

Falling levels of teacher pay must be addressed urgently to lessen staffing crisis

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Monday, 25 March 2019

Following recent figures showing that a huge 36,000 teachers (<https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/yorkshire-news/record-number-teachers-leaving-profession-15103060>) stepped down from the profession last year, Baljinder Kuller, managing director of The Supply Register, has urged that better pay for workers is prioritised to prevent the current crisis worsening.

Teachers are leaving in higher numbers than ever, with the government's failure to reach its own targets on recruitment for the last five years leading to a shortfall of 30,000 teachers (<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/feb/04/30000-teacher-shortfall--secondary-schools-further-education>). At the same time, pupil numbers are set to rise by 19% over the next decade.

Another trend occurring parallel to this is continuously falling levels of teacher pay, which has dropped by more than £4,000 a year (<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/feb/09/teacher-pay-down-real-terms-since-2003>) since 2010 in real terms. However, the government is still stalling on a solution, with Damian Hinds, the education secretary, warning that only a 2% increase (<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/schools-staff-crisis-looms-as-austerity-hits-teachers-pay/ar-BBTnigJ>) can be expected for the next academic year.

Commenting on the current situation, Baljinder Kuller, managing director of The Supply Register (<https://www.supplyregister.uk/>), has urged school leaders to focus on staff pay to boost retention levels:

“While the latest figures showing record numbers of teachers leaving the profession do not make for pleasant reading, sadly, they don't come as a surprise. Retention levels in schools have been getting worse for a long time now, and it's not farfetched to say that we're in the midst of a full blown crisis. Teacher pay has played a large role in this. When I started recruiting for local authorities back in the early 2000's, graduate pay packages were incredibly attractive – now, they are anything but.”

“Clearly, the combination of a stressful environment, heavy workload, and stagnant remuneration is driving staff away, leading to a systematic erosion of recognition for the role that teachers play in our society. To reverse this, it's urgent that authorities act now. For school leaders themselves, this may seem like an impossible task, but with the right workforce management procedures in place, and by re-evaluating the staffing agencies that they are using, schools will be able to manage resources in a way that will ensure their workers get a fairer deal –particularly where supply teachers are concerned.”

“While recent plans, such as an offer of improved pay (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-47487093>) to workers across Scotland are promising, it is clear that change must come from the top. Decision makers need to take the initiative and see whether their existing staffing strategies are actually preventing current teachers from getting the pay they deserve.”

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