



Department
for Education

Workload Challenge Analysis of teacher consultation responses: Sixth form colleges

**Research Report
December 2015**

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- CooperGibson Research**

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Executive Summary

The Department for Education's online Workload Challenge consultation ran between 22 October and 21 November 2014. It asked three key open-ended questions:

1. Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time. Where do these come from?
2. Send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload – what works well in your school?
3. What do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload – by government, by schools or by others?

A report was produced which presented analyses of an initial 10% sample (1,680) of consultation respondents, who answered all three questions.¹ This accompanying report presents the findings from the analyses of a sample of 240 members of staff working in sixth form colleges, of which the majority (71%) were classroom teachers. Teaching experience was varied; respondents ranged from those in their Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year, to individuals who had taught for several decades.

Key findings

Defining 'unnecessary and unproductive' tasks

Respondents in the sample of sixth form colleges noted that the tasks that they undertake are not 'unnecessary' or 'unproductive', but the amount of work that is required within the time that they have creates the burden on their workload.

The main reasons given for the burden on workload were:

- Excessive level of detail (64%)
- Amount of duplication (58%).

The most frequently mentioned source of unnecessary and unproductive workload, according to 75% of respondents in the sample of sixth form colleges, was within the category of **school administration and management**. Other common broad themes that responses corresponded to were accountability and lesson planning and policies, assessment and reporting administration.

The three most commonly reported tasks which were said to be burdensome were:

¹ [Workload challenge: analysis of teacher responses \(2015\), DfE Research Report 445](#)

1. Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data (57%)
2. Basic administrative and support tasks (36%)
3. Maintaining records (32%).

Key drivers

Respondents in the sample of sixth form college staff most commonly reported that the burden of this unnecessary workload was created by tasks set by leaders/middle leaders (46%), and policy change at a local and school level (40%).

Variation across job role

Two variations between the responses of classroom teachers and middle leaders are worth noting:

1. Implementing new initiatives, curriculum and qualification change – 14% of classroom teachers reported this to be burdensome, in comparison to 7% of middle leaders
2. Arranging and attending school trips, evening events/clubs - 13% of classroom teachers reported this to be burdensome, in comparison to 7% of middle leaders.

Strategies and solutions

Key solutions suggested by the sample of sixth form college staff (232 responses) were changes in support offered and accountability. In terms of specific types of solutions, the three most common were:

1. Reduce data inputting and analysis requirements (33% compared with 25% from the initial dataset)
2. Hire additional administrative staff (22% compared with 13% from the initial dataset)
3. Delegate administrative duties (20% compared with 19% from the initial dataset).

Variation by job role

Classroom teachers were more likely than middle leaders to suggest delegation of administrative duties, cap working hours, reduce frequency of curriculum/qualification change, modify planning requirements and reduce frequency of written reporting.

1. Introduction

The Workload Challenge consultation ran between 22 October and 21 November 2014. It used an online self-completion survey which was placed on the Times Educational Supplement (TES) website and was disseminated via the Department for Education and union websites, newsletters and social media.

CooperGibson Research was commissioned by the Department for Education to conduct qualitative coding and descriptive analysis of a sample of responses. A report was produced which presented analysis of a 10% sample (1,680) of all consultation respondents.² This accompanying report presents analysis of a sample of responses from members of staff from sixth form colleges.

1.1 Methodology

The Workload Challenge survey asked three key open-ended consultation questions:

1. Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time. Where do these come from?
2. Send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload – what works well in your school?
3. What do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload - by government, by schools or by others?

When reading and interpreting the results please note that respondents were self-selecting so the results should not be read as being representative of the overall school workforce.

The sample of sixth form college responses was coded using the same framework as used in the analysis of the 10% sample of all responses to allow comparison with the main findings. The coding framework can be found in Appendix 1. The analysis is presented in this report along with direct quotes which illustrate or exemplify the findings. Where respondents have noted what they thought to be useful or good practice, this is highlighted using shaded boxes.

The sample

In total, 1,455 sixth form college staff submitted responses to the Workload Challenge. This analysis is based on the responses of 240 members of staff working in sixth form

² [Workload challenge: analysis of teacher responses \(2015\), DfE Research Report 445](#)

colleges, selected systematically from those who had answered all three open-ended questions.

Respondent characteristics

Survey respondents were asked to select options that best described their main job role. The majority from the sample of sixth form colleges were classroom teachers (71%).

Table 1: Survey respondent by type of role undertaken – sample of sixth form colleges. Workload Challenge survey, 2014.

