



National College for  
Teaching & Leadership

# Workload challenge research projects: overall summary

Research report

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# Executive summary

## 1. Introduction

Three reports from the Independent Teacher Review Groups (DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2016b; and DfE, 2016c) included findings from the DfE Workload Challenge Survey in which 56% of respondents indicated that data management caused unnecessary workload (DfE, 2016a, 6), 38% identified detailed lesson and weekly planning as adding an unnecessary burden to their workload (DfE, 2016b, 6), and 53% thought that the excessive nature, depth and frequency of marking was burdensome (DfE, 2016c, 6). The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) commissioned 11 school-based research projects to investigate practical and sustainable solutions for tackling teacher workload and provide evidence of impact of successful workload reduction strategies related to data management, planning and marking.

The aim of this review is to analyse the reports from the 11 commissioned research projects, and a further independent research report, to determine the methods trialled and resulting outcomes. The independent report is from a consortium of schools that did not receive NCTL funding, however, the consortium decided that their project was important to the schools and proceeded with the research without the funding. The schools submitted their report to the NCTL and this was published alongside the others due to the quality of the work and the importance of the findings.

## 2. Methods

The analysis was conducted by developing a report recording card with headings to capture the key points from each of the research reports; this was trialled with a sample of the reports, then amended to include additional headings. The report recording card was then used to capture findings relating to: the methods trialled to reduce unnecessary workload; their impact on teacher workload and pupil outcomes; factors which facilitated and challenged practices associated with reducing workload; and recommendations for policy and practice. Findings were analysed in the context of three distinct areas - data management, planning and marking.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Overview of research reports

Eleven research projects (ten of the commissioned projects and the independent project) were conducted in existing networks of schools, comprising of between three and 25 schools; primary, secondary and, in a small number of cases, middle schools and special

schools were involved in these projects. The remaining project was conducted in one school with Key Stage 5 teachers and pupils. Four of the research projects focused on reducing teacher workload around data management; five around marking; and three around planning.

Typically, the projects were conducted in a relatively short time frame of 2-3 months and, while some project outcomes provide an indication of different kinds of impact associated with the interventions implemented, the limited time frame makes it difficult to make claims about the long-term implications of the interventions on teacher workload, or to attribute changes in pupil attainment solely to the intervention. It must also be acknowledged that relatively small numbers of participants were involved in each project; thus, participants' views may not represent the view of others in their schools, and are unlikely to be generalisable to wider school contexts.

### **3.2. Findings relating to reducing teacher workload around data management**

Within the research projects four different approaches were adopted as follows:

1. *Identifying key performance indicators and developing a bespoke tracking system (see Lighthouse School Partnership report).* Teachers worked collaboratively across schools in year group teams to identify key learning objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) for different subject areas. A bespoke tracking system was then developed for entering and extracting data in the assessment process; this allowed data to be entered once and then used multiple times at class, school and MAT levels. Following the introduction of this approach teachers reported a reduction in time taken to assess pupils' learning.

2. *Identifying a set of data collection practices which teachers should 'start, stop, and continue doing' (see Jurassic Coast Teaching School Alliance report).* An interdisciplinary event attended by teachers, three GPs and a consultant surgeon was held so that teachers could learn about medics' policies and practices around data management. Building on insights gained from responses to a teacher questionnaire and interviews, and the interdisciplinary event, teachers created action plans detailing the actions they planned to 'stop, start, and continue doing' in relation to data management within their own school context. This project did not report on findings relating to the implementation of the developed action plans.

3. *Developing a set of recommendations for future practices to reduce workload around data management (see Ashford Teaching Alliance research report).* Findings from teacher on-line questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to gain insights into teachers' perceptions of the purpose, process and validity of data use demands within their school contexts. Drawing on these insights, recommendations were

developed to inform future practices aimed at reducing workload around data management. This project did not report on findings relating to the implementation of these recommendations.

4. *Exploring the use of Turnitin, an on-line essay hand-in platform, which enables pupils to view essay grades and feedback on-line (see Hatcham College report).* The use of Turnitin for handing in essays with Key Stage 5 pupils is currently being trialled in one school. Key Stage 5 teachers have been asked to track the amount of time spent on different data management tasks, and a teacher survey and interviews will be conducted at the end of this academic year to explore the impact of the initiative. Findings from this project have not yet been reported.

Drawing on insights gained from the above four research projects, recommendations for data management policies, and factors to support the reduction of teacher workload associated with data management, were developed.

### **3.2.1. Recommendations for effective policies around data management**

- Consider whether expectations of linear progress and performance management criteria have the potential to discourage accurate reporting, and whether particular data are to be used as proof of good practice rather than as a resource for improving practice.
- Ensure staff: are aware of the purpose and significance of data demands and the inherent limitations of the data; have opportunities to contribute to the creation and use of KPIs and tracking systems; have the statistical literacy required to confidently interpret and use assessment data.
- Ensure assessment reporting cycles allow adequate time to identify and support specific pupils before a new reporting cycle begins, and build in collective staff moderation time prior to, or concurrent with, data entry deadlines.
- Review the culture around data use and if teachers deem tasks a hindrance consider whether the tasks could be removed or whether their purpose and importance could be communicated more clearly.

### **3.2.2. Factors to support the reduction in teacher workload associated with data management**

- Reduce data demands placed on multiple individuals where processes could be completed centrally and shared with relevant staff.
- When using summative assessment, develop clear KPIs and depth descriptors for subjects in each year group so teachers can assess whether

every child has achieved the key learning they need to ensure a smooth transition into their next year group.

- Implement clear summative assessment cycles, ensuring clarity for all staff about the timing and type of summative assessment to be carried out.
- Use tracking systems that reflects the curriculum being taught, and that allows teachers to enter KPIs and/or objectives once and used multiple times within and across schools.

### **3.3. Findings relating to reducing teacher workload around planning**

Three different approaches to reducing unnecessary workload around planning were adopted as follows:

1. *Introducing year group collaborative planning across an existing network of schools (see Transform Trust Teaching School Alliance report).* Teachers spent time in year group networks with peers from other schools collaborating on planning and resource development. This led to improved teacher subject knowledge, the production of high quality planning, and a reduction in teacher workload around planning and resource development.

2. *Shaping and refining the role of subject leaders to those of ‘Collaborative Planning Leaders’ across a school trust of three schools (see Meads Teaching School report).* Subject leaders worked collaboratively to develop specialist subject plans within a clear planning framework for use by teachers across the three schools. Findings suggest that where work plans were developed to include appropriate and stimulating curriculum content, challenging questions, key vocabulary, engaging activities and resource ideas, led to an overall reduction in teacher workload around planning.

3. *Implementing shared planning activities across a secondary, a middle and a primary school (see Whitley Bay High School report).* Middle leaders facilitated teams of teachers in planning a module of lessons by strategically delegating planning activities. Within subject areas staff decided on a focus for their work (e.g. to create a scheme of work or homework booklets) around a specific topic for a particular year group. Work that needed to be covered was then broken down into manageable chunks and allocated to different teachers. Findings suggest that, while shared planning improved the quality of planning, saved planning time and encouraged collaboration and departmental teamwork, some staff over-planned and time still needed to be spent on personalising material to suit individual teaching styles and pupil profiles.

Drawing on insights from the above projects, the following recommendations were developed.

### 3.3.1. Recommendations for effective policies around planning

- Set aside time for shared and/or collaborative planning activities, especially in the early stages.
- Ensure all staff understand the aims and agree from the outset, the fundamentals of the approach to be taken, and divide shared and collaborative planning activities to exploit teachers' specialisms.
- Ensure continuity and progression in pupils' experiences.
- Ensure the technology infrastructure can support any demands that will be made of shared and collaborative planning activities.

### 3.3.2. Factors to support the reduction in teacher workload around planning

- Encourage and support shared and collaborative planning activities so that teachers do not have to plan every lesson from scratch.
- Invest in, or create, high quality schemes of work that can then be personalised by teachers for their individual contexts.

## 3.4. Findings relating to reducing teacher workload around marking

Five research projects (four commissioned projects and the independent project) focused on reducing teacher workload around marking. Within these projects three broad approaches were adopted.

1. *Using high quality verbal feedback to reduce workload around marking (see Aquinas Teaching and Learning Trust report, Candleby Lane TSA report, the report from Tarporley, Helsby and Queen's Park High Schools, and the Independent research report).* Within the research projects several verbal feedback approaches were adopted, including: *Marking in the moment*, in which teachers engage in dialogue with pupils about their learning during lessons; *Marking conferences* in which teachers use weekly success criteria to assess work, and feedback verbally to pupils through either whole class, small group, or 1:1 conference marking; *Minimal marking*, which entails replacing some or all written feedback using a combination of marking in the moment, small group conferencing, and using marking symbols. Other verbal feedback strategies included: *Front end feedback*, in which teachers identify anticipated pupil misconceptions with learning in advance of teaching and address these explicitly in class; *Register feedback*, whereby at the start of lessons individual pupils share with the class a small section of their work as directed by the teacher, and the teacher gives immediate feedback with the addition of further information to shape their next steps; and *Strategic sampling*, whereby teachers select pupils' work at random and 'live marks' this in front of the class, and/or



gives a five-minute flick review of 3-5 books and uses the information gained to inform the next sequence in teaching and learning.

Each of the measures to reduce marking workload through increasing verbal feedback were found to reduce teacher workload, with no negative impact on pupil outcomes. The approaches enabled pupils to immediately apply the new learning during lessons, and this led to an increase in pupils' confidence, self-esteem and motivation as they saw their work improve. However, some pupils expressed a preference for written feedback and for their work to be graded, especially when they had put a lot of effort into their work. Additionally, teachers expressed that finding time for small group and 1:1 marking conferences was challenging as these approaches relied on other pupils in the class being able to work independently.

