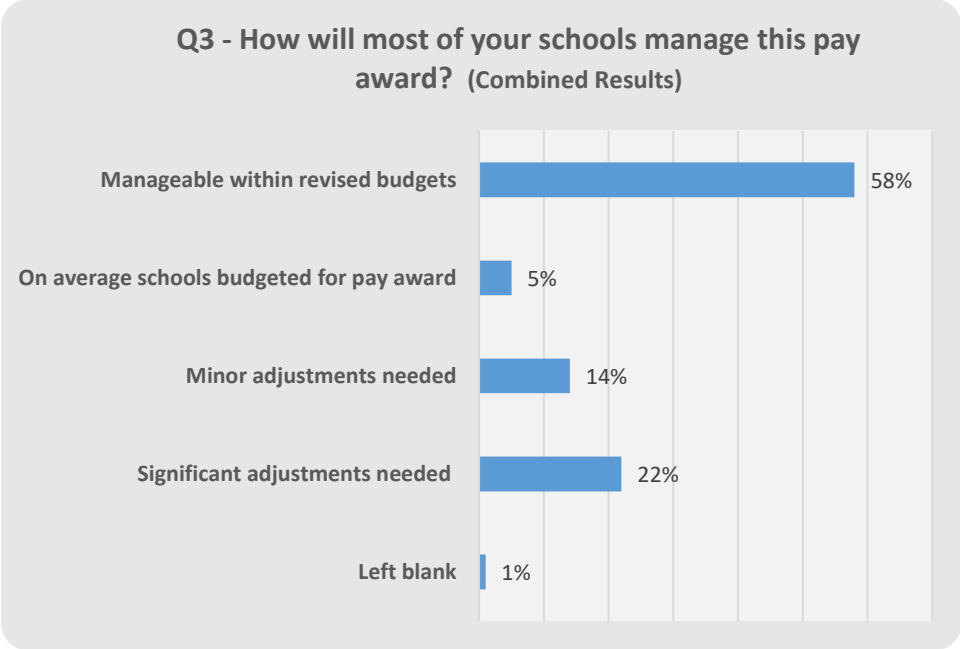
Pay Award and Agreed Funding

12. We welcome the Government's acceptance of the [STRB's recommendations](#) in their 34th report for 2024/25 teacher pay awards, which details a proposed 5.5 per cent uplift to all pay points and allowances for both teachers and leaders applicable from 1 September 2024 alongside the new additional money for schools to implement the pay award.
13. The Secretary of State set out in a [ministerial statement](#), that the pay deal will be fully funded at 'a national level'. The STRB's 34th report estimated its pay recommendations would increase the pay bill by approximately £1.65 billion for mainstream schools. Schools, including mainstream, special and alternative provision, will be provided with almost £1.1 billion in additional funding to support them with overall costs in 2024-25. The funding announced by the Government is intended to cover the first seven months of the full-year cost of the award up to March 2025, as the impact of the teacher pay award will span into the next financial year. The government has yet to announce details for school funding for 2025-26 but is committed to taking into account the full year's costs of the teacher pay award for schools when considering future budget allocation.
14. The funding detailed above is intended to support school finances in coping with the current 2024-25 pay offer for support staff as well, which is currently under negotiation by the [National Joint Council for Local Government Services](#).
15. Following past evidence and an 'ask' presented by NEOST, we welcome the decision this year to include funding for centrally employed teachers.

