Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools

Accounts Commission
for Scotland

Time for teaching

Improving administration in schools

A joint study by the Accounts Commission for Scotland and HM Inspectors of Schools

Contents

Accounts Commission for Scotland

The Accounts Commission for Scotland is a statutory, independent body which, through the audit process, assists local authorities and the health service in Scotland to achieve the highest standards of financial stewardship and the economic, efficient and effective use of their resources. The Commission has five main responsibilities:

- securing the external audit

- following up issues of concern identified through the audit, to ensure satisfactory resolutions

- reviewing the management arrangements which audited bodies have in place to achieve value for money

- carrying out national value for money studies to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local government and the NHS

- issuing an annual direction to local authorities which sets out the range of performance information which they are required to publish.

The Commission secures the audit of 32 councils, 34 joint boards (including police and fire services), 15 health boards, 47 NHS trusts and five other NHS bodies. In total, these organisations spend public funds worth around £12 billion a year.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools

HM Inspectors of Schools are appointed by HM the Queen on the recommendation of the Secretary of State. The Inspectorate exists as a distinct unit within the framework of the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, HM Inspectors have the right to enter schools and other educational establishments for the purpose of inspection.

The head of the Inspectorate is the principal professional adviser to the Secretary of State. HM Inspectors provide information, assessment and advice to Ministers, the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department and other Government departments and national agencies engaged in education and give a lead in implementing Government policy through development work. They provide an external audit on the overall quality of education, standards of attainment, the effectiveness of individual institutions, ways of assuring quality and achieving value for money.

Each year they inspect and publish reports on a wide range of educational establishments, including nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, further education colleges, teacher education and community education. Denominational and non-denominational schools are inspected, as are independent schools and those managed by education authorities.

HM Inspectors also produce general reports on important aspects of education, identifying strengths and weaknesses and making recommendations for improvements.

Preface

This report is the product of a joint study by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools looking at administration in schools. The principal purpose of the report is to help schools and education authorities to improve value for money in the way they handle administrative tasks. Although the contents relate specifically to primary and secondary schools, they should also apply to nursery and special schools.

This report should be relevant to a range of stakeholders, including:

• headteachers and staff of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools

• school boards

• directors of education

• chief executives.

We would like to express our appreciation to the study's Advisory Group, comprising a range of experts from the field of education[1]. The Group provided valuable advice and acted as a useful sounding board for the study team.

The following also provided valuable advice and assistance:

• staff from the schools and further education colleges who gave up their time to talk to us or to complete questionnaires

• education authorities

• representatives from teachers' unions who took time to discuss the issues with us

• the Scottish Council for Research in Education, who conducted a research survey looking at administration in schools outwith Scotland

• George Street Research, who were awarded the contract to process survey data.

There are many examples of good practice relating to administration in Scottish schools. A number of these are included in this report and we are grateful to these schools for their time and their agreement to document their practices.

The Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools jointly retain responsibility for the content of this report.

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[1]   See appendix 1 for membership of the Group.

Executive summary

Background

Good administration is essential to the smooth running of Scotland's schools. If administration is not handled efficiently and effectively, teachers are diverted unnecessarily from tasks which are central to teaching and to raising attainment. This study, conducted jointly by the Accounts Commission for Scotland and HM Inspectors of Schools, looks at the extent to which administrative work could be handled in a way that gives better value for money, so releasing time.

Key issues

Schoolteachers estimate that they spend between 15% and 50% of their contracted working hours on administration associated with a range of tasks identified in a survey for the study. Generally, the more senior the teacher, the more time they consider that they spend on administration.

Teachers say that significant proportions – sometimes between a quarter and a third – of the time they spend on administration could be done by support staff. The study fieldwork reinforced the view that a substantial part of the administrative workload carried by teachers could indeed be done by support staff, thus releasing teachers' time for activities more directly related to improving teaching and learning. Again, the more senior the teacher, the higher the proportion of administrative work they consider could be transferred.

The levels of administrative support allocated to schools vary widely. Levels of support to primary schools of 220 pupils vary by a factor of four to one – between 0.5 full-time equivalent staff (FTE)[1] and 1.9 FTEs. Support levels in secondary schools are higher overall, though variations are also marked, eg a school of 1,320 pupils would have 3 FTEs in one authority and 11 FTEs in another.

Levels of support can be particularly low for some small primary schools. In some authorities, primary schools with 40 pupils could have an administrative assistant for only one day per week. This means that in these schools, teachers spend additional time on administration and may be diverted from their classwork by the need to answer telephone calls and to handle visitors to the school. Schools of the same size in other authorities may have up to one person on-site five days of the week during term time.

There is considerable variation among schools in the amount and sophistication of information and communications technology (ICT) resources available for use in administration. The availability of modern ICT systems in the schools visited during the study varied widely, as did support systems for hardware and software. In a number of cases, teachers of computing carried out most support work within the school. Most authorities responding to a study survey have centrally-based technical support available to schools, although two have taken the step of locating specialist staff within schools.

Schools generally have limited flexibility to alter their staffing complements. Authorities generally limit virement between teaching and non-teaching elements of the staffing budget at school level. This contributes to the situation where some schools use senior teaching staff to carry out work that could be done more cost-effectively by support staff.

Some schools and education authorities have given considerable attention to ensuring that their administrative procedures are carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, the study has shown that there is considerable scope for improvement.

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[1] A list of abbreviations used in this report is attached in appendix 2.

What should be done?

(i). Schools should streamline what they do in administration. Fieldwork visits showed that there is scope for schools to reduce the time spent on administration simply by reviewing how they undertake tasks and streamlining them. This can release time both for teachers and for administrative staff. Teachers can then use this time for tasks which require their professional input. Administrative staff can use released time to take on more work currently undertaken by teachers.

(ii). Schools and authorities should review the use they make of ICT. Administration can be handled better by more, or simply different, use of ICT. Improvements may be made using quite radical solutions, eg using SMARTcard technology to reduce cash handling, or more prosaic changes, eg the increased use of templates for document production.

(iii). Schools and authorities should review who does which tasks within schools. There were a number of instances found during fieldwork where schools used administrative staff to carry out tasks more commonly undertaken by senior staff within other schools, eg organising cover for staff absences, handling cash, filing of papers and so on. These reinforce the view expressed by many teachers in the survey that much of the administration currently carried out by teachers could be done by non-teaching staff. Some significant changes are possible within the constraints of present funding and structural arrangements; others will become possible with additional support in schools, such as classroom assistants.

(iv). There should be a questioning of the current staffing structures in schools, and the development of alternative models. The constraints on current structures mean that administration is more expensive than it need be, and that teaching staff are diverted away from activities which are aimed at delivering high-quality education and improving attainment.

Next steps

There are implications for schools, education authorities, and at a national level. Recommendations are included in *The Way Forward* below. These recommendations may be implemented by schools and authorities, possibly via service reviews under the Best Value regime. Checklists for both schools and authorities are included in the report.

The questions about the structures of Scottish schools need further, detailed debate. The outcome of such a debate cannot be pre-judged. However, its starting point must be the challenging of the current 'one-size-fits-all' approach – and a robust challenge may best be made by identifying alternatives, planning carefully for their implementation, and evaluating their impact.

1 Introduction

There are nearly 49,000 teachers supported by over 5,000 administrative staff in Scottish state schools. They staff approximately 1,000 nursery schools, 2,300 primary schools, 400 secondary schools and 160 special schools[1].

The central purpose of schools is to provide a setting within which pupils can be educated, and the central role of teachers is to provide that education. There is an organisational infrastructure which supports the education process by ensuring that each school runs smoothly. Where that happens efficiently and effectively, teachers' time can be focused on teaching and learning.

Teachers' time is valuable. It should be spent on tasks which promote the provision of high-quality, relevant and effective learning experiences for pupils. A certain amount of administration is inherent in any job, a teacher's included, and sound administration is certainly essential to the smooth running of a school. In addition, there are tasks associated with effective management which may have an administrative component. However, if excessive amounts of teachers' time are spent on activities which distract them from the high-level professional tasks for which they have been trained, the public can justifiably ask whether schools provide good value for money. This study seeks to take a broad overview of the current situation in schools managed by education authorities and helps to point the way to part of the answer.

Teachers are contracted to work for 35 hours in the week, of which 27.5 hours relate to the time pupils are also in school. This in-school time has two parts: contact time – activities involving direct contact with pupils, principally teaching; and non-contact time, which is spent on a range of duties according to the post held.

This study looks at the extent to which the non-contact time is devoted to tasks which are a necessary part of the professional duties of teachers. It considers whether there are aspects which are mostly administrative in nature and whether such tasks could be done in more cost-effective ways.

However, the issues involved are complex. Definitions of the terms 'professional' and 'administrative' are problematic and the lines between the two are not as clear as might be supposed.

The nature of administration in schools

The infrastructure of schools must include, for example, arrangements to:

- promote a safe, healthy and orderly learning environment

- provide the necessary educational experiences for pupils, backed by appropriate learning materials

- ensure continuity of learning for pupils through effective planning and smooth transition from pre-5 education to primary school; from there to secondary school, and then on to further and higher education

- assess and record pupils' learning

- report on, and be accountable for, pupils' achievements to parents, the education authority and The Scottish Office.

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[1] Scottish Education Statistics Annual Review 3, 1998 edition, p6. Staff numbers are FTEs.

Such arrangements are a fundamental part of what teachers do. Each of them unpacks into more detailed sets of tasks. The first in the above list requires schools to engage in activities such as:

- maintaining the fabric of buildings and ensuring heating, plumbing and lighting systems are operating well

- making adequate safety arrangements (eg for moving pupils around the school, for the arrival/departure of school transport, for storing and moving equipment, for handling of potentially hazardous materials by pupils – machinery, chemicals, electrical appliances etc)

- ensuring that pupils generally feel safe and protected and have recourse to support in times of difficulty

- organising for order and discipline in classrooms, social areas and corridors.

In turn, each of these tasks contains a series of activities which may be more or less 'administrative' in nature, some of which require teachers' time to be spent on them and others which could be done by other means. In between these two ends of the spectrum are greyer areas where the distinction between 'administrative' and 'professional' is much harder to make and where certain tasks, apparently routine, may play an important role in the effective management of the whole establishment.

However, despite such difficulties, there are clearly some activities which appear to be more wasteful of teachers' time than others. For example, is it a wise use of resources for:

- a secondary school headteacher to spend three hours a week entering data into a computer?

- a primary school headteacher to spend time attending to building maintenance problems, eg stemming a plumbing leak because there is no-one else immediately available?

- classteachers to spend time writing out lists of names or transferring information on pupils' assessments from one sheet of paper to another?

These examples happen in Scottish schools and have done so for many years. Increased levels of administration also arise from new circumstances, such as work relating to devolved school management and the increased role for schools in the recruitment of staff.

Some schools and individual education authorities are already making or considering changes to the way in which administrative work in schools is supported. Examples of such changes are given later in this report.

Teachers will always have to carry out some administrative tasks. However, the drive to raise standards and quality, and the overall amount of administration required in schools make it crucial that we now look to ensure that administration is as efficient and effective as possible.

About this study

The study aimed to identify ways in which schools and authorities could improve their handling of administration, and in so doing, release time which could then be used by teachers for more professionally intensive activities. These considerations led us to ask three main questions (exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: The focus of the study

The study focused on three main questions.

	Question	Implications
1	Are there administrative tasks currently done by teachers, promoted teachers and other staff which could give better value for money (VFM) by using different methods?	Could simply doing the task in a different way save time or increase its effectiveness?
2	Are there administrative tasks which could give better VFM with the use of information and communications technology (ICT)?	Could tasks be handled more efficiently or effectively by using ICT more or differently?
3	Are there administrative tasks which could give better VFM if done by other people?	Do teachers need to be involved, or could other staff carry out the work as effectively and at lower cost?

We divided the study into five main strands of work (exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: The main strands of the study

There were five main strands to the work.

	Strand	Purpose	Scale
1	Initial interviews with school staff	to highlight which tasks were seen to be most in need of change – these were then used as the basis of more detailed survey work.	Approximately 100 teaching and administrative staff were interviewed in 11 schools covering the primary and secondary sectors and reflecting a range of different environments.
2	Survey of staff in schools	to gather evidence on estimates of time spent on tasks by different postholders, and their views on whether tasks could be done differently.	• 1,307 responses overall from staff in schools (61% response rate) • 337 from primary school staff (45% response rate) • 970 from secondary school staff (69% response rate).
3	Survey of headteachers	to understand headteachers' priorities for change and their views of what was hindering change.	• 153 responses (80% response rate).
4	Survey of education authorities	to gain benchmark information on the level of support to schools of different sizes.	25 authorities returned the questionnaire (78% response rate).
5	Good practice	to highlight examples of alternative/good practice related to administrative tasks, and to the three key questions: • using different methods • using ICT • using alternative staff.	Visits were made to a number of education authorities and schools, to some independent schools and colleges of further education.

2 Survey findings and key issues

This section summarises issues relating to the study together with data from the questionnaire survey of staff in schools and from other relevant sources. In the questionnaire, specific questions were asked about a number of tasks, each of which had been pinpointed by teachers in Strand 1 of the study as having a substantial administrative element. In responding to each set of questions, teaching staff were asked to consider only those elements of the task which they felt were administrative in nature and therefore did not require the input of a teacher.

The tasks covered in the survey are listed in appendix 3, along with the explanatory text which outlined the aspects of each task that might be considered to be administrative. They covered a range of activities, eg organising links with the community, preparing written reports on pupils' performances, and so on. Appendix 4 shows an analysis of the responses to the main survey questions on each task, while this section focuses on a summary of the findings.

It is important to note that the survey findings are founded on the perceptions of respondents, who may have had different interpretations of which aspects of a task are 'administrative' or 'professional' in nature, reflecting the blurring between them. However, taken in conjunction with other evidence, the survey highlights important issues.

How much time do teachers spend on administration?

Primary school teaching staff estimate that they spend between 205 and 450 hours a year on administration related to the tasks identified in the survey, while secondary teaching staff estimate they spend between 230 and 675 hours a year. Generally, the more senior the teacher, the more time they feel they spend on administration (exhibit 3).

The estimated time spent on administration for the survey tasks represents around 17% of the total contracted working hours for primary and secondary classteachers, and around 50% of the contracted working hours for a secondary depute headteacher. It should be noted, however, that some of this administrative work may be done outwith contracted hours.

Exhibit 3: Teachers' estimates of the time they spend on a range of administrative tasks, and how much of that time they consider could be transferred to administrative or technical staff

The more senior the teacher, the more time they spend on administration and the greater the proportion of administration they say could be done by support staff.
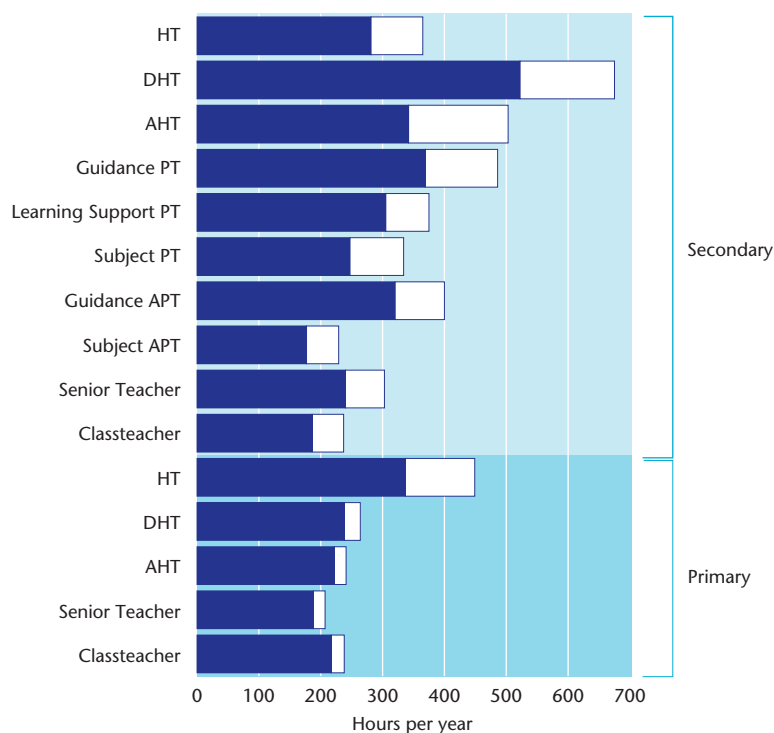
The total length of a bar shows the number of hours teachers considered they spent on administration per year, over all the tasks in the survey. The white portion indicates the number of hours of administration per year that postholders believed could be delegated to administrative or technical staff. A list of abbreviations is contained in appendix 2.

Source: Survey by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

How much can administrative staff do?