2. *Supporting pupil peer- and self-assessment skills (see Southwark TSA, Candleby Lane TSA reports, and the Independent research report).* Strategies used to support pupil peer- and self- assessment include: *Marking symbols* which were used by pupils to assess their work and set their 'next steps'; and *Self-assessment grids* with a traffic light system for pupils to indicate how well they have met success criteria. Some self-assessment strategies also included spaces for pupils to write evidence of success criteria and next steps. Teacher ratings in the form of 'Red, Amber, Green' were used to indicate where learning objectives had been met and, on occasions, teachers identified some spelling and grammatical errors and made written comments relating to pupil/peer assessment. Although teachers reported reduced marking workloads without impacting negatively on pupil outcomes, they also reported feeling frustrated by not being able to provide a written model and correct all spelling.

3. *Applying measures to reduce marking through the use of marking symbols (see Candle by Lane TSA report, and the Independent research report).* When using *Marking symbols* in the form of stamps and coloured pens, teachers reported that this led to their marking being more focused and personalised, and a reduced marking workload. Marking symbols also enabled pupils to engage with feedback as they had to think about the meanings attributed to the symbols. Some pupils found symbols motivating, while others found some symbols held negative connotations, engendering feelings of failure. Insights gained from the above projects led to the development of the following recommendations.

### **3.4.1. Recommendations for effective policies around marking**

- Acknowledge that different year groups and subject areas may need to manage marking differently due to the needs of diverse classroom contexts and independence levels of the pupils.
- There must be a direct correlation between marking/feedback and a positive impact on teaching and learning; marking and assessments should

identify pupil needs rather than be used solely for accountability measures. The concept of meaningful, manageable and motivational provides a useful guide to practice.

- Ensure staff understand the school's feedback policy and where possible include all teachers in the development of the policy.
- Involve pupils in marking and assessing their work to encourage greater ownership and responsibility for their learning.

### **3.4.2. Factors to support the reduction in teacher workload associated with marking**

- Replace some written marking and feedback with verbal approaches and pupil self- and peer- assessment.
- Support staff to understand that marking quantity is not a proxy for marking quality.

## **4. Facilitators and barriers to reducing teacher workload around data management, planning and marking**

Within the research reports reference was made to factors which facilitated, and those which created barriers, to implementing measures to reduce teachers' workload around data management, planning and marking.

### **4.1. Factors which facilitate implementing new approaches, policies and practices**

#### *Organisational factors*

- Commitment from school heads and senior leaders through the provision of time for the implementation of the new practices and policies, and for ensuring staff understand the underpinning principles, values, and benefits of these.
- Provision of clear examples of how workload reduction strategies can be adapted for different subjects, age ranges and pupil profiles, and opportunities to discuss the impact of their implementation to ensure there are no detrimental effects on pupils' progress.
- The modelling of good practice with regards to reasonable workload practices by the senior leadership team (SLT).
- Effective technology and systems for storing and sharing resources.

#### *Cultural factors*

- A well-developed collaborative ethos within and/or across schools.
- All teachers equally highly committed to the implementation of new initiatives.

## **4.2. Factors which impeded the implementation of new approaches, policies and practices**

### *Organisational factors*

- SLT resistance to allowing time for staff to receive training in, and to implement new initiatives.
- Accountability measures that place heavy workload burdens on teachers, e.g. through lengthy and/or frequent reporting requirements.

### *Cultural factors*

- Guilt that some teachers associate with time-saving methods, and the tendency by some teachers to view high workload as a proxy for teacher professionalism.
- Feeling pressure (from parents, pupils, governors and Ofsted) to demonstrate and conform to a perceived 'good practice' model of data management, planning and marking which entail time-consuming working practices.
- Teacher sub-cultures with varying dispositions to collaborative working within and across schools.

## **5. Conclusion and recommendations**

The range and quality of research and development presented in the 12 research reports exemplify exciting and promising programmes of research-informed innovation. These projects have important implications for teachers' practices and school systems, and for policies related to teacher workload reduction. It is clear from our review that the school-based research studies have influenced thinking about policies and practices of workload reduction within and across the schools that featured in the reports. We recommend that the Department for Education also use the findings of the studies to support policy development relating to school processes, structures and cultural factors.

### **5.1. Concluding remarks**

When considering teacher workload reduction strategies around data management, planning and marking, it must be acknowledged that activities associated with each of

these cannot be viewed in isolation as activities in one area will impact on other areas. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to the interaction between the three areas of data management, planning and marking, and how strategies relating to each can be integrated.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Aims of the review

In January 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned the University of Brighton to analyse 11 school-based research reports and related summary posters, and a further independent research report focusing on reducing teacher workload.

The overarching aim of this review is to report on both the methods trialled and the resulting outcomes. Specifically, this review aims to highlight findings and recommendations from the research reports and summary posters in relation to three distinct areas – data management, planning, and marking. An overview of the factors that facilitated, and those that challenged, the implementation of practices to reduce teacher workload will also be outlined.

## 1.2. Background to the review

The three reports of the Independent Teacher Review Groups (DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2016b; DfE 2016c) stated that all parts of the education system have a role to play in reducing unnecessary tasks for teachers and school leaders. The reports include findings from the DfE Workload Challenge Survey in which 56% of respondents indicated that data management caused unnecessary workload (DfE, 2016a, 6), 38% identified detailed lesson and weekly planning as adding an unnecessary burden to their workload (DfE, 2016b, 6), and 53% thought that, whilst marking pupils' work is necessary and can support improvements in pupils' learning, the excessive nature, depth and frequency of marking was burdensome (DfE, 2016c, 6). There are multiple reasons behind these excessive workloads, however, such workloads mean teachers have less time to focus on the most important aspects of their job - teaching and improving learning experiences and outcomes of their pupils.

The reports emphasised that unnecessary teacher workload within the three areas – data management, planning and marking – is often driven by what teachers and school leaders perceive to be expected of them, rather than by optimising the quality of teaching, learning, and outcomes for pupils. They highlighted the need for a cultural shift and rebalancing in patterns of teachers' work, and made recommendations as to how this could be achieved. The National College for Teaching and Leadership, working closely with the teacher Workload and Development Unit, offered grants to support groups of schools to carry out collaborative research projects. Eleven projects were commissioned, and all aimed to build on the recommendations made within the Workload Review Group's reports to investigate practical and sustainable solutions for tackling workload within their own contexts. The projects also set out to provide evidence of impact of successful workload reduction strategies related to data management, planning and

marking that could be shared with others. In addition to the 11 commissioned research projects, a further independent research report is also included in this review. The independent report is from a consortium of schools that did not receive NCTL funding, however, the consortium decided that their project was important to the schools and proceeded with the research without the funding. The schools submitted their report to the NCTL and this was published alongside the others due to the quality of the work and the importance of the findings.

## 2. Methods

This reports details findings from 12 research reports (11 commissioned, and one independent school-based research report). To ensure the reports were reviewed and analysed in a rigorous and timely way, the following review processes were followed:

*1. Development of a report recording card with headings designed to capture key points from the research reports.* An initial report recording card was developed based on the key points relating to the study aims. Both researchers independently trialled the report recording card with the same two research reports. Following discussions about the outcomes of the trial, the recording card was amended to include some additional headings to reflect more nuanced findings from the research reports.

*2. Review of remaining research reports.* Both researchers reviewed different research reports simultaneously to enable discussion and refinements of the process as necessary. During the simultaneous reviewing process, both researchers intentionally reviewed reports from each of the three focus areas – data management, planning, and marking. This increased their understanding of issues relating to each of the key domains, and facilitated critical discussion around the findings to be reported.

*3. Development of a draft reporting structure and writing of draft report.* Following the review of the research reports a draft reporting structure was developed and a draft report written.

*4. Critical review of draft report and writing of final report.* Following a critical review of the draft report by the DfE and one of the researchers, a final version of the report was produced.

### 2.1. Ethical considerations

Data security was ensured throughout the reviewing process by storing all data on password protected computers, and any printed work was stored in locked cabinets within the university.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Overview of research reports

Each of the school research reports focused on one of the three areas - data management, planning, or marking, and all focused on identifying solutions to, and developing strategies for, eliminating unnecessary teacher workload without impacting negatively on pupil outcomes.

Eleven of the research projects (ten of the commissioned projects and the independent project) were conducted in existing networks of schools, comprising of between three and 25 schools for each project; primary, secondary and, in a small number of cases, middle schools and special schools were involved in these projects. The remaining project was conducted with Key Stage 5 teachers and pupils in one school. Most projects developed and trialled interventions aimed at reducing teacher workload in a specific area, however, one project developed an intervention but did not trial it, another project developed recommendations for an intervention, but did not get as far as creating or implementing the intervention, and a further project is still in the process of trialling an intervention. Three of the research projects, all focusing on reducing teacher workload around marking, involved comparisons between control and experimental groups.

Across the research reports, the tendency was for initial data to be collected relating to teachers' perceptions of prevailing workload conditions pertaining to one of the focus areas. Following this, new ways of working were developed and outcomes on teacher workload and pupil learning determined using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Quantitative methods, including online teacher surveys and teacher questionnaires, were commonly used to gather data relating to teacher perceptions of workload both pre- and post- trialling new ways of working. Qualitative data collection methods, mainly in the form of semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups with teachers and/or pupils, and occasionally teacher journal entries and logs, were used to evaluate participants' perceptions of the impact of the new ways of working on teacher workload and pupil outcomes.

When interpreting the reported outcomes from each of the research projects, it is important to acknowledge the following in relation to the research projects:

- Typically, the projects were conducted in a relatively short time frame of 2-3 months, and one project was conducted over a shorter 4-day period. While some of the outcomes provide an indication of different kinds of impact associated with the interventions, the limited time frame of the projects does not allow claims to be made about the long-term implications of the



interventions on teacher workload, or for changes in pupil attainment to be confidently attributed to the intervention.

