

# The Teacher Workload Report





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The UK is in the midst of its worst ever teacher shortage, and excessive workload is one of the most oft-cited reasons for teachers leaving the profession. A combination of budget cuts, increased marking and administrative tasks, and higher expectations around standardised testing have pushed some teachers to breaking point. In this report, we'll explore the issue of workloads and look at how schools can help tackle it.

In 2017, two and a half thousand teachers and senior school leaders were surveyed nationwide to find out more about how teacher workload was impacting on their personal and professional lives – and the results were sobering.

For example, many teachers reported working over 50 hours a week, with only 40% of that time spent on actual teaching. As a result, 43% of teachers have cited workload as the reason they plan to quit within the next five years, and this increases to almost half of those under the age of 35. Teachers reported regularly sacrificing time with friends and family, as well as having little time for hobbies and being unable to take enough time off to fully recover from illness.

In March 2018, the Government started to take some steps to address the issue with Education Secretary Damian Hinds pledging to strip away workload that doesn't add value in the classroom, and to give teachers the time to focus on teaching. In July, the Department for Education released a Teacher Workload Toolkit for schools to use to start tackling the workload issue which included recommendations about how education technology can play a big part in this process.

It is clear that teachers are struggling, but the vast majority would welcome increased usage of technology to help with workload reduction including software that cuts down on admin time and allows for more flexibility in working locations. With only 13% of SLT members surveyed positive about the future of teaching, this is an issue that needs to be tackled right now, and something that we are especially passionate about helping schools and trusts to improve.

### **Key findings of the Teacher Workload Survey:**

- Just 3% of teachers and 6% of SLTs believe they have a healthy work-life balance
- 97% of teachers are suffering, or have suffered, mentally or physically as a direct result of workload
- 80% of teachers have missed important life events due to workload
- 76% of teachers reported that senior leadership team expectations had a considerable impact on their workload
- SLTs acknowledge the pressures of workload on staff at their school, with 78% reporting workload has
  an impact on their teachers' family, 70% finding that their workload caused them to suffer from anxiety
  and 69% having sleep related issues
- 65% of teachers are positive about the potential afforded by software to help them work more efficiently
- Only 13% of SLTs feel positive about the future of teaching



### 1. INTRODUCTION

We are currently in the midst of one of the worst teacher shortages we've ever seen. Cuts to funding and an upsurge in teacher workload have left many questioning their place in the profession.

In addition to the increase in planning, marking and feedback – let alone taking classes, teachers are increasingly having to prove their worth, with added pressures coming from both the Government as well as school Senior Leadership Teams.

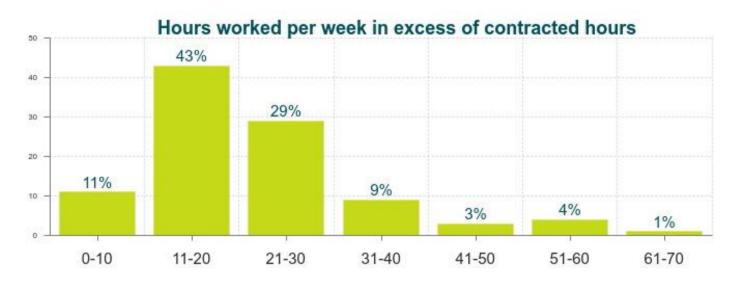
The data for the 2017 Teacher Workload Survey was collected via two online surveys aimed at teachers and senior leadership team (SLT)

members across the UK. In total, **2,497** education professionals were surveyed from a mix of primary and secondary schools. The teachers surveyed had spent an average of 18 years in the profession, while SLT members had spent an average of 21 years working in education.