Affordability of the schoolteachers' pay bill

16. NEOST notes the government's affordability estimates, as detailed in DfE's schools cost note, are based on national averages, not school-level analysis. Department officials spent time with NEOST representatives during the summer months to review the methodology for assessing affordability within existing constraints and to ensure the affordability calculation includes an understanding of different circumstances and different financial years (maintained and academy). This conversation was greatly appreciated. We understand that accommodating the different financial cycles is a complex challenge and that estimating affordability (to ensuring all schools can afford to implement the pay award without having to make savings elsewhere) is extremely difficult. However, it remains the case that any quoted 'national average' will not reflect the reality of affordability for a significant number of schools (as reported by 30 of the total of 135 ATs and LAs who took part in our survey).
17. NEOST remains concerned that the complexity and imperfection in that process mean that some schools continue to face greater financial challenges than others, and risks getting lost among national averages. NEOST asks that the Government ensures that all schools can fully implement the pay award without having to make significant adjustments (as 30 of our responses indicated they had to this year) that are likely to affect the quality of education. Our survey results in paragraphs 22 and 23 evidence the result that some geographic areas, i.e. rural and areas of high levels of deprivation, and types of schools, i.e. special schools and primary schools, are facing the biggest financial challenge in being able to afford to full implement the proposed pay award within existing budgets. We asked our stakeholders if this year's pay award, with almost 1.1 billion in additional funding from DfE was largely manageable within existing budgets for the majority of their schools. Graph 1 shows us that only five per cent had budgeted for this level of pay award. 58 per cent of our stakeholders indicated their schools would now be able to afford to implement the award, when taking into account the Government extra funding and a further 14 per cent could manage but with some minor adjustment. This means 77 per cent of our survey is telling us they can manage. However, this leaves 33 per cent of our respondents not feeling that confidence. NEOST is concerned that 22 per cent (30) of respondents indicated they would not manage this pay award without making significant adjustments to their budgets. Although still a critical concern, this is an improvement from last year when 43 per cent of respondents indicated they could not afford the pay increases without making significant savings. In summary, the survey results suggest that although the additional funding has resulted in the majority of schools now being able to afford to implement the proposed pay award, a significant number of schools across the system do not think they can fully implement the proposed pay awards within existing budgets.
18. There was a notable difference between the percentage of ATs (13 per cent) compared to LAs (30 per cent), who indicated their schools would need to make significant budgetary adjustments to afford to implement the pay award fully. This

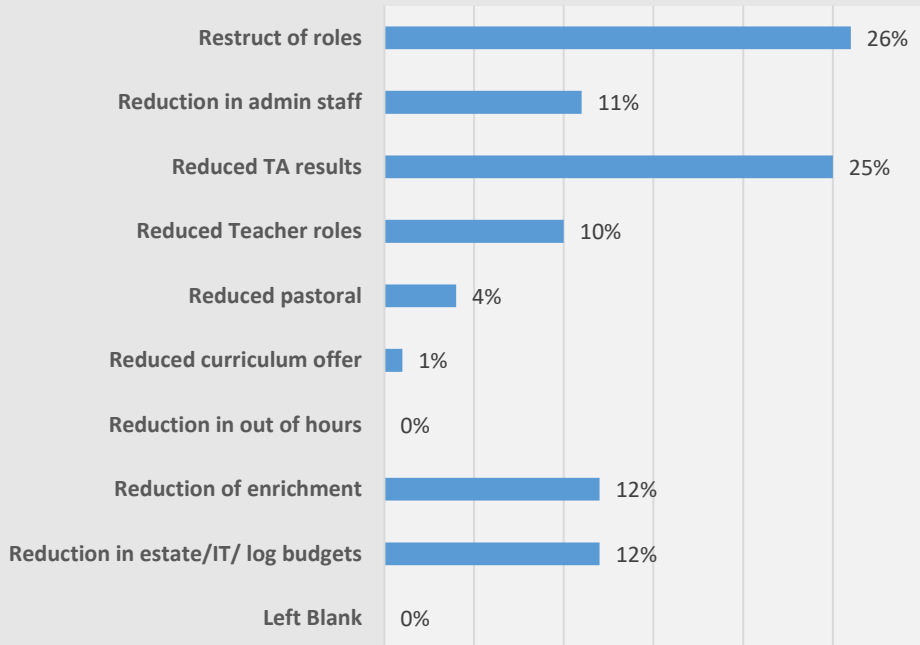
suggests, when looking at school finances as a whole, that ATs, on average, maybe in a more favourable current budget position than some maintained schools. Further research would need to be undertaken to understand the reasons for this.