- Relatively small numbers of participants were involved in each of the projects. Thus, the participants' views that are reported may not represent all, or even some, of the teachers' and pupils' views at the schools involved in the research; and it is unlikely that their views can be generalised further afield to teachers and pupils at other schools not directly involved in the projects.
- There is the potential for the 'Halo effect' within the research findings, whereby respondents give answers that they feel are expected of them, particularly when questions are posed to them by senior colleagues.
- Some of the findings are reported in more detail than others, the detail presented in this report is commensurate with the depth of detail in the research reports.

## **3.2. Findings relating to reducing teacher workload around data management**

### **3.2.1. Findings from the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group**

The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group's report on eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management identified two key reasons why data management becomes a burden rather than a benefit - when there is a lack of clarity around the purpose of collecting data; and when the process of collecting data is inefficient, for example, when it is duplicated or requires too much time to complete (DfE, 2016a, 6).

The Workload Review Group concluded that there are common overarching principles that should apply to effective data collection in schools:

1. Be streamlined and eliminate duplication - collect once, use many times.
2. Be ruthless – only collect what is needed to support outcomes for children. The amount of data collected should be proportionate to its usefulness. Always ask why the data is needed.
3. Be prepared to stop a data collection activity – do not assume that collection or analysis must continue just because it always has.
4. Be aware of workload issues and consider not just how long it will take, but whether that time could be better spent on other tasks (DfE, 2016a, p5).

### 3.2.2. Approaches to reducing unnecessary workload around data management, and resulting outcomes

Four of the school-based research projects focused on developing ways of reducing teacher workload around data management. Each adopted a different approach, a summary of these approaches, and the resulting outcomes are detailed below.

#### *Approach 1*

##### **Identification of key performance indicators and the development of a bespoke tracking system (see Lighthouse Schools Partnership report)**

*Overview of approach:* Teaching staff from five multi-academy trusts (MATs) worked collaboratively in year groups and phase teams to identify key learning objectives they felt children in Years 1-7 must secure to be ready for the next steps in their teaching for each subject. As part of this, the National Teacher Assessment Frameworks were used for Years 2 and 6 as this was a national requirement. Building on these objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs) were developed for each year group for Reading, Writing and Maths. Each KPI had an expected descriptor and a 'depth descriptor'. Using these KPIs, a bespoke tracking system to enter and extract data in the assessment process was developed based on the school's own assessment principles. A key feature of the system was to ensure data would be entered once and be able to be used multiple times at class, school and MAT levels.

*Outcomes:* Findings from a survey completed by 24 teachers following one round of summative assessment and implementation of the new tracking system across the MATS indicated that:

- Since the development and use of KPIs, all staff have a clear understanding of the assessment objectives in their year group, the standards pupils need to reach in their year group, and the majority of teachers understand how progress is measured. The majority of teachers reported that their increased understanding meant a reduction in time taken to assess pupils' learning using the KPIs, and a reduced teacher workload.
- Positive features of the new tracking system include: clarity of KPIs and depth descriptors; ease of use; opportunities to moderate with colleagues; and the ability to use point in time assessment and to use this information to inform future teaching.
- Using the same tracking system across the MATs created a common language and format across schools, and provided a facility for data to be entered once and used several times within and across the schools.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- The projects were conducted in a relatively short time-frame; thus, it is difficult to comment on the long-term implications of the intervention on teacher workload and pupil outcomes.
- Relatively small numbers of participants were involved in the project, they may, therefore, not be representative of all, or even some, of the views of their colleagues involved in the research; and it is unlikely that their views can be generalised further afield to teachers at other schools not directly involved in the project.

## **Approach 2**

**Identification of data collection practices teachers should ‘start, stop, and continue doing’ (see Jurassic Coast Teaching School Alliance research report)**

*Overview of approach:* Ten teachers from the Jurassic Coast Teaching School Alliance (TSA) attended an interdisciplinary event and were joined by four medics (three GPs and one consultant surgeon). The aim was for teachers to learn about the medics’ policies and practices around data management.

*Outcomes:* Building on insights gained from a questionnaire, interview and the interdisciplinary event, teachers used a change management model to identify what they planned to ‘stop, start, and continue doing’ in relation to data, and created action plans to take back to their school context.

Note – this project did not report findings relating to the implementation of the developed action plans.

## **Approach 3**

**Developing recommendations for future practices to reduce workload around data management (see Ashford Teaching Alliance research report)**

*Overview of approach:* Data collected from responses to an on-line questionnaire completed by 125 teachers across 25 schools in the Ashford TSA, and from semi-structured interviews conducted with 34 teachers from 14 of these schools, were used to gain insights into teachers’ perceptions of the purpose, process and validity of data use and demands within their school contexts.

*Outcomes:* Drawing on these insights, recommendations were developed to inform future practices aimed at reducing reduce workload around data management (these are incorporated into the recommendations listed below).

Note – this project did not report findings relating to the implementation of the developed recommendations.

## **Approach 4**

### **Using Turnitin, an on-line essay hand-in platform, to enable pupils to view essay grades and feedback online (see Hatcham College report)**

*Overview of approach:* Interviews were conducted with teachers from Hatcham College to understand more fully their data management workload, and an on-line survey was conducted with Key Stage 5 pupils to ascertain which school information channels they found the most useful. Following these initial data collection exercises, it was decided to explore the use of Turnitin for handing in essays, with Key Stage 5 pupils. This intervention is currently being trialled until the end of this academic year.

*Outcomes:* Teachers of Key Stage 5 pupils have been asked to track the amount of time they spend on different data management tasks, and staff interviews and a staff survey will be conducted at the end of this academic year to explore the impact of the initiative. The impact on staff workload will be a key factor in deciding whether or not to adopt the approach across the whole of the sixth form during the next academic year.

Note – this project did not report findings from the project.

Drawing on insights gained from the above four research projects, recommendations for data management policies, and factors to support the reduction of teacher workload associated with data management, were developed.

### **3.2.3. Recommendations for effective policies around data management**

- Ensure the workload implications of data management processes are considered in relation to their impact on pupils' attainment.
- Consider whether expectations of linear progress and/or performance management criteria have the potential to discourage accurate reporting. Also consider the relationship between academic progress data and judgments about the performance of staff, and whether there are any potential conflicts of interest.

- Support staff to develop the appropriate statistical literacy required to confidently interpret and use assessment data.
- Regularly review assessment data to ensure it is valid and reliable for the purposes intended. Ensure staff are aware of the purpose and significance of particular data demands, and the inherent limitations of the data produced in their school. Consider if particular data are used as proof of good practice or as a resource for improving practice.
- Provide opportunities for staff to contribute to the creation and use of KPIs, depth descriptors, tracking systems, and assessment cycles, to ensure they align with teacher expectations.
- Assessment reporting cycles need to allow adequate time to identify and support specific pupils before the process begins again, otherwise the analytical work is unlikely to have an impact upon learning. Ensure assessments are well designed and enhance the schemes of work to which they relate.
- Build in collective staff moderation time prior to, or concurrent with, data entry deadlines.
- Regularly review the culture around data use. If teachers deem tasks a hindrance, consider whether the tasks could be removed or whether their purpose and importance could be communicated more clearly. Ensure teachers and senior leaders have shared understandings about the usefulness and need for data management systems.

#### **3.2.4. Factors to support the reduction in teacher workload associated with data management**

- Reduce data demands placed on multiple individuals where processes could be completed centrally and shared with relevant staff. Designate data managers to process data and reduce reporting frequency. Aim to free up teachers to respond to, rather than process data.
- When using summative assessment, teachers should not be assessing every national curriculum objective, instead, they should develop clear KPIs and depth descriptors for subjects in each year group so they can assess whether every child has achieved the key learning they need to continue into their next year group. Provide support to ensure teachers understand the KPIs and depth descriptors, and have clarity over what they are assessing.

- Use tracking systems that allow teachers to enter KPIs and/or objectives that reflect the curriculum they teach, and that measure progress in terms of depth from prior attainment.
- Use tracking systems that allow data to be entered once and used within and across schools, and ensure staff are fully trained in using the tracking systems. Implementing common tracking systems across a network of schools enables a common language and format to be used within and across schools.
- Implement clear summative assessment cycles, ensuring clarity for all staff about the timing and type of summative assessment to be carried out and an even cycle of assessment over the academic year.

### **3.3. Findings relating to reducing teacher workload around planning**

#### **3.3.1. Findings from the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group**

Detailed lesson and weekly planning were identified by 36% of the respondents to the Workload Challenges Survey as adding an unnecessary burden to teacher workload (DfE, 2016b, 6). The analysis of responses drew out issues relating to requirements around the level of detail in plans teachers needed to submit, having to produce annotated seating plans for each lesson and justifying decisions for these, having to change and revisit plans during the course of the week as lessons developed, and having tight deadlines for submitting weekly plans (ibid.).

The report acknowledged that effective planning is key to effective teaching, however, it was the unnecessary nature of the work around lesson plans that the Independent Teacher Review Group sought to address. The review group set out five principles relating to planning practices which they considered were needed to ensure that planning is productive and that workload for teachers is manageable. These principles are as follows (see DfE, 2016b, 6-9):

1. Planning a sequence of lessons is more important than writing individual lesson plans.
2. Fully resourced schemes of work should be in place for all teachers to use each term.
3. Planning should not be done simply to please outside organisations.
4. Planning should take place in purposeful and well-defined blocks of time.

5. Effective planning makes use of high quality resources.

The report also refers to Hattie's (2012) work which asserts that planning is more powerful when teachers work together to develop plans and common understandings of what is worth teaching, when they collaborate on understanding their beliefs of challenge and progress, and when they evaluate the impact of their planning on student outcome (DfE, 2016b, 10).