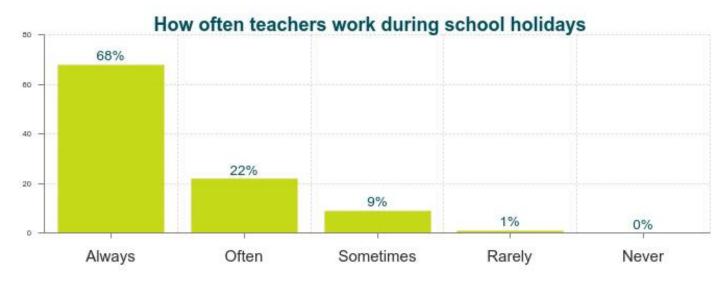
## The survey explored the following areas of teacher workloads:

- Where this workload is originating from
- How teachers feel their workload is affecting their life
- If teachers and senior leadership believe the DfE's guidance and advice will reduce teacher workloads
- If technology is helping to reduce workload
- If teachers themselves believe a work-life balance can exist

### 1.1. TEACHER WORKLOADS:

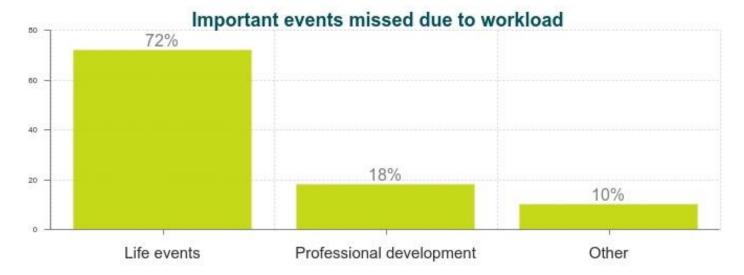


In a typical week, teachers said they worked an average of 24 hours over their contracted terms. Considering the average working week in the UK is 37.5 hours, teachers are working more than three days per week over their contracted terms, or over eight 'working days' a week in total.



90% of teachers say they regularly work in school holidays while just 9% sometimes work during the holidays. Only 1% said they rarely did it and fewer than 1% of teachers (rounded down to zero on the graph) said they never work during school holidays.

The fact that teachers are having to work for long periods with little time to relax and recover is having a detrimental effect on their lives and wellbeing. 14% of teachers have missed out on professional development opportunities due to workload, suggesting that it could be having a detrimental effect on standards.



Over half of teachers claim to have missed important life events as a consequence of high workloads. Many are missing out on leisure time, as well as time with their friends and families, and their relationships, health and wellbeing are suffering as a consequence.

### 1.2. WHAT IMPORTANT EVENTS HAVE YOU MISSED DUE TO WORKLOAD?

"I only see my 1 year old for 1-2 hours in the week. General socialising with friends in the week, I wouldn't consider going out on a school night."

"Never feel I have enough time for myself and family in general. I have school always on my mind and feel that if I allow myself time then I'm stressed to complete other tasks for school. I find that at family gatherings my mind wanders onto the list of things I need to do for school and I find myself having to leave early!"

"Spending time with family and friends like a normal human being."

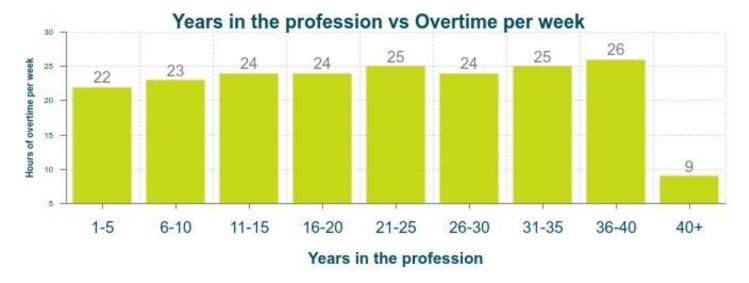
"I have to miss my own children's parent evenings, plays and sports days."

"I rarely have the opportunity to spend time with friends as I always have something that 'needs' to be done. My friends have started to anticipate this and have taken to not inviting me because they already know I can't come. I love my job so much but it is ostracising me from life."