Graph 1

- 19. When looking at the budgetary challenges, NEOST always asks stakeholders what the likely consequences might be. Schools cannot set deficit budgets, but our results (see Graph 2) indicate that where an employer has identified it will need to make significant savings to afford to implement the pay award, a significant proportion of our stakeholders would need to consider staff reductions. Although 26 per cent (up from 21 per cent in January) have told us it is too early to say which specific roles are likely to be reduced, 25 per cent indicated a reduction in Teaching Assistant (TA) roles (up from 15 per cent in January). NEOST understands the rationale behind that but notes that if implemented is likely to increase workload for other support staff and teachers and therefore exacerbate wellbeing issues, impacting negatively on recruitment and retention rates overall. Board members highlighted the unintended consequence of both the likely negative impact on the outcomes of pupils with special educational needs and the potential of the need for more costly public sector support later, as it is commonly accepted that early intervention with pupils tends to be more effective and ultimately cost the public purse less.

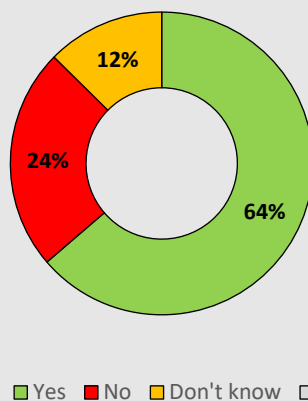
Q4 - For those who responded to significant adjustments needed - choose top 3 (Combined Results)



Graph 2

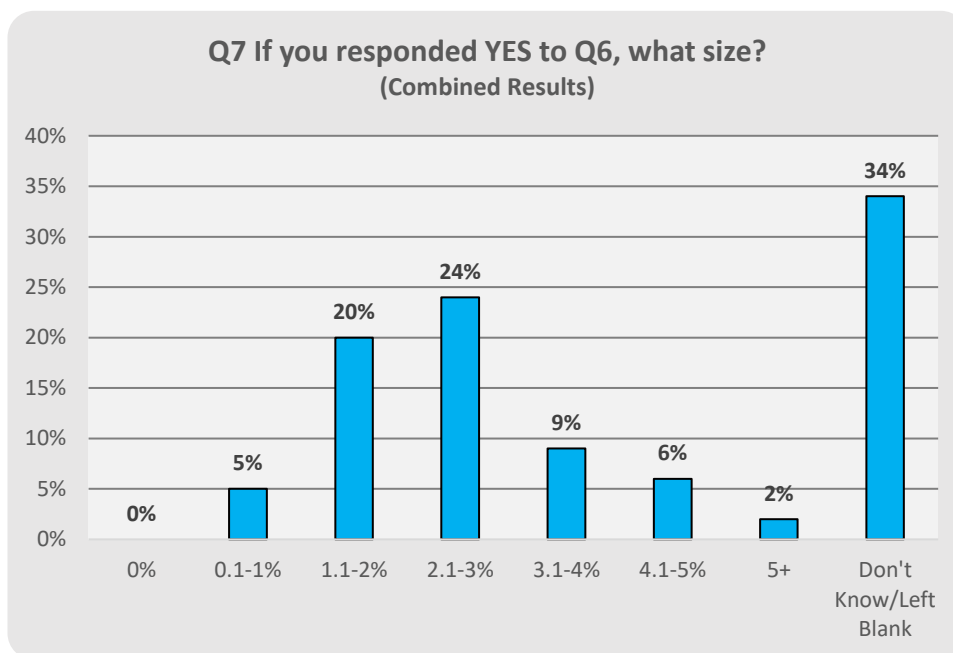
20. Sixty-four of our respondents (73 per cent of LAs) indicated that after considering the additional new funding, they would still have an affordability gap in their budget for 2024/25.

Q6 - Is there an affordability gap in your budget for 2024/25? (Combined Results)