Teaching staff were asked to identify what proportion of the work could be undertaken by suitably trained support staff. The estimates of the amount of time spent on administrative tasks that could be done by support staff vary considerably for different grades of teacher, as indicated by the white bars in exhibit 3, from around 10% to over 30%. Teachers at more senior levels identified the higher proportions of work which could be done by others, notably so for primary school headteachers and promoted staff in secondary schools.

Fieldwork supported these survey findings. Some schools use their administrative staff to do tasks carried out in other schools by promoted teachers – eg arranging cover for staff absences, or taking minutes at management team meetings.

The effect of reducing teachers' administrative workload by the estimates given by teachers could be that time may be released for promoted staff to work on activities more directly related to improving the quality of provision. The most marked release of time could potentially be realised by promoted secondary teachers – around 150 hours for depute headteachers; 160 hours for assistant headteachers and around 90 hours for subject principal teachers. The figure for primary headteachers is also significant – estimated at over 110 hours. The amount of time that may be saved by

classteachers is lower: on average, 20 hours per year for primary, and 50 for secondary staff.

Time spent by teachers on administration which could be done by non-teaching staff amounts to very sizeable chunks of time for the whole school. For example, an average-size secondary school of around 850 pupils may have 57 teaching staff, 35 of whom occupy promoted posts – senior teacher and above. Extrapolating the survey findings to this hypothetical secondary school means that around 4,200 hours of teachers' time per year is spent on tasks that could be done by non-teaching staff. The majority of this, almost 60%, is put in by staff at principal teacher level and above – the higher-paid teaching posts[1].

In a typical primary school, of say, over 200 pupils, there may be 13 teachers, of whom three occupy promoted posts – senior teacher and above. Extrapolating the survey findings to this hypothetical primary school means that around 360 hours of teacher time is spent per year on tasks that could be done by non-teaching staff. Over 35% of this time is spent by teachers at assistant headteacher level and above.

What is the level of administrative support?

All schools in Scotland have some administrative support; the type and number of posts are defined by the education authority's scheme of devolved school management (DSM) typically as a function of the school roll. To facilitate comparisons, education authorities were asked to indicate the number and type of administrative staff[2] within schools of a range of sizes. Many administrative staff in schools are employed on a term-time only basis, often for less than 35 hours per week. So, the full-time equivalent of a staff member who is present 'full time' in the school during normal working hours is about 0.7 FTE[3].

For schools of the same size, the total allocation of administrative staff, in terms of full-time equivalent staff (FTE), varies widely among authorities. In some cases, the allocation varies by a factor of around five to one (exhibit 4). Authorities' levels of support for different sizes of schools are shown in appendix 6.

Exhibit 4: Minimum and maximum levels of administrative staff allocated to schools by authorities

There are wide variations in the levels of support allocated to primary and secondary schools by different authorities.

Sector	School roll	Administrative staff per school (FTE)		
		Minimum	Maximum	Average
Primary	40	0.14	0.86	0.54
	110	0.28	1.54	0.94
	220	0.48	1.93	1.42
	440	0.83	3.20	2.13
Secondary	440	1.17	5.45	3.55
	880	3.00	8.10	5.28
	1,320	3.00	10.80	7.14

Source: Survey by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

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[1] Appendix 5 describes typical school structures and staffing numbers in Scottish state schools.

[2] Included in administrative staff were the following titles: clerical assistant, senior clerical assistant, clerk/ typist, senior clerk/typist, administrative assistant, administrative finance assistant and secretary.

[3] The method of calculation of FTE may differ slightly from authority to authority.

There is a particular issue for very small primary schools. One authority's allocation of administrative staff would see a 40-pupil primary school operating with 0.14 FTE, roughly equivalent to one person available one day a week during term-time. Yet a school of the same size in another authority would have 0.86 FTE. Headteachers in small primary schools, carrying a larger teaching commitment, have less time for administration yet fewer resources to help them. This can have a range of consequences – eg if there is no administrative support on site for much of the week, teaching may be frequently interrupted by telephone calls and visitors.

In some authorities the levels of administrative support in small schools are lower proportionately than the levels supplied to larger schools. This appears odd, given that there are fixed administrative costs – eg there will be building maintenance work and DSM monitoring required no matter how tiny the school.

Secondary schools have more administrative support than primary schools – eg a secondary school of 440 pupils will have, on average, three to four FTEs, while a primary with 440 pupils will have, on average, around two FTEs.

There is also variation in support levels for secondary schools – eg a secondary school with 1,320 pupils would have three FTEs of administrative support in one authority compared with 11 FTEs in another.

Some schools have other staff who complement the role of administrative staff. These include auxiliaries who may provide general (administrative and classroom) support. For many, this may be in addition to their work assisting pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The number and distribution of auxiliary staff may affect the allocation of administrative staff by the authority.

There is also a variation among education authorities in the amount of administrative support provided centrally by education authority headquarters staff. This again may make a difference to levels of administrative staff based in schools.

What is the level of use of information and communications technology?

Schools vary considerably in the level of information and communications technology (ICT) to which they have access. Some small primary schools do not have a fax machine, whereas some secondary schools routinely use electronic links to their education authority and have Internet access for staff and pupils.

However, it is not only the amount of technology available that is important, but how useful it is. The study team visited schools where at least four different types of incompatible, stand-alone computers were in use, many of which were incapable of running modern software or of being networked to other computers.

Also important is the ready availability of technical support for the maintenance of ICT in schools. Of the 25 education authorities which responded to the study's survey, 16 indicated that technical support is provided at education authority level; two located specialist staff both within schools and at the education authority; and four relied on support by the council's corporate ICT unit. Three authorities did not submit a response to this particular question. Where there is ICT support from within the education authority, it typically amounts to between one and four FTEs and provides a service to all schools in the authority. Many schools currently rely on teachers of computing to provide support for their ICT systems.

In the survey, some teachers saw enormous scope for the increased use of ICT to reduce their administrative workload, yet others saw little potential for ICT to help. There appears to be considerable variation, however, in the extent to which they know about and are comfortable with ICT.

What are the constraints on staffing flexibility?

Authorities have staffing standards – formulae largely based on school rolls – which determine the levels of teaching and non-teaching staff budgeted for each school. Schools generally have limited flexibility to recruit additional administrative staff by viring money from other budgets. The schemes of DSM operated by most authorities do not permit schools to vire money between teaching and non-teaching elements of the staffing budget. It may be considered that such flexibility could lead to alterations in the numbers of different posts within schools, including the post structures. This in turn is regarded as being subject to negotiations between councils and teachers' unions.

The effect of this perceived lack of flexibility in staffing arrangements is that schools and authorities are using promoted teachers to undertake work that could be carried out as effectively and at a lower cost by administrative staff. In fact, there is more flexibility than is commonly exercised, an issue considered below, in *The broader context – staffing structures* section of this report.

Summary

Some teachers, especially at higher promoted levels, consider they spend substantial amounts of time on administration that is not a core part of teaching.

Some teachers, especially at higher promoted levels, believe that perhaps between a quarter and a third of their administrative workload could be done by support staff.

Some schools use support staff to do tasks carried out by teachers in other schools.

There is considerable variation in the level of administrative support based in schools.

The particularly low level of administrative support in small primary schools in some authorities means, among other things, that teaching time is frequently interrupted.

There is considerable variation among schools in the amount and sophistication of ICT resources available for administrative purposes.

There are constraints on the extent to which the headteacher can vary a school's staffing arrangements to reflect the need for administrative support.

3 Effective administration

This section draws on knowledge of current arrangements in schools and education authorities, on study findings including teachers' perceptions, and on examples of good practice in the ways in which the administrative aspects of professional tasks are undertaken.

The section is broadly structured around the three questions which are fundamental to the study, as discussed in the *Introduction* – could administration be handled more efficiently or effectively by streamlining work, by using ICT more or differently, or by using administrative staff more?

The examples provided throughout this section range in scope from what may appear the relatively trivial to some very large-scale, authority-wide practices. They are intended to be illustrative, and are offered for consideration.

Four key points should be borne in mind:

- savings of small amounts of time for individuals can build into a substantial saving of time for the whole establishment

- a task might always have been done in a certain way, but the method should still be open to reconsideration

- opportunity costs should always be considered when change to current practice is contemplated – what could teachers do if they did not spend time on administration that could be done by others? What would the impact on teaching and learning be?

- when changes are made, it is important to review them to ensure that anticipated benefits are indeed being realised.

A composite example based on the experiences of a number of schools is included in exhibit 5. It illustrates how a secondary school might change the procedures for completing reports for parents on pupils' work across all subject areas.

Exhibit 5: A composite illustration of some secondary schools' approaches

Greater use is now made of support staff and ICT.

Originally, the approach involved:

- administrative staff producing the shell of the reports

- reports being placed in class bundles, in the staff room

- individual subject teachers writing in their contribution in the relevant box

- administrative staff unstapling the several pages of completed reports, copying them, restapling them and distributing to file, pupils and guidance staff.

The main disadvantages of this system were:

- the amount of time teachers often wasted in checking for the availability of reports in the staff room

- the time spent by administrative staff unstapling, copying and collating reports

- the lack of opportunity for guidance staff to consider the completed report and make overview comments on the pupils' personal and academic progress.

After considerable planning, new procedures now apply:

- administrative staff now insert relevant factual data (the pupil's name, class etc)

- self-copying sections of the report are distributed to teachers for them to complete and return by a certain date

- administrative staff collate and staple the individual sheets into full reports

- guidance staff receive reports and add an overview comment

- reports are distributed to pupils and to file.

The main advantages are:

- individual teachers save time previously spent in 'queuing' for access to a bound document and then inserting information

- according to the school, the new approach has led to an overall improvement in the quality of comment on pupils' work

- guidance staff have the opportunity to provide a summary overview for parents

- administrative staff save time previously spent in stapling and copying.

In a further change, ICT was used to allow teachers and administrative staff to enter comments directly onto computers. This brought the extra advantages of improved presentation and legibility of report content, which parents were said to appreciate highly. The school had also considered developing an item bank of comments which subject teachers could select as part of their contribution to the report, but rejected that step because the system did not permit comments to be adapted, and it wanted to ensure that teachers' comments accurately reflected the work of individual pupils.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

This is an example of a change in process which affected the administrative aspects of a professionally intensive task, and entailed:

- the use of different methods, to streamline the process itself

- the use of information and communications technology, and

- the use of administrative staff.

Each of these aspects will now be considered in turn.

Using different methods

Using different methods at school level

Some schools visited in the course of the study had given considerable attention to ensuring that administrative procedures were carried out in as streamlined a way as possible. Having taken this approach, they had arrived at new and more efficient methods of carrying out a wide range of tasks, varying in the level of professional teaching input required. The tasks in exhibit 6 were highlighted by a number of schools as some of those where changes had led to improvements.

Exhibit 6: Examples of task streamlining at school level

Streamlining can be applied to a range of administrative tasks.

Task	Approach
Attendance	Absentees for every register class are noted at the start of the day, a list is then collated and used by teachers to note discrepancies for each class period. The school thus has a relatively straight forward means of noting period by period absences, rather than requiring a collation of data the next day.
Primary/secondary liaison	Standardised formats are used for the transfer of information, whether electronic or not, on pupils' attainments.
Resource management	Standardised formats are used for the collection of information on resource needs from individual classteachers.
Forward planning	Teachers highlight relevant sections of existing school documents (eg 5-14 guidelines) rather than copying out those sections by hand. Agreements on the layout of documents at school, and sometimes at 'cluster'[1] or education authority level, avoid duplication of effort and save time.

Source: Survey by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

Headteachers and other teaching staff reported that benefits deriving from the kinds of changed processes illustrated above included:

• saving teachers' time by removing clumsy or unnecessary parts of the process

• lowering the levels of frustration associated with bottlenecks in processes or seemingly over-bureaucratic aspects

• improving the quality of the output – for example, in pupil reports

• receiving a positive reaction from parents – again, for pupil reports

• improving information flows across education sectors – for example, when there was co-ordination and streamlining of the ways in which information on pupils' experiences and attainment are passed from primary schools to secondary schools

• lastly and perhaps most importantly, potential improvement in teaching and learning, through an accumulation of the release of teachers' time to focus on the curriculum and on contact with pupils in a teaching or guidance context; or through the enhancement of an ethos of achievement in the school.

Headteachers also reported that staff morale could improve when stress generated by administrative problems was reduced.

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[1] 'Cluster' is used to refer to a secondary school together with its associated primaries.

The scope for improvement will vary from school to school. However, making sure that existing tasks are handled as efficiently as possible within existing resources is an essential first step in improving value for money in administration.

Using different methods at education authority level

A number of examples of education authority-led collaboration to reduce duplication of effort are evident across the country. They include:

- groups of schools using the cluster principle to produce common document formats for the transfer of information on 5-14 levels of pupils' attainment

- education authorities providing support for administrative tasks which are similar across schools eg timetabling

- authorities developing a forward planning format for use within all their schools.

The advantages of these approaches include reduced amounts of time expended by schools in reinventing the wheel and the better quality that can be achieved by the sharing of effort and good practice. However, before developing a common approach, the education authority should ensure that imaginative individual approaches are not unnecessarily inhibited or that poor practice is spread.

Some authorities are looking at different ways of organising the management of a group of small primary schools. The aim of the changes, which will be evaluated, is to increase opportunities for joint planning, the sharing of materials development and streamlining of resourcing.

Using information and communications technology

The second of the three questions addressed by this study – whether there are administrative tasks which could be done more efficiently by using information and communications technology (ICT) – has generally been answered affirmatively. However, it is an area where the costs of investment and maintenance need to be very carefully balanced against the potential benefits.

ICT can provide new and effective tools for teaching and learning. It also offers great potential to:

- provide powerful sources of information and analyses

- ease existing administrative burdens

- offer more efficient means of communication and data transfer.

The potential of ICT is now becoming more widely recognised, as can be seen through current work at school, education authority and national levels.

School level

Schools and education authorities cited a range of examples of the use of ICT in easing administration. Examples of where ICT has been used to save time or to open up new sources of information to improve teaching, learning and attainment are listed below (exhibit 7).

ICT can improve administration across a range of areas.

- recording and analysis of information on pupil performance

- electronic storage, collation and analysis of attendance information, sometimes combined with automatic generation of draft letters triggered by analysis of pupil records, for attendance or discipline matters

- availability of electronic versions of standard letter templates and commonly used pro-formas, such as job application forms

- use of software to assist DSM budgeting

- access to computerised catalogues, and electronic purchasing and processing to streamline the handling of resources

- preparation of reports to parents using computers (note, however, that there is both good and poor practice in computerised reporting. Where inflexible comment banks are used or, worse, codes which parents must decipher, the resulting report is unlikely to do justice to individual pupils' strengths and development needs)

- electronic storage and retrieval of pupil reports.

In examples of these kinds, staff can obtain overviews and analyses of data, allowing them to identify patterns and trends. For example, a pupil's attainment or attendance can be tracked, and teachers, guidance staff or senior managers can then plan for action where necessary. Ultimately, analyses of this type will be an important element in individual target-setting for pupils and raising attainment. Automatic triggering of draft letters can ensure that procedures are implemented speedily and according to local policies.

Staff reported a range of benefits from applications of these kinds, including substantial savings of time for both teachers and administrative staff, and improvements in presentation of, for example, letters and reports.

In order to realise these benefits, staff need to have ready access to computers and the necessary communications technology. Safeguards need to be in place to protect pupil confidentiality and the security of information.

A small but growing number of schools have the infrastructure in place to allow computers throughout the school to be connected via a network.

In one secondary school, the installation of such a communications network allowed streamlining of some of the kinds of task mentioned above, as well as the development of new ways of doing other tasks, with clear benefits in terms of time saved and improved practice (exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8: The use of a communications network in a secondary school

The use of a communications network has brought benefits for teaching staff, support staff and pupils at Linlithgow Academy, West Lothian.

The new practice	The previous arrangement
The DHT e-mails individual teachers to inform them of any additional classes they are to take during that day ('please takes').	The DHT informed teachers individually in their classrooms.
Teachers at all levels can access pupils' timetables through the school's ICT network.	Teachers went to the school office and looked through paper versions of the pupils' timetables in office files.
Indiscipline in corridors between classes is referred through e-mail to relevant staff.	Slips of paper were completed by teachers and taken to the school office. Teachers indicated that incidents were sometimes ignored if they had no time to complete the procedure.
In completing complex reference forms (eg for pupils' applications to universities), text is prepared and transferred electronically by the relevant teachers and the pupils to allow the final documents to be produced on computer. Key benefits include: • better quality content • text can be edited at any appropriate time by the individuals involved • higher quality of presentation.	Reference forms were completed by hand, by all the individuals involved.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

Greenwood Academy in North Ayrshire, which had introduced a system of hand-held computers, reported similar advantages:

• staff recorded attendance and lateness on a period-by-period basis, reducing time required for the administrative aspects of daily registration and reducing pupil truanting

• commendations and discipline matters were recorded for central collation, analysis and action

• use of the system for e-mail had reduced interruptions to classes

• staff were able to use the system to raise the alarm in an emergency.