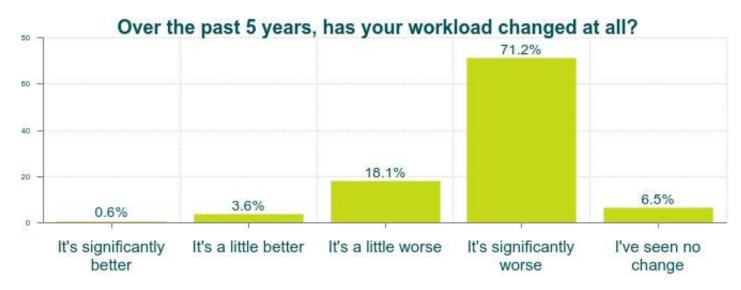
"My Grandson's first football match for his team. Joining the family for Sunday lunch. Not big things, just spending time with family."

It seems like there is nothing in a teacher's personal life protected from workload. Other teachers said they'd missed out on weddings, funerals, volunteering, holidays, physiotherapy, church attendance, medical appointments and time off to recover from illness.

Experienced teachers tell those new to the profession that it does get easier in terms of planning and marking, yet the survey found that the longer you spend in the profession, the more hours' overtime you work per week, perhaps implying that the change is not in workload per se but the mindset about tackling it.



This isn't uncommon as responsibility in any role generally grows over time, but new teachers (1-5 years) still work over 20 additional hours per week. First year teachers reported working an average of 16 hours' overtime. Unsurprisingly, 43% of England's teachers want to leave the profession within the next five years, citing workload as the primary reason.



Responses suggest that it hasn't always been this way, with 56% acknowledging that workload hasn't always been an issue. Teachers have said their workload has changed due to a number of reasons.

### Administrative tasks

- Too much admin
- Increased paperwork
- More time on tracking, planning, reporting
- More time marking
- Writing moderation

# Student supervision

- Having to deal with individual issues
- Monitoring students
- Bigger class sizes

### **Evidence for SLT and Ofsted**

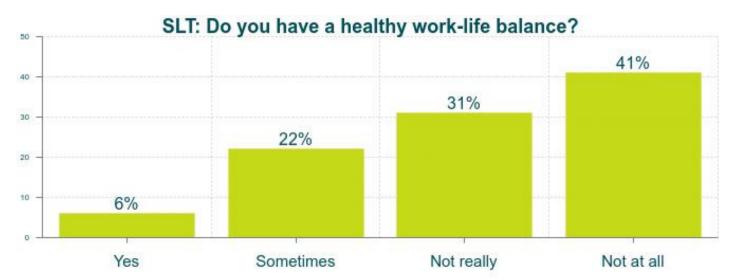
- More reporting
- New strategies for marking and feedback due to Ofsted
- Requiring more evidence to protect yourself
- Accountability and government pressure
- Having to provide evidence

### Other

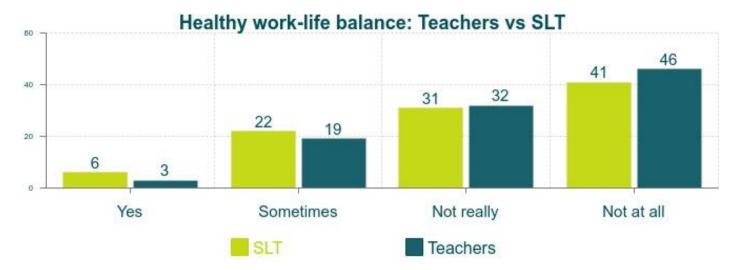
- Changes to the curriculum
- Commitments outside the classroom
- Parental contact

According to the survey, 30% of teachers cite a rise in marking as the main reason for an increased workload. 22% said the issues were to do with the amount of data management. Another 22% cited admin tasks as the reason for their increased workload, including planning (13%).

### 1.3. SENIOR LEADERSHIP WORKLOADS



Over 70% of SLTs responded that they did not have a work life balance, which, although slightly lower, is still broadly similar to the teachers' responses. While more SLTs believed they have or sometimes have a work-life balance, the majority still don't believe their work-life balance is a healthy one.