Graph 3

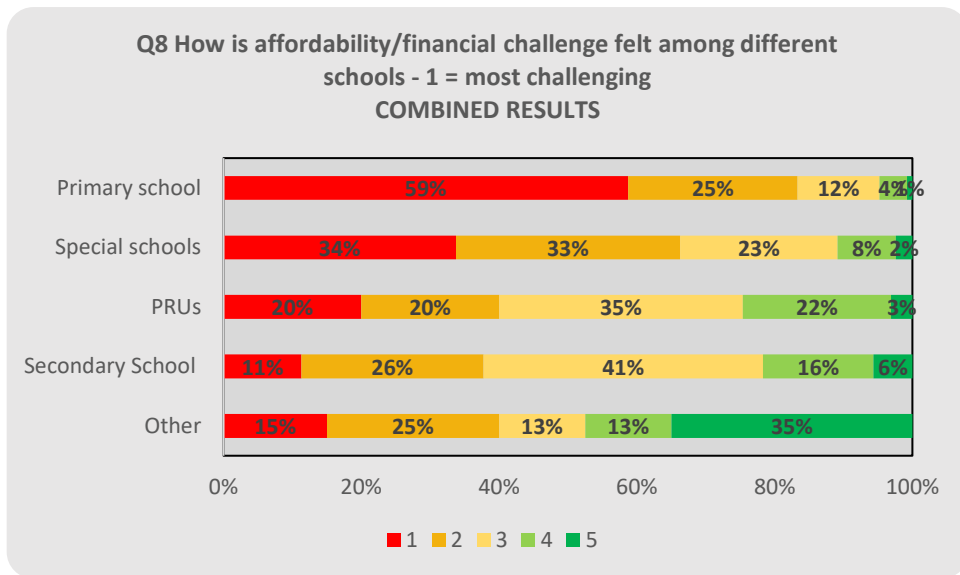
21. We asked our stakeholders to indicate the size of any total affordability gap, reminding them of the additional money given to schools this year that takes into account the NJC LGS pay award applicable to the majority of support staff pay. For trend purposes, we identified a reduction of 26 per cent from the 2023/24 responses that indicated an affordability gap of more than five per cent, which may be a positive result of the additional funding that covers the teachers' and support staff pay awards this year. However, out of the total 86 respondents (54 LAs) that indicated they had an affordability gap for 2024/25, 44 per cent of those respondents indicated a gap of between 1.1 and three per cent (see Graph 4). More concerning is the 17 per cent telling us they have an affordability gap between 3.1 and 5 per cent.



Graph 4

Types of schools with a disproportionate impact

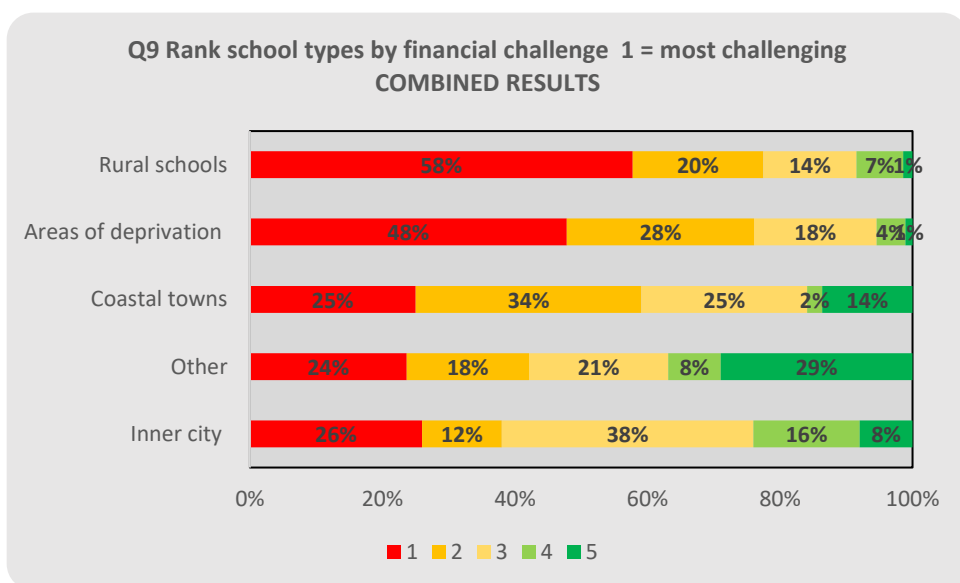
22. Our stakeholders across both ATs and LAs indicated that, as shown in previous years, primary schools (59 per cent) and special schools (34 per cent) continue to feel the most significant financial challenges. We hear anecdotally that combined with the need for a higher pupil-to-staff ratio, one of the other difficulties that an increasing number of primary schools, face is the number of pupils falling and/or predicted to fall due to population trends in certain areas across England. This has a knock-on impact on the level of funding a school attracts whilst still needing to fund a good teacher in every classroom.