### **3.3.2. Approaches to reducing unnecessary workload around planning, and resulting outcomes**

Three research projects focused on reducing teacher workload in relation to planning; of these, two focused on collaborative planning and one on shared planning. The major difference between collaborative and shared planning approaches is that collaborative (or joint) planning involves a small number of people planning together simultaneously; shared planning, by contrast, involves sharing the planning workload amongst teachers in a strategic way. An outline of the approaches taken within these projects, and the resulting outcomes are detailed below.

#### **Approach 1**

##### **Developing year group collaborative planning across an existing network of schools (see Transform Trust Teaching School Alliance report)**

*Overview of approach:* Teachers in Years 1-5 within an existing network of schools were supported by school senior leaders to trial collaborative planning activities. The work was guided by the 'three M's' – meaningful, manageable and motivational – as outlined in one of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group's reports (DfE, 2016c). Within the Transform Trust TSA report, the three M's were defined as follows:

*Meaningful* - meeting teachers' professional needs and improving their practices;

*Manageable* – improving the time-effectiveness of planning;

*Motivational* – motivating teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Collaborative planning days were held during which teachers spent time in year group networks with peers from other schools collaborating on planning and resource development. Expertise from subject leaders were present during these days to quality assure the plans and resources produced by teachers.

An online survey was distributed to all Year 1-5 teachers, and focus group interviews with some of these teachers were conducted at the beginning of the project to record teachers' views on planning activities. The survey was repeated a term later and further focus group interviews were conducted to identify any changes in teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the collaborative planning sessions on teachers'

workload around planning. Seventy-two teachers completed the baseline survey and 40 fully or partially completed the follow-up survey.

*Outcomes:* Findings from the baseline data indicated that planning was a major workload issue. Teachers found planning to be time consuming, it impinged on evenings, weekends and holiday time, it was often carried out in isolation, and planning formats often required unnecessary and complicated detail.

Findings from the follow up survey and interviews indicated that the combination of the time allocated to the planning events and planning collaboratively with peers:

- Provided opportunities for teachers to engage in professional dialogue with colleagues about how pupils learn, share resources and texts, and access different expertise. This led to the production of high quality planning and a reduction in workload around planning and searching for, or producing, teaching resources.
- Led to a reported improvement in teacher subject knowledge and ability to meet the learning needs of the pupils they taught.
- Built teacher confidence through reassuring them that they were doing things well in their own classrooms and contexts.
- Led to teachers feeling more willing to take risks in their planning, for example, by trialling new approaches and/or activities.
- Made the process of lesson planning more intellectually enjoyable and manageable. It led to teachers becoming more self-reflective about their planning, thinking more about the quality of their teaching, and making their lessons more interesting.

Towards the end of the project, a pupil survey was also conducted to ascertain their views on the extent to which they enjoyed teaching and learning. This was completed by 123 Year 5 pupils across three schools; findings suggested that pupils, on the whole, enjoyed teaching and learning in school.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- There is no indication as to how many schools were in the Transform Trust TSA at the time of this research or how many Year 1-5 teachers there were; therefore, we do not know how representative, if at all, the sample is, and how generalisable the findings are beyond the teachers participating in the data collection itself.
- Although 72 teachers completed the baseline survey, only 40 fully or partially completed the follow-up. The drop in number of follow-up respondents weakens confidence that the reported patterns of changes in



perception can be generalised beyond the teachers participating in both baseline and follow-up surveys.

- Teachers found it difficult to quantify the time they had saved since the introduction of collaborative planning.
- The pupil questionnaire focused mainly on ascertaining pupils' perceptions of teaching and learning generally, rather than specifically about changes in pupils' views prior to, and following, the collaborative planning activities. There was, therefore, no robust evidence linking collaborative planning to pupils' learning experience from pupil's points of view.
- The project ran for only two terms and some of the collaborative planning was in preparation for units to be taught at a later stage, thus, it was too early to draw any direct relationship between the intervention and changes in teachers' classroom practices or pupil outcomes.

## Approach 2

### **Shaping and refining the role of subject leaders to those of 'Collaborative Planning Leaders' across a school trust of three schools (see Meads Teaching School report)**

*Overview of approach:* The SLT in the three schools within the Meads Academy Trust focused on developing subject leaders as Collaborative Planning Leaders. The schools sought to explore whether the collaborative development of curriculum plans within and across the three schools by subject specialists in Science, Design and Technology (DT), and Computing, would help to increase teacher confidence and reduce their planning workloads. With this in mind, the schools implemented the following measures:

1. SLTs in the three schools gained an initial understanding of the issues underlying workload demands on teachers through administering an online questionnaire to all teachers in the participating schools. Thirty-five teachers responded and findings indicated that teachers in all schools identified the time and effort expended on planning was perceived to have insufficient benefits for teaching and learning, and led to reduced teacher confidence and self-efficacy.
2. Subject leaders worked collaboratively to produce specialist subject plans within a clear planning framework for use by teachers across the three schools.
3. The SLT and subject leaders worked with Science, DT and Computing teams to pilot using the framework across the schools.
4. Subject leaders provided on-going support to ensure teachers were able to provide effective sequencing of subject specific teaching and learning – this was

complimented through providing a role description document clearly outlining subject leaders' responsibilities, and through training them in facilitation skills.

5. Subject leaders created an online 'Primary planning pod' for all subject plans across the three subject areas to facilitate collaboration.

To ascertain teachers' perceptions of the outcome of this intervention an online questionnaire was distributed (to which 29 teachers responded), semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from Year 3 across all schools, and in-depth interviews were conducted with three teachers working in Key Stage 2.

*Outcomes:* Findings from the teacher questionnaire and interviews suggested:

- Specialist-led plans for each subject area and the subject specialists' capacity to provide appropriate and stimulating curriculum content, challenging questions, key vocabulary, engaging activities and resource ideas, and detailed subject knowledge, contributed significantly to increasing teacher confidence and reducing planning workload. As one teacher stated: *"I'm confident now – all the plans are there so I know the buzz words children need to use and can teach them"*.
- Having the opportunity to talk to specialist subject leads about aspects of teaching increased teacher confidence. As stated by one teacher: *"Being able to chat through subject areas with the Science lead teacher was very helpful; especially as she knows I am not very confident in Science. Also, if I don't understand anything, she'll give me five to ten minutes of her time. She has pointed me in all the right directions and, despite not feeling confident, I managed to teach a lesson on electricity thanks to her"*.
- While the provision of detailed and clear specialist plans was considered beneficial for reducing workload, teachers also need to be able to personalise these plans to gain a sense of ownership; this has implications for the appropriate level of detail to include in the plans and how flexibility is built in. Some teachers also found it difficult to work with plans that were too wordy or had too much subject content and insufficient lesson content, or alternatively had not offered sufficient detail – a clear balance between these two tensions was important.
- Where curriculum plans had not been deemed helpful, this was due to teachers preferring to use their own plans or to a lack of available resources/apparatus for lesson delivery.

Interviews with small groups of Year 3 pupils from each of the schools indicated a level of enthusiasm about the topics they had recently covered. The project team also felt that pupils' understanding had significantly increased, when compared to their previous learning, and an informal book scrutiny of Year 3 pupils' work indicated that more

Science teaching was being undertaken, and the use of subject specific vocabulary was demonstrated more consistently in pupils' writing.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- There were relatively small numbers of responses to the teacher questionnaire (35 responses to the first, and 29 responses to the second), and very few teachers were involved in the semi-structured and in-depth interviews. It is unlikely, therefore, that the data developed are representative of teachers from across participating schools, and findings cannot be generalised with confidence to teachers and schools that did not participate in the project.
- Interview data was gathered from only a small number of pupils; therefore, claims that the enthusiasm they reported about recently covered topics are difficult to substantiate.
- As the project was conducted in a relatively short time-frame, it is difficult to comment on the long-term implications of the intervention on teacher workload and pupil outcomes.

### **Approach 3**

#### **Reducing teacher workload through introducing shared planning activities (see Whitley Bay High School report)**

*Overview of approach:* The shared planning approach adopted by Whitley Bay's TSA involved middle leaders within three schools - a secondary, a middle and a primary school, facilitating teams of teachers within the same subject areas in the planning of a module of lessons and strategically delegating planning activities. Within subject departments staff decided on a focus for their work and broke down the work that needed to be covered into manageable chunks, each to be tackled by a member of staff who specialised in that area. The focus areas chosen tended to relate to specific topics and were aimed at particular year groups; some projects set out to create material resources such as schemes of work, homework booklets, worksheets, while others set out to build knowledge in preparation for the introduction of a new course.

One hundred and twenty-eight teachers across three schools in the TSA recorded the time they spent on planning activities during a one-week period. A post project questionnaire was then completed by 73 staff from across the schools and focus group interviews were conducted with 14 members of staff to ascertain their perspectives of the shared planning approach.

*Outcomes:* Findings from the post project questionnaire and interviews indicated the following positive outcomes relating to shared planning approach:

- It opened up opportunities for non-threatening professional dialogue amongst staff, encouraged collaboration and departmental teamwork, improved the quality of planning, and saved planning time. It also enabled teachers to exploit their skills in particular areas, while teachers who were not experts in the subject benefited from the expertise of colleagues with subject specialist knowledge.
- The dedicated time for planning allowed teachers to reflect on the *how* as well as the *what* of pupils' learning; it encouraged teachers to reflect on the planning process and to be more open about the effectiveness of existing practices.
- It led to a more uniform approach across many departments in terms of differentiation and the range of activities offered, and in the appearance of materials produced.
- Staff also noted greater levels of pupil enjoyment, enthusiasm and motivation, and some pupils fed back to staff their improved enjoyment of lessons and greater understanding of the topics covered.