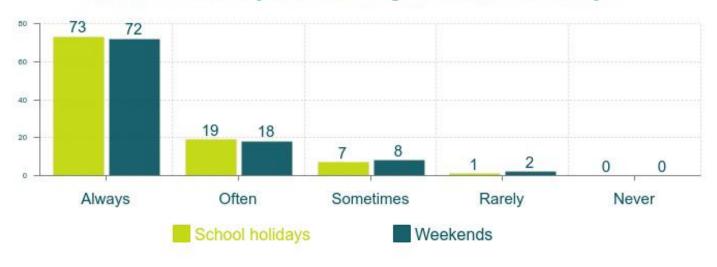
### 1.4. HOW HAVE YOU AND YOUR STAFF BEEN AFFECTED BY WORKLOAD?

"I have actually suffered from weight gain! My school does not see the link between workload and ill health and tends to put more pressure on us to 'frighten' us into not being off sick."

"Frustration at not being able to do more fun things in free time because work days are so long. It is also really hard to relax when you know there is still work you should be doing at the end of an 11-12 hour day."

Like teachers, SLTs' most time-consuming tasks are marking (43%), planning (32%) and data (27%), with 21% including meetings in their most time-consuming tasks, as well as assessments (18%) and staff issues (18%).

## SLT: How often do you work during weekends and holidays?



The majority of SLTs also find themselves working through school holidays - 73% 'always' do, 19% 'often' work throughout the holidays and 6% 'sometimes' work during school holidays. Less than 1% of respondents said 'rarely', while just one SLT member replied saying they 'never' work through school holidays.

Asked if they found themselves working at weekends, 90% said they 'always' or 'often' worked at weekends. 8% said 'sometimes', 2% 'rarely' and again, just one SLT said 'never'.

### The average time in the role from SLTs that responded was 21 years. During this time:

43% said workload had always been an issue

- 52% said workload hadn't always been an issue
- 5% reported workload had never been an issue

The majority of SLTs (61%) perceived workload to be significantly worse compared to five years ago. In comparison, less than 1% reported it was significantly better. While 52% say that they have had no issue in the past, the problem has intensified over the past five years.

Those who said there had been a change said the following issues contributed to their workloads.

### What about your workload has changed?

- Constant paperwork, in-depth planning, in-depth marking and feedback
- A greater amount of assessment data
- Increased pressure of student outcomes
- Parents' attitudes and expectations have meant more work to be done
- Day to day urgent staffing issues
- Reductions in staff mean increase in workload on those who are left

The responses SLTs gave were similar to teachers, as they too struggle the most with marking, planning and data management. One of the reasons given by teachers for increased workloads was SLT expectations. Investigating SLT responses, it is apparent that they too also have to manage the following expectations:

- Uncertainty around what is expected e.g. to meet Ofsted requirements, deadlines & expectations
- Increased pressure from government
- Changes to the curriculum
- More external demands
- More evidence to support accountability

### 1.5. REDUCING TEACHER WORKLOADS

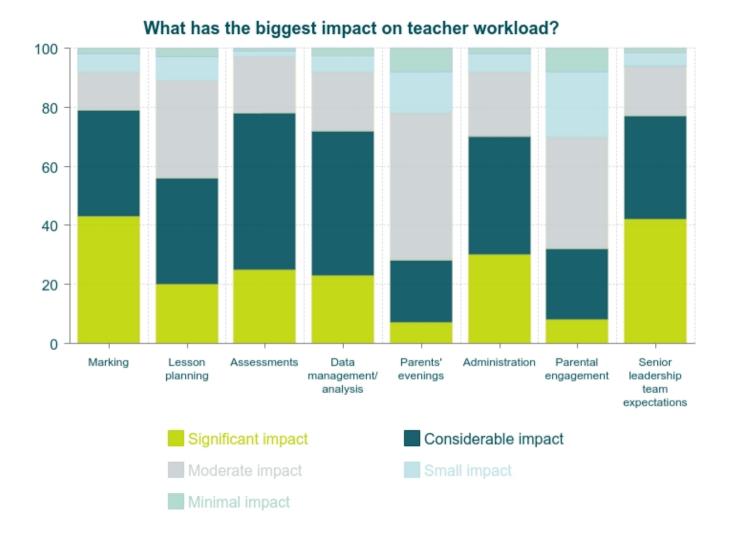
While the rhetoric coming out of the Government around teacher workloads has somewhat strengthened in the past 12 months, they first began acknowledging the issue back in 2014 with the Teacher Workload Challenge. The Workload Challenge survey asked teachers to share their experiences, ideas and solutions on how to tackle unnecessary and unproductive workload. The report surveyed senior leaders, who said they used different strategies to manage and plan professional time.