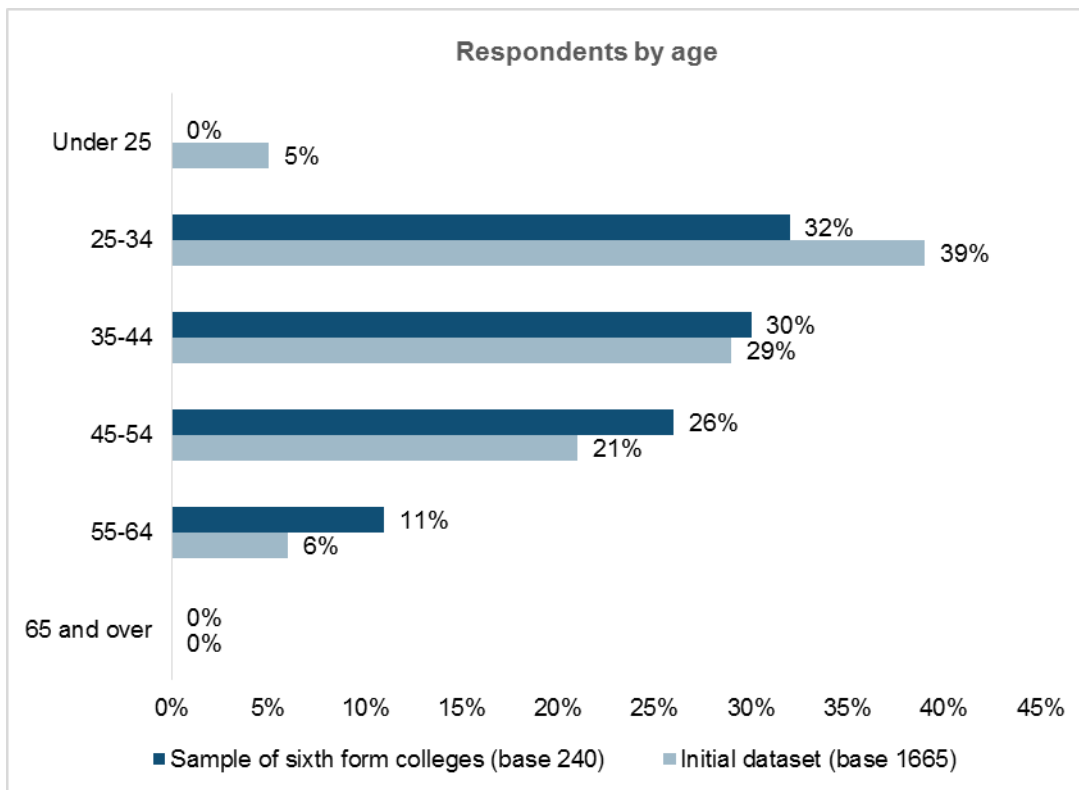
	Number of respondents in sample	Percentage of sample (base 240)	Comparison with initial dataset (base 1,680)
Classroom teacher	171	71%	56%
Middle leader	63	26%	30%
Senior leader	5	2%	10%
Support staff	1	0%	1%
Headteacher / Principal	0	0%	2%
Governor*	0	0%	0%
Employer*	0	0%	0%
Total	240	99%	

* Percentages sum less than 100 due to rounding. Note that support staff represented 0.4% of the sample of sixth form colleges. Governors represent 0.3% of the initial sample. Employers represent 0.09% of the initial sample

Of the 239 sample respondents who indicated their gender, 67% were female and 33% were male. The proportion of female respondents is lower in the sample of sixth form colleges in comparison with the overall sample of the initial dataset (79% female and 21% male).

Of the 240 respondents that indicated their age, 32% were aged between 25 and 34. The sample of staff from sixth form colleges was marginally older than those indicating their age in the initial dataset (Figure 1).

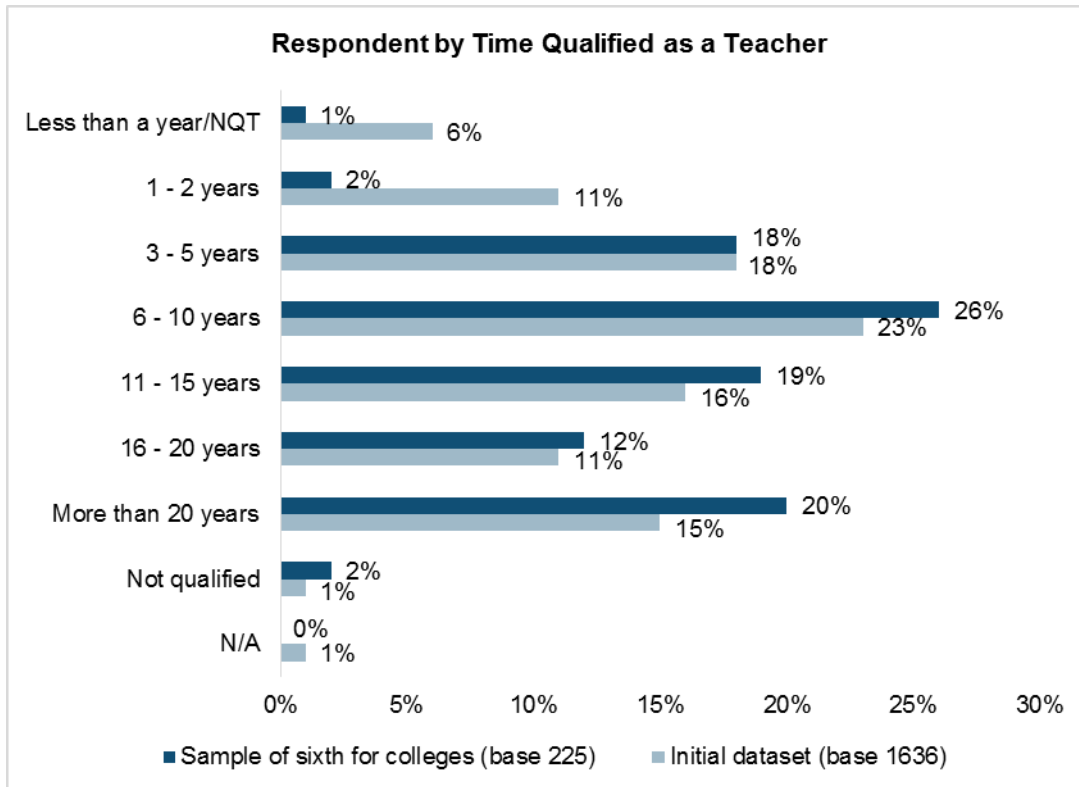
Figure 1: "How old are you?" Workload Challenge survey, 2014