Findings also highlighted the following challenges relating to a shared planning approach:

- Opportunities for shared planning were limited where departments had only one member of staff, especially if there were no opportunities to work with colleagues from similar departments in other schools.
- It can be time consuming for department staff to reach a consensus with regard to what work to focus on, and the nature of the work that needs to be done in order to prepare lessons to incorporate sufficient differentiation to cater for students of every level of ability. Some staff over-planned in an attempt to ensure staff had all potential levels of work covered in their lessons.
- The practicalities of dividing up areas of planning fairly when they differ in degree of content and number of units can be problematic.
- Time needed to be spent on 'tweaking' or personalising material to suit individual teaching styles and different class profiles. Some teachers also experienced difficulty in following the original planner's thinking and lesson transitional processes, thus reducing confidence in delivery.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- The task of quantifying the time spent on planning activities was not straightforward, thus it is difficult to draw definite conclusions around actual reductions in the time teachers spent on these activities.
- The short time scale of the project, and the nature of the data gathered, makes it difficult to substantiate the claims about the impact of the project, and to comment on the long-term implications of the intervention on teacher workload and pupil outcomes.

Drawing on insights from the above projects, the following recommendations were developed.

### **3.3.3. Recommendations for effective policies around planning**

- Set aside time for shared and/or collaborative planning activities, especially in the early stages.
- Organise shared and collaborative planning activities to exploit teachers' specialisms and support the learning of staff with less expertise in the area.
- When facilitating shared and/or collaborative planning events, use teachers with subject specific expertise to facilitate these and quality assure the content of work produced. Invest in the development of subject leaders who can focus on management and facilitation skills to support shared and collaborative planning activities.
- Build on the existing team spirit within subject departments and/or across schools and networks.
- Ensure that everyone is on board and understands the aims, and agrees from the outset, the fundamentals of the approach to be taken whilst remaining flexible to individual predispositions.
- Encourage continuity and progression in pupils' experiences.
- Strike a balance between shared and collaborative specialist plans, and fostering ownership and autonomy of individual users of the plans.
- Make provision for staff in one-person departments to plan with colleagues elsewhere.
- Ensure that the technology infrastructure can support any demands that will be made of shared and collaborative planning activities, especially when teams are working across schools.

### **3.3.4. Factors to support the reduction in teacher workload around planning**

- Encourage and support shared and collaborative planning activities so that teachers do not have to plan every lesson from scratch, and if embarking on shared planning, ensure that the workload is evenly spread.
- Invest in or create, high quality schemes of work that can then be personalised by teachers for their individual contexts.
- Align the focus and timing of shared and collaborative planning events with individual schools' curriculum priorities so that planning events are not an 'add on' but support school's curriculum development initiatives and enable teachers to use their plans within clear timescales.

## **3.4. Findings relating to reducing teacher workload around marking**

### **3.4.1. Findings from the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group**

The DfE Workload Challenge Survey reported that 53% of sample respondents thought that, whilst marking pupils work is necessary and productive, the excessive nature, depth and frequency of marking was burdensome (DfE, 2016c, 6). The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group concluded that effective marking should be meaningful, manageable and motivating, and described these terms as follows:

- **Meaningful:** Marking varies by age group, subject, and what works best for the pupil and teacher in relation to any particular piece of work. Teachers are encouraged to adjust their approach as necessary and are trusted to incorporate the outcomes into subsequent planning and teaching (DfE, 2016c, 8).
- **Manageable:** Marking practice is proportionate and considers the frequency and complexity of written feedback, as well as the cost and time effectiveness of marking in relation to the overall workload of teachers. This is written into any assessment policy (Ibid.).
- **Motivating:** Marking should help to motivate pupils to progress. This does not mean always writing in-depth comments or being universally positive; sometimes short, challenging comments or oral feedback are more effective. If the teacher is doing more work than their pupils, that can become a disincentive for pupils to accept challenges and take responsibility for improving their work (DfE, 2016c, 10).

### 3.4.2. Approaches to reducing unnecessary workload around marking, and resulting outcomes

Four of the commissioned research reports focused on reducing teacher workload around marking while maintaining or improving outcomes for pupils. Of these projects, two focused on reducing written feedback through the general provision of high quality verbal feedback (see Aquinas Trust school and Southwark TSA reports), and two focused on implementing specific verbal feedback strategies (see Tarporley/Helsby/Queen's Park High Schools' report and Candleby Lane TSA report). Some schools within the Candleby Lane TSA also focused on reducing teacher marking workload through increasing pupil self- and peer assessment.

Each of the research projects recorded teachers' perceptions of time spent on marking both before and after implementing interventions aimed at reducing marking workload. Teachers' perceptions were ascertained mainly through questionnaires, diaries/logs and interviews and, in some studies, pupils' perceptions about the implementation of marking interventions were also ascertained. Three of the projects - those undertaken by the Aquinas Teaching and Learning Trust schools, Southwark TSA and Tarporley/Helsby/Queen's Park High Schools - included both control and intervention groups.

The independent research report also detailed findings relating to reducing teacher workload around marking. The report includes findings from studies conducted in 14 primary schools, including special schools, within the *With Others We Succeed* (WOWS) Consortium. The consortium, comprising 17 schools in total have been working in partnership for many years. Each of the participating schools produced a case study outlining the resulting outcomes of trialling new approaches to marking. However, only very minimal details about the approaches trialled were included in the reports, and details of the research participants were largely lacking; it is, therefore, only possible to include general findings relating to this study; these will be reported at the end of this section.

Within the commissioned projects, three broad approaches were adopted to reducing teacher workload around marking were identified.

#### **Approach 1 - Using high quality verbal feedback in lessons to reduce marking workload**

(See Aquinas Teaching and Learning Trust report, Candleby Lane TSA report, and the report from Tarporley, Helsby and Queen's Park High Schools)

The three projects that reported using this approach each adopted slightly different approaches, each of these is described below.

*i) Overview of approach adopted by Aquinas Teaching and Learning Trust:* Seven schools participated in this research – three primary, one infant, two secondary, and one special school. Within these schools 24 parallel classes in Years 4, 5 and 7 were divided into intervention and control groups. In the intervention classes teachers were required to undertake formative assessment and give verbal feedback during the lessons instead of written feedback. Teachers in the control classes continued with their current school practice of giving written feedback according to their schools' marking policies.

Teachers from all classes addressed the same learning outcome for pupils - *Draft and write using a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs*. They were able to choose the writing genre most suitable for their classes, however, the lessons were no longer than 45 minutes, and all followed a set procedure over four days, as follows:

Day 1 - Teachers provided a general outline of the new concepts being taught and modelled examples that exhibited the planned outcomes. Pupils generated their own examples that incorporated the taught material. Teachers assessed pupils' outcomes throughout the lesson offering personalised feedback and requiring pupils to make improvements in their next attempts.

Day 2 - The lessons continued in similar manner in order for pupils and teachers to master the skills.

Day 3 – Pupils were given opportunities to apply the learned skills. The teachers shared the expected standard of writing and asked pupils to produce an extended, purposeful piece of writing that was marked in depth by the teachers.

Day 4 – The teachers clarified any common misconceptions. Pupils analysed the teachers' feedback, edited their work and produced a final version. The final version was discussed, with peers critiquing and making comparative analysis against the expected standard shared by teachers.

*Outcomes:* Findings from teacher questionnaires, logs of time spent on marking activities, and interviews with teachers and pupils suggested that:

- Teachers in the intervention group experienced a significant decrease in workload.
- The immediate feedback meant pupils could correct errors instantly and apply the new learning to the remainder of their work, thus reducing the need for pupils to write out whole pieces of work; it also reduced the need for teachers to plan extra lessons to enable corrections to be made. Real-time feedback also boosted the confidence of pupils with special



educational needs as they saw their work improve immediately, and the extent to which they were willing to redraft was markedly improved.

- Teachers in the intervention group thought more about what they expected from different ability groups, and reported their planning was more thorough than it had previously been. Teachers also considered that using verbal feedback impacted positively on the quality of written work produced by pupils by the end of the week, more so that was evident in pupils' work during the previous week.
- Teachers considered that lower attaining pupils need more reassurance about the work they need to do and that verbal feedback provided this reassurance.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- The marking intervention took place over a one-week period. The claims made relating to the outcome of the intervention are, therefore, based on a project with a very limited time-frame, and which was limited to pupils from Years 4, 5 and 7 in one curriculum area with a particular set of teachers. The conclusions drawn from the research, therefore, need to be interpreted within this context.
- A potential source of bias in the outcomes is that all participating schools were faith schools and belonged to the same Trust that sought to share similar policies and practices in their schools.
- Outcomes reported relate to only those of the intervention group, with no reference made to the experiences or views of those in the control group.

*ii) Overview of approaches adopted by Candleby Lane Teaching Schools Alliance:*

The following strategies were used:

*1. Marking in the Moment* – this involves teachers engaging in dialogue with pupils about their learning during lessons. This method was trialled by 48 teachers in six of the Candleby Lane TSAs in some English and Maths lessons. Some of these schools developed a whole school approach, while others targeted a range of selected classes from Early Years to Years 6.

*2. Marking Conferences* – this approach involves teachers giving verbal feedback to pupils during lessons about their work and informing them about what to do next. Three Marking Conference strategies were used: *Whole-Class Conference Marking*, *Small Group Conference Marking*, and *1:1 Conference Marking*. During small group and 1:1 marking conferences, pupils not involved in the conferencing completed other activities

independently. Marking Conferences were used across Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 by nine teachers in two schools.

3. *Minimal Marking* – this involves teachers replacing some or all written feedback using a combination of marking in the moment, small group conferencing, and using marking symbols. Nine teachers across three schools trialled this approach.