Following the Workload Challenge, the DfE launched three independent workload review groups which produced detailed reports offering advice for teachers on the tasks that were the biggest contributor to their workloads:

- Marking policy
- · Planning and teaching resources
- Data management

Our survey confirmed that these were indeed the biggest tasks for teachers, with 79% saying marking has considerable impact on workloads. 78% also said assessments impacted their workload considerably.

76% of teachers reported that senior leadership team expectations had considerable impact on their workload. After that, 72% said data management caused a considerable amount of work for them, and 55% agreed lesson planning also contributed to their workload.

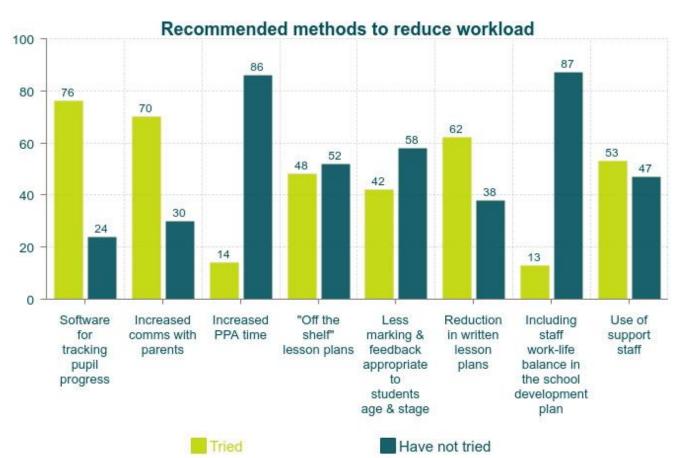


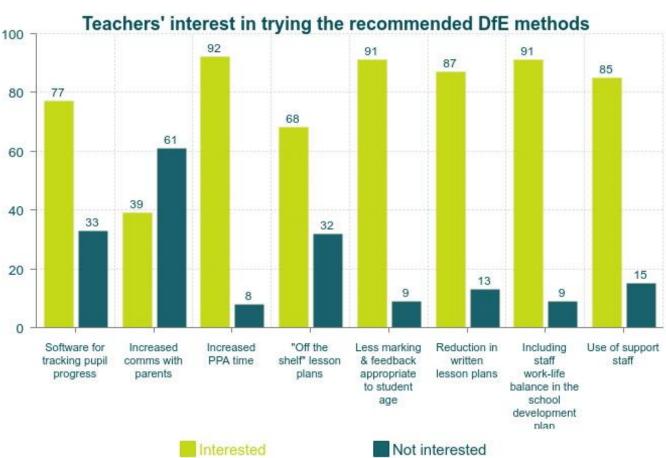
The DfE report surveyed senior leaders, who said they used different strategies to try and manage and plan professional time.

### The most common mechanisms included:

- Protected blocks of non-teaching time
- Working collaboratively with other staff to plan work and using existing schemes of work
- Associated lesson plans which can be adapted by teaching staff

Senior leaders also agreed that their school working environment allows them to collaborate effectively and that teaching assistants are effectively deployed. As a result of this feedback, the DfE provided suggestions to help unnecessary aspects of teachers' workloads. We asked teachers whether they had tried these methods and whether they worked, or whether they would like to try the suggested solutions.





### Workload strategies that were the most successful included:

- Reducing written lesson plans
- Use of support staff
- Increased PPA time
- Less marking & feedback, appropriate to students' age and development stage

### The strategies that teachers were most eager to try included:

- Software for tracking pupil progress
- Increased PPA time
- Less marking & feedback, appropriate to students' age and development stage
- Incorporation of staff work-life balance into the school development plan
- Use of support staff



# 2. WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE 12 MONTHS SINCE THE REPORT? – PRESS COVERAGE AND COMMENTARY

The above research was conducted and published in 2017 at a time when the teacher workload crisis had been bubbling away for several years. The Groupcall research was one of a number of studies and articles looking at teacher workload in the UK.

