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“FILE ON 4”

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Producer: Matt Precey

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DEITH: It's 8 o'clock. The end of a long day? Or have you got the radio on while you plough through marking that will take hours yet? The Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, doesn't want it to be like that.

EXTRACT FROM ARCHIVE

MORGAN: The more I hear of teachers working late into the night, marking books, planning lessons, I marvel at their dedication; but I also think, there must be a better way. I don't want my child to be taught by someone too tired, too stressed and too anxious to do the job well.

DEITH: And she's promised to help. But at the same time, teachers are under surveillance like never before. Tonight we reveal exclusive evidence school is making teachers sick. Are we pushing them too far?

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY OF BELL RINGING, CHILDREN CHATTERING

DEITH: It's bright and early and fifteen hundred children and a hundred and eight teachers are pouring into Huntington School in York. This is a comprehensive for 11 to 18 year olds. It reminds me a bit of my old school in the eighties, mostly because the buildings are a little dated, compared to the shiny academies we see these days. But this is a popular school, rated Good by Ofsted.

ACTUALITY WITH PHOTOCOPIER

TOMSETT: There we go, get some stuff out, we'll get the day going. We'll go and make a cup of coffee any second now.

DEITH: Inside, head teacher, John Tomsett, is at the photocopier, ahead of a day of interviews for a new Head of Chemistry. But the number of applicants was a shock.

TOMSETT: We're going to speak to three; we only had four apply for the job. We've put a golden hello, a £5,000 golden hello. In the past I've had well into double figures, into the twenties, so four candidates, only four applications was really disappointing. Attracting people to take responsibility jobs is becoming more difficult.

ACTUALITY AT TEAM MEETING

DEITH: But chat with some of the staff at Huntington and they'll tell you every teaching job comes with a lot more responsibility these days. Here's Sam Currie, who's an English teacher, and Carl Ellwell, Head of Media Studies.

CURRIE: The workload has gone up. You've certainly got to do, you know, two to three hours a night planning, preparation, marking. And then, you know, anything between half a day at the weekend or a day at the weekend.

ELLWELL: It is so difficult. It can be completely rewarding and absolutely amazing but, you know, you're going to have people leave this job, leave this profession, who are really good teachers unless we start realising the workloads that we're under, because it's not healthy.

DEITH: Huntington's teachers get stuck into lessons. But around the country, record numbers are leaving the profession. The Department for Education keeps a record of what it calls teacher 'wastage' and it's at its highest for a decade. Four thousand teachers leaving every month – that's 1 in 12. More teachers are retiring early and over the last four years, the number of teachers heading out the door has risen by a quarter, at the same time as a fall in people choosing to train. The Government must be worried, because it's commissioned the University of Nottingham to investigate over the next three years. Professor Christopher Day is from the School of Education.

DAY: The local authorities don't seem to know who is leaving. The Government doesn't seem to have the figures to differentiate between retirement and other reasons. And so what we're being asked to do by the Government is to work through the schools, teachers associations and head teachers associations and unions to seek out those people who have left the profession and to find out why it is they've left.

ACTUALITY OF BELL RINGING

DEITH: At Huntington School in York, head teacher John Tomsett has finished his day of interviews. Has he found his new Head of Chemistry?

TOMSETT: We haven't made an appointment today. We had some good applicants today, but I'm looking for something quite special and we just didn't quite make an appointment. So tomorrow the advert will be going out again, another £1,700 to advertise nationally for the post.

DEITH: If you're struggling to recruit, do you worry for the wider profession?

TOMSETT: I do and I think there are certain real worries about recruiting for certain subjects. Recruiting maths teachers is really hard, and I think it's one of the biggest challenges of the profession at the moment.

DEITH: John Tomsett fears some good teachers just don't want the stress of being a head of department. But, more worryingly, thousands of teachers are thinking they don't want the stress of teaching, full stop. The NASUWT union has given us an exclusive early look at an online survey of three and a half thousand teachers ahead of its Easter conference. General Secretary Chris Keates told me 68% have seriously considered quitting in the last year.

KEATES: What it's doing to teachers health and what measures they're having to take are actually quite frightening. We've got 48% of teachers, so that's nearly half of teachers, are saying they've seen a doctor in the last twelve months as a result of work-related physical or mental health problems. We've got over a third, 37%, have to take medication. We've got 13% reporting that they've had to have professional counselling, and I think, quite frighteningly, we have 2% of teachers reporting that they have resorted to self-harm as a result of the mental pressure and stress that they're under. 5% report that they've been admitted to hospital with health issues related to their work.

