

Southwark Schools' Human Resources News Bulletin

25 September 2026

Contents

Terms and Conditions.....	3
NJC Terms and Conditions – Support Staff.....	3
Back Pay for Employees Receiving Universal Credit	3
What Schools Should Do.....	4
Back Pay for Employees Who Have Left Employment Since 1 April 2026	4
Teaching Terms and Conditions	5
School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2026.....	5
School Teachers Pay Scales	5
Link for existing Schools HR subscribers:	6
Recruitment Advertising Update – Guardian Jobs	7
Apply for Qualified Teacher Status in England service (AQTS).....	9
What is AQTS?.....	9
Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Changes for Overseas-Trained Teachers	9
What Schools Need to Know.....	9
Alternative Routes into Teaching	10
HR Policies and Procedures	11
DfE guidance.....	11
New and Updated Documents.....	11

Terms and Conditions

NJC Terms and Conditions – Support Staff

The NJC pay award covering the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027 has been agreed. The new pay rates reflect an increase of 3.3% per annum.

Schools will need to implement the new pay rates with effect from 1 April 2026.

Back Pay for Employees Receiving Universal Credit

As employees will be receiving a payment covering several months of back pay, we are aware that employees in receipt of **Universal Credit (UC)** may request that this is paid over several months rather than as a single payment.

However, a one-off back-pay payment may temporarily increase an employee's earnings in the month in which it is paid. The Universal Credit system may treat this as an increase in normal earnings rather than recognising it as a one-off backdated payment.

This could result in a reduction in the amount of Universal Credit an employee receives in the following assessment period. In some circumstances, the additional payment could result in an employee receiving no Universal Credit for that period.

Back pay **cannot be staggered** in order to avoid or reduce the impact on employees receiving Universal Credit.

There is currently no national guidance advising employers to stagger back-payments for this purpose. Given the individual circumstances of Universal Credit claimants, the impact will vary from person to person and it is not possible to provide national guidance on how an employer should manage an individual's Universal Credit claim.

The advice currently being provided to employers is:

"Universal Credit is such a very specific issue that applies in different ways to different people, it is not possible for us to issue any national guidance. Employers should advise employees affected by this issue to speak to their Universal Credit Work Coach via their online account or call the Universal Credit Helpline on 0800 328 5644."

What Schools Should Do

Schools should make employees aware of the potential impact that a backdated pay award may have on their Universal Credit entitlement, particularly where they receive Universal Credit as part of their household income.

Employees who are concerned about the impact of the back-pay payment on their individual circumstances should be advised to:

1. Contact their Universal Credit Work Coach through their online Universal Credit account; or
2. Contact the Universal Credit Helpline on 0800 328 5644.

Schools should avoid providing individual advice on how an employee's Universal Credit entitlement may be affected, as this will depend on their personal circumstances and assessment period.

We appreciate that this may cause concern for some employees. However, the appropriate advice is for individuals affected to seek guidance directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding their own circumstances.

Thank you for your continued support in ensuring that affected employees are made aware of this issue.

Back Pay for Employees Who Have Left Employment Since 1 April 2026

Where requested by a former employee, employers should pay any salary arrears due for the period between 1 April 2026 and the employee's final day of employment.

When salary arrears are paid to former employees who were members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), the employer must inform its local LGPS fund. Employers will need to amend the employee's CARE pay and final pay figures (where the former employee has pre-April 2014 LGPS membership and/or underpin protection) accordingly.

Please refer to the employer resources section of www.lgpsregs.org for further information, including FAQs on backdated pay awards.

Teaching Terms and Conditions

School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2026

Timeline for draft School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) 2026 to become final (dates may be estimates)

- **16 October 2026** - Any agreed changes made and STPCD 2025 Teachers Pay Order laid in Parliament
- **6 November 2026** - 21 day praying period ends (this allowed MPs to raise any objections on the Teachers' Pay Order)

School Teachers Pay Scales

The Government has accepted the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) recommendations for both 2026/27 and 2027/28.

From **1 September 2026**, all teachers' and leaders' pay points and allowances will increase by **3.5%**, except for the lowest unqualified teacher pay point (**UT1**), which will increase by **5%**.

The Government has also accepted the STRB's recommendation for a further **3% increase** to all teachers' and leaders' pay points and allowances from **1 September 2027**, based on the 2026/27 pay values.