Graph 5

Geographic locations with the biggest estimated challenges

23. Exploring the question of whether there might be any regional impact on a school's ability to fund this award, our survey confirmed previous trends indicating that rural schools (58 per cent), followed by schools in areas with high levels of deprivation (48 per cent) were the geographical places most likely to have the most significant financial challenge. Looking at the AT results in isolation, they include schools in coastal towns as also facing the most significant financial challenge in implementing the pay awards in their trust. These differences in results will be influenced by the overall geographical profile/makeup of schools within either the AT or LA that responded. However, the results have been consistent over several years and do suggest that the local economy and area surrounding a school will impact its financial health.

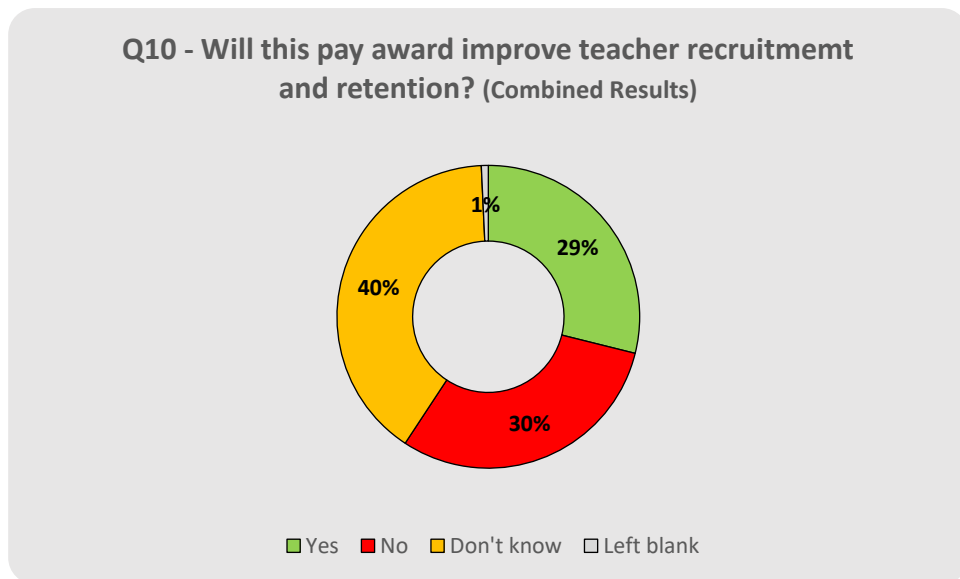


Graph 6

24. Therefore, noting earlier comments about the use of averages in calculating affordability, NEOST asks the Government to provide adequate financial support so that all schools, including primary schools and special schools, can implement the pay award without having to make significant adjustments that are likely to affect the quality of education.

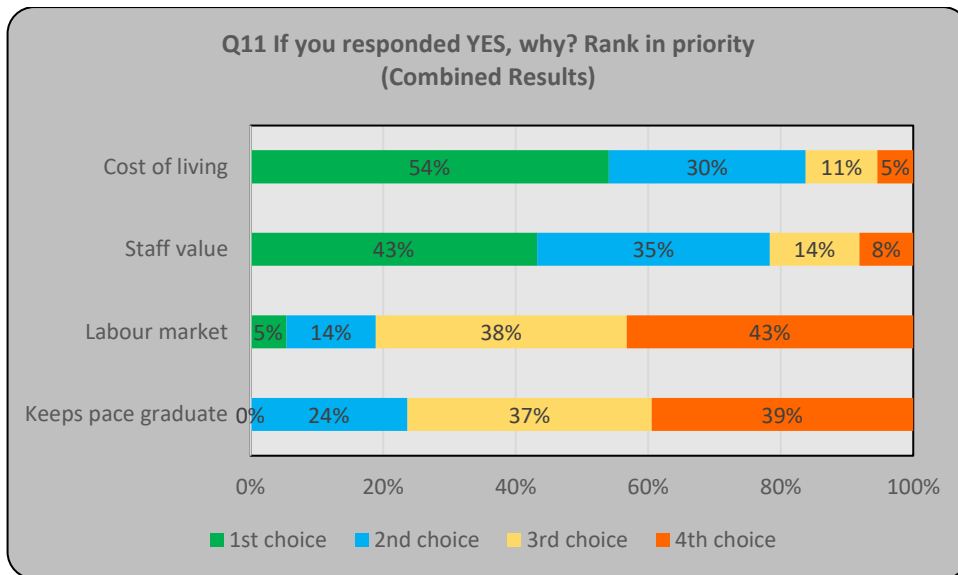
Impact of pay award on levels of recruitment and retention