Around the time the Groupcall Teacher Workload report was being finalised, The National Audit office were reporting that tens of thousands of teachers were leaving England's schools before reaching retirement age, and headteachers were struggling to fill the gaps. "The failure of the department to get to grips with the number of

teachers leaving puts additional pressure on schools faced with rising numbers of children needing a school place and the teachers to teach them" according to the report.

There were even stories of teachers going part time, just so they could use their free days for unpaid preparation and assessment.

This was further pressed home by the National Education Union, whose own survey released in March 2018 found even more damning results than the Groupcall survey – namely that a full 81% of teachers said they had considered leaving teaching because of workload.

Articles about workload have been a regular occurrence in the Education press, with the DfE even sponsoring the "Reducing Teacher Workload" section of the Times Educational Supplement. The most common theme is the amount of time spent around planning and resourcing lessons.

Further media coverage paints a picture of a workload situation that is getting worse, not better. The Guardian reported in May 2018 that:

"Every teacher knows someone who has left the profession, retired early, had a breakdown, or been signed off work with stress. Just under 40,000 teachers quit the profession in 2016 – the latest figures available – representing about 9% of the workforce, according to government figures. And not enough of them are being replaced – there is now a shortfall of 30,000 classroom teachers, particularly at secondary level, where 20% of teacher training vacancies are unfilled."

### 2.1. THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

The Government clearly has a big task on their hands in dealing with workload, and it is unclear how much impact they are having so far.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) says the DfE does not have a coherent plan to tackle teacher retention and development, saying in a report that the number of qualified teachers leaving the profession - for reasons other than retirement - increased from 6% (25,260) of the qualified workforce in 2011 to 8% (34,910) in 2016.

It says the issue is particularly critical in England's secondary schools, with the number of teachers falling by 10,800 (5%) between 2010 and 2016, from 219,000 to 208,200.

This comes at a time when secondary school pupil numbers are set to increase by 540,000 (19%) between 2017 and 2025.

### 2.2. DFE WORKLOAD GUIDE AND THE 'EDUCATION REVOLUTION'

On the 21st of July 2018, just in time for the summer break, the DfE came out with the Workload Reduction toolkit aimed to provide practical advice for school leaders and teachers to help review and reduce workload. The toolkit encouraged school leaders to take full stock of teacher workloads and encouraged them to put strategies in place to help reduce them.

Whether school leaders have the time and inclination to put these strategies into place will remain to be seen across the next few years, but given the Government's response so far, the pressure has largely fallen on school leaders (and their shrinking budgets) to make a difference.

This was further confirmed in August 2018 when Minister for Education Damian Hinds announced a call for technology providers to come with an 'education revolution' in classrooms. In making this call, Hinds asked education technology providers to help develop innovative teaching practices, cutting teacher workload and promoting lifelong learning.

- Teaching practices to support access, inclusion, and improved learning outcomes for all
- Assessment processes, making assessment more effective and efficient
- Methods for delivery of teacher training and development by upgrading educator support so they can learn and develop more flexibly
- Administration processes to reduce the burden of 'non-teaching' tasks
- Solutions to lifelong learning to help those who have left the formal education system to get the best from online learning

Hinds reiterated this further in November 2018 with a joint letter sent to all school leaders, co-signed by organisations including Ofsted and the Confederation of schools reiterating his commitment to clamping down on teacher workloads. The Government is clearly putting the onus on schools and trusts to figure out the workload problem themselves. However, the good news is that edtech products for many of these workload issues already exist – and teachers are ready and willing to use them.



# 3. STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING WORKLOAD AND KEEPING TEACHERS IN TEACHING

Damian Hinds' call for an increase in the use of effective technology compliments what the Groupcall research found. Teachers are largely ready and willing to use software solutions to help tackle workload issues, but historical hurdles of poorly chosen technology and a lack of change management need to be overcome.

