

## **STATEMENT FROM THE BRITISH AND IRISH GROUP OF TEACHER UNIONS**

### **Work overload negatively affecting wellbeing in education systems**

Following the first in-person meeting of Presidents and General Secretaries from the ten education unions within the British and Irish Group of Teacher Unions (BIGTU), the group has called on policy makers within their jurisdictions to prioritise the tackling of teacher workload and the promotion of practitioner wellbeing within schools, colleges and universities.

Teachers and lecturers are increasingly expected to work long hours each week. There is mounting concern amongst education unions and the wider education community, about the impact that this is having upon the work-life balance of education workers and on their general well-being. The unions believe that the long and stressful working hours associated with teaching are causing a recruitment and retention crisis in the profession.

Educators in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland spend an inordinate amount of time on burdensome non-teaching tasks involving paperwork such as tracking, audits and form filling which have little direct effect upon the quality of learning and teaching yet negatively impact upon the quality of working life. Increasing workload and longer working hours are resulting in low levels of teacher well-being and morale.

There are two clear areas where reducing teachers' workload would help reduce stress: excessive summative assessment and unhelpful external audit and inspection processes. Policymakers should ensure that examination, curriculum and inspection reforms are designed to decrease workload as all of these factors have the capacity to create additional work for teachers.

BIGTU calls on the Departments of Education on these islands to redouble their efforts to reduce teacher stress by reducing the amount of paperwork teachers and lecturers are required to handle. The group believes that such an initiative would have a positive impact on student learning.

BIGTU Chairperson Larry Flanagan stated:

“Teachers’ and lecturers’ time is finite. If we want the very best for our students, we need to allow teachers to focus on activities that have the greatest effect on student learning and wellbeing. By reducing workload in areas with little evidence of impact, we can realign teachers’ working lives with

their moral purpose and improve both teacher wellbeing and the student experience.”

Signed by:

Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, Education Institute of Scotland (EIS),  
Chairperson BIGTU

John Boyle, General Secretary, Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO),  
Secretary, BIGTU

Dr Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney Joint General Secretaries, National  
Education Union (NEU)

Jo Grady, General Secretary, University and College Union (UCU)

Jacquie White, General Secretary, Ulster Teachers’ Union (UTU)

Kieran Christie, General Secretary, Association of Secondary Teachers in  
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Frank Jones, General Secretary, Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT)

Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary, NASUWT

Seamus Searson, General Secretary, Scottish Secondary Teachers’ Association  
(SSTA)

Michael Gillespie, General Secretary, Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI)

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