The school was about to extend the system to include electronic gathering and analysis of attainment information.

Education authority level

At education authority level there has been substantial development of ICT for school administrative processes and educational purposes. Some packages have been developed in-house while others are commercial. A number of schools and authorities pointed out ways in which the availability of electronic links between individual schools and the authority could ease administrative tasks. Glasgow City Council provided an illustration relating to the handling of staff absence (supply) cover (exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9: An authority-level approach to handling supply cover

The use of a database of information on supply teachers has brought improvements for schools and the education department of Glasgow City Council.

The issue

Staff at senior levels in schools were spending a lot of time each day trying to phone round for suitable supply cover.

The new practice

The education department developed a database to hold information on the supply teachers available to schools in the area. This acts as a 'one-stop-shop' where schools can source supply teachers.

The benefits include

- schools waste less time trying to find cover, by no longer phoning candidates who are unavailable because, for example, they have just agreed to provide cover in another school
- headteachers know that the education authority has vetted all the staff on the database, and generally only have one phone call to make
- the education authority is able to monitor the deployment of absence cover.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

One authority, taking part in the pilot arrangements for the National Grid for Learning (see below) is pioneering the development of fully integrated ICT support (exhibit 10). Benefits are anticipated for individual pupils and teachers; schools; other bodies eg libraries; and the authority as a whole. The extent to which these are realised is being closely monitored by the education authority. It will be important that advantages and disadvantages, pitfalls and recommendations are shared nationally.

Exhibit 10: Pilot of integrated ICT support

Major benefits should derive from linking schools and the authority, West Lothian Council, in an integrated ICT network.

The proposals

- fully automated transfer of data among schools and between schools and the authority, for a very wide range of tasks
- education authority communications network
- an e-mail address for every pupil, eventually useable also at home
- eventually, the transfer of teaching and learning materials, and the capacity for video-conferencing for staff and pupils.

Anticipated benefits

- streamlined administration in individual schools
- headteachers, teachers and pupils will be able to access current and new materials
- access to the Internet in support of teaching and learning
- improved communication among staff and with pupils
- more training for pupils and staff in the use of ICT.

Keys to success

- policy co-ordination and drive at the level of the education authority
- local area networks within schools and wide area network linking schools with the education authority headquarters
- appropriate, specialised software for school administration, with appropriate technical support
- training for pupils, teachers and administrative staff in schools and for staff in the education authority
- facility for teachers to access the education network from home.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

National level

At national level, two current projects will have a significant impact on the development of ICT systems in Scotland over the next three years: the National Management Information Systems (MIS) Project and the National Grid for Learning (NGfL).

The MIS project is a joint COSLA/SOEID[1] initiative which will lead to the development of agreed procedures and common formats for the electronic transfer of data. These will include exchanges between:

• schools, for the transfer of pupil data

• schools and education authorities, for administration and evaluation purposes

• schools, education authorities and SOEID, for the transfer of profile, census and benchmark data

• schools and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), for examinations and attainment data.

Through the Government's plan to implement the NGfL in Scotland, £62 million will be spent over the next three years in strengthening the ICT infrastructure in Scottish schools. A further £23 million from National Lottery funds is to be used to provide ICT training to all Scottish teachers. Government targets to be achieved by the year 2000 include[2]:

• ensuring the ICT competence of new and serving teachers

• connecting all schools, colleges, universities, public libraries and some community centres to the NGfL

• ensuring that most school leavers have a good understanding of ICT

• reducing the amount of paper-based administrative communication between schools, further and higher education institutions, SOEID and relevant public bodies.

Barriers to using ICT

There is clear evidence that good progress is being made to ease administrative tasks and provide teachers with additional ICT tools to help them to improve teaching, learning and attainment. Some barriers remain to be overcome, however, before the full potential of ICT for administration can be realised. There appear to be three particular barriers, all mentioned consistently by headteachers in the study survey:

• the availability and compatibility of computer hardware and software in schools

• the availability of technical support for schools

• insufficient computer skills or confidence among staff in schools, and the lack of time or money for training.

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[1] COSLA/SOEID: Convention of Scottish Local Authorities/The Scottish Office Education and Industry Department.

[2] *Implementing the National Grid for Learning in Scotland,* The Scottish Office, August 1998.

As previously indicated, the amount of useful ICT equipment in schools varies tremendously. At one end of the spectrum lie schools which are very well equipped, with computers in virtually every classroom in primary and secondary schools; suites of computers for teaching and learning purposes; computers for each of the promoted teaching staff and access for guidance, learning support and administrative staff. At the other end of the spectrum, some small primary schools have one or two computers which run very simple programs. A further difficulty lies in the fact that some computers within the same school may be incompatible, reflecting the piecemeal garnering of equipment. Such incompatibility can also arise between schools and their authority and among different services within any one authority, thus creating barriers to the electronic transfer of information and difficulties with maintenance. In addition, to be successful, software for administration must meet identified user needs and arrangements must be in place to ensure continuing development of software.

This study has shown that the level and form of ICT support for schools provided by education authorities also varies widely. Schools may source technical support for training and maintenance and repair of facilities in a number of ways, such as by:

- relying on the enthusiasm of non-specialist teaching or support staff to help on a voluntary basis

- relying on a promoted teacher, often a teacher of computing, with specific whole-school responsibility for ICT

- drawing on ICT support located within the education authority, the support being made available to schools as required

- liaising directly with the council's ICT unit, perhaps under the guidance of the education authority.

Tackling the barriers

Education authorities have a key role to play in promoting coherent strategies for ICT in schools which outline how ICT will be used in support of teaching and learning and in administration. This process should include consideration of the routes by which ICT can be provided; implications for budgets arising from investment needs; options for offering support to schools or clusters of schools; arrangements for monitoring and evaluating use; and training requirements.

The NGfL strategy is aiming to address some of the existing barriers. Planning at school and education authority level will be expected to demonstrate strategies to overcome the problem of rapid obsolescence of hardware and software. A key plank of the NGfL strategy is to meet the need for technical support and reduce the burden on computing teachers by promoting the use of 'managed services', where schools and authorities enter into service level agreements with specialist contractors. Funding is being made available to support training of teachers in ICT skills for curricular purposes.

Good training for staff in the use of ICT is necessary if the technology is to be used as fully as possible and the benefits gained. Teachers who use ICT for their own professional work, including administration, are also more likely to understand the potential for using it with pupils. An important aspect of training strategies is that they are most effective when the training takes place shortly after the ICT infrastructure has been installed.

The work of the National MIS Project and the significant increase in computer access and ICT skills which will arise from the NGfL initiative will give momentum to the use of ICT for administrative purposes.

The study found that teaching staff believe they are involved in sizeable amounts of administration which could be undertaken by support staff. In a small number of schools, the traditional ways in which administrative staff are used are being challenged. In some instances, changes have developed through processes associated with DSM, either for school-based staff or for staff allocated to a number of neighbouring 'clustered' schools. In others, headteachers have taken a broad look at the administrative support requirements of teaching staff and have made changes in the way support is organised.

Primary schools

The study found very few examples of administrative staff in primary schools undertaking work elsewhere carried out by senior teaching staff. This could be a function of the generally lower levels of administrative support allocated to primary schools. However, there were many examples of very good teamwork between the headteacher and his or her administrative support person, and a view among many that much more work could be transferred were more support staff available.

The Government's recently announced classroom assistant scheme should increase the amount and flexibility of administrative support available to teaching staff. Possible duties which could be undertaken by classroom assistants are noted towards the end of the section.

Secondary schools

There were a number of examples of staff being used differently:

- using administrative staff to log discipline incidents

- using administrative staff to organise absence cover

- involving an Attendance Officer, allocated by the education authority, in computerised monitoring of pupil absence

- 'buying in' non-teaching personnel to invigilate internal examinations.

Some schools had introduced packages of measures on much larger scales (exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11: Examples of practice in some secondary schools

There are schools where support staff undertake work which teachers in other schools feel they need to do themselves.

> The system used by Brannock High School in North Lanarkshire demonstrated a range of effective measures in the use of administrative staff, including:
>
> - a clear office manager role for the Senior (Administration) Officer, who also has responsibility for DSM
>
> - each member of the administrative staff is linked to a specific member of the promoted teaching staff, providing administrative assistance in general and support in specific tasks – such as links to the SQA, completion of Scottish Office surveys etc
>
> - a member of the administrative staff also provides support to guidance teachers, to carry out tasks such as filing and retrieval of papers
>
> - a number of systems have been set up to promote the effective completion of certain tasks, such as photocopying.
>
> Beeslack High School in Midlothian developed a system for providing support to individual subject departments on a regular basis. Features included:
>
> - timetabling blocks of time (say three hours per week) of a member of the support staff to an individual department
>
> - flexibility in the ways departments used this additional help, such as for copying and collation of papers, typing, filing, preparing papers.
>
> In another school, Inverkeithing High School in Fife, several arrangements contributed to the reduction of time spent by teachers on administrative tasks. For example:
>
> - administrative staff support guidance staff in organising and filing papers
>
> - minutes of meetings of senior promoted staff are routinely and effectively taken by a member of the administrative staff
>
> - a 'quiet' office has been set up, away from the central office, in which administrative staff can enter data and do filing without interruption. Guidance staff can also access files there.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

Some authorities have altered the level at which they employ administrative staff. For example, one authority has recently introduced the post of bursar in all its secondary schools, on a salary grade of AP4 (£16,770 – £18,609). The rationale for this is that the post of bursar more accurately reflects the responsibility of senior administrative staff in secondary schools (exhibit 12). One of the expected benefits is that headteachers will be able to delegate many of their responsibilities for administrative tasks.

Exhibit 12: The role of the secondary school bursar in one education authority

City of Edinburgh Council has recently introduced the post of bursar in all its secondary schools.

> The role of the post is:
>
> - to provide and operate financial management, integrated management information and budgetary information systems for the school
>
> - to manage the delivery of a wide range of administrative, clerical and general office support services
>
> - to be jointly responsible with the headteacher and/or other senior staff for the administration of the community-use facilities and to generate income as specified by the education authority
>
> - to act as adviser to senior staff throughout the school on financial, personnel and administrative matters in accordance with the council's policies and procedures.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

Experience elsewhere

In considering whether the levels of administrative staff and ways of using them are meeting the current needs of the education system, it might be helpful to look at practices beyond the state sector in Scotland, though care must be taken when drawing comparisons. As part of the study, information was sought through the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) on practices in other countries.

State schools in England may have more options available to them for transferring tasks from teaching to administrative staff. For example, they are more easily able to increase the hours of secretarial assistance available to them, employ classroom assistants and invest in training for auxiliary staff. This is possibly due to more flexibility in their schemes of local management of schools than is usually the case in the Scottish DSM schemes.

Beyond the United Kingdom a very wide range of practices was evident. At one end of the spectrum, the duties of the head of establishment in some countries only related to administration. In other countries there was an almost complete separation of professional management functions (eg links with parents and appraisal of teachers) and the administrative running of the school.

In other parts of Scottish education, administration in **independent schools** is usually the responsibility of the bursar, a senior professional administrator, who leads a team of administrative staff in support of the running of the school and is usually part of the school's senior management team. A key role of the bursar is to handle financial arrangements, including fees. In addition, the bursar and administrative staff often take on responsibility for a broad range of other administrative tasks. For example, in Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen, the bursar is responsible for:

- groups of support staff, including receptionist/telephonist, secretarial staff, technicians, janitors, grounds and building maintenance staff

- a range of support functions, including management of the school's finances, the recruitment of non-teaching staff, ICT, academic records, pupil information and report cards, cleaning, catering, photocopying and reprographics.

One notable difference between the independent and state sectors is in the way in which building maintenance is handled. This task is one where both primary and secondary state school headteachers are particularly dissatisfied with current arrangements, and which takes a substantial amount of their time – an average of 80 hours per annum for secondary headteachers, and about 50 hours for primary headteachers. In the independent schools visited, the bursar was responsible for organising building maintenance work.

Scottish colleges of **further education** were under education authority control until April 1993, when they became responsible for running their own affairs. Some functions, such as investment management and the development of large-scale commercial activities, go well beyond what has to be done in schools, but other aspects are similar. Over the past five years, colleges have arrived at a range of solutions to deliver the necessary administrative support. Many colleges undertake all of their administrative work themselves but some colleges, especially the smaller ones, enter into contracts with councils for aspects such as building maintenance or personnel services. Each college has arrived at its own structure for academic and support staffing, sometimes through radical restructuring (exhibit 13).

Exhibit 13: An example of one FE college's approach to administrative support

A review of tasks and duties led to a new staffing structure for Lauder College, Fife.

The issue

After April 1993, the college saw an increase in the volume and complexity of administrative work carried out.

The new practice

Tasks and duties were analysed and distinguished as being senior management, management, lecturer, technical or administrative responsibilities, then allocated in a revised structure. Lecturer duties were identified as those which are necessary for the professional task of supporting learning – in addition to teaching and assessment, this includes recording and monitoring of attendance and attainment. Administrative staff provide support at a range of levels, for example:

- providing clerical assistance

- collating and processing information on attendance and performance

- providing staff with statistics which allow them to monitor students' progress and prepare reports

- dealing with property management, including building maintenance and room allocation requests

- preparing examination timetables and appointing invigilators

- managing examination arrangements, including SQA returns

- co-ordinating external verification visits and maintaining internal verification information

- co-ordinating community and industrial links, supporting commercial work including contract management.

Technical support staff duties include:

- preparing for all practical work in classes, and setting-up

- problem-solving and maintenance of computers.

The benefits

Teaching staff time has been released through the new approach to handling administration. Class contact time has increased from 21 hours per week to 24 hours a week. Management information has improved.

Critical success factors

These were considered by the college to be:

- good partnerships between teaching and non-teaching professionals, within which the roles and contributions of all staff are clear and valued

- staff development for both administrative and teaching staff, including management development programmes

- clear progression opportunities for administrative staff, who may aspire to senior posts

- flexible working arrangements leading to cover being provided outwith normal hours.

Source: Fieldwork by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

Barriers to using administrative staff

The headteachers surveyed feel that the biggest barrier to the transfer of administrative work from teachers to administrative staff arises from not having enough administrative time available in the school.

Under many schemes of DSM headteachers cannot readily alter the levels of administrative staff in their schools. DSM virement rules frequently include the condition that schools must maintain the levels of teaching and non-teaching staff allocated to the school using the authority's staffing formulae.

The net result of these constraints is that where there is no scope for administrative staff to take on more work, promoted teachers, especially at assistant and depute headteacher levels, spend sometimes substantial parts of their time on administration.

Given that resources for administrative staff are limited, it is important to ensure that the available support is used to best effect. Looking at how tasks can be streamlined and how ICT may be used more or differently is an essential first step in reviewing administration and may yield considerable benefits. Beyond a certain point, though, there may simply be fewer administrative staff than may be appropriate, particularly in small primary schools.

Tackling the barriers

Increasing the use made of administrative staff can be done in two ways – within existing school resources and with additional resources.

Schools and authorities can take a number of steps which should help to increase the amount of administrative work that teachers can delegate to non-teaching staff. The essential first steps are to streamline work where possible and to review the ways in which ICT is used to reduce the time required for administration. These steps alone should free up time for both teaching and support staff.

The next step is to review who should be doing which tasks. The number of instances in which schools have been innovative in the use of administrative staff reinforces the need to challenge traditional views of who should do specific tasks. Persuading teachers to delegate tasks and ensuring that support staff are able to tackle them requires effective management of administration.

Features of effective management include:

• that there is an ethos of teamwork among all staff – teachers, administrative, technical, and other support staff – which values the contributions of all staff members

• that administrative staff are willing to take on challenging tasks and that teachers are willing to delegate these

• that tasks are allocated which are well-matched to the capabilities of the staff concerned and which play to their individual strengths

• that administrative staff take part in appropriate, school-based staff development and have opportunities to engage in staff development organised specifically for them (eg at 'cluster' or education authority level)

• that teaching staff, particularly those in senior posts, engage in staff development relating to the effective management of administrative staff.

If there is then still a situation where senior promoted teachers are undertaking administrative work which could be done by others, then the schools and education authorities may wish to consider flexibility within existing budgets.

In some authorities, headteachers have some flexibility to vire between the teaching and non-teaching components of their staffing budgets, without the requirement to comply with authority-determined levels of provision. This means that in some schools, headteachers may choose to employ additional administrative support. In this circumstance, this may be provided within the school's existing resources.

Authorities may wish to review the balance between teaching and support staff allocations in their overall budgets. We look at this further in *The broader context – staffing structures*, below.