Teachers were asked about their experience with software, both to help complete planning, marking and data tasks to reduce their workload as well as how flexible it allowed them to be.

- 65% of teachers are positive about having more software to help them work more efficiently.
- 64% of teachers said they had appropriate technology in place allowing them to work effectively from home. This gives them access to school systems to input the data into the school's MIS, allowing them some flexibility on where they work the approximate 24 hours over their contracted time.
- 70% of teachers who didn't have the right means to work from home and had to work during the school
  holidays said they would welcome technology to help increase flexibility. As the EdTech industry
  matures, more schools are benefitting from technology supporting their administrative tasks.
- 73% of SLTs said they have appropriate technology that allows them to work from home, should they wish, with access to the school's systems.

Software provides major opportunities to optimise teachers' workflows in schools as well as allowing them to work more flexibly, which has become commonplace in the corporate environment.

Of those who said they had a healthy work-life balance, 64% said they had the appropriate technology in place to allow them to work from home. Before significant changes can be seen in schools, the implementation of technology needs to be embraced.

### **Embracing technology in schools**

- Accept technology's positive influence in teaching and supporting staff
- Build the technical infrastructure to help technology run efficiently
- Develop a culture to help staff innovate and adapt to change
- Ensure sufficient training is given to staff to help them in their roles
- Ensure the software serves a purpose
- Would staff want to use the software out of choice if it wasn't a requirement?
- Which operational or workflow problem does the software solve?
- Will the software help teachers save time?
- Can it integrate well with existing software and processes?

Using technology efficiently to reduce workload

Try not to enter data twice

- Refrain from manual data entry
- Where practical, automate data reporting
- Create consistent channels for communications

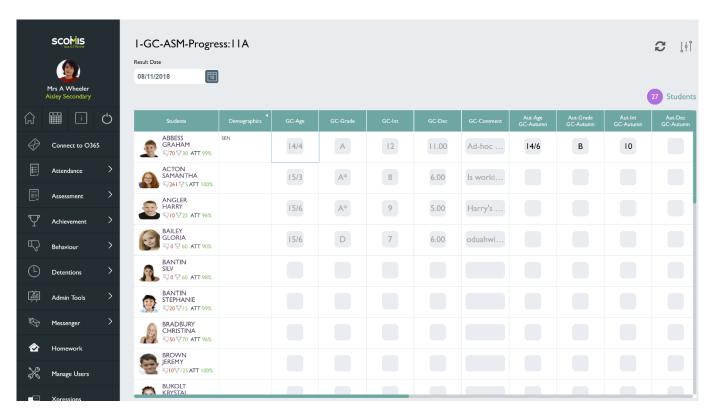
Staff are a schools' most valuable resource. Healthy and well-motivated staff will go the extra mile, provide commitment and creativity, take fewer sick days and take pride in their role.

The DfE has highlighted several areas which schools could focus on to reduce workload;

- Using technology effectively
- Feedback and marking
- Curriculum Planning
- Data management
- Communications
- Managing change
- Performance management and staff support

While the DfE has offered suggestions and ideas to reduce workload the implementation is very much down to schools as every school is different and so the solutions will be too.

To reduce workload, we must first recognise that this is an issue for all staff and not just teachers. Everyone has it in their power to reduce their workload and that of their colleagues.



Some questions we can ask ourselves about the work we are asking staff to do:

- Is it necessary?
- What are we hoping to achieve?
- What are the consequences of not doing it?

- Are we doing it the most effective way?
- How do we know?

When introducing change, the chance of success will increase if time is invested in planning. The DfE has produced a number of 'toolkits' to help structure planning.

Talk to your staff - they are the experts in the job they do. They may see a problem differently than you e.g. 73% of SLTs said staff have the appropriate technology to allow them to work from home where only 64% of teachers said they had. Over two thirds of teachers who didn't have it wish they had.

Some changes can be introduced easily, and the benefits are seen quickly. Other changes will require greater planning and need a shift in culture. What needs changing and what can be changed will vary from school to school as will the rate of change.