Differences in teachers' marking workload were ascertained through pre- and post-intervention survey.

*Outcomes:* Findings from the surveys indicated that:

- Teachers who adopted Marking in the moment, Marking conference, or Minimal marking, or a combination of these approaches reported a reduced marking workload.
- Teachers reflected that Marking in the moment led to: an increase in pupils' confidence, self-esteem and motivation; pupils making better progress; and teachers being more aware of pupils who might have previously missed quality time with the teacher.
- In reflecting on the Marking conference approach, teachers reported that this approach motivated pupils as they felt they had more guided support. Whole class conferencing enabled all marking to be completed within one lesson, but it did not allow teachers to be sufficiently specific for some pupils. Small group marking conferences enabled pupils' specific needs to be met, however, some pupils lacked the ability to work independently when teachers did this. 1:1 marking conferences resulted in good progress in pupils' work, however, finding the time for this was viewed as "*incredibly difficult*".
- The immediacy of feedback allowed pupils to recall what they intended to write as they edited their work. Some pupils enjoyed the chance to make improvements during the lesson, as one pupil stated: "*It's better when you tell us and help us in lessons when it's not right so we can correct it and learn from our mistakes straight away*", while others felt it was distracting, as expressed by one pupil – "*I don't like the interruptions in the lessons. I just want to get on with my writing and change it later*".

*iii) Overview of approach adopted by Tarporley, Helsby and Queen's Park High Schools:* Thirty teachers of Years 10 and 12 GCSE and A Level English Language and Literature from across three secondary schools took part in this project. Within each of the schools, some of these classes implemented an intervention, while others were control groups for

the project. Those in the intervention group suspended their usual practice of providing written feedback comments to pupils in Years 10 and 12 for a three-month period and replaced this with three alternative verbal feedback approaches delivered in class. Teachers in the control group continued marking as per normal. The alternative feedback approaches used with the intervention groups were:

1. *Front end feedback* – teachers used their subject expertise to identify and anticipate student misconceptions or pitfalls associated with learning in advance of teaching, they then addressed these explicitly in class.

2. *Register feedback* – at the start of the lessons when registers are taken, individual pupils shared with the class a small section of work, as directed by the teacher. Immediate feedback was given by the teacher; the teacher also incorporated into the feedback some additional information to shape the next steps in the lesson or sequence of lessons.

3. *Strategic sampling* - this was in the form of i) *Live Sampling*, in which the teacher selected pupils' work at random and 'live marked' in front of the class (using visualiser or similar); or ii) *Sampling for Planning* in which the teacher selected three to five books and used a five-minute 'flick' review (no marking) to inform the next steps in the next sequence of teaching and learning.

Teachers' perceptions of the impact of the intervention were ascertained using self-reported teacher assessment of hours worked in a week (using the DfE Teacher Workload Survey as a template and comparator), a self-efficacy measure (using the Ohio State Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) and semi-structured interviews. Pupils' perceptions of the intervention were ascertained through semi-structured interviews and through analysing their achievement scores on a common English assignment set for all pupils. Markers for this were blind to whether pupils were from the intervention or the control group, and teachers did not mark tests from their own school.

*Outcomes:* Findings suggest that the intervention:

- Led to a reduction in teacher workload when compared with the control group, with no detectable impact (positive or negative) on pupil outcomes.
- Improved the timeliness of feedback to pupils. One teacher stated: "*The positives have been everything has been so much quicker, students getting feedback so much quicker, instantly in the lesson or the next lesson. So basically, everything is very much instant*".
- Enabled pupils to take ideas from another pupil's work.

Pupils expressed mixed feelings about the intervention:

- They considered the use of visualisers to be beneficial for gaining ideas from others but also felt exposed and would prefer teachers to comment directly to them about their work, rather than in front of others.
- Pupils found the Register feedback approach beneficial for their learning, although they found this to be a lengthy process.
- Pupils expressed frustration when work was not marked and showed a preference for work to be graded, especially when they had put a lot of effort into their work.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- Findings from this study were presented in aggregate form; no distinct findings were reported about teachers' and pupils' perceptions of the benefits and constraints of using each of the three intervention methods. Thus, the findings provide only general insights about the processes and outcomes of adopting these marking strategies.
- It is difficult to draw generalisable conclusions about the impact of the study because the findings were developed in relation to specific year groups, subject and school contexts, and the sample size was small and unrepresentative of the wider school context. Further limitations of the research include a lack of detail about the number of students involved and the low response rate from teachers to calls for pre-and post-test data. The absence of baseline achievement scores mean comparisons cannot be made between the progress of pupils in the intervention and control groups.
- Without the random allocation of teachers and pupils to the intervention and control groups, differences in outcomes may not be attributed to the intervention as other variables and combinations of variables are likely to have influenced outcomes.

## **Approach 2**

### **Applying measures to reduce marking through supporting pupil peer and self-assessment skills (see Southwark TSA and Candleby Lane TSA reports)**

Two projects focused on reducing marking through supporting pupil peer and self-assessment skills.

*i) Overview of approach adopted by Southwark TSA:* Fifteen classes in Years 1-5 within four primary schools in the Southwark TSA participated in this project. In each school, there was at least one intervention class and one control class. The intervention, which spanned four months, involved a training day following which teachers in the intervention

group spent six weeks developing classroom cultures and teaching pupils' effective self- and peer- assessment skills. During these six weeks, the following measures were taken:

1. *No written marking in pupils' books in English and Maths.* This was in contrast to most books being marked daily either during or after the lesson, including pupils being given 'next steps' to complete.
2. *An intentional shift in focus from assessment to planning.* Instead of written marking, teachers read pupils' work and put books into three piles – re-teach, consolidate or extend. As most work in Maths would have been peer assessed, this was a relatively small task. For writing tasks, the teacher would read the work and record what the pupil needed to do next, this might inform whole class feedback and planning, or pupils might be put into groups depending on their needs.
3. *Introduction to conferencing and peer-assessment approaches.* Teachers conferenced with groups identified by the analysis of the previous day's learning outcomes. The expectation was for a pupil to be conferenced at least once per week. Teachers also developed pupils' abilities to peer and self-assess.
4. *The process was supported through efficient record-keeping of what each pupil needed to do next and when they had been conferenced with.* Three different stickers were used to record feedback conversations – *I spoke to my teacher and I need to...; I spoke to my friend and I need to...; and I checked my own work and I think I need to...*

Three of the schools returned Maths data (259 pupils in total) and all returned Writing data (380 pupils in total); data was collated from teachers in both intervention and control classes. A survey of participating teachers also collected data on teachers' views on their marking practices pre and post the intervention period.

*Outcomes:* Findings from the teachers' survey suggested:

- All teachers in the intervention group had made significant changes to their practice over the term, reducing written methods to zero and providing verbal feedback on all or most pieces of work; they considered this form of marking practice to be time effective.
- Teachers reported feeling frustrated by not being able to write in books either by giving a written model or correcting spelling; they considered that time spent on written marking was worthwhile in terms of impact on pupil outcomes.
- Across the term the intervention had no measurable positive or negative impact on pupils' progress in Writing or Maths when compared to the control group data.

- Five of the seven teachers in the intervention group were more likely to agree post-intervention than pre-intervention that the change in marking practice had a positive impact on their pupils and their levels of progress and pupil motivation. The remaining two teachers who did not share these views were both from the same school and neither of them implemented the feedback methods to the same extent as others in the intervention group.
- Some teachers in the control group felt they made 'partial' change to their practice; half reported increased levels of verbal feedback throughout the study, which suggests some 'contamination' of the study.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

- The short duration of the intervention (one term) meant there was limited scope for changes in teachers' practices to become embedded, and for pupils to adjust to new marking strategies and to change their learning behaviours in ways that may influence their performance on learning outcome measures.
- Teachers in the intervention groups were reported to be less experienced than those in the control groups. This suggests that those who agreed to take part in the intervention may have been more amenable to change. The limited information about the composition of participating teachers in the control and intervention groups makes it difficult to interpret and draw conclusive findings from the data.
- Without the random allocation of teachers and pupils to the intervention and control groups, it is difficult to attribute differences in outcomes to the intervention as other variables and combinations of variables are likely to influence outcomes.

*ii) Overview of approach adopted by Candleby TSA:* Eleven teachers from two schools focused on encouraging pupils to assess their own work. In one school pupils in each of Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 were encouraged to use marking symbols to assess their own work and set their own 'next steps' in English lessons. In the other school pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 used a self-assessment grid in English and topic work, with a simple traffic light system to indicate how they had met success criteria, and pupils in Year 1 coloured in dots according to how they had met the success criteria. In Years 3 and 4, pupils had additional space on the grid to write their evidence or next steps, and for teachers to comment on these. Pupils' work was 'Red, Amber, Green' rated, or stamped, by the teacher to give a visual representation of how teachers rated pupils' work against the

learning objectives. In some cases, spellings and grammar errors were identified by the teacher.

*Outcomes:* Findings from initial and end of project teacher surveys, teacher research journals and focus groups, and from pupil interviews suggested the following:

- All teachers reported spending much less time on marking and considered that pupils had become more independent and skilled at assessing their own work and identifying what they needed to do to move on their learning.
- The project impacted on other areas of teaching as pupils looked for their own next steps in other curriculum areas.
- Pupils considered that that the responsibility of looking for evidence gave them a better understanding of what they had done well and areas they needed to improve, as one pupil commented: *“When it’s written down for you, you don’t have to think, you just do what it says”*.

### Approach 3

#### **Applying measures to reduce marking through the use of marking symbols (see Candleby Lane TSA report)**

*Overview of approach:* Teachers used marking symbols to indicate various forms of feedback. Two schools adopted this approach. One school used symbols in a mixed class of Year 3 and 4 pupils; this school had already used marking symbols but developed this strategy further. Two teachers from another school, which was new to using symbols, used the approach with pupils in Years 2 and 4; these pupils were tasked with finding or designing symbols they thought were appropriate, and these were displayed in their classrooms.