So, there are a number of measures which should help schools to increase the amount of administration that can be delegated to support staff within existing resources. There is one current initiative that will increase staffing resources available to schools – classroom assistants.

Government funding is being made available from April 1999 to allow education authorities to recruit classroom assistants, in an extension to the pilot scheme which is now underway. A working party is currently considering key aspects of this initiative, including evaluation of various models of deployment, and training and development implications.

Classroom assistants will carry out a range of duties which will enable teachers to concentrate more fully on their professional tasks, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching, learning and pupil attainment. The earlier sections of this report provide some pointers towards tasks which classroom assistants could usefully perform. The following list indicates the types of activity which classroom assistants might carry out, having undergone suitable training (exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14: Duties which may be carried out by classroom assistants

Classroom assistants can carry out a wide range of administrative and classroom-based activities.

In primary schools, these activities might include:

- under the guidance of classteachers, preparing materials for lessons (photocopying, setting out material for practical activities)

- hearing children reading, subject to teacher direction

- discussing events, 'story time' talk with small groups of children

- providing comfort and care in cases of minor accidents or illness

- organising resources (cataloguing, ordering)

- transferring factual information to databases and reports

- attending to visitors and enquiries

- helping with displays around the school

- making arrangements for trips and school events such as performances and parents' evenings

- collecting money and keeping accounts

- supervising in non-teaching areas such as corridors and playgrounds

- helping to set up experiments

- helping with computers

- arranging photocopying and collation of materials

- doing filing for teaching staff

- cataloguing, organising and maintaining resources

- collating information for reports to parents.

In secondary schools, classroom assistants (or departmental assistants) might also tackle:

- preparing materials where technician support is not available or necessary

- providing clerical support to groups of teachers (eg departments).

Authorities should consider developing broad job descriptions for these staff – including both general administrative and classroom-based duties. A wide job description will allow flexibility of use – ensuring that these additional school staff are able to take on some of the administration currently handled by senior teaching staff.

Authorities may also wish to consider reviewing the job descriptions of other non-teaching staff currently present within the school, eg auxiliaries, clerical assistants and so on, in order to review the balance between classroom-based work and general administration.

Authorities may wish to review the formulae used to allocate administrative staff to their schools – particularly small primary schools where levels of support are very low. These reviews should look at the impact of low levels of administrative support on the time which headteachers and other senior promoted staff have for professionally intensive tasks. These reviews should take into account how authorities plan to use classroom assistants.

Systematic reviews of administration at both school and authority levels provide a sound basis for considering change, but are relatively uncommon. Without them, the developments which lead to the better handling of administrative tasks may remain *ad hoc* and localised.

For classroom assistants, there is to be national funding. The difficulty with other measures is the issue of resources. To increase support staff in the context of fixed budgets, resources have to be diverted from elsewhere. This may be possible as part of a radical look at school structures. From the evidence in this report there are reasons to do this – in secondary schools almost 50% of the teaching posts are management posts[1] where staff feel that a substantial amount of their administrative work could be done by support staff. Rearranging structures could free up resources to increase administrative and ICT support in schools. This is examined further in *The broader context – staffing structures* section below.

Summary

There is scope to reduce the time spent on administration in schools:

- by reviewing how tasks are done and streamlining them where possible
- within schools' existing ICT resources, time may be saved by using ICT differently eg developing standard letters which can be tailored
- with increased ICT resources, more savings in time become possible, eg by enabling teachers to input comments for pupil reports directly onto a central file, by use of e-mail and so on.

These measures can free up time both for teachers and for support staff. Where time is freed up for the latter, there is the opportunity for teachers to delegate more administrative work.

There is scope for teachers to delegate administration to support staff where:

- support staff have time available
- support staff have the necessary skills and training
- there is effective management of administration, including good teamwork between support and teaching staff and teachers are willing to delegate tasks.

There may be scope to increase the amount of administrative support available in schools, by:

- authorities using classroom assistants in flexible roles, combining administrative work with classroom-based duties
- authorities reviewing the extent to which headteachers can vire between teaching and non-teaching parts of their staffing budgets.

Lastly, authorities may wish to consider the levels of administrative support made available to schools, in particular to small primary schools.

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[1] Information on numbers of staff in promoted posts in Scottish schools is attached in Appendix 5.

4 The broader context – staffing structures

Introduction

Our education system should be organised to meet the needs and aspirations of individual pupils and their parents and the expectations of society as a whole. This implies that:

- teachers' time should be protected as far as possible to allow them to focus on professional activities central to teaching

- the time of headteachers and other senior promoted staff should be focused on ensuring that the quality of education in their establishment is at the highest possible level.

The previous section has given examples of ways in which individual schools and education authorities are amending their practices with a view to achieving these goals. Nonetheless, the overall findings of this study are that their achievement is generally compromised by:

- the ways in which many administrative tasks in school are organised

- the extent to which teachers, especially at higher promoted levels, are involved in administrative work.

This report sets out ways in which schools and authorities can review their administrative work. In addition, the classroom assistants initiative will be a key step in the provision of further administrative support to teachers.

However, any consideration of fundamental changes to the ways in which schools handle administration should not be undertaken in isolation. Issues to be considered include the ways in which schools are structured and organised as a whole to support the effective delivery of high-quality education.

Current structures and numbers of teachers

Much of the present structural arrangement for schools was laid down more than 40 years ago, in the 1956 Schools (Scotland) Code, which defines what kind of teaching posts may be established in the primary and secondary sectors. Generally, authorities are only required to establish those posts which are sanctioned by the Code, but are under no obligation to create posts at all possible levels in all schools – indeed the minimum legal requirement is that a school must have a headteacher and a classteacher. The current arrangements are, therefore, potentially flexible, but in practice this flexibility is not widely applied. Appendix 5 outlines, for readers not familiar with the way schools are organised, the structures of primary and secondary schools.

The proportion of promoted staff within schools is substantial in secondary schools, and less so in primary schools – overall, 57% of teaching staff in the secondary sector occupy promoted posts. In primary schools, the figure is 32% (appendix 5).

The percentage of teaching staff in primary schools who occupy the statutorily required roles – headteachers and classteachers – is 79%. In secondary schools, 44% of teaching staff occupy these roles, ie the majority of teachers occupy posts which are not laid down as being required, yet which are used in the vast majority of schools.

The effectiveness of current structures

This study did not set out specifically to consider the effectiveness of current staffing structures. However, the findings of this study indicate that current school structures do not always meet the requirements for effective and efficient administration, because they use staff at higher levels than necessary. There are also questions about whether present structures in secondary schools:

• readily allow the matching of certain tasks to specific existing promoted posts, eg some aspects of quality assurance, or cross-curricular issues such as health education, or numeracy as a core skill

• lend themselves to adaptations which will be necessary if there are more radical changes in the concepts of schools, as in the broader context of New Community Schools

• readily allow flexibility to meet changing needs.

Serious attention was given to these issues in the COSLA/SJNC (Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee) Joint Inquiry (the Millennium Review).

Joint COSLA/SJNC inquiry (Millennium Review)

The Millennium Review took evidence on how a high-quality, value for money education service for Scotland in the 21st century could be achieved. Four task groups separately considered: the relationship between the Scottish Parliament and local authority education services; managing demographic pressures and matching needs and resources; management structures in schools; and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the SJNC.

Task Group 3 considered whether management structures within schools are fit for purpose for the new millennium. Exhibit 13 notes some conclusions from Task Group 3 which are especially relevant here.

Exhibit 13: Quotes from the conclusions of the Millennium Review Task Group 3

The Task Group reached a number of conclusions relevant to the current study.

1	The main purpose of the (teachers') promotion structure is to support teaching and learning.
7	Considerable flexibility in relation to promoted post structures already exists within the system but there is little evidence of it being used.
12	Promotion structures in the secondary sector require to be reviewed.
16	Support staff provision should be sufficient to remove routine administrative functions from teaching staff.
18	Arrangements for promoted post structures should have regard to the time needed for completion of the duties involved.

The findings of this report reinforce these conclusions and in particular conclusion 16.

Administrative and professional structures

A key finding of this study is the extent to which teaching staff at different levels felt that aspects of their administrative workload could be undertaken by suitably qualified administrative staff (exhibit 3, page 8). The findings indicate that there is

substantial scope for the release of time from promoted staff in secondary schools to allow them to concentrate more fully on professional duties. Secondary headteachers, depute headteachers, assistant headteachers and principal teachers identified the largest portions of time which they felt could be done by administrative staff. Given the relative numbers of staff holding these posts in Scotland, the greatest scope for the release of time for more professional duties lies with principal teachers and assistant headteachers.

In primary schools, levels of administrative support are low, and for some small primary schools, very low. This means that the headteacher is diverted away from more important functions by the need to attend to basic administrative tasks. Furthermore, holders of promoted posts, especially those who carry full-time teaching commitments, often feel that they have an inadequate amount of time to carry out key functions, including – notably – those relating to quality assurance.

Removing the administrative load from these teachers may require additional administrative resources. Classroom assistants will help. However, if after streamlining, using ICT and available support staff more, authorities and schools still find that their senior promoted teachers are doing administration that could be done more cost-effectively by others, then staffing structures should be considered. Are there structures which would allow an increase in administrative staff and an increase in the quality of education provision within fixed budgets? The development and evaluation of alternative staffing structures could provide evidence on which a range of models for the future organisation of schools may be based.

Summary

The continuing debate about how schools are structured, as highlighted in the Millennium Review, should include consideration of the findings of this report.

Administrative staffing structures, which may include the development of a career path for administrators in schools or school clusters, should not be viewed in isolation from overall school staffing structures.

There is currently very little variation in the way in which Scottish schools are structured. The flexibility that exists currently is not widely used. There are questions over the fitness for purpose of the currently predominant model for secondary schools.

5 The way forward

Conclusions

This report has signalled a number of areas where there are inefficiencies in administration in schools. When this is the case the quality of teaching may suffer, important development work may not happen quickly enough, or essential management functions may be hindered when senior managers are diverted by routine administration.

There is significant scope for administration in schools to yield better value for money. Within the existing administrative resources available to most schools, improvements could be made by:

- using different methods – typically by streamlining the way a task is handled to reduce the time it takes

- making better use of ICT – to automate the handling of information and enable new ways of using it

- using support staff more – to release teachers' time for those activities which are pivotal to the improvement of attainment.

There are no simple formulae for improvement: schools vary considerably in the approaches that they take to administration and the efficiency of their administrative procedures, including their use of ICT. The scope for improvement will therefore vary from school to school and from task to task.

Some significant changes are possible within the constraints of present funding and structural arrangements, often at little cost; others will become possible with additional support in school, such as classroom assistants.

There comes a point where increasing the cost-effectiveness of administration requires more administrative staff than currently exist. Arguably, this point has already been reached in the case of some schools where support levels are very low.

Schools of all sizes are constrained in the extent to which they can change the amount and type of support staff available to them, because their authority's scheme of devolved school management effectively specifies how many support staff they have. Also, currently accepted staffing structures are rarely varied to reflect the full range of tasks which need to be carried out in a particular school to ensure the highest quality of teaching, learning and attainment.

Improving administration, while a good thing in itself, is not the primary objective. The primary objective is to ensure that best use is made of teachers' time. This cannot be achieved simply by improving administration. It will need an appreciation of the complementary roles of teaching and support staff and, fundamentally, a reconsideration of what it is that makes a school structure fit for purpose.

Next steps

This section considers two layers of potential change in turn:

- action which can and should be taken under present arrangements – at school, authority and at national level – to improve the cost-effectiveness of administration in schools

- issues for consideration in more fundamental reviews of structures in schools.

Next steps for schools

Schools currently use two principal tools to assist them in planning for improvement – self evaluation using *How Good is Our School?,* and the school development planning process. We recommend that, as part of these continuing processes, schools should address the points below:

- review the scope for streamlining administrative tasks to release time for activities more directly related to teaching and learning

- develop strategies which cover the use of ICT both for teaching and learning, and for administration

- review administrative arrangements to ensure that tasks are being done as efficiently and effectively as possible: is the right person doing the task and is it being done in the best way?

- ensure that there is a team ethos embracing both teaching and support staff – an ethos which respects the role and contribution of every member of staff

- ensure that all staff are supported in continuous professional development and technical training

- evaluate the impact of changes in terms of the effect upon teaching, learning and attainment.

At the end of the report is a checklist for action which may assist schools in reviewing their own arrangements. In all cases, the guiding principle should be that changes in administrative arrangements or structures should lead to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and attainment.

Next steps for education authorities

Education authorities have a key role in enouraging and supporting schools in improving their arrangements for administration. An obvious mechanism for authorities seeking to improve their arrangements for supporting administration in schools is to use the Best Value service review process.

We therefore recommend that education authorities should:

- encourage and support schools in reviewing their administrative arrangements

- encourage and support schools in sharing information on good practice in administration and the use of ICT

- review their own practices, particularly in relation to:

  - the level and distribution of administrative and ICT support in their schools

  - the ICT support provided through the council's central services

  - DSM, particularly regarding the level of budget flexibility available to headteachers to minimise the burden of routine administrative tasks on teachers

- consider opportunities for improving administrative support to schools, eg through the deployment of senior administrative staff in schools; economies of scale achievable from the clustering of groups of schools; and the provision of specialist services on an authority-wide or inter-authority basis

- facilitate efficient and effective administration at the interfaces of schools and other council departments, and external agencies.

The checklist at the end of the report may assist authorities in the review process. It is complementary to generic guidance on conducting service reviews developed by individual authorities and it should be used in conjunction with material relating to the four questions proposed by the Best Value Task Force[1], which authorities will use when conducting reviews at corporate and service level:

1   How do we know we are doing the right things?

2   How do we know we are doing things right?

3   How do we plan to improve?

4   How do we account for our performance?

These questions, applicable to both schools and authorities, reflect the need to challenge present ways of working; to compare how similar tasks are handled in different schools, authorities and other organisations; and to consult staff, pupils, parents and others affected by changes.

Next steps at a national level

The above recommendations have implications at a national level:

- local good practice should be disseminated nationally

- the Scottish Qualification for Headship should reflect the management tasks of identifying and implementing good practice in administration and promoting effective team working between all staff

- consideration should be given to a career path for administrative staff

- consideration should be given to developing performance indicators for 'How Good is our Administration?'

Issues for consideration in more radical reviews of structures of schools

We recommend that:

- the potential roles for suitably qualified administrative staff should be given careful consideration in discussions about staffing structures in schools. The aim should be to make the fullest possible use of the professional expertise of teaching staff, and of senior staff in particular

- schools and authorities should be encouraged to incorporate flexibility when devising staffing structures

- in any particular school, the structure should be the result of a careful review of functions. The adage to follow is 'form follows function'.

The time of teachers, teacher-managers and administrative staff should be used in such a way that the teaching and learning needs of pupils can be met most effectively, and their potential to achieve the highest standards of attainment can be maximised.

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[1] Scottish Office Development Department Circular 12/98.

Appendix 1: Advisory Group

Members sat on the Group in a personal capacity.

Tom Balanowski   Principal Teacher (Physics)
Linlithgow Academy,
West Lothian Council

Ken Corsar   Director of Education
Glasgow City Council

Kate Coyle   Depute Headteacher
St Patrick's Primary School,
West Dunbartonshire Council

Jim Gibson   Personnel Officer
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)

Jackie Howie   Assistant Principal
Angus College

Robert Leggate   Bursar
Robert Gordon's College

Anne Minto   Headteacher
Caerlaverock Primary School,
Dumfries and Galloway Council

Shelagh Rae   Director of Education
Renfrewshire Council

Lindsay Roy   Headteacher
Inverkeithing High School,
Fife Council

Michael White   Director of Education and Recreation Services
Aberdeenshire Council

Appendix 2: Abbreviations

AHT	Assistant Headteacher
APT	Assistant Principal Teacher
APT-G	Assistant Principal Teacher of Guidance
APT-S	Assistant Principal Teacher of a subject
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CT	Classteacher
DHT	Depute Headteacher
FTE	Full-time equivalent
DSM	Devolved School Management
ICT	Information and communications technology
HT	Headteacher
MIS	Management Information System
NGfL	National Grid for Learning
PT	Principal Teacher
PT-G	Principal Teacher of Guidance
PT- LS	Principal Teacher of Learning Support
PT-S	Principal Teacher of a subject
SJNC	Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee
SOEID	Scottish Office Education and Industry Department
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
ST	Senior Teacher
TSSE	Teaching Staff in School Education
VFM	Value for money

Appendix 3: Task illustrations

The tasks below were the focus of the postal survey sent to staff in schools. The tasks covered by the survey were representative of the range of administrative work in schools - some requiring a great deal of input by teachers, others less so. All were felt by staff in the initial fieldwork in schools to involve administrative aspects which could be handled more efficiently.