Make it explicit what the benefits are to change the way work is carried out. This encourages 'buy in' from staff e.g. by taking your register electronically:

- it will take you less time
- it reduces the chances of mistakes being made as data is entered only once
- you will have an easily accessible record of attendance for consultations with parents
- it will be easier to spot trends of absence patterns
- you will improve safeguarding by allowing support staff to make first day contact earlier
- it will save administration time as data is no longer required to be input by staff in the school office

The Scomis Desktop has the added benefit of working on a portable device allowing you to take a register wherever there is internet access and you can also add assessment marks, behaviour and achievement points, view student records and marksheets. This means staff can enter data immediately as they sit with the student rather than making a note and having to update the records later.

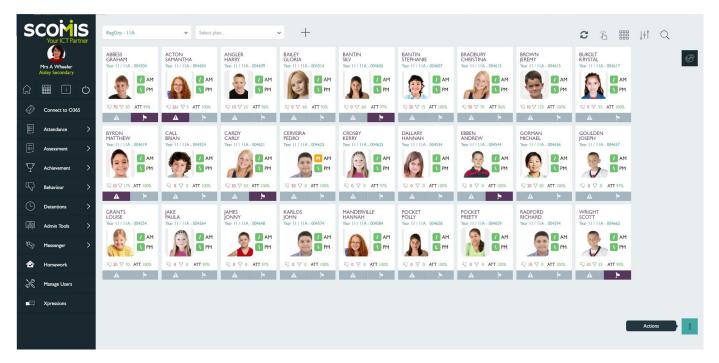
When changing working methods make sure that enough time is set aside for staff training. This support will build trust between staff members and the leadership team. Appropriate training and support will help ensure that staff have the right skills and will work more effectively. This investment in time and money at the start is often paid back by cost and time savings later as well reducing stress in the workforce.

Build in time to review the changes to ensure they are giving the desired benefits to all those involved. Even the best laid plans will require fine-tuning!

### 3.1. REDUCING WORKLOAD WITH THE SCOMIS DESKTOP

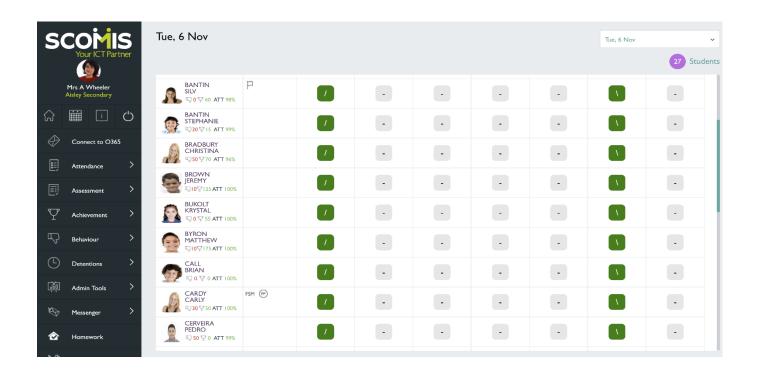
The Scomis Desktop grants freedom from the confines of school machines to teachers, allowing MIS data to be accessed in an easy manner, wherever they are; be it at home or on the go. Its automatic synchronisation with MIS can save hours of administration time, allowing teachers to focus on the areas that need their attention most. The Scomis Desktop can be used out in the field, on school trips, in emergency situations and more. Its mobility and accessibility make it a must-have for helping to reduce teacher workload.

Staff can also view timetables and reports and spot data trends relating to attendance, achievement and behaviour to help improve student outcomes.



The Scomis Desktop is just one of the many services available from Scomis to help schools be more effective and efficient with their Management Information Systems. To explore how we might be able to help your school please contact one of our knowledgeable SIMS experts.

Scomis partners with schools to offer innovative, high quality ICT services that add value and matter to our customers. Our aim is to help our customers achieve effective and efficient use of ICT that delivers best value and supports improved outcomes for all. Based in Devon, we work with over 730 schools across 27 local authorities nationwide.



### REFERENCES AND LINKS

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# The Teacher Workload Report



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