*Note that 65 and over in the initial dataset represented 0.2% of the sample; 25 and under represented 0.4% of the sample of sixth form colleges. Those not responding are not included. Percentages are rounded.

Responses were received from participants with a broad range of teaching experience – from those still in their Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) year, to individuals who had taught for several decades. This question was coded post completion of the survey since the question was originally designed as an open question. Whilst in many cases, respondents had included the amount of time they had been qualified as a teacher, others had submitted more complex responses, including when they qualified abroad for example. It was not entirely clear in some cases how they defined ‘qualifying’.

Figure 2: “When did you qualify as a teacher?” Workload Challenge survey, 2014



*Note that those not responding are not included. Percentages are rounded. The proportion of responses in the sample of sixth form colleges that were not applicable was 0.4%

2. Unnecessary and Unproductive Tasks

This section provides findings of the analyses of qualitative responses from sixth form college staff. It explores responses to the first open question of the Workload Challenge consultation, which asked what tasks respondents felt took up too much of their time. Respondents were asked to describe the tasks that they were required to carry out during their working day which they considered unnecessary and/or unproductive. The analysis was also able to explore to some extent what it was that made these tasks burdensome, where these tasks come from and any examples of good practice.

Throughout this section, examples of good practice are highlighted where survey respondents offered them as solutions or ideas of what worked well in their school in dealing with workload challenges.

2.1 Defining ‘unnecessary and unproductive’

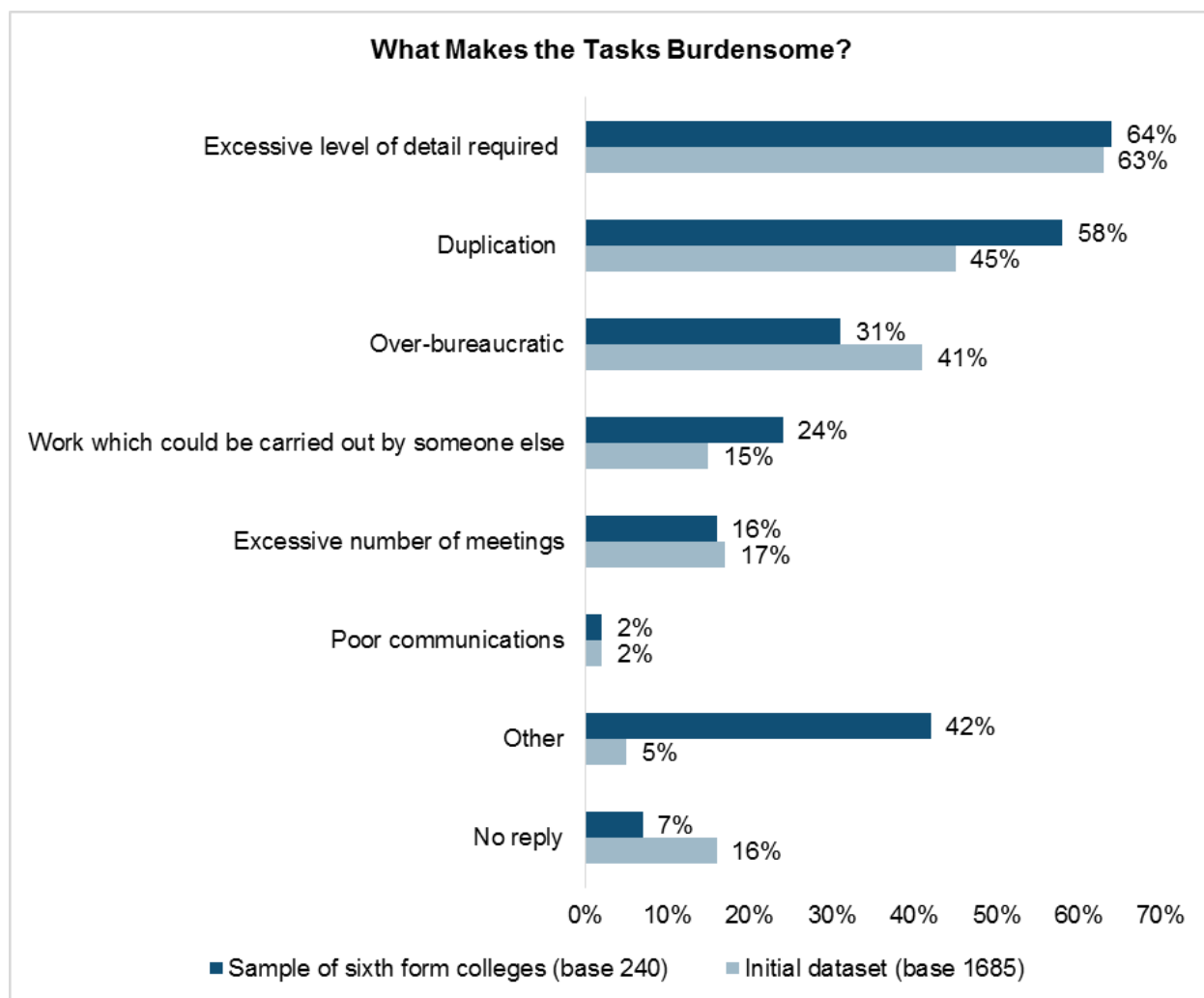
Respondents in the sample of sixth form colleges noted that the tasks that they undertake are not ‘unnecessary’ or ‘unproductive’, but the amount of work that is required within the time that they have creates the burden on their workload.