The descriptions below were used in the survey to illustrate possible examples of administrative aspects. In thinking about the tasks, teachers were asked to leave to the side those aspects which require their professional thought or input, concentrating instead on those aspects which are largely administrative in nature.

Organising primary/secondary liaison

This work may be largely secretarial in nature, such as organising meetings by phone or letter, perhaps for individual visits of staff from the secondary school, or of staff from a number of primary schools in the area. Unnecessary time may be spent on writing out lists of pupils or describing work covered or not covered in the last years of pupils' primary schooling. It may be that different members of staff in schools ask for the same information but in a different format. The expenditure of time against the account which is taken of the information may be an issue.

Organising out-of-school trips, visits etc

This task could include organising day visits to local places of interest and also longer residential visits to outdoor centres, other centres in Scotland or abroad. Secondary schools will also organise exchange visits with foreign schools. Various class lists or lists of pupils may have to be written out several times. Time may be spent collecting and counting money, recording amounts against names, transferring money elsewhere and writing receipts. Various locations may need to be contacted, transport organised and arrangements checked. It may be necessary to write to parents and/or to organise parents' meetings in connection with the visit. Insurance, health forms and passports may need to be checked. Staff in other departments or schools may have to be contacted.

Organising links to community/industry, statutory agencies

For example, administration accruing from organising links with charities, links or visits to local nursing homes, special schools, old folks' homes; organising visits to/ from local firms or industries and organising work experience placements; administrative work associated with links to social work or psychological services or health agencies (eg for Records of Need or Children's Panel purposes); phoning and writing to organise meetings. This does not include preparation, or attendance at, meetings as these are professional aspects.

Recording information on pupils' performances

For example, class or group lists may have to be written out several times or information transferred from one place to another, without change of content. Information already existing in printed form (eg in 5-14 guidelines, grade-related criteria or departmental guidelines) may have to be rewritten. Information may be in one format but required in another format to transfer the information to other staff (eg from classteacher to Guidance or Learning Support, or vice versa) or to another school. Data may be held electronically but required in a different format for use by others.

Preparing/completing written reports on pupils' performances

Administrative aspects could include transferring handwritten comments to another handwritten format, or keying in handwritten comments to a computer.

Unnecessary administrative work may be required in collating reports. Time may be spent waiting for reports to be available so that information may be transferred on to originals. Information held electronically may have to be transferred into a written format.

Organising building maintenance, health and safety

Almost all work under this heading could be considered as 'administrative', eg contacting the education authority or building works organisation to ask for a repair, doing minor carpentry, undertaking an emergency plumbing repair and processing related paperwork. There will be times where professional (eg teaching/educational management) expertise is required, or where a teacher alerts the headteacher/ authority on some specific health and safety angle.

Resources: stocktaking, ordering, purchasing, checking

Administrative tasks could include finding and looking through catalogues, checking prices, counting and checking books and other resources, writing out orders, transferring orders to central forms, checking invoices and orders, tidying up and accessing centralised resources.

Arranging staff absence cover

For example, in primary schools, contacting supply teachers, with notice and at short notice, and associated administration; organising cover for individual classes and informing staff. In secondary schools, arranging 'please takes', for example.

Devolved School Management (DSM)

This may involve time spent managing budgets, submitting statistical returns to the education authority and managing computer systems which specifically handle DSM-related administration.

Forward planning (primary schools only)

This does not relate to the whole forward planning process of a school, but rather to those administrative aspects of it which involve duplication of effort. For example, writing out sections of information which are already in some printed format, writing out descriptions of proposed work, writing lists of pupils, transferring what is already written into a different format and rephrasing existing materials.

Timetabling (secondary schools only)

Creation of the school timetable, collating and transferring information (eg on pupil options) to another format, copying information and entering data into a PC.

Making returns to the SQA, and associated work (secondary schools only)

This task will generally entail the transferral of recorded data into another format, organising or rewriting information for internal use or transfer to the SQA, writing standard letters, providing the same information more than once in the same or different formats, checking information and writing labels.

Handling attendance issues (secondary schools only)

Associated with registration processes, checking period attendance, providing information to office staff or teachers, writing lists of pupils, undertaking administrative work associated with recording late-coming, keying into computer information on attendance/late-coming.

Appendix 4: Task analyses

The questionnaire sent to staff in schools contained a standard series of questions on each of the administrative tasks profiled in appendix 3. The total numbers of teaching staff indicating they were involved in administration relating to the tasks were as follows:

Task		Primary	Secondary
1	Organising primary/secondary liaison	86	297
2	Organising out-of-school trips, visits etc	197	489
3	Organising links to community/industry, statutory agencies	104	330
4	Recording information on pupils' performances	204	650
5	Preparing/completing written reports on pupils' performances	204	649
6	Organising building maintenance, health and safety	45	112
7	Resources: stocktaking, ordering, purchasing, checking	172	470
8	Arranging staff absence cover	59	172
9	Devolved School Management (DSM)	51	130
10	Forward planning (primary schools only)	181	—
11	Timetabling (secondary schools only)	—	211
12	Making returns to the SQA, and associated work (secondaries only)	—	448
13	Handling attendance issues (secondary schools only)	—	536

The charts overleaf summarise teachers' responses in four charts per task:

Chart 1: percentage of teaching staff who responded that they were involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2: for those involved in the task: the estimated number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task. Staff were asked how often they worked on the task (daily, weekly, termly etc) and how long they spent on it at each time. Average annual hours were then calculated from these estimates.

Chart 3: for those involved in the task: the percentage indicating the various levels of satisfaction with current arrangements for handling the task. This chart is not included for tasks related to DSM – the question was not asked in the same way as for other tasks.

Chart 4: for those involved in the task: the estimated percentage of the time spent on the task that respondents feel could be saved by delegating to support staff.

Charts show secondary school posts at the top and primary posts at the bottom, and contain responses averaged for all those respondents in each primary and secondary teaching post category. Please note that the scale of the horizontal axis for charts varies from task to task. Where there were five or fewer respondents for a particular post and question, the response has been omitted in the interests of statistical reliability.

A list of abbreviations used in the charts is in appendix 2.

Primary/secondary liaison

Chart 1

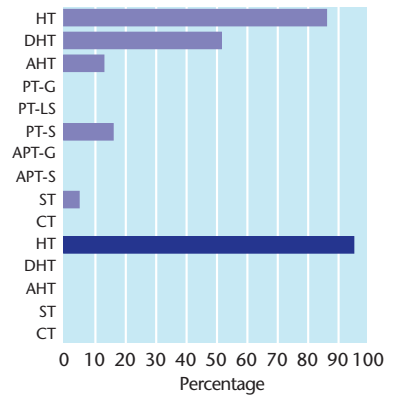Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.
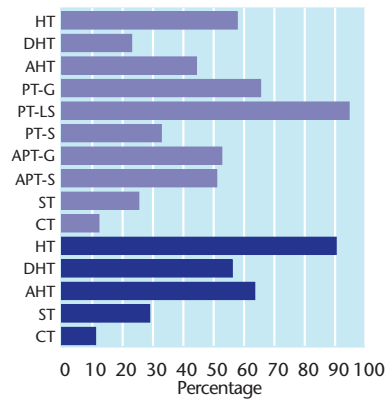
Chart 2

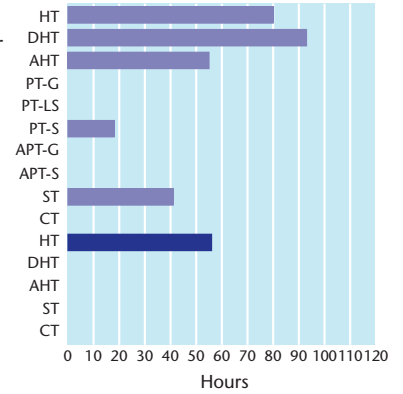Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.
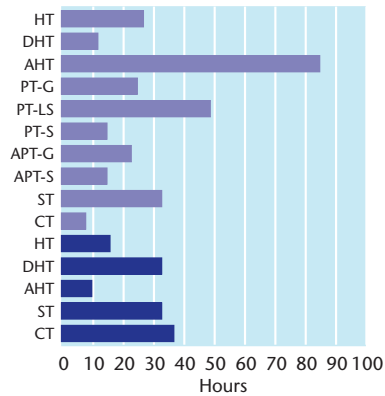
Chart 3

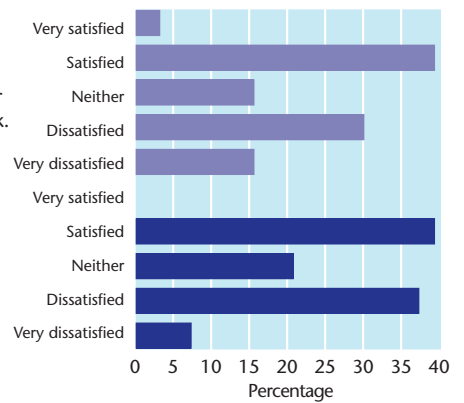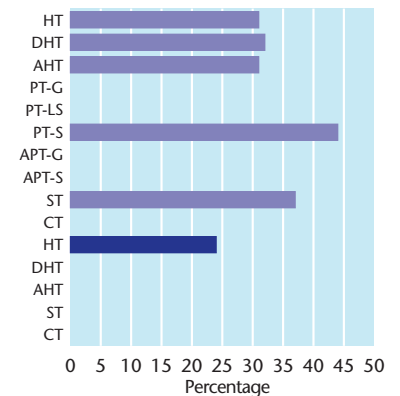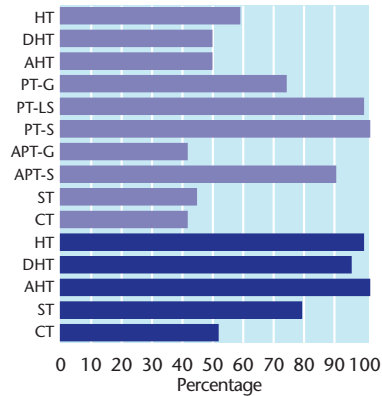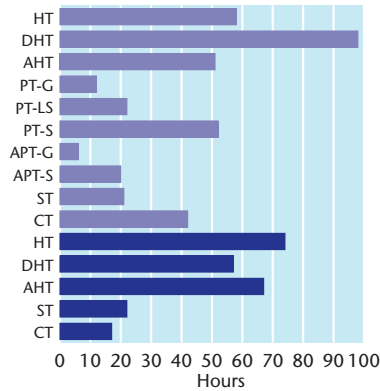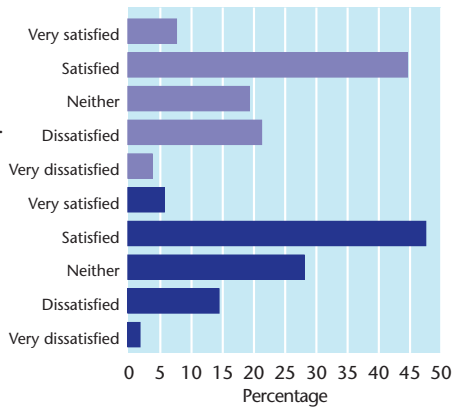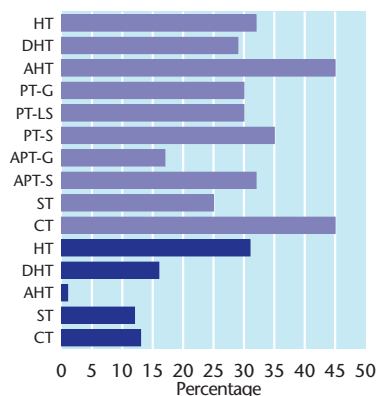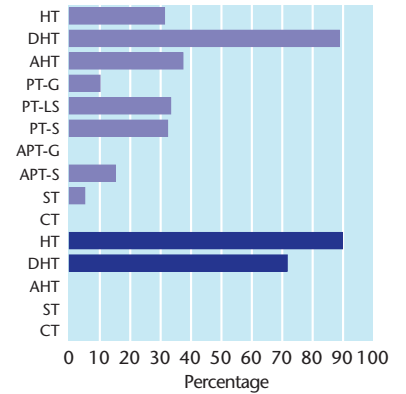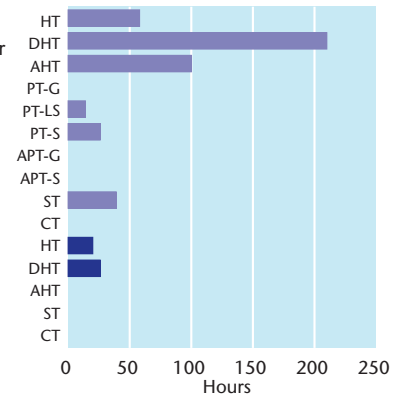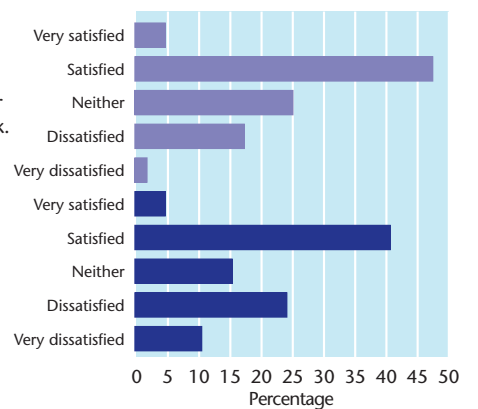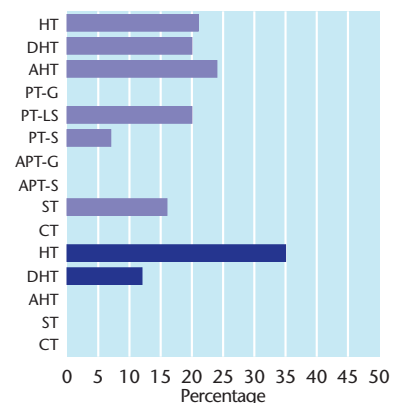Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.
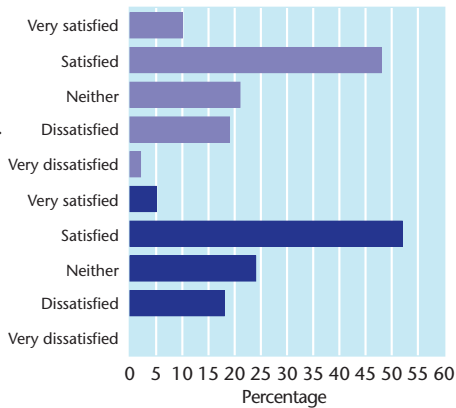
Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.
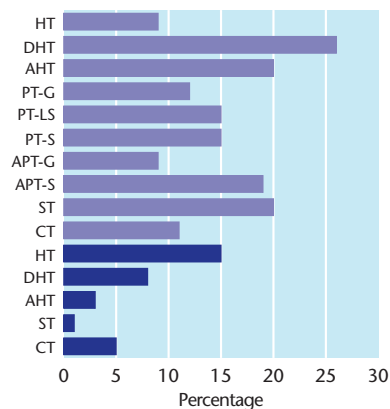
Organising out-of-school trips and visits

Chart 1

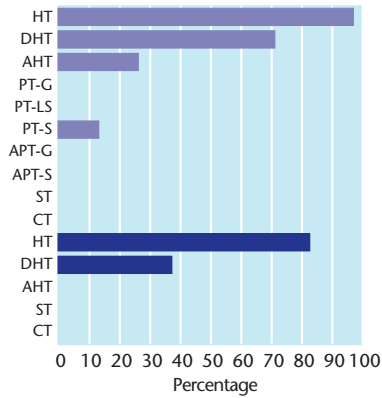Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.
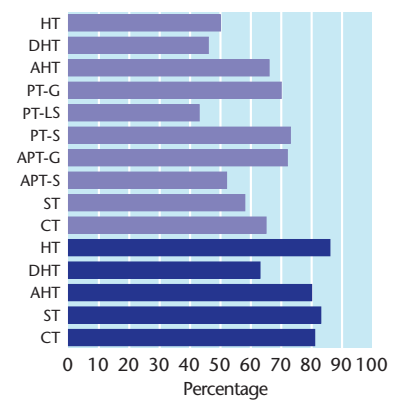
Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.
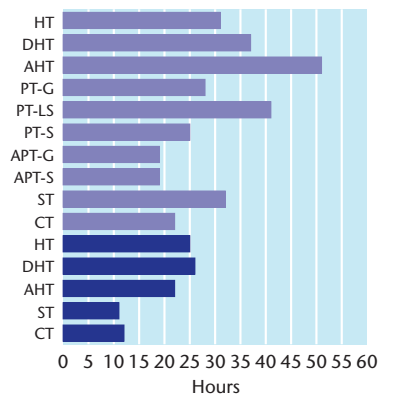
Chart 3

Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.
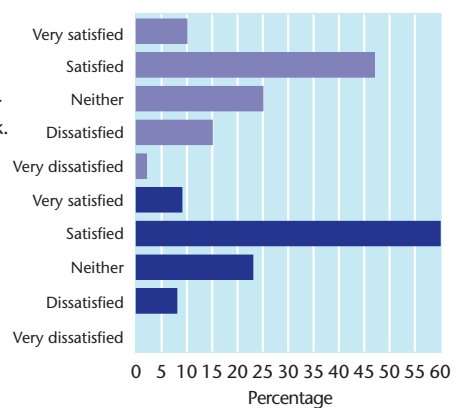
Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.
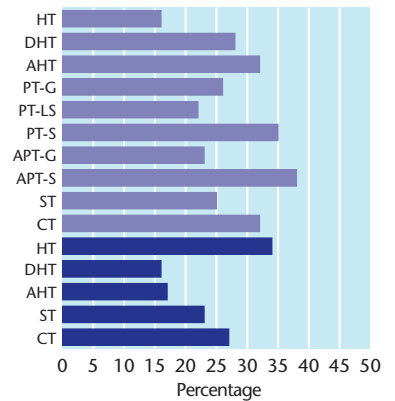
Links to the community

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.
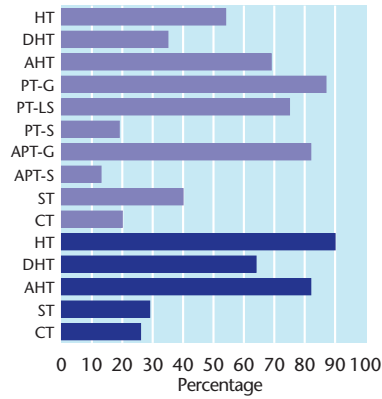
Chart 2

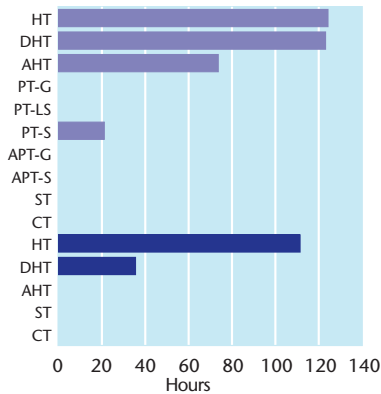Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.
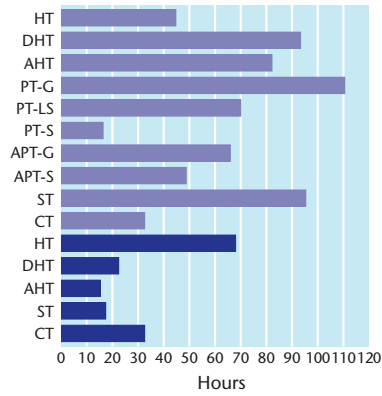
Chart 3

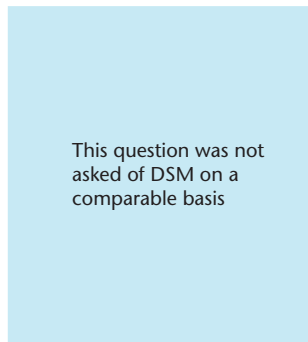Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.
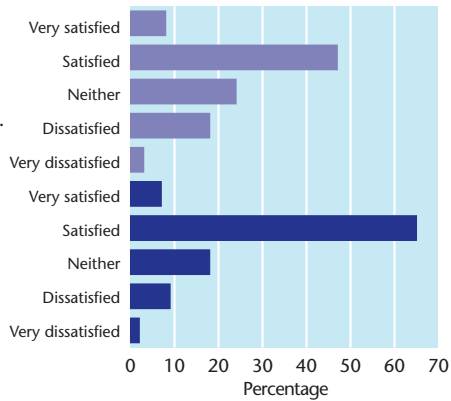
Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.
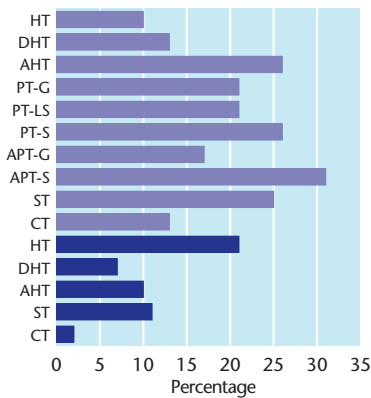
Recording pupils' performances

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.
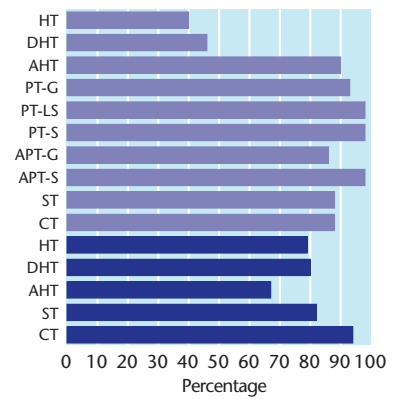
Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.
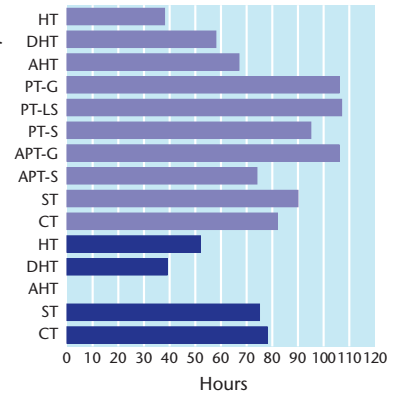
Chart 3

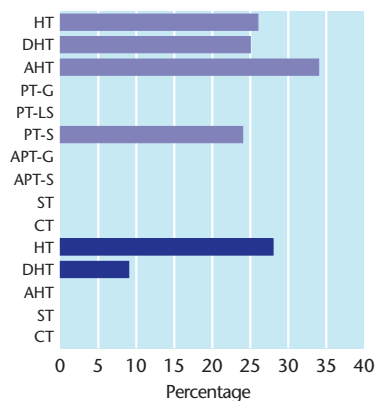Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.
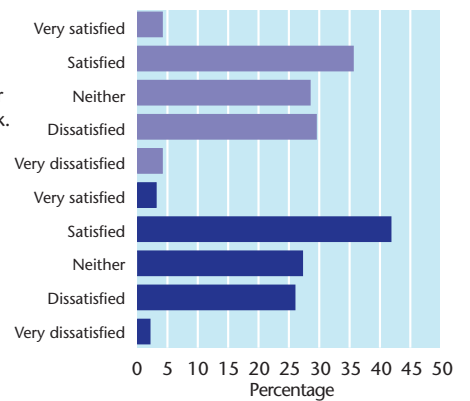
Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.
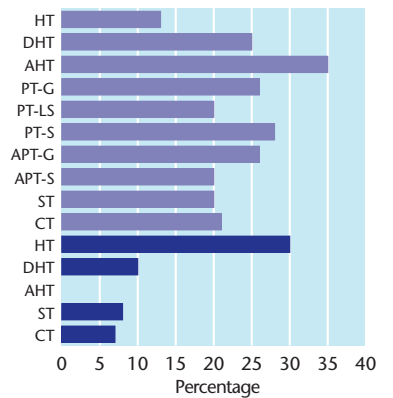
Reporting pupils' performances

Chart 1

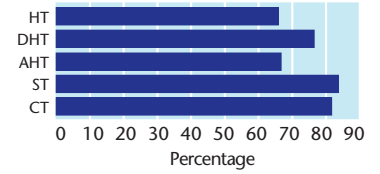Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.
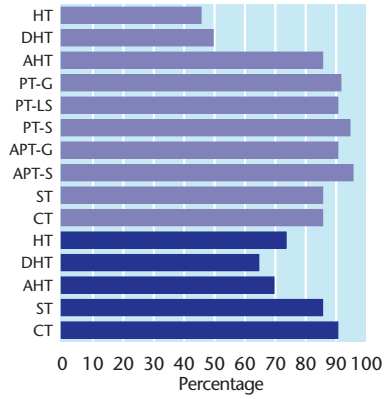
Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.
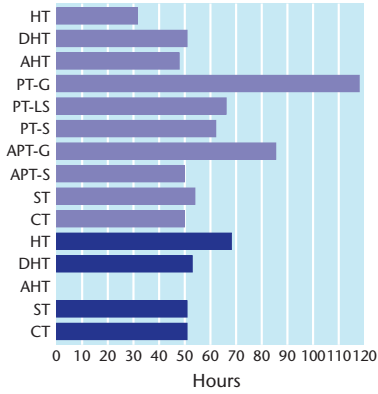
Chart 3

Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.
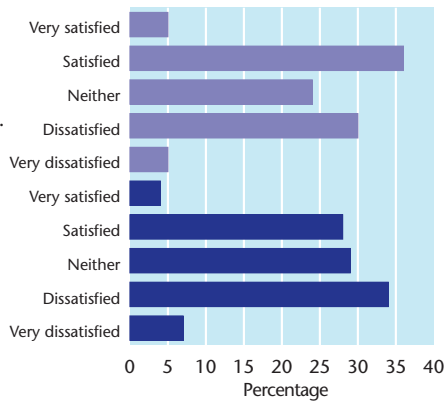
Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.
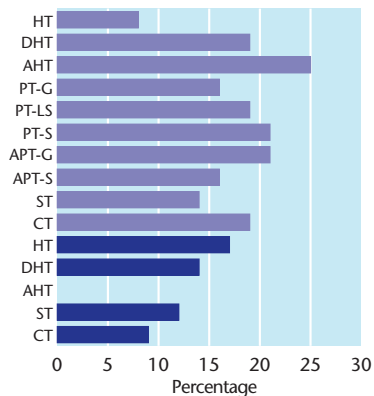
Building maintenance, health & safety

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

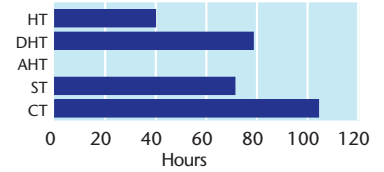Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

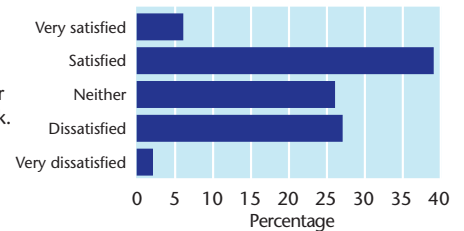Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.

Resource management

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

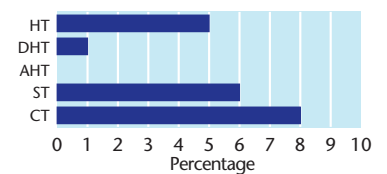Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.

Arranging staff absence cover

Chart 1

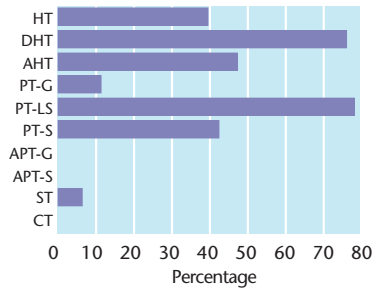Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

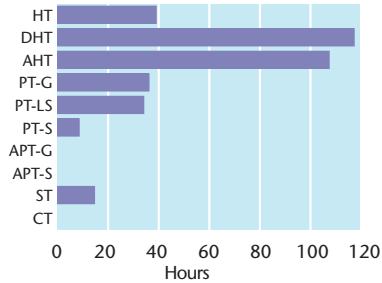Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to support staff.

Devolved school management

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

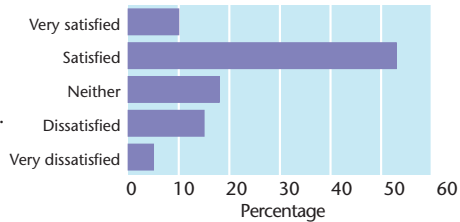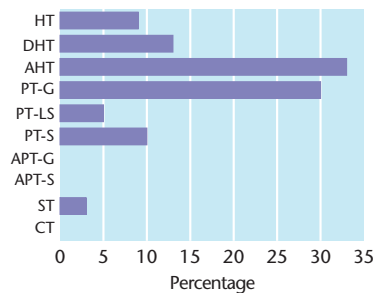Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

This question was not asked of DSM on a comparable basis

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to administrative staff.

Forward planning

Primary schools only

Chart 1

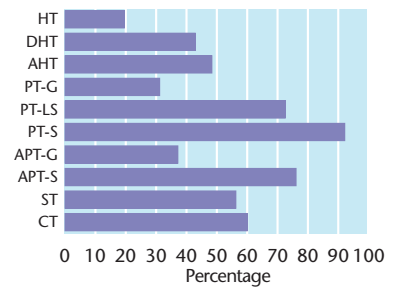Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

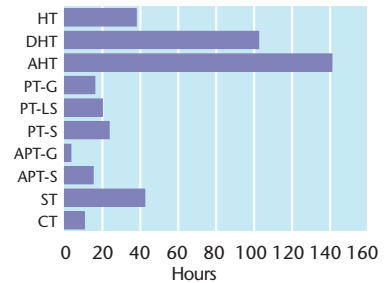Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to administrative staff.

Timetabling

Secondary schools only

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

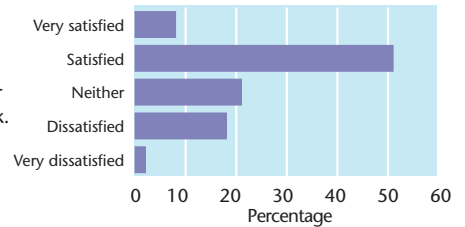Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to administrative staff.

Making returns to the SQA

Secondary schools only

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

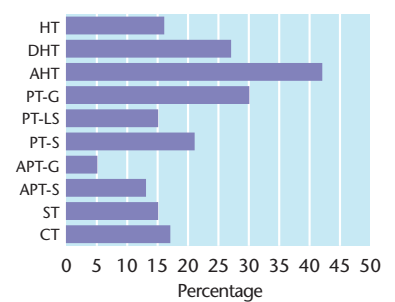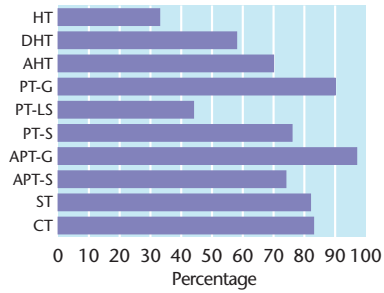Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to administrative staff.

Handling attendance issues

Secondary schools only

Chart 1

Percentage of staff involved in administration relating to the task.

Chart 2

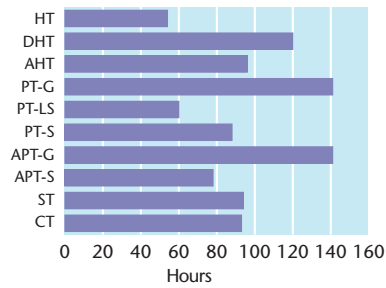Number of hours per year spent on administration relating to the task.

Chart 3

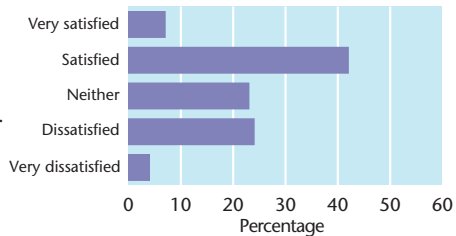Satisfaction with current arrangements for handling this task.
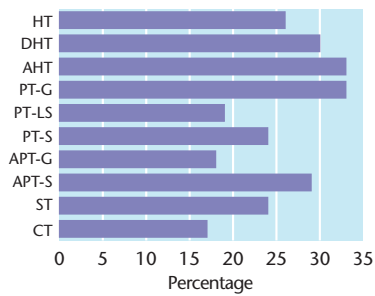

Chart 4

Percentage of time that could be saved by delegating this task to administrative staff.

Appendix 5: Teaching time, structures and number of posts

Teaching time

Teachers are contracted to work for 35 hours in the week, of which 27.5 hours relate to the time pupils are also in school.

All teachers have a contractual amount of non-contact time, taken from the 27.5 hours, for correction of pupils' work, preparation for classes and necessary administrative work. This amounts to 2.5 hours per week for primary staff and 4 hours per week for secondary teachers[1].

Primary schools

The teaching post structure contains up to five levels of post. However, the number of layers present varies with school size, and only larger schools would have staff at all possible levels. In small primary schools, the headteacher often has full-time responsibility for a class of pupils (ie is class-committed) and there are usually no other senior promoted postholders. It is worth noting that most primary schools in Scotland have a teaching headteacher. The following represents the common arrangements for larger primary schools, of around 400 pupils:

- Headteacher – typically non-class-committed

- Depute Headteacher – typically non-class-committed

- Assistant Headteacher – may be class-committed

- two Senior Teachers – class-committed

- approximately twelve unpromoted classteachers (CT) – class-committed.