*Outcomes:* Findings from initial and end of project teacher surveys, teacher research journals and focus groups, and pupil interviews indicated the following outcomes.

- All teachers reported that their marking workload had lessened and that marking was more focused, personalised and meaningful as a result of adopting the approach. As one teacher stated: *“I give more meaningful feedback to the children and they are receiving better quality lessons because feedback is instant. It has changed my teaching practice”*.
- Pupils engaged more than previously with feedback as they had to think about the meanings attributed to the symbols. The use of symbols reminded pupils of the many skills they are expected to know, and they

could quickly note aspects of their work that was done well and where improvements were needed.

- Some pupils found some symbols to be motivating, while others found some of the symbols held negative connotations, engendering feelings of failure.

In addition to the three approaches described above, one school from the Candleby Lane TSA aimed to reduce marking workload through using a combination of verbal feedback, coloured pens and stamps (as marking symbols), and pupil-self- and peer- assessment. They entitled this approach *Visible learning in action*. Teachers in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 increased the use of verbal feedback and minimised the use of stamps and coloured pens. Teachers in Years 2- 4 used ticks, coloured pens and stamps to replace extensive written feedback, and made minimal written comments relating to ‘next steps’, and where work was exceptionally well done, or where there were errors; and teachers in Years 5-6 increased the use of pupil self-assessment and peer marking. Findings from initial and end of project teacher surveys, teacher research journals and focus groups, and pupil interviews indicated similar findings to those outlined in each of three approaches discussed within the above section. However, one finding from this approach worth highlighting is that teachers reported looking more broadly at patterns of pupils’ work, rather than having a narrow focus on where individual mistakes had been made; thus, they were able to celebrate a wider range of pupils’ achievements and strengths. Furthermore, some pupils reported struggling with new levels of independence, e.g. using a dictionary to correct spellings, because they were used to teachers correcting work for them. As stated by one pupil: “*You have to look up the spelling, it’s harder but better... when you look it up it stays in your head*”.

### **3.4.3. Findings from the independent report relating to the case studies**

The independent research report did not include details of any additional approaches to reducing teacher marking workload to those identified above in the 11 commissioned research projects. Thus, only a general overview of the 14 case studies included in this report. Recommendations for reducing teacher marking workload stemming from the independent report are included within the overall recommendations for the development of effective policies around marking in section 3.4.4.

*Overview of the case studies reported within the independent report:* All participating schools agreed a general process and time scale for implementing practices aimed at reducing teacher marking workload, as follows:

*First half-term.* Findings and recommendations of the Independent Teachers Workload Review Group on Marking were presented to staff at the schools. A review of current



marking practices was conducted and evaluated against the three principles of effective marking identified by the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group – *Meaningful, Manageable and Motivating* (DfE, 2016c). School leads then presented and discussed recent and current practice relating to marking within their schools.

Staff developed proposals for changing marking practices and drafted criteria for evaluating the changes; school leads reported back on their school's decisions around future marking practices, including the expected impact on teaching, learning and workload; and all schools agreed on the evaluation criteria to be used for capturing outcomes.

*Second half-term.* A variety of interventions aimed at reducing marking workload were implemented in the participating schools.

*Third half-term.* Staff fed back on the outcome of their implementations, including suggestions of recommendations. The group then drafted, reviewed and redrafted, and then published the final report.

Staff and pupil questionnaires were used to elicit views on the implementation of new marking practices within the schools.

*Outcomes:* Findings suggested that many of the marking strategies in place at the beginning of the project were time consuming with teachers often writing more than the pupils themselves. Following the interventions to reduce marking workload, findings from the project questionnaires indicated:

- Teachers had more clarity with regard to the purpose of feedback, and the intended audiences was viewed as the pupils themselves, rather than SLT or interested third parties, such as Ofsted. Teachers also reported reduction in time spent marking and recording, and an improvement in teacher morale. In many schools, teachers no longer took work home to mark in the evenings or at weekends.
- The application of the principles contained in the workload report helped with removing previously bureaucratic marking processes that were burdensome and unhelpful, and schools now emphasised the manageability of feedback, its meaningfulness, and the extent to which it motivates pupils.
- Changes to new marking practices resulted in no reports of negative impacts on pupils' learning. Some schools reported pupils' enhanced engagement with the learning process, and the early detection and immediate rectification of pupils' misunderstandings led to clear gains in pupils' progress. Additionally, the early interventions to tackle

misconceptions meant that teachers could differentiate by input rather than by task, thereby improving learning.

- Where schools moved to a greater reliance on self- and peer- assessment, pupils and teaching assistants needed to be inducted into using these approaches. However, once implemented, the approach was considered to increase pupil confidence, and improve attainment and progression. In one school, an Ofsted Inspector noted improved progression, following the introduction of the new feedback policy and commented: *'The quality of teachers' questioning is very good...supplementary questions are used very well to help pupils identify and correct misconceptions or to extend their ideas. The school's marking policy is applied consistently. Teachers' feedback is highly effective and leads pupils to revise and improve their work'*.

*Cautions to acknowledge when interpreting outcomes from the above project:*

It is difficult to draw confident conclusions about the implementation of approaches to marking due to the following:

- Details of the approaches adopted were minimal and gave very little information about how approaches were implemented.
- Details of the methods used to analyse data were limited, and details of the research participants were largely lacking. For example, very little is known about which year groups or subjects were involved in trialling new approach to marking, or about the kinds of evidence used to support school-specific or cross-consortium claims about the benefits reported.

Drawing on insights gained from the commissioned projects focusing on reducing teachers' marking workload, and from the independent report, the following recommendations were developed.

#### **3.4.4. Recommendations for effective policies around marking**

- When developing marking/feedback policies, agree which approach, or combination of approaches are to be used at school level to promote a shared understanding of their usage. Do not apply too many 'rules' across the school, and acknowledge that different year groups and subject areas may need to manage marking differently.
- Ensure staff understand the school's feedback policy. Revisit this regularly to address any issues or uncertainty and, where possible, include all teachers in the development of the policy.

- There must be a direct correlation between any form of marking/feedback, and the positive impact on teaching and learning. Marking and assessments should be seen as opportunities to identify pupil needs rather than being used solely for accountability measures. The concept of meaningful, manageable and motivational provides a useful guide to practice.
- Ensure feedback is part of a holistic approach to teaching and learning; marking and feedback should be age-related, so that the intended audience can understand what is said or written.
- Involve pupils in the marking and assessment of their work to encourage them to take more ownership and responsibility for their learning.

### **3.4.5. Factors to support the reduction in teacher workload associated with marking**

- Replacing some written marking and feedback with verbal approaches and pupil self- and peer- assessment reduces teachers' marking workload.
- Support staff to dispel the notion that marking quantity is a proxy for marking quality.

## **4. Facilitators and barriers to reducing teacher workload around data management, planning and marking**

Within the research reports it was common for reference to be made to factors which either facilitated or created barriers to implementing measures to reduce teachers' workload around data management, planning and marking. The key factors are outlined below.

### **4.1. Factors which facilitate implementing new approaches, policies and practices**

Factors which facilitate the implementation of new approaches, policies and practices for reducing teacher workload can be considered in the context of organisational and cultural factors.

#### *Organisational factors*

- Explicit public support from school heads and senior leaders, especially where some teachers are anxious about the scrutiny of data, lesson plans and written marking by Ofsted.
- Designated time to support the implementation of the new practices and policies, to ensure staff understand the underpinning principles, values, and perceived benefits, and to share good practice with colleagues within and between schools.
- An agreed whole school approach to implementing new approaches, policies and practices, and communications which portray the changes as practicable, and incremental rather than as an over-ambitious, threatening challenge.
- Whole school professional development on new initiatives with clear examples of how they can be adapted for different subjects, age ranges and pupil profiles.
- Measures which encourage teachers to contribute to the development of new approaches, policy or practice, and which nurture and support teacher agency at the heart of the change process.
- The provision of resources, conditions and expertise to improve the quality of dialogue around data management, planning and/or marking, and which encourage a collaborative approach within and/or across schools that is effective, confidence-building and intellectually challenging.

- The modelling of good practice with regards to reasonable workload practices by the SLT.
- Effective technology and systems for storing and sharing resources.
- Clear check points and opportunities to discuss the implementation of new approaches to ensure there are no detrimental effects on pupils' progress.

#### *Cultural factors*

- A well-developed collaborative ethos within and/or across schools.
- All teachers equally highly committed to the implementation of new initiatives, and to improving knowledge and practices with fellow staff.

## **4.2. Factors which impeded the implementation of new approaches, policies and practices**

Organisational and cultural factors were both found to impede the implementation of new approaches, policies and practices for reducing teacher workload.

#### *Organisational factors*

- SLT resistance to allowing time for staff to implement new initiatives, and to receive training in how to do so.
- Accountability measures that place heavy workload burdens on teachers, e.g. through lengthy and/or frequent reporting requirements.

#### *Cultural factors*

- Staff resistance to changing established ways of working, especially amongst long-standing staff.
- The guilt that some teachers associate with time-saving methods. Related to this is the tendency for teachers to think that hours spent managing data, planning and/or marking is the sign of a good teacher, to equate high workload with effectiveness, and to view high workload as a proxy for teacher professionalism.
- Feeling pressure (from parents, pupils, governors and Ofsted) to demonstrate, and conform to, a perceived 'good practice' model of data management, planning and marking which entail time-consuming working practices.

- Teacher sub-cultures with varying dispositions to collaborative working within and across schools.