25. It is well established that pay is not the only motivating factor for the retention of teachers, albeit the issue has become a feature of heightened industrial debate in recent years. While recognising that work is on-going to explore the issues of wellbeing and workload within schools, we wanted to test whether this pay award would positively support improved recruitment and retention in schools. Forty per cent of responses indicated it was too early (to predict if the proposed pay award for experienced teachers and leaders would support improved recruitment and retention rates within schools, (see Graph 7). The remaining 59 per cent were somewhat split between predicting that it would help (29 per cent) or not (30 per cent). Therefore, a mixed response suggests that overall, it is too early to predict if the proposed pay award will improve recruitment and retention rates at this stage. That said, NEOST notes the calmer industrial relations environment, and on-going commitment to work on additional issues that may form part of the solution to this challenge.



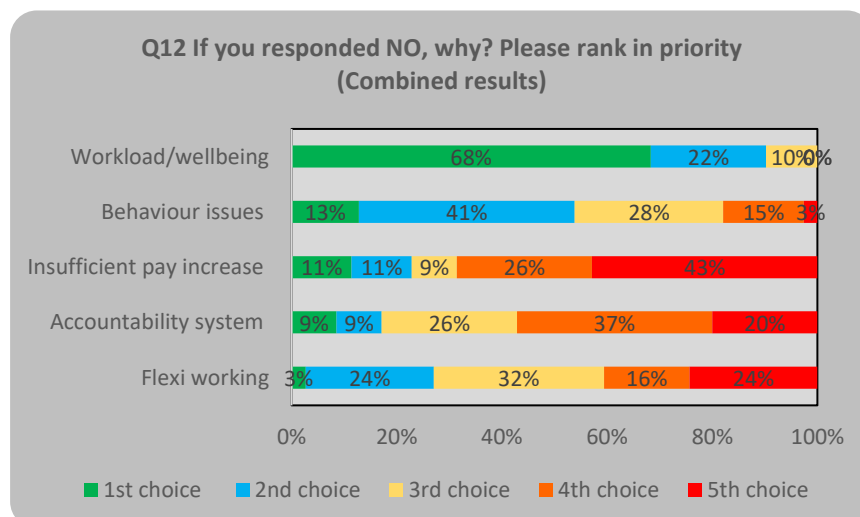
Graph 7

26. Exploring in further detail where the pay award supports recruitment and retention, the 39 respondents saying it would improve recruitment and retention levels cited the 'cost of living' (54 per cent), followed by anticipated increases in the levels of teachers' and leaders' sense of being valued (43 per cent), as the top two reasons (See Graph 8)



Graph 8

27. As anticipated, the 31 respondents indicating that while a sufficient pay award would go some way to improving recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders, those other factors (particularly levels of workload and wellbeing 68 per cent), are more significant considerations. NEOST is committed to working with the Government and unions in designing and implementing interventions that support improvements in reducing workload and improving the wellbeing of teachers and school leaders, we recognise that improvements in those complex issues are likely to have a significant positive impact on the recruitment and retention of good teachers and leaders.