In some cases, the depute headteacher also has responsibility for teaching a class. In others, he or she may not be class-committed, but could still teach much of the week – either alongside classteachers or to allow them to be freed from a teaching commitment for specific purposes. In very large schools, there would probably be an additional assistant headteacher, possibly with a full teaching timetable, additional senior teachers, as well as, of course, additional classteachers.

Secondary schools

Secondary schools have six levels of post (unless they are very small): headteacher, depute headteacher, assistant headteacher, principal teacher, assistant principal teacher/senior teacher (same level) and teacher.

Each school has a headteacher and a depute headteacher. The number of posts at other levels varies with the size of the school.

As teachers move up the promoted post structure they will usually have additional non-contact time allocated for them to carry out management functions. The exact amount of time varies across schools, but a rough range is provided in the illustration below.

---

[1] Scheme of Salaries and Conditions of Service, SJNC/TSSE.

The following represents a typical arrangement for a school of around 880 pupils:

- 1 headteacher: usually non-teaching[1]

- 1 depute headteacher: usually non-teaching[1]

- 3 assistant headteachers: teaching for about 10-16 hours per week, depending on circumstances

- 14 -16 principal teachers (subject): teaching for about 19-22 hours per week

- 3 principal teachers of guidance: teaching for about 18-21 hours per week

- 1 principal teacher of learning support: teaching for about 18-21 hours per week

- 10-12 assistant principal teachers subject or guidance or senior teachers: teaching for about 20-22 hours per week

- 20-24 classteachers: teaching for 22-23 hours per week.

It is stressed that the above is illustrative. The patterns will vary somewhat in different schools.

Number of teaching posts

Numbers (FTE) of teachers in publicly funded primary and secondary schools as at September 1997. Note, numbers may not add to totals given due to rounding of both FTEs and percentages.

	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	FTE	% of total	FTE	% of total
Headteacher	2,277	10.3	394	1.6
Depute Headteacher	935	4.2	389	1.6
Assistant Headteacher	597	2.7	1,021	4.3
Principal Teacher	N/A	N/A	7,089	29.7
Assistant Principal Teacher	N/A	N/A	3,018	12.6
Senior Teacher	3,201	14.4	1,773	7.4
Classteacher	15,176	68.4	10,193	42.7
Total	22,186	100.0	23,875	100.0

Source: Scottish Office Education Statistics Annual Review 3, 1998 edition.

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[1] Headteachers and depute headteachers sometimes teach a class (say 2-3 hours per week).

Appendix 6: Levels of administrative support in schools

The survey of education authorities asked for information on the full-time equivalent number of administrative staff in schools. To enable direct comparisons among authorities, they were asked to state the level of administrative support which their scheme of DSM would allocate to schools of a range of set pupil rolls. Nevertheless, comparisons between levels of support provided by different authorities need to be made with care, bearing in mind the following points:

• the number of administrative staff in the education headquarters may influence the number and type of administrative staff required by schools

• the availability and use of ICT, both in schools and education authorities, impacts on the way administration is handled and the amount of staff needed to do the work

• some schools have other staff who complement the role of administrative staff. These include auxiliary staff who may provide general (administrative and classroom) support. For many auxiliaries, this may be in addition to their work assisting pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools

• the calculation of full-time equivalent may differ slightly from authority to authority.

A total of 25 education authorities responded to the survey. Not every chart has 25 authorities represented, because a large urban authority may not have any primary schools with as few as 40 pupils, and a rural authority may have no primary schools with 440.
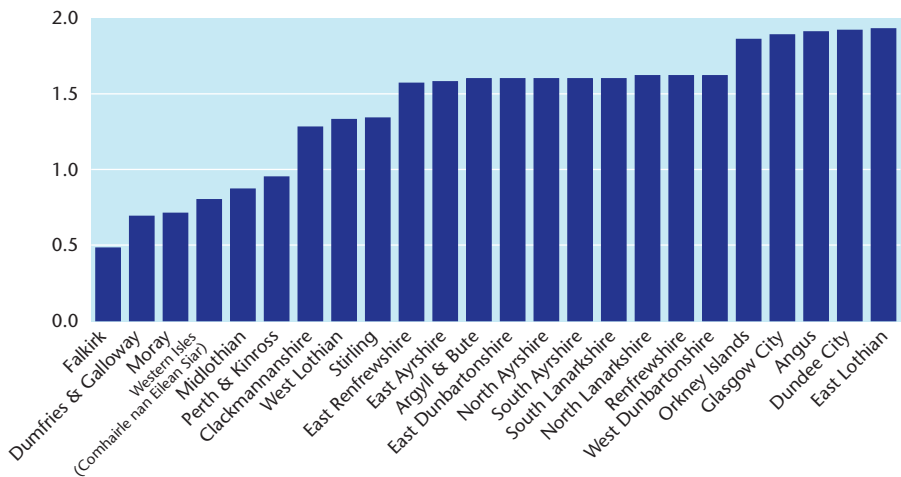
Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a primary school with 40 pupils
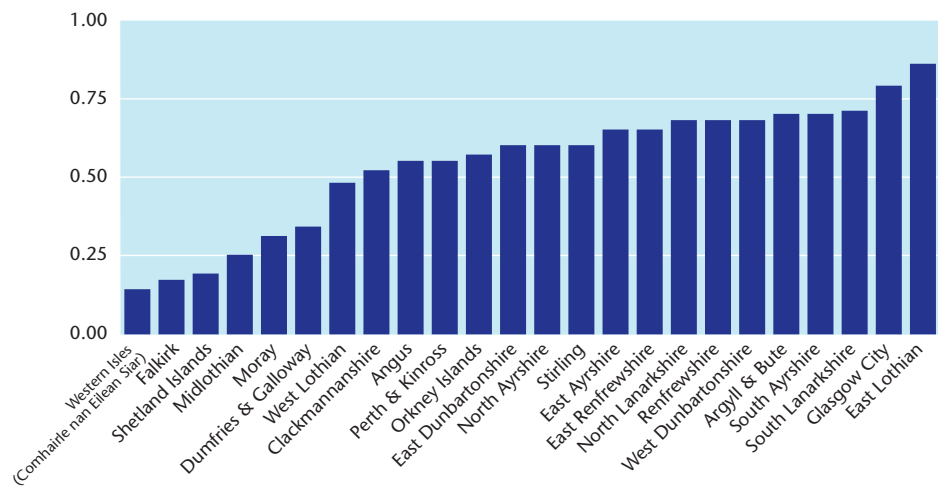
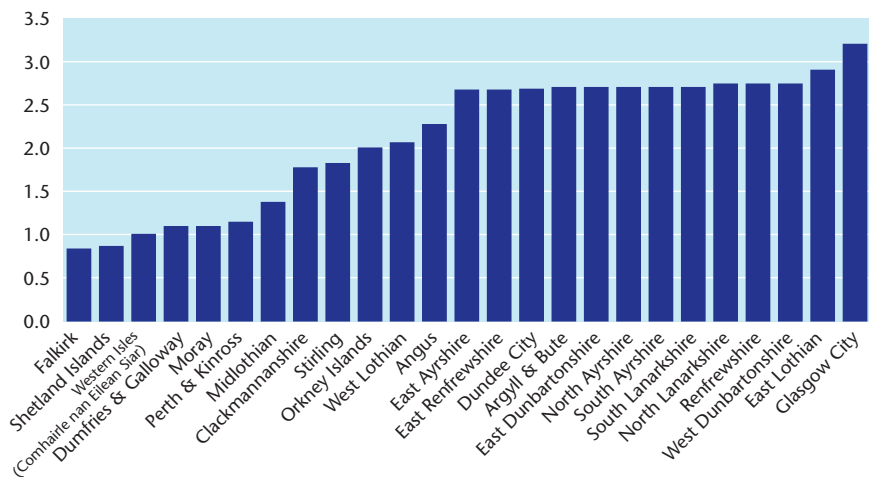## Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a primary school with 110 pupils
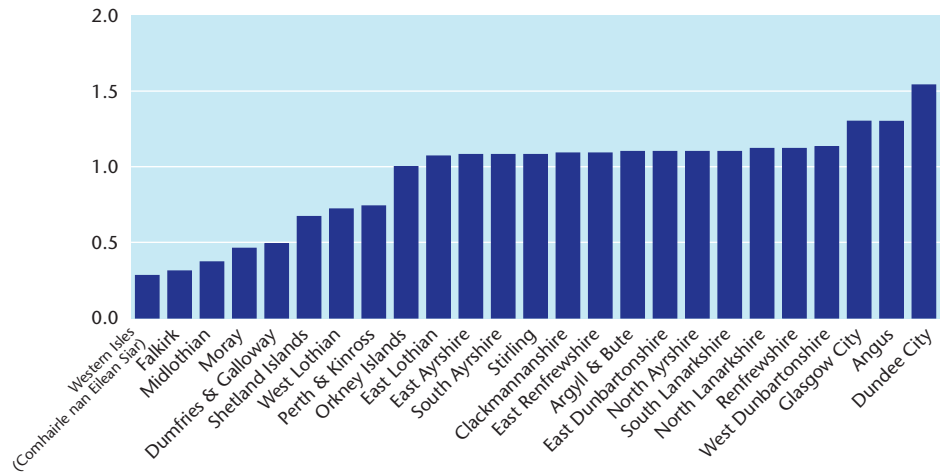
Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a primary school with 220 pupils
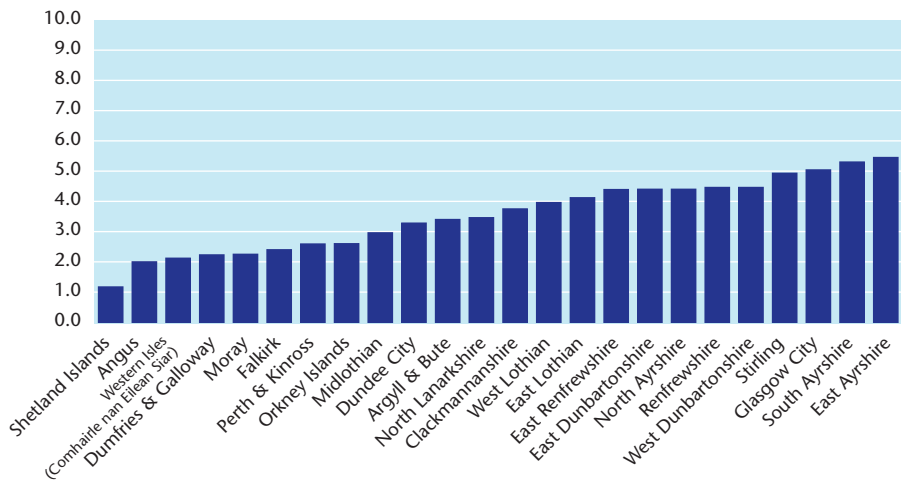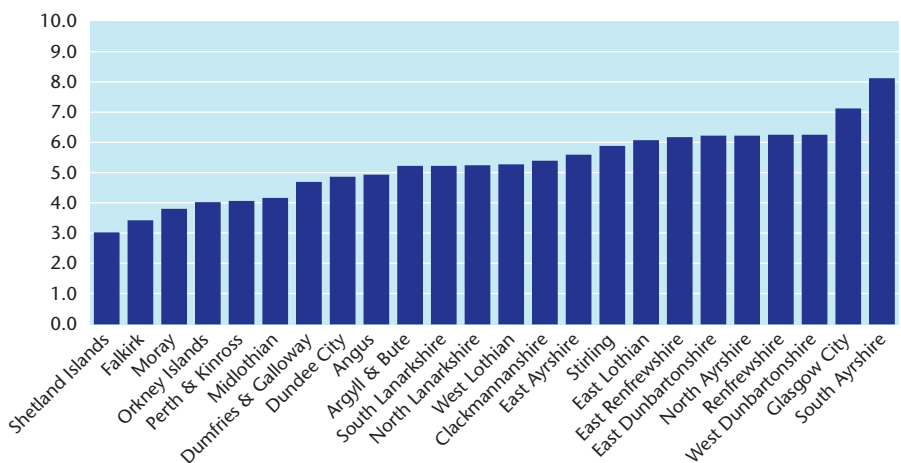

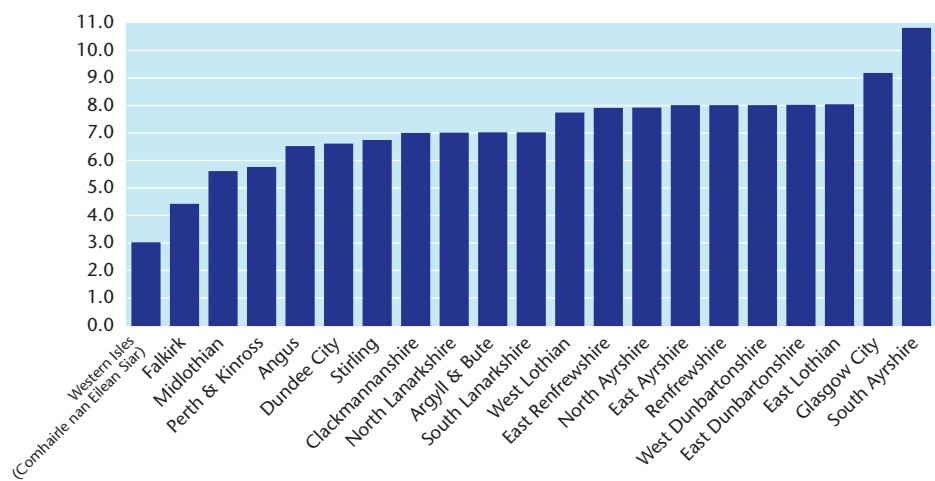## Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a primary school with 440 pupils

Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a secondary school with 440 pupils

Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a secondary school with 880 pupils

Number of FTE administrative staff allocated to a secondary school with 1,320 pupils

Checklist for schools

The report covers a range of issues for schools to consider in their handling of administration. The checklist below may assist schools to review how they handle their administrative work and where improvements may be possible.

The checklist is based around certain key steps (exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: The steps involved in improving administration arrangements

Reviewing administration arrangements can be done using a series of steps.
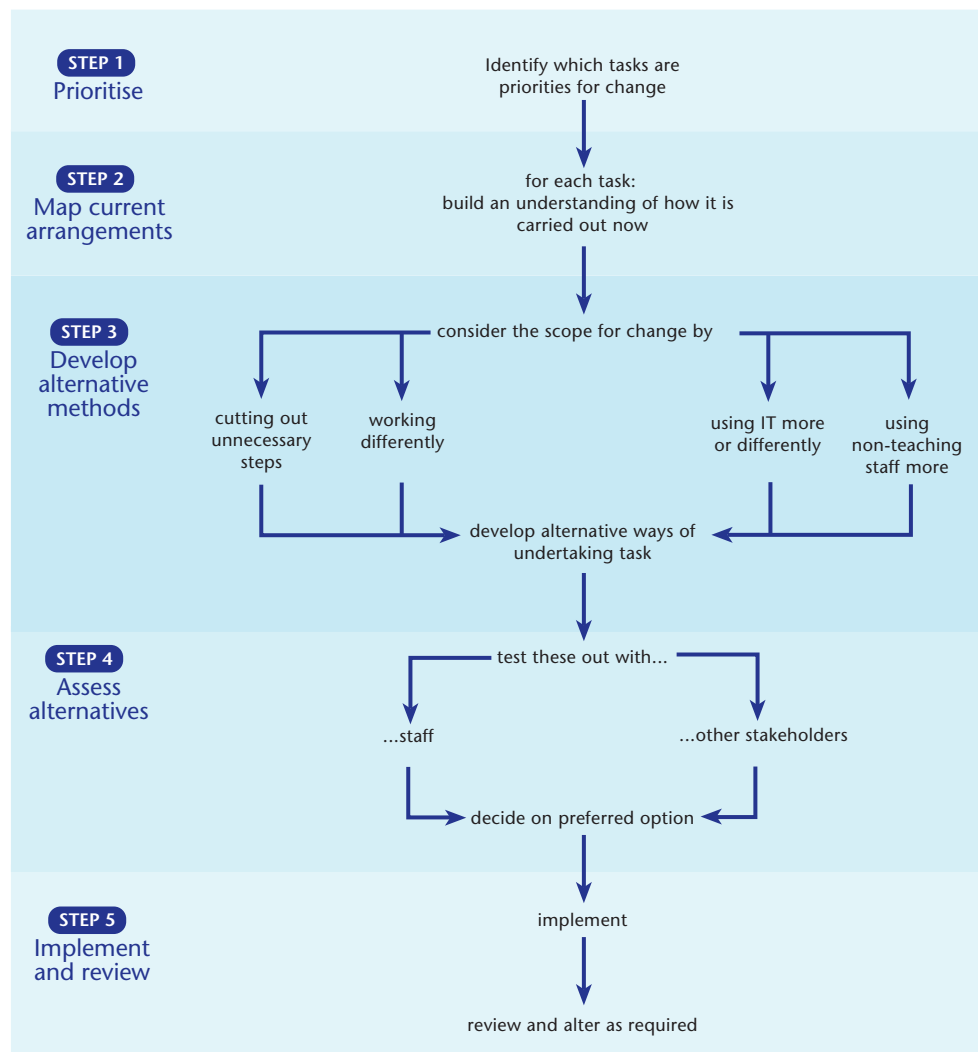
Source: Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

The steps can apply to a wholesale review of administration, or to individual tasks. For large changes it will take longer to go through these steps, to consult with parents and so on. For smaller tasks, it may be possible to go through the steps above in the space of only an hour or so.