The excessive level of detail (64%) and amount of duplication (58%) were attributed as the main reasons for the burden of workload among the sample of staff from sixth form colleges. This reflects the results of the initial dataset – see Figure 3.

We have over 1000 students doing A level or GCSE, in A level we fill in a sheet for each module grade and one for the final outcome. That's one filled in for each GCSE, three for an AS student - of which we have 600, four filled in per A level student - we have 450 of those. This doesn't include double workload for the 150 further mathematicians. Plus we have to do exam invigilation. This comprises many hours of time that could be better used on say planning for one.

(Middle leader)

Figure 3: What Makes the Tasks Burdensome? Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time. Workload Challenge survey, 2014



*Note that percentages have been rounded.

2.2 Overall findings

The most frequently mentioned source of unnecessary and unproductive workload, according to 75% of respondents in the sample of sixth form colleges, was within the category of **school administration and management**. Other common broad themes that responses corresponded to were accountability and lesson planning and policies, assessment and reporting administration.

These themes give overarching indications of the nature of tasks that school staff fulfil and perceive to be unnecessary or unproductive. They represent broad headings relating to a range of tasks. These headings/themes and related tasks form the coding framework (see Appendix 1).

Compared with the initial dataset, the results are broadly similar, although school administration and management was the main source of workload for respondents in the

sample of sixth form colleges, rather than lesson planning and policies, assessment/reporting administration.

Table 2: Most common unproductive work areas. “Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time. Where do these come from?” Workload Challenge survey, 2014

	Sample of sixth form colleges (base 233)	Initial dataset (base 1645)
School administration and management	75%	76%
Accountability	64%	73%
Lesson planning and policies, assessment and reporting administration	64%	82%
Administrative planning and policies	13%	12%
Pupil support	7%	10%
Behaviour management	5%	13%