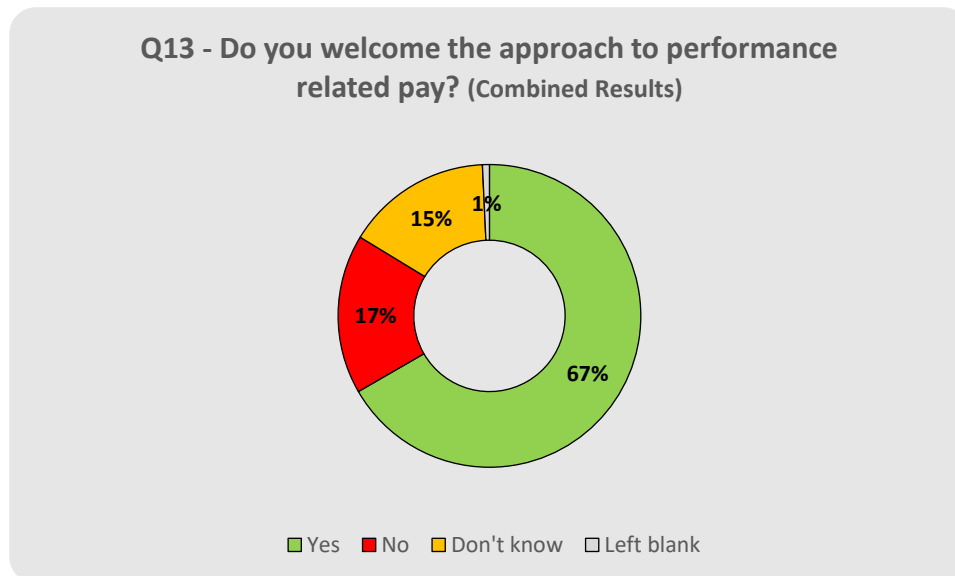


Graph 9

Wider proposed changes in Draft STPCD 2024

Removal of the requirement to operate a performance-related pay model

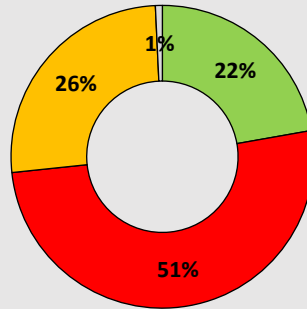
28. The vast majority (67 per cent) of respondents welcomed the removal of the requirement to operate a performance-related pay (PRP) model, therefore giving employers flexibility to adopt a performance management model that is most effective for their school(s). See Graph 10.



Graph 10

29. The majority (51 per cent) of responses indicated that they did not think their schools would retain their existing PRP model (Graph 11). The two main reasons given for this decision were based on taking the lead from the draft STPCD 2024 as well as indicating that it was used sparingly to differentiate or hold back pay in any event. Only seven per cent did so on the basis that it 'may help to reduce workload,' which is what we have been hearing anecdotally from our stakeholders and have fed back to Departmental officials.
30. The reasons given by the 22 per cent (Graph 11) of respondents who suggested their schools would retain their PRP model were roughly split between wanting to keep a proven performance management model and having insufficient time to implement the necessary changes. These responses highlight the need for local flexibility as well as the importance of fully consulting employers to understand the time that schools need to consider, consult, and implement any appropriate changes for their school(s).

Q14 - Are you anticipating your schools will retain their performance related pay model? (Combined Results)



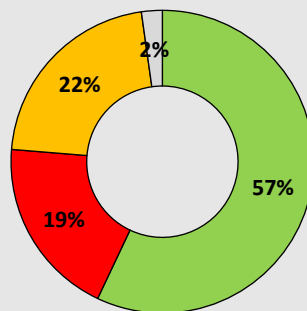
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know ■ Left blank

Graph 11

Proposed flexibility to take Planning, Preparation and Assessment time outside of the school's premises.

31. The majority (57 per cent) of respondents welcomed the proposed flexibility within the STPCD that would enable, where reasonably appropriate and agreed by both the individual teacher and the relevant body, PPA time to be taken in one weekly unit and to be taken away from the school site. See Graph 12. The importance of including proposed changes into the STRB's remit is an important principle as it may have provided a more explicit evidence base that the change will support improvements in recruitment and retention of teachers, giving NEOST more time to engage employers so they fully understand the proposed changes and any implementation issues as well as mutual benefits that could be gained.