Step One - Identify and prioritise tasks for improvement

The aim of this step is to understand where change is most needed. One way of prioritising is to look at two factors. Firstly, where is changed needed most – what is taking most time and where is there most dissatisfaction about how tasks are carried out currently? Secondly, what scope is there for the school to influence how tasks are carried out?

For some tasks, improvements may be possible by altering procedures within the school, eg in the preparation of pupils' reports; in others, improvements may lie more with the actions of others – eg improving arrangements for building maintenance may rest more with the authority. Tasks can then be prioritised as quick wins, major wins, no actions, or outwith school actions (exhibit 2):

Exhibit 2: Matrix for prioritising effort

Schools should concentrate effort on quick wins and major wins.

Quick wins	Major wins
Low time/dissatisfaction and high scope for school to take action	High time/dissatisfaction and high scope for school to take action
No actions	Outwith school actions
Low time/dissatisfaction and low scope for school to take action	High time/dissatisfaction and low scope for school to take action

Source: Accounts Commission and HM Inspectors of Schools.

The actions that a school may consider taking for each of these priority groups are outlined below.

Quick wins

Take easy actions to improve minor areas. Examples that may come under this heading include:

• arrangements for handling cash within the school

• arrangements for booking transport for trips out of school.

Major wins

These are the larger areas which will release time and which should carry top priority. Examples which may in some schools fall under this heading are:

• arrangements for completing and collating pupil reports

• forward planning.

No actions

These are low priority – no action required by school.

Outwith school actions

These are areas which are problematic but where the school may not take independent action to improve matters. Examples which may in some areas fall under this heading are:

- building maintenance arrangements

- links to other agencies.

You may find help in prioritising by:
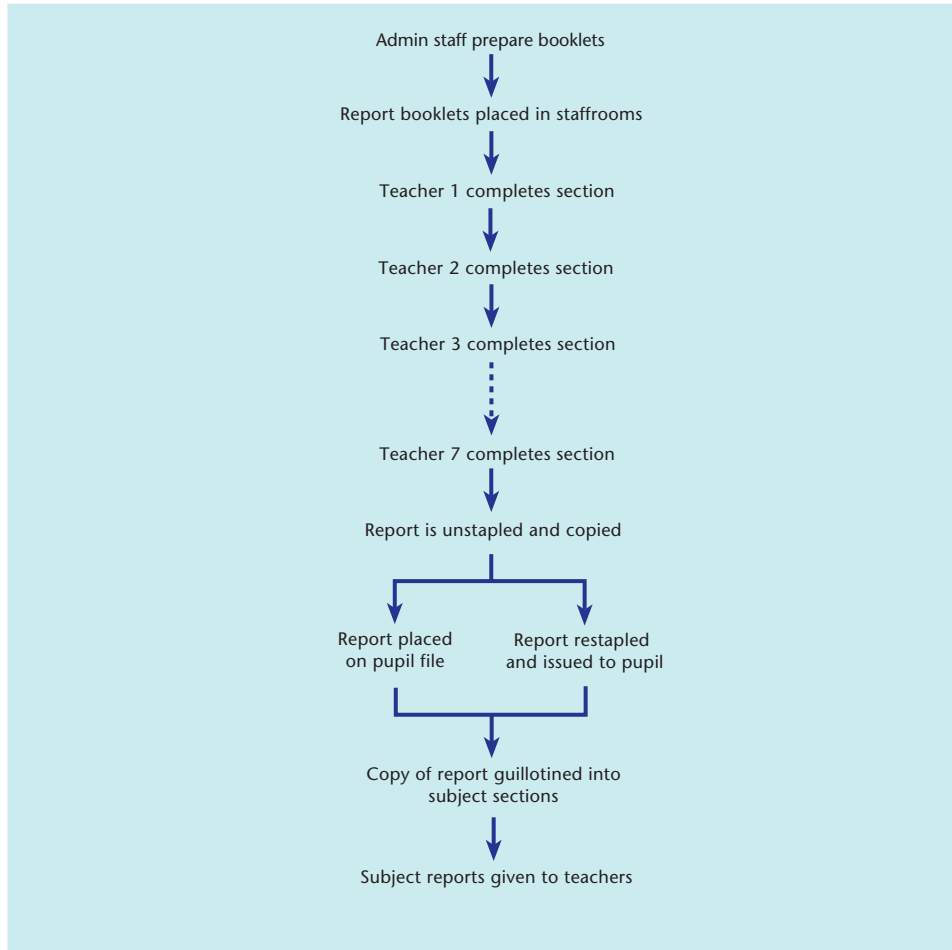
- **asking staff** about

    - tasks they spend most time on

    - tasks they think can be done in different ways.

- **considering**

    - your own views of what can be improved

    - parents' or pupils' views of administrative issues, where relevant. For example, parents may have expressed views about aspects of pupils' reports.

Step Two - Map current arrangements

The aim of this step is to understand how the work is currently undertaken. Perhaps the easiest way of doing this is to map the steps. An example relating to the production of pupils' reports is shown below (exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3: A simple process map of how pupils' reports could be completed

The process contains 14 separate steps, of which 12 are consecutive.

Admin staff prepare booklets

↓

Report booklets placed in staffrooms

↓

Teacher 1 completes section

↓

Teacher 2 completes section

↓

Teacher 3 completes section

⋮

Teacher 7 completes section

↓

Report is unstapled and copied

↓

Report placed on pupil file   Report restapled and issued to pupil

↓

Copy of report guillotined into subject sections

↓

Subject reports given to teachers

Mapping a process allows staff to look at it objectively and to consider scope for changing the way it is done. Questions can then be asked about whether the current way of working can be streamlined.

Step Three - Develop alternative methods

The purpose of this step is to develop options – how could this task be done differently? The key point here is that there will always be options – rarely is the first one the best one. So, the task is to develop options – by brainstorming perhaps. The people best placed to review how tasks are done are those involved in it, together with at least one or two pairs of fresh eyes – people who can look at the current arrangements objectively and challenge them constructively. When developing other options, the questions below may be helpful:

- what is needed to do the job?

   - what professional educational knowledge is essential in this task?

   - what skills, knowledge or experience are required for this task?

   - who could undertake the work?

- what do the users need?

   - what do users require of this task?

   - what do pupils, parents, outside agencies need?

   - what are the quality requirements of the users?

- what can be changed?

   - can we cut out any steps in the process?

   - can we combine any steps in the process?

   - can we use existing technology better?

   - can we standardise any of the steps?

Thinking through these questions will lead to a range of possible ways of undertaking the task. In the hypothetical example above, staff might have come up with two possibilities (exhibits 4 and 5).

This option saves administrative staff time and means that teachers no longer have to wait to complete reports – they can work on the same pupils' reports at the same time.
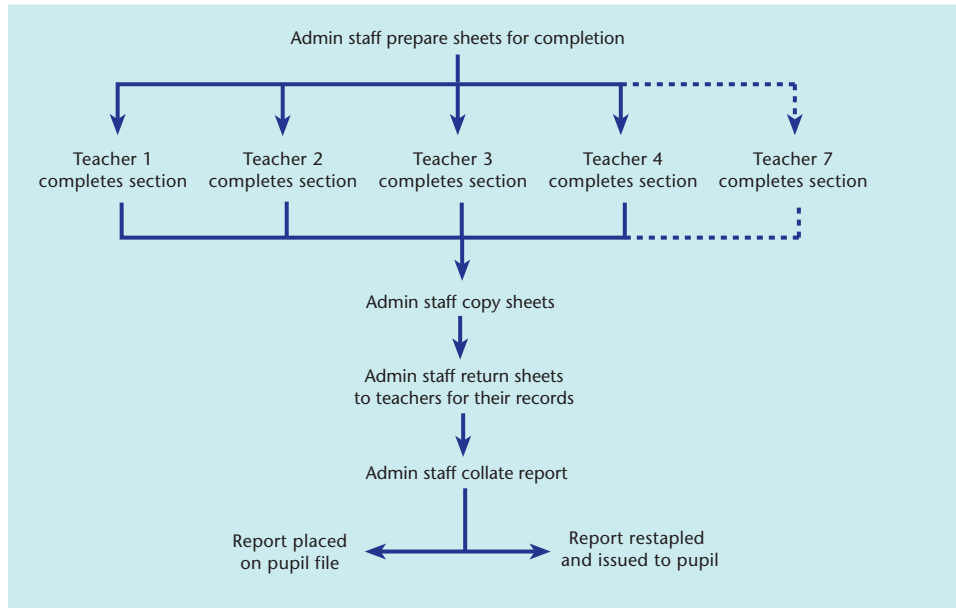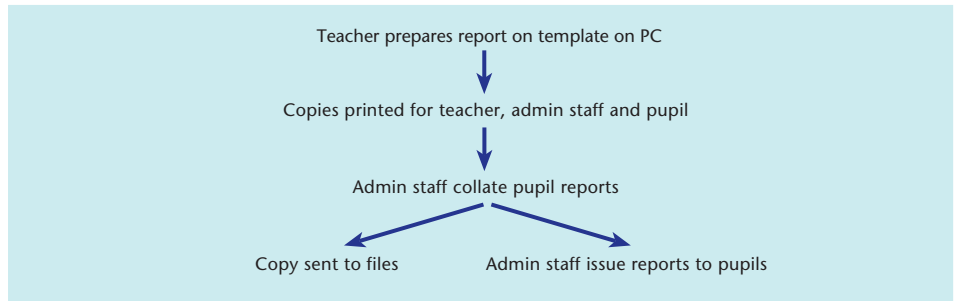
This cuts down on steps involved, saving substantially on administrative staff time, and makes reports easier to read for parents.

In this example, the school could make the change to the first option above. This would save support staff time and would make it easier for classteachers to complete their input. In the longer term, a move to the second option would be possible where suitable ICT resources were available. The second option would ease completion of the task and save more time.

The next step is to assess the possible changes. If the thinking so far has not involved the people affected by the possible changes, then the next step should also include consulting them.

Step Four - Assess the alternatives

This purpose of this step is to think through the different options – what will be the advantages and the disadvantages of the options? An important part of this stage is to consult the people who will be affected by the changes that are proposed, if this has not already been done.

Why consult? There are several reasons. The people involved may well have good ideas that could make the work quicker or easier; the idea of change is communicated – giving people time to get used to it; support for change can be built by the very fact that people know that the decision will take into account their views. In short, consultation means that you are more likely not only to go forward, but also go in the right direction, and that people affected are more likely to accept and support it.

Different people will need to be consulted depending on what the task is. For example:

•   changes to a way in which a pupil report is put together that involves a changed format should be subject to consultation with parents, teachers and possibly pupils

•   changes to the way in which external agencies are contacted should be subject to consultation with staff from these agencies.

One last point in this section: the choice of which option to take forward should take account of the need to ensure that changes in administration do lead to improvements in teaching and learning. Above all else, which option will have the best effect on teaching and learning in the school?

Step Five - Implement and review

The aim of this step is to ensure that the changes required are implemented as intended. One way of thinking about what is required for successful implementation is the mnemonic, the 4Cs[1]. These are:

<u>C</u>larity – are all the people affected – teachers, support staff, parents, others – clear about what the changes are and clear about their new roles?

<u>C</u>ommunication – has there been communication about the change, why it has come about, the forecast benefits and so on? Has there been communication with **all** the people affected by the change? Has it been effective?

<u>C</u>ompetence – are the people affected able to make the changes? For example, changes involving increased use of ICT will mean training; changes involving staff dealing with other departments for the first time will mean that they will need familiarisation with new requirements and activities.

<u>C</u>ommitment – all of the above are essential for people to be committed to the change. Without their commitment, making a successful change will be difficult.

Finally, review. Check to see if the changes have indeed brought about the advantages that you expected. For example, one school found that a change to using comment banks in collating pupil reports took much longer than anticipated to develop and to maintain. Staff were not happy with the comments, feeling they would lead to a decline in the quality of the pupil reports, so about five teacher days were spent in altering the comments, and this was felt to be required year-on-year. This cost in time had not been anticipated and, had it been appreciated at the outset, might have influenced the initial decision to use a comment bank at all. So, review and change if necessary.

And lastly, if it works, tell others. Sharing ideas that ease administration helps other schools – and they might have ideas which help you.

---

[1] Adapted from the 4Cs, developed by the Eglinton Management Centre.

Checklist for education authorities

Authorities can take action to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which administration is handled in their schools. The checklist below includes some suggestions and some questions that may be of value to authorities reviewing their work in this area, possibly as part of a best value service review.

Authorities can help to improve administration by working at three different levels:

- **encouraging schools** – to take action and to share best practice

- **reviewing the education authority's practices** – for supporting administration in schools; the balance between school-based and centralised support and so on; the levels of flexibility possible under DSM arrangements; and considering future opportunities for improving administrative support to schools, through, for example, economies of scale arising from groupings of schools, provision of specialist staff, recruitment of senior administrative staff

- **facilitating work with other departments and agencies** – improving arrangements involving other council departments and other agencies, working with these partner organisations to reduce the administrative load.

We look at each of these levels in turn below.

Encouraging schools

The role here is to encourage schools to review their own arrangements for improving administration. Questions the authority may want to consider in assessing their role in this include:

- how can the authority encourage schools to review administration?

- how can the authority ensure that good practice is shared between schools?

Reviewing the education authority's practices

The role here is to review the way in which the authority supports administration in its schools, both directly by allocating staff, and indirectly, by staff based centrally.

There are some questions that authorities may wish to consider in assessing their role.

Levels of administrative and ICT support

- are the levels of support based within schools sufficient to free teaching staff from substantial unnecessary involvement in administration? In particular, are the levels of support available to small primary schools sufficient?

- how will classroom assistants be used? How should their job descriptions be framed to allow flexibility of assistance in the school?

- are administrative staff in schools graded at the right level? Are current levels of knowledge and skills sufficient to be able to take on the administrative work done currently by, say, a headteacher?

- what specialist ICT support is available to schools?

- what training is available to support increased use of ICT for administration? How does this link to training for staff under the NGfL project?

- what is the level of demand for help-desk support and how will it increase?

- where might ICT support be located – school, cluster or authority level? What are the costs and benefits of these options?

- who should provide ICT support – education department, other council department, external provider? What are the costs and benefits of these options?

- does the current balance between centrally located staff and staff in schools offer the best balance between cost of provision and ready availability?

- does the current balance between staff located at the secondary school within a cluster and staff based in the associated primaries offer the best balance between cost of provision and ready availability?

Current DSM arrangements

- do the virement limits of current DSM arrangements unduly constrain opportunities for headteachers to improve the cost-effectiveness of administration arrangements?

- do current DSM arrangements unduly constrain flexibility available to headteachers for targeting resources to improve the quality of teaching, learning and attainment?

Utilisation of existing staff

- are skills of existing staff being used to the fullest extent possible? Could training and development allow better utilisation of staff? What would be the costs and benefits of increased development?

Future options

There may be a number of additional areas which offer improvements in the cost-effectiveness of handling administration. Developments in some of these areas offer possible changes in the effectiveness of teaching and learning:

- economies of scale arising from groupings of schools – or having schools with more than one campus

- the provision of specialist services on an authority-wide basis – at HQ, clusters or at individual schools

- the appointment of senior administrative staff to free-up senior management time within schools.

Facilitating work with other departments and agencies

The role of the authority here is to smooth the interfaces between the schools, council departments and other agencies. For example, one authority works to handle as many information requests as it can in-house, without recourse to the schools. Another example is in building maintenance – many headteachers expressed dissatisfaction with the arrangements for maintenance and the time that they had to spend on it. This is an area that may be addressed by the education authority developing new ways of working with the authority's building maintenance operations staff.

Some questions which may help the authority to assess its role in facilitating joint working arrangements are:

• where are joint arrangements working well and where could improvements be made?

• how best can the authority work with, or influence, other council departments or external agencies to improve the administrative aspects of joint working?

• where can authorities 'intercept' information requirements and deal with them centrally rather than each school having to respond individually?

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