KIRSTY: They took one look at me and sent me straight to hospital, thinking I might have meningitis, and after about three or four days, they said they thought it was the physical manifestation of stress.

DEITH: That's Kirsty, who was teaching at a school in Yorkshire. We've re-voiced her words and we can't tell you her name or the name of the school for two reasons. One is Kirsty doesn't want her new school to know she's suffered from stress; the second is she signed a gagging clause, preventing her talking about why she left the last school. Both of which tell us something about the attitude to stress in the teaching profession. Kirsty was teaching at a secondary academy, rated Outstanding. But having a reputation as a brilliant school brought its own pressures.

KIRSTY: They just kept saying to us, ‘We have to keep our Outstanding. If we lose it we wouldn’t have the funding to keep teachers in a job, we wouldn’t have the facilities we’ve got.’ So there’d be things like, you know, constantly reporting back to the senior team on paper. You know, senior teams mock inspecting the whole school on a regular basis, so you’d have to be on show for a week and those were quite regular. They’d want to see tons of green pen in books, because to them that was evidence that learning and feedback had taken place. And that was a real, real massive drain and really easy to get behind with. But what they were asking us to do just isn’t sustainable forever.

DEITH: Kirsty was working fourteen hours a day, six days a week. She says she was crying seven days a week and rowing with her partner. And she was falling behind on her marking.

KIRSTY: It was presented to me that I wasn’t capable of fulfilling the role, not that their expectations were unreasonable or unsustainable, and I was just exhausted beyond all measure. I’d never experienced tiredness like it. One Sunday I had a rash all over my legs. I was packed off to hospital for lots and lots of tests. They said I was just that tired and washed out and burnt out that actually my body had just given up on me.

DEITH: What did you make of that?

KIRSTY: The GP that I’d seen about it, my first sick note, he wanted to write ‘stress’ and I didn’t want him to. I said, ‘Please don’t write stress on there,’ and he wrote, ‘fatigue.’ And I said, “Please don’t write stress, because I think it will cause me a world of problems.”

DEITH: While she was still on sick leave, Kirsty was called in to a meeting with the Head. She was told there were concerns about her competence. The options on the table were, 1) competency proceedings – what was called a support programme, where she would face weekly observations and, if she didn’t progress in nine weeks, they would terminate her contract. 2) misconduct - the late marking was breach of contract and that would equal the end of her career.

KIRSTY: And the third option was to go – “And you go now, we’ll give you a good reference. Get out of our hair and, you know, we’ll cut all ties now.” I can remember exactly what was said , “You can make all of this go away, you can have some money in your back pocket and be on your way.” And I think the thing is, at that time, because I was so unwell, the phrase ‘make all of this go away’ was very appealing, it was very appealing. I wasn’t allowed to tell anybody. I wasn’t allowed to disclose that I was leaving on an arrangement.

DEITH: What about saying that you were leaving because you found the job too stressful? Were you allowed to do that?

KIRSTY: No.

DEITH: It took time for Kirsty to recover and be able to face teaching again. She’s got a new job now, at another Outstanding academy. The culture couldn’t be more different. She still does a sixty hour week, but there’s support if she says she’s struggling. No one, not her colleagues, not those in officialdom, knows Kirsty was effectively forced to resign because she’d suffered stress. The Government will have a record of how long she was off sick, but not the reason why, because it doesn’t log every type of sick leave. And gagging clauses, or ‘compromise agreements’ like the one Kirsty signed, help keep it that way. So to get some reliable figures, we asked a company which sells teacher insurance to run some numbers for us. Absence Protection Limited insures 23,000 teachers in 1,800 schools, so a decent sized sample. Analyst Harry Cramer brought in his data and was able to give us an exclusive picture of the level of stress in schools on his books.

CRAMER: Well, with the exception of maternity, stress is the single biggest reason for days taken off by members of staff within education, which means among men, of course, it’s the single biggest reason. In actual fact, stress accounts for 12.7% of all days taken off by staff at any point. So colds, flus and so on only account for about 6.3%, so stress is doubly responsible for absence days in contrast to things like colds and viruses.

DEITH: At its worst, in 2011, the average time teachers had off with stress was nearly six weeks - a big chunk of the school year. While the proportion of staff who go off sick with stress is modest, about 3%, many schools are hit.

CRAMER: In 2014, we saw 55% of our client base actually making a claim. So well over half suffered from staff absence as a result of stress and have therefore made a claim on their policy. There are certainly areas far more susceptible to stress related absences. For example, some of the more urban areas of the South East and London are two of the biggest culprits. Teachers in the South East actually take an average of 29 days off when they take a stress-related absence. By contrast Wales or East of England only take around 11 days off.