## 5. Potential for future research

An important hallmark of the studies we reviewed, and a strength of school-based research, is their context specificity. Each study focused on the implementation of one particular workload reduction strategy in one or a small number of classroom, curriculum and/or key stage contexts. Furthermore, given the funding and timing restrictions placed on this programme of schools' research, the implementation of workload reduction strategies necessarily involved small numbers of teachers and pupils in each project. The practical value and significance of the research we reviewed find expression in those very specific contexts of investigation and innovation.

Developing the wider relevance of the findings reported here would involve schools utilising their existing (or creating new) knowledge-sharing and mobilisation infrastructures. This would enable practices and systems developed in one school context of innovation to be spread and adapted by other teachers, and other subject and key stage teams working in different contexts at the same school, or at other schools. Understanding more about the processes, structures and strategies through which successful innovations can be mobilised and shared within and between schools in clusters, networks and indeed throughout national education systems, would be a useful and important extension to the local research studies reported here.

It is worth stating clearly that none of the findings are directly generalisable to wider populations and contexts of professional practice. The restrictions around the studies, including their short time-frame, the highly contextualised and curriculum and key stage specific focus of the studies, and the non-representative nature of samples recruited to each of these projects, place understandable limits on what can be generalised directly from the studies either to other teachers in the same school or cluster of schools, or to teachers and schools beyond the research context reported in each of the cases. To enhance the generalisability of school-based research projects such as those reviewed, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted over a longer period of time, with larger samples of teachers, pupils, and school leaders, at a larger number and wider variety of schools and school clusters.

It is suggested that more extensive, longitudinal designs are supported by increasing the timeframes of studies. This way, there is more realistic scope for new policies and practices to be adapted for practice and embedded in different contexts. Longer time frames would allow the scope needed by pupils and teachers to adjust to, and adapt, any new initiatives to their particular learning and teaching contexts. More extended and longitudinal designs would also open up more fruitful opportunities for changes in learning and teaching behaviours, and underpinning thinking and values associated with workload reduction strategies, to be studied in more depth. It would also allow for their influence on performance and learning outcomes to be measured in more detail.

Larger teacher samples would widen the scope for researching and comparing processes and outcomes of implementation, and for the adaptation of different workload reduction strategies by teachers in different classroom, year group and curriculum

contexts and at different types of school, in different sectors, and with different socio-economic and pupil attainment profiles. Larger pupil samples would enable comparisons to be made between patterns of pupil engagement, participation and attainments related to workload reduction strategies in terms of pupil characteristics such as SEND or Pupil Premium. An explicit and systematic focus on the leadership of workload reduction over time would also help develop understandings of how workload reduction initiatives can be successfully adapted, embedded, sustained and spread across different classroom, school and network contexts at scale.

In order to develop understandings of the processes and outcomes of successful workload reduction strategies that are useful for advancing school and national policy and practice, it is important to develop research and development programmes that optimise contextual variation, as well as scale of investigation and innovation. The processes should also combine different methods of data collection and analysis so that detailed analysis of process, outcomes and impact can be incorporated.

The small scale, locally contextualised and embedded studies reviewed here are important initial steps that have provided very useful indicative findings of the kinds of potential that might flow from the featured workload reduction strategies for teaching and learning processes and outcomes. A national programme of research and development can be built on the experience and findings of these 12 studies. This could include combining classroom observations, interviews with pupils, teachers and leaders and an analysis of pupil attainments that avoid overreliance on standardised national measures and incorporate more context specific and locally developed tests and measures of the learning promoted in different contexts of workload reduction. Designing and incorporating measures of pupils' and teachers' self-reported efficacy, motivation, and well-being would also enhance understandings of the impact of workload reduction strategies.

We would recommend that our discussion of general approaches to investigation and analysis outlined above can inform investigation of a programme of research focused on qualitative and quantitative comparisons of the leadership and implementation of different workload reduction strategies developed in different contexts. Different research and innovation projects could be shaped by the following broad foci:

- i) Processes and outcomes of any intervention in relation to different year groups, curriculum areas and school contexts.
- ii) The distinctive affordances and constraints arising from the implementation of any interventions.

In light of our review of the school reports, we suggest the following specific areas of focus for a future programme of workload reduction research and development:

Determining factors that support the development of:



- Effective tracking systems that measure progress from prior attainment and that allow data to be entered once and used in multiple ways within and across networks of schools
- High quality schemes of work can then be adapted by teachers for different contexts of their work.
- Effective teacher assessment using verbal feedback, 'real-time' marking, deep questioning, and pupil conferencing, taking into consideration teachers' and pupils' preferences for feedback approaches.
- Effective pupil self- and peer- assessment practices which support pupils to take ownership of their work and be able assess whether they have met their learning objectives.
- Assessment practices that can optimise the experiences and outcomes of pupils' learning, and effective ways in which school leaders can collect and use assessment information for school self-evaluation purposes.

Increasing understanding about:

- The benefits, or otherwise, of working collaboratively across schools to develop effective approaches to curriculum planning.
- The processes through which any workload reduction intervention influences pedagogy and school practices. For example, how changes in marking, planning and data reduction practices interact to influence lesson structure and design, and teachers' and students' classroom practices.
- Leadership and organisational practices that successfully promote and embed effective practices for reducing teachers' workload in ways that optimise the quality of classroom learning.
- Cost-benefit analyses to measure the value for money of different teacher workload reduction strategies in different contexts.

An important feature of a future programme of research that builds on the research and development already started with such promise in these 12 groups of schools should, we believe, be characterised by large scale design and ambition which optimises scope for understanding effective workload reduction in the widest possible range of school and classroom contexts to include different school types, education phases, curriculum areas and schools with different pupil profiles. We also believe questions of leadership and dissemination of workload reduction strategies should be an important feature of a future research programme.

## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

The school-based research projects reviewed within this report set out to develop workload reduction strategies around data management, planning and/or marking. In all cases, the schools and networks of schools involved identified aspects of policy and practice relating to one of these areas as a focus for their research. Teachers within schools, and across networks of schools, worked collaboratively on projects which culminated in either the development of recommendations for workload reduction practices, or (in the majority of cases) developing and trialling the practices.

The range and quality of research and development presented in the 12 reports exemplify exciting and promising programmes of research-informed innovation. These projects have important implications for teachers' practices and school systems, and for policies related to teacher workload reduction. It is clear from our review that the 12 school-based research studies have influenced thinking about policies and practices of workload reduction within and across the schools that featured in the reports. In some cases, changes in policy and practice have been affected as a direct consequence of the research and development activities set in motion by the schools themselves. The Independent Teacher Workload Review Group reports (DfE, 2016a; DfE, 2016b; DfE, 2016c) framing the policy and practice imperative of teacher workload reduction, provided important starting points for all the reviewed research studies. The schools and clusters were involved in serious, thoughtful, constructive and practically useful research enterprises that have advanced policy and practice in relation to workload reduction. These schools clearly represent a cohort of researching schools, many of which already have in place effective arrangements for creating and sharing the research-informed knowledge they developed, and using it to advance policy and practice in their local school and cluster contexts.

The research projects typically administered pre-intervention surveys, to ascertain teacher perspectives of the time spent on, and challenges associated with, data management, planning or marking activities. Post-intervention teacher surveys, interviews and focus groups were then used to gain understandings about the impact of the intervention on teacher workload and pupil outcomes. Within some of the studies, data relating to pupils' perspectives was also collected through pupil surveys, interviews and focus groups. An overall conclusion is that those studies that reported the implementation of interventions also reported successful reductions in teacher workload without impacting negatively on pupil outcomes. Additionally, studies that developed recommendations for, but did not trial, interventions reported that teachers were confident that once implemented, the interventions would lead to a reduction in their workload.

Drawing on findings that were common across the research reports, we highlight practices which should be encouraged when developing and implementing policies and approaches to reducing teacher workload:

- Support from the school's SLT is needed to enable the successful implementation and embedding of new practices. In particular, for interventions to be developed and implemented, teachers need support during the period of transition when new initiatives are introduced. Time also needs to be given for teachers to become familiar with, and understand, the purpose of new initiatives, for the implementation process, and to review the impact of the intervention on their workload and on pupil outcomes.
- School leaders and governors should ensure that the purpose of activities relating to data management, planning and marking, go beyond adherence to policies and 'delivery' of target test results, and focus on improving the quality of learning opportunities, experiences and outcomes for all pupils. The precise nature and purpose of specific interventions must be clearly communicated to, and understood by, teachers.
- Staff should be encouraged to contribute to, and take ownership of new initiatives, and school governors, parents and pupils should be supported to understand the principles behind them.
- Any new initiatives should be monitored and its effectiveness for reducing teacher workload and improving outcomes for pupils evaluated.

When developing ways of implementing these approaches, consideration will need to be given to how measures to reduce workload may vary according to the diversity of teachers and pupils and different school contexts. Acknowledgment will also need to be given to the fact that each school has unique features pertinent to individual pupils, teachers and their school which need to be taken into consideration when implementing potential new practices.

## **6.1. Concluding remarks**

Issues of teacher workload should be seen in the broad context of current challenges within the education system, including curriculum innovation and other initiatives which impact on school policies and practices, and often serve to increase teacher workload.

When considering teacher workload reduction strategies around data management, planning and marking, it must be acknowledged that activities associated with each of these cannot be viewed in isolation as activities in one area will impact on other areas. For example, changes in practice relating to marking will impact a school's overall

assessment strategy, and are likely to impact on the school's data management and lesson planning policies and practices. It is therefore, difficult, if not impossible to attribute any changes in pupil outcomes to any one change in practice, and consideration needs to be given to the interaction between the three areas of data management, planning and marking, and how strategies relating to each can be integrated. Care must also be taken to ensure that any new recommendations aimed at reducing teacher workload do not contribute, unintentionally, to increased pressure on school teachers and leaders.

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