Schools should now make arrangements to implement the 2026/27 award, including obtaining the necessary approval from their Governing Board where required. However, schools are advised not to update their Pay Policy at this stage, as a revised School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) has not yet been finalised. Further guidance will be issued once the final STPCD is published.

Schools should also take these confirmed awards into account when undertaking financial planning and budget forecasting.

Link for existing Schools HR subscribers:

[Pay & Conditions | Southwark Schools](#)

We have also updated the model Teacher Pay Policy Statement.

Recruitment Advertising Update – Guardian Jobs

We would like to inform schools that **Southwark will no longer be working with Guardian Jobs** following the closure of the service in September 2026.

Updated job advert pricing:

Apply for Qualified Teacher Status in England service (AQTS)

What is AQTS?

The AQTS in England service allows some highly qualified overseas-trained teachers to apply for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in England, without further training or assessment.

The robust eligibility criteria can be found in [AQTS online guidance](#).

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Changes for Overseas-Trained Teachers

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced changes to the eligibility criteria for the **Apply for Qualified Teacher Status (AQTS) service**, effective from 9 September 2026.

Under the revised arrangements, countries eligible for the AQTS route must have an active national teaching regulator, and the majority of applicants must be able to provide references that meet the DfE's published requirements. The changes are intended to strengthen the verification of applicants' professional standing and qualifications, helping to ensure that overseas-trained teachers awarded QTS possess the skills and experience required to teach in schools in England.

As a result of the updated eligibility requirements, teachers trained in Ghana, India and Nigeria will no longer be eligible to apply for QTS through the AQTS service.

What Schools Need to Know

Schools involved in the recruitment of overseas-trained teachers should be aware of these changes and consider the implications for future recruitment plans. The revised criteria may affect candidates who were previously eligible to apply for QTS through the AQTS route.

Further information, including detailed guidance and frequently asked questions, is available on the DfE website:

[Overseas-trained teachers: apply for qualified teacher status \(QTS\) in England](#)

Schools are encouraged to review the guidance when considering applications from overseas-trained teachers and to ensure that recruitment processes reflect the updated eligibility requirements.

Alternative Routes into Teaching

Schools should note that alternative routes into teaching remain available for overseas-trained teachers who are not eligible for the AQTS route. These include Initial Teacher Training (ITT), International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS) and the Assessment Only Route.

Further information on these pathways can be found on the Get Into Teaching website:

[Train to Teach in England as a Non-UK Citizen](#)

Schools may wish to signpost prospective candidates to this guidance when discussing alternative routes to achieving qualified teacher status in England.

HR Policies and Procedures

We are pleased to share a number of new and updated Schools HR policies and supporting guidance documents.

DfE guidance

The DfE published the Bullying and Harassment guidance (July 2026):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying-and-harassment-of-school-staff>

This has been taken into consideration in the development of these policies and procedures to ensure they reflect current guidance and support schools in creating safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces.

New and Updated Documents

1. Schools HR Model Policy – Grievance

The revised Grievance Policy is now accompanied by a **Schools HR Resolution Toolkit**, which has been developed to support schools in managing and resolving workplace concerns at the earliest opportunity. The toolkit provides practical guidance to help promote informal resolution where appropriate.

2. Respect at Work Model Statement

The previous Respect at Work Policy has been updated and simplified into a **Model Statement**. This statement underpins the Grievance Policy and Procedure, as well as other relevant employment policies, and reinforces the school's commitment to maintaining a respectful and inclusive working environment.

New Policy for October 2026

In anticipation of legislative changes coming into effect in **October 2026**, we have developed a new policy:

3. Schools HR Model Policy – Third Party Harassment, Abuse and Inappropriate Behaviour

This policy is intended to support schools in responding to inappropriate behaviour, harassment or abuse from third parties, including parents, carers, visitors and members of the public. It should be implemented alongside the school's Complaints Policy.

Updated Policy

4. Schools HR Model Policy – Sexual Harassment

The Sexual Harassment Policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect current legal requirements and good practice.

Supporting Guidance

5. Choosing the Right Policy Guidance

To support schools in navigating these policies, we have also attached the **Choosing the Right Policy** document. As there is some overlap between the various procedures, this guidance is designed to help schools determine the most appropriate policy to follow in different circumstances.

To access these documents and supporting resources, we have created a new [Resolving Workplace Issues, including Grievances | Southwark Schools](#) section on the Schools HR website:

Please note: this section is available to Southwark Schools HR subscribers only.

If you have any questions regarding the implementation of these policies, please contact the Schools HR Team.