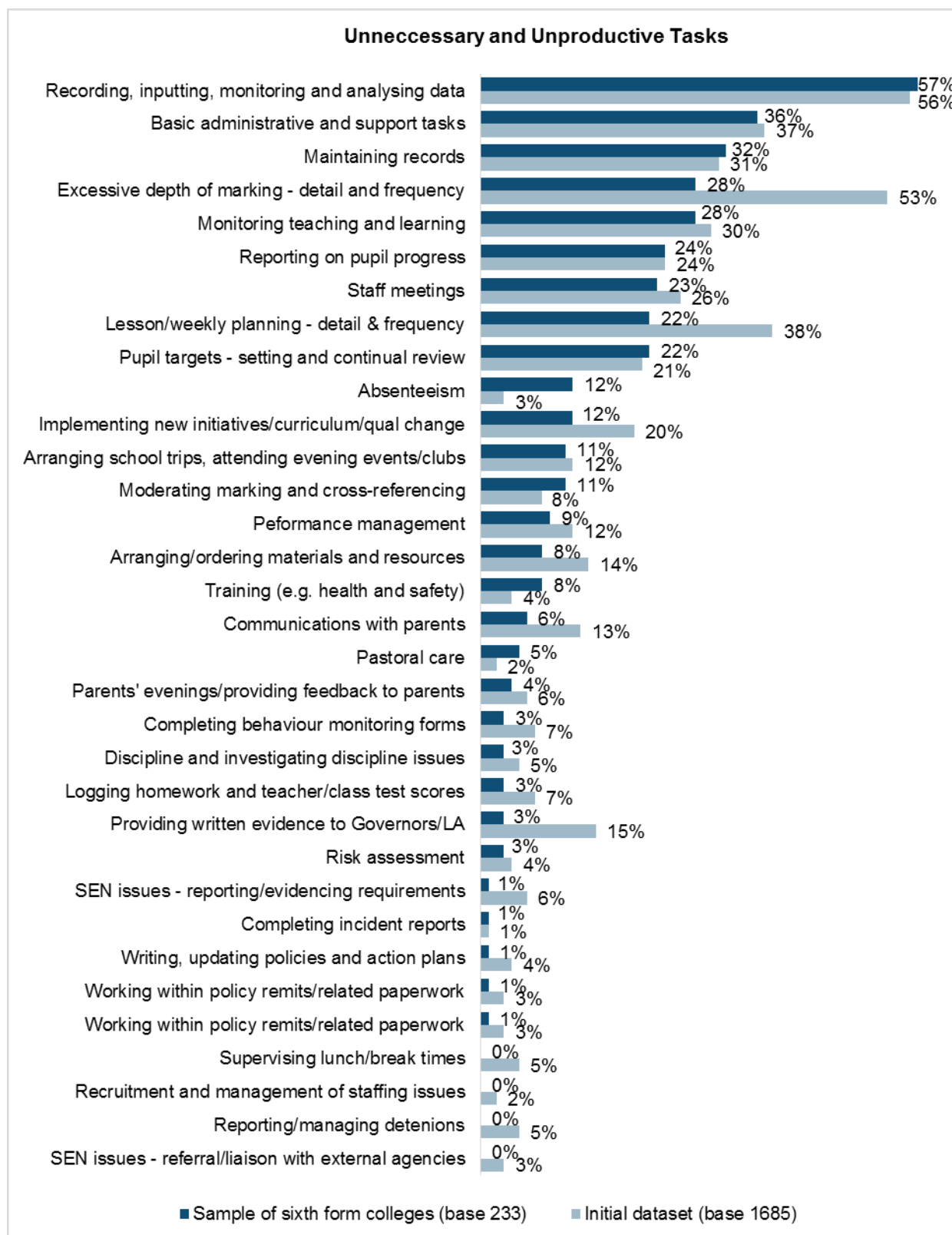
*Note that those not responding are not included. Percentages are rounded. Base represents the number of respondents who gave at least one response across all categories.

As Figure 4 shows below, there were three tasks that respondents in the sample of sixth form colleges most commonly stated were burdensome. These were:

3. Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data (57%)
4. Basic administrative and support tasks (36%)
5. Maintaining records (32%).

Further commentary on these three areas of workload for sixth form college staff is provided below.

Figure 4: Unnecessary and unproductive tasks. “Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time. Where do these come from?” Workload Challenge survey, 2014



*Note that those not responding have not been included. Percentages have been rounded. Supervising lunch/break times, recruitment and management of staffing issues, reporting/managing detentions and SEN issues – referral/liaison with external agencies each represented 0.4% of the sample of sixth form colleges.

Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data was categorised under the broad theme of accountability, and respondents from the sample of staff from sixth form colleges reported that this included producing duplicated versions of the same data for different reports, data requests that were too frequent or 'badly timed', and data that has been inputted on a central system then being requested in reports from individual teachers.

A well-designed database with useful reports should be able to provide the information in a timely manner to admin / managers.

(Classroom teacher)

These issues were also echoed in responses related to the workload created by **basic administrative and support tasks** and **maintaining records**.

Record keeping means that marks are recorded on students' work, on my own paper records, on electronic mark books, and on report forms. These should be written-once, ideally.

(Classroom teacher)

Respondents from sixth form colleges also commented on the 'particularly onerous' requirement to regularly plan, write/rewrite and colour code Schemes of Work due to the different units involved in each course (BTECs especially).

What works well

What works well in our college: We have five admin days a year. These five admin days are days off timetable during which we can get on with admin. Each is set aside with a specific purpose: for example, we have one set aside specifically to write UCAS references (we are a sixth form college and have 650+ students applying to UCAS every year); one to moderate coursework.

(Senior leader)

2.3 Main drivers of workload

Respondents in the sample of sixth form college staff most commonly reported that the burden of this unnecessary workload was created by **tasks set by leaders/middle leaders** (46%), and **policy change at a local and school level** (40%).

Accountability/ perceived pressures of Ofsted (38%), policy change at national level (35%) and changes from Ofqual (new qualifications/examinations – 18%) were also reported to be significant drivers of workload by the sample of staff from sixth form colleges.

The 42% reporting 'other' drivers of workload, stated examples such as:

- The volume of work that respondents needed to get through in the time available
- Poor/unreliable Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment and systems
- Lengthy meetings and the paperwork required as a result (e.g. detailed minutes)
- Lack of staff capacity, particular due to illness or staffing cuts
- Excessive exam board paperwork and requirements
- Lack of preparation and marking time.

What works well

The college has committed to a two year Teaching and Learning session that runs once monthly where groups of staff can meet and share strategies in the classroom concerning key issues raised by senior management. This has become a positive lifeline for many people who work in isolation, in small departments or for the majority of the staff who are part time.

