

Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 27 February 2023
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Reference: SR23/4917

Petition Number: P-06-1317

Petition title: Recognise Teaching Assistants as an important asset to schools by raising wage

Text of petition: Teaching Assistants (TA) are an extremely important part of the running of schools in Wales but are not currently recognised as this by our government when reflecting on the wage.

Without Teaching Assistants, schools wouldn't be able to cater to the high number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) students. They work hard and are discriminately underpaid for the work they do. A Teaching Assistant's role is demanding, and the workload they face in current times is massive. Duties include, but are not limited to, supporting SEN students (often on a one-to-one basis), teaching groups of children and sometimes even a whole class to cover teachers, lesson planning, organising extra-curricular activities, making sure that every child reaches their full potential. Sadly, as the wage is so low, this is not a job many TAs can afford to keep, and a huge number of highly skilled TAs are being forced to find other jobs. This needs to change.



1. Teaching assistant pay

Teaching assistants may be paid either through school budgets or through local authority budgets. A research report commissioned by the Welsh Government several years ago, [School support staff in Wales Research report on the employment and deployment of support staff in schools in Wales](#) (2008) found that:

Most schools said that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) rates were used for teaching and learning assistants and administrative staff. Most also indicated that LEA [local authority] advice was the usual method of calculating support staff wages where the NJC scales were not used. A slightly different view was offered by the LEAs who said that decisions about the wages of staff not employed on NJC scales were taken by schools or jointly by schools and LEAs.

Latest data from the Education Workforce Council shows that the [number of registered school learning support workers](#) has increased by 27.4 per cent since 2017 and 10.1 per cent between 2021 to 2022 to 42,585.

2. Welsh Government action

On 18 February 2022, Jeremy Miles, Minister for Education and Welsh Language issued a written statement [Update on activities to support those assisting teaching](#). He said that a Task and Finish Group, which included Welsh Government, trade unions, local authorities, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Education Workforce Council, teaching assistants and headteacher representation, had identified several key areas for attention:

- **Deployment of teaching assistants** - a new Teaching Assistant Professional Learning Steering Group were to develop further resources for leaders and Governors on the deployment of teaching assistants. The Minister had also agreed to a comparative research project to look at the deployment of teaching assistants in other education systems.
- **Access to training and professional development** - Since 2017, the Welsh Government and the Regional Consortia have supported the development of a Teaching Assistants Learning Pathway to increase the number Higher Level Teaching Assistant candidates; provide training for all new teaching assistants; and offer opportunities to gain level 2

qualifications in certain core subjects. From September 2022, teaching assistants have access to a new **National Professional Learning Entitlement** to support the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales.

- **Standardisation of roles** - the Task and Finish Group were to consider whether, and if so how, a standard set of job descriptions can be implemented across Wales.
- **Pay** - as a longer term consideration for local authorities based on the outcomes of the above. While pay remains the responsibility of local authorities and/or schools, the Minister said that the work on deployment and standardisation of roles can bring greater coherence to support pay discussions, to work towards greater consistency between local authority areas and to support local authorities to reflect the important role that teaching assistants play, in their terms and conditions.

In addition, the Minister said he was writing to all school governing bodies recommending that they assign the role of ‘**Teaching Assistant Champion**’ to one of their members. They would have a responsibility to ensure that the perspective and input of teaching assistants is sought and included when key decisions are being made.

The Task and Finish Group has evolved into the “School Support Staff Workforce Board”. It meets every term and monitors progress in implementing the Task and Finish Group’s recommendations.

3. Other Petitions

A [petition on this subject](#) to the UK Parliament closed on 2 February 2023. The wording of the petition was the same as that being considered by the Committee. The petition attracted 87,275 signatures (at the time of writing this briefing). The UK Government responded on 12 August 2022 saying:

- Schools are free to set their pay and most mirror local government pay scales.
- For most staff, including teaching assistants, schools have the freedom to recruit according to their own circumstances and set pay and conditions.
- Teaching assistant pay has increased year-on-year since 2017. Last year’s pay rose by between 1.75 and 2.75 per cent for teaching assistants, which was backdated to April 2021.
- The government does not have a role in setting local government pay and there is no national pay body. Instead, most councils take part in

collective negotiations. The Local Government Association (LGA) represents the employer, negotiating with the National Joint Council (UNISON, Unite and the GMB) which represent the employee.

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