Q17 - PPA Time - Do you welcome the draft wording within STPCD 2024? (Combined Results)

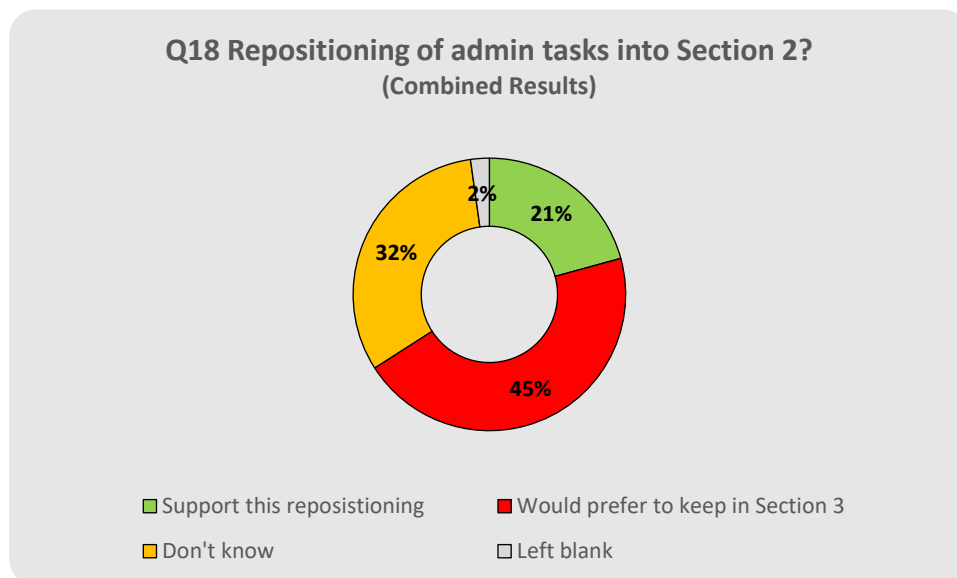


■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know ■ Left blank

Graph 12

Administrative tasks that teachers should not routinely be expected to do

32. The draft STPCD 2024 includes the repositioning of Annex 5, which details the guidance for school employers to determine what administration tasks teachers should not routinely be asked to do. As shown in Graph 13, 45 per cent of respondents indicated they would have preferred that the reference to the guidance stayed under the guidance index (and not as proposed, in the main body of the document under paragraph 52.8 of the draft STPCD 2024). Noting that maintained schools are legally obliged to follow the STPCD, employers have raised concerns about the guidance being interpreted literally in all instances. Therefore, without understanding the context the school is operating in this could potentially cause unnecessary operational and/or local industrial relation issues. This is particularly likely in smaller schools. Again, NEOST's preferred approach would have been to include this proposed change in the STRB's remit or undertake a separately smaller consultation.



Graph 13

Future STRB remits – NEOST suggestions for future consideration:

33. The NEOST position remains that future remits should prioritise a review of enabling Upper Pay Range (UPR) teachers to voluntarily move back to the Main Pay Range (MPR) within their existing school as well as a review of salary safeguarding arrangements. This is a long-held view that our stakeholders have raised for many years, which they argue could add an element of flexibility to career cycle of teachers.

34. NEOST, therefore, invites DfE to discuss this in more detail, to inform the prioritisation of the above reviews (movement from UPR to MPR pay and pay safeguarding) and to be actively involved in early discussions involving careful consideration of the phasing and timing of any agreed review. NEOST accepts that these changes may be controversial with teaching trade unions. However, our stakeholders are very clear that a significant number of teachers request to move from UPR to MPR for numerous reasons, including as part of their retirement plan or well-being and currently, even if employers wanted to agree to the teacher's request, they are legally unable to as a result of the current STPCD regulations. To that end, we remain committed to exploring ways to allay concerns to reach a consensus on this issue.
35. Any agreed future reforms/changes will likely involve system-wide changes that LAs and ATs will need adequate time to plan, cost, consult and implement any proposed new arrangements, so, again, we ask that this is a factor in any future remit timescales.

Consultation process and timings

36. NEOST welcomes the government's publication of the STRB's remit for 2025 on 30 September, earlier than in the last few years. The teachers' pay award has a statutory effective date of 1st September - aligned with the start of the school academic year. It is, therefore, essential for employers to have all the information needed to budget, plan, and use their flexibility to set effective workforce development programmes that align with organisational priorities and affordability. LAs and all school employers have informed us of the difficulties they experience reviewing their pay policies in a managed and timely fashion due to previous delayed consultation and publication of the final STPCD well after 1 September.
37. Therefore, NEOST welcomes the government's commitment to a return to an effective consultation process which takes account of prudent financial budgeting and reporting requirements, allowing for planning and school closure periods.