DEITH: We wanted to discuss our data on stress with the Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan, and the problem of the record number leaving teaching. But she turned us down. The Department for Education sent us a statement which doesn't mention the number leaving, but does say this:

READER IN STUDIO: Teaching continues to be a hugely popular career with more teachers in England's classrooms than ever before. Record levels of top graduates are entering the profession and the teacher vacancy rate remains steady at just 1%. But we are not complacent. We are committed to supporting the profession to tackle the issue of unnecessary workload, which we know can lead to teacher stress.

DEITH: So we've discovered stress is making thousands of teachers ill. But what exactly is making them so stressed? Well, the Government got some very straight answers when it asked the profession to take part in a survey called The Workload Challenge. 44,000 teachers told Nicky Morgan exactly what they thought.

ACTUALITY WITH RESULTS

DEITH: And here are the results, published a few weeks ago. Top of the list of tasks teachers said were a burden - according to 82% of them - is lesson planning, assessment and reporting. Now many said these are not unnecessary tasks, they're very necessary, but it's the level of detail and bureaucracy that's wearing them down.

DEITH cont: For example, 53% of teachers complained about excessive, in-depth marking, up to 120 books a day, some schools demanding written feedback on all homework, even for children too young to understand it.

READER IN STUDIO: Marking every last shred of work with developmental and next step marking, checking that the children have responded to the marking, and marking that they have read my marking and so on, ad infinitum – Middle Leader, Primary.

DEITH: Half of teachers said pupil data is the problem. Recording it, inputting, monitoring and analysing it and a third of teachers say schools want overly-detailed lesson plans.

READER IN STUDIO: Weekly planning, with learning objectives and success criteria for every area for submission to head of year, due in Saturday 5 pm. Feedback given on Sunday evening with suggestions for even better, so I have no weekend. I find it demoralising and soul destroying that my class is outstanding and yet this gives the impression of lack of trust - Classroom Teacher, Primary.

DEITH: The Department for Education says it's doing everything it can to relieve unnecessary burdens and has a comprehensive programme of action. Promising shorter, streamlined Ofsted inspections and cash for professional development programmes. It's not quite what the teaching unions were looking for. Chris Keates is General Secretary of the NASUWT.

KEATES: I'm afraid the Government isn't listening at all. The Government is pretending that they're actually listening. All they came out with was a series of reviews, promises not even of jam tomorrow. So, in fact, they hadn't taken seriously what teachers have said and it isn't a case of teachers having professional development. How does professional development alleviate the extreme stress of working over sixty hours a week?

DEITH: What would you have liked Nicky Morgan to have done? I mean, she can't strip accountability out of teaching.

KEATES: Well, I have to say we would entirely agree, but we said to Nicky Morgan that she'd got two lots of things she could do. So there were lots of practical steps we gave to the Secretary of State and, quite frankly, she didn't adopt one of them, which can only lead to the conclusion that The Workload Challenge was more smoke and mirrors, rather than a serious attempt to tackle the enormous burdens that teachers are facing.

DEITH: Again, given The Workload Survey was the Government's baby, we wanted to discuss it with Education Secretary, Nicky Morgan. But we were told she was unavailable. One other thing The Workload Survey asked was, who is driving your workload? Half said it stems from the demand for accountability and the perceived pressures of Ofsted. The other half blamed senior and middle managers.

ACTUALITY IN CLASS

PUPIL: ... things like nuclear weapons ...

TEACHER: Yeah, go on.

PUPIL: Not the use of, like, weapons

DEITH: At Huntington School in York, head teacher John Tomsett says when people at the top are stressed out, it can be tempting to burden teachers with it.

TOMSETT: The pressure on schools largely comes from above and I think it's the job of the head teacher to soak that pressure up, right, because the worst thing you can do is transmit that pressure down through the institution in a way that is negative and unhealthy. And I don't always get it right, but the worst time I ever let it surface was a couple of years ago, maybe three years ago now, where we were due to have an inspection and I had a training day, and I opened the training day and I let the kind of fear and pressure bubble up and surface in front of the whole staff, and it probably took me about six months to get their confidence again.

DEITH: In The Workload Survey, one in three teachers said Ofsted's and Mock-steds created a significant amount of extra work. And in-house monitoring, so that's lesson observations and learning walks by heads, created a significant amount of anxiety.

TOM: My