(Classroom teacher)

2.4 Variation across job role

The results according to job role were broadly similar across the sample of respondents from sixth form colleges. Two variations between the responses of classroom teachers and middle leaders are worth noting:

- 1. Implementing new initiatives, curriculum and qualification change** – 14% of classroom teachers reported this to be burdensome, in comparison to 7% of middle leaders
- 2. Arranging and attending school trips, evening events/clubs** - 13% of classroom teachers reported this to be burdensome, in comparison to 7% of middle leaders.

3. Solutions and Strategies for Tackling Workload Issues

Respondents to the Workload Challenge consultation were asked to make suggestions of:

- Any solutions and strategies for tackling workload: examples of what works in their school
- What should be done to tackle unnecessary workload by the government, schools and others.

The questions were again designed as open text response and have been coded to allow quantitative and comparative analysis. Since the questions allowed open response, the coding was designed to allow multiple selection of potential solutions. The responses to these two questions were often very similar in the nature and as such, the coding framework was designed to encompass all responses under a broad theme of 'solutions' and including seven broad categories:

- Communications
- Support
- Effective use of time and resources
- ICT
- Professionalism
- Curriculum and qualifications
- Accountability.

The following analysis will explore the detail under these broad categories as well as the prevalence of responses against the categories themselves.

3.1 Key overarching solutions

The key solutions are grouped under the following themes (identified in the coding framework). Out of the respondents from the sample of sixth form colleges answering the two questions around solutions and ways forward (232); **changes in support offered and accountability** were most common.

Table 3: Most common themes for solutions. “Send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload – what works well in your school? What do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload – by government, schools or others?” Workload Challenge survey, 2014

	Sample of sixth form colleges (base 232)	Initial dataset (base 1,630)
Support	55%	34%
Accountability	49%	40%
Effective use of time and resources	44%	25%
Communications	21%	19%
Professionalism	34%	24%
ICT	18%	6%
Curriculum and qualifications	16%	14%

*Note: percentages are rounded. Those not responding are not included. Base is number of respondents who gave at least one response across all categories.

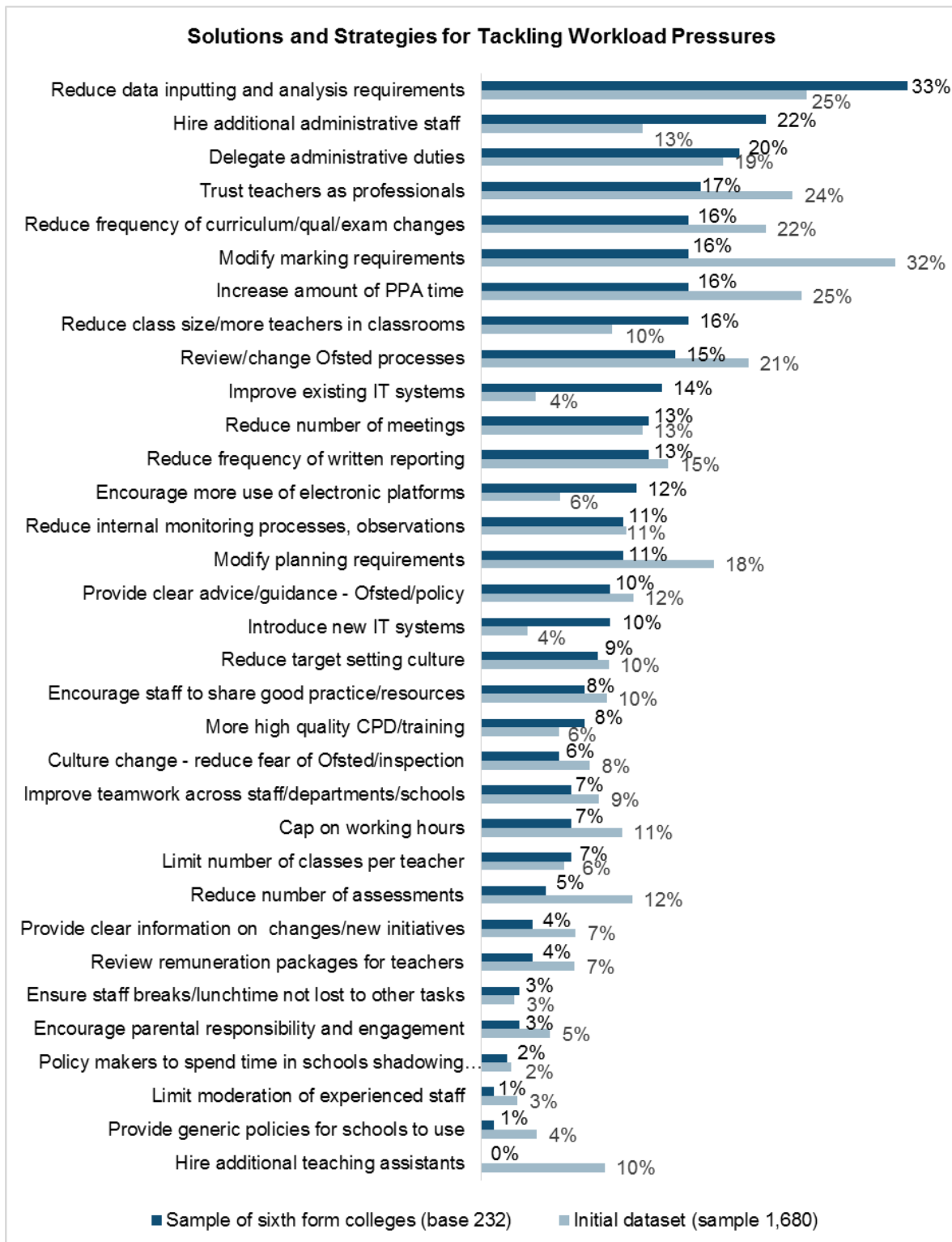
3.2 Specific solutions

The range of suggested solutions and proportion of respondents from the sample of sixth form colleges suggesting these solutions, are set out below. The most common solutions they suggested were:

- Reduce data inputting and analysis requirements (33% compared with 25% from the initial dataset)
- Hire additional administrative staff (22% compared with 13% from the initial dataset)
- Delegate administrative duties (20% compared with 19% from the initial dataset).

Respondents from sixth form colleges were notably more likely to suggest reducing class size/having more teachers in the classroom than those in the initial dataset (16% compared to 10%), and more likely to suggest improvements to existing IT systems (14% compared to 4%), introducing new IT systems (10% compared to 4%) or more use of electronic platforms (12% compared to 6%).

Figure 5: “Send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload – what works well in your school?” “What do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload – by government, schools or others?” Workload Challenge survey, 2014³



³ For a full description of the solutions in the chart above, refer to the coding framework under questions 2 and 3 which can be found in Appendix 1

*Note: percentages are rounded. Those not responding are not included. Hire additional teaching assistants represented 0.4% of the sample of sixth form colleges.

The need to **reduce data inputting and analysis requirements** (33%) was supported by other suggestions given by respondents from the sample of sixth form colleges: hiring additional administrative staff (e.g. data managers) and improved, as well as more integration of, IT systems across colleges.

What works well

For the lesson observation paperwork my school now provides us with packs of the information at the start of the year or has sensitive information saved in a staff folder for access. My school has also started to provide summaries of exam results data saved in organised folders so it will be easy to do a three year comparison relatively quickly.

(Classroom teacher)

To assist with their workload, respondents from the sample of sixth form college staff suggested **hiring additional administrative staff (22%)** and **the delegation of administration duties**. They reported that this would help them by (as examples):

- Designated data managers taking responsibility for data analysis and reporting
- Having additional specified support for tasks such as changing displays, creating lesson materials/resources, photocopying
- Assigning individual members of support staff clearly defined roles across the college, e.g. parental liaison, attendance monitoring, reprographics, pastoral care.

What works well

For the lesson observation paperwork my school now provides us with packs of the information at the start of the year or has sensitive information saved in a staff folder for access. My school has also started to provide summaries of exam results data saved in organised folders so it will be easy to do a three year comparison relatively quickly.

(Classroom teacher)

Respondents suggested **improving existing IT systems (10%)**, **introducing new systems (10%)** and **encouraging the use of electronic platforms (12%)**.

Workload would be kept to a minimum if it was a requirement to have one centralised database rather than a number of databases that all have slightly different data.

(Classroom teacher)

This included adopting centralised software; training; hiring more IT technicians that were skilled in using up-to-date IT resources and on-hand to assist; more use of Virtual Learning Environments and electronic systems through which parents can be provided with news/updates.

Invest in technology/ apps that actually reduce workload. Teachers should have access to good laptops and iPads, not cheap budget models that run slowly, outdate and break easily. Technology that is just used by management to fire emails to staff would increase workload. This must be considered carefully.

(Middle leader)

What works well

We use [a proprietary system] which allows us to communicate with students, staff and tutors with just a few clicks and review students' progress rapidly without the need for excessive paperwork. [We also use an interactive software package] which allows us to set work to all students with very little effort and time stamps returned work; ideal for BTEC where deadlines are now important for availability of resubmissions. Also useful for keeping meeting minutes, Schemes of Work and sharing documents which are editable by staff at the same time. This is handy for common mark books also. (Middle leader)

Some managers and teachers have designed useful spreadsheets for tracking student results and used mail-merge to create individual reports for parent's evenings. This needs to be rolled out to the whole college.

(Classroom teacher)

3.3 Variation by job role

As with the analysis of unnecessary and unproductive tasks, the solutions given by job roles were broadly similar. However, there were five notable variations between classroom teachers and middle leaders:

- **Delegation of administrative duties** was suggested by 23% of classroom teachers (compared to 13% of middle leaders)

- **Cap on working hours** was suggested by 9% of classroom teachers (compared to 2% of middle leaders)
- **Reduce frequency of curriculum/qualification change** was suggested by 19% of classroom teachers (compared to 10% of middle leaders)
- **Modify planning requirements** was suggested by 13% of classroom teachers (compared to 7% of middle leaders)
- **Reduce frequency of written reporting** was suggested by 16% of classroom teachers (compared to 7% of middle leaders).

Appendix 1: Coding Framework

QUESTION 1a: Tell us about the unnecessary and unproductive tasks which take up too much of your time.

- 1. Accountability / providing evidence e.g. for inspection**
 - a. Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data
 - b. Providing written evidence and reports (to Governors/LA)
 - c. Liaising with Governors
 - d. Monitoring teaching and learning (incl. observation)
 - e. Pressures on 'Requires Improvement' schools to provide additional evidence
 - f. Pressures on newly qualified teachers to provide evidence

- 2. School administration and management**
 - a. Maintaining records
 - b. Absenteeism (including chasing absenteeism and contacting parents)
 - c. Communications with parents (e.g. queries, complaints)
 - d. Basic administrative and support tasks
 - e. Supervising lunch/break times
 - f. Arranging school trips, attending/running evening events/clubs
 - g. Arranging/ordering materials and resources
 - h. Liaising with external agencies
 - i. Performance management
 - j. Staff meetings
 - k. Recruitment and management of staffing issues

- 3. Administrative planning and policies**
 - a. Writing, updating policies and action plans
 - b. Working within policy remits and completing paperwork (incl writing local offer)
 - c. Risk assessment
 - d. Training (e.g. health and safety)

- 4. Lesson planning, assessment and reporting administration**
 - a. Lesson/weekly planning – detail & frequency required
 - b. Curriculum and qualification change/implementing new initiatives
 - c. Pupil targets – setting & continual review (incl target culture)
 - d. Excessive/depth of marking – detail and frequency required
 - e. Reporting on pupil progress
 - f. Parents' evenings and providing feedback to parents
 - g. Moderating marking and cross referencing
 - h. Logging homework and teacher/class test scores

5. Behaviour management

- a. Discipline and investigating discipline issues
- b. Reporting / managing detentions
- c. Completing behaviour monitoring forms for class/school

6. Pupil support

- a. Pastoral care
- b. Completing incident reports
- c. SEN issues – referrals/liaison with external agencies/ meetings
- d. SEN issues – reporting/evidencing requirements
- e. EAL pupils – reporting evidence requirements

QUESTION 1b. What makes them burdensome?

1. Excessive level of detail required
2. Over-bureaucratic (e.g. requirement to fill in standard template)
3. Duplication (e.g. same information in different forms)
4. Excessive number of meetings
5. Work which could be carried out by someone else (e.g. non-teaching staff/admin staff)
6. Poor communications
7. Other

QUESTION 1c: Where do these come from?

1. Government - national policy change (e.g. new curriculum)
2. Policies (local, school)
3. Ofqual (new qualifications/examinations)
4. Accountability / pressures of Ofsted
5. Requirement for individualised learning and differentiation
6. Requirement for school improvement
7. Tasks set by leaders/middle leaders
8. Lack of capacity
9. Employer (e.g. local authority / academy trust)
10. Other agencies
11. Funding requirements

QUESTION 2: Send us your solutions and strategies for tackling workload – what works well in your school? QUESTION 3: What do you think should be done to tackle unnecessary workload - by government, by schools or by others?

These two questions have been combined for the coding since they have very similar responses around solutions. Good practice examples have been noted separately.

1. Communications

- a. Provide clear advice/guidance – Ofsted requirements, policy/curriculum/qualification changes
- b. Encourage staff to share good practice/resources (within school)
- c. Publicise good practice/positive examples of teacher achievements
- d. Provide clear information on policy changes/new initiatives
- e. Encourage parental responsibility and engagement
- f. Provide generic policies for schools to use
- g. Policy makers to spend time in schools shadowing staff

2. Support (including time and resources)

- h. Hire additional teaching assistants (incl funding for this)
- i. Hire additional administrative staff (incl funding for this)
- j. Delegate administrative duties
- k. Increase amount of PPA time allocated to each teacher
- l. Reduce class size / more teachers in classrooms
- m. Limit number of classes per teacher
- n. Ensure staff breaks/lunchtime are not lost to other tasks
- o. Cap on working hours

3. Efficiency

- a. Reduce number of meetings
- b. Reduce data inputting and analysis requirements
- c. Improve teamwork across staff/departments/schools
- d. More efficient pupil referral and assessment processes (SEN)

4. ICT

- e. Improve existing IT systems
- f. Introduce new IT systems – e.g. use of specialist software
Encourage more use of electronic platforms for monitoring/marketing/assessment

5. Professionalism

- a. Trust teachers as professionals
- b. Culture change - reduce fear of Ofsted/inspection processes
- c. More high quality CPD/training (incl workload management, expectations)
- d. Review remuneration packages for teachers

6. Curriculum and qualifications

- a. Reduce frequency of curriculum/qualification/examination changes

7. Accountability

- a. Review/change Ofsted processes
- b. Modify marking requirements
- c. Modify planning requirements
- d. Reduce frequency of written reporting
- e. Reduce number of assessments
- f. Reduce target setting culture
- g. Reduce internal monitoring processes, observations
- h. Limit moderation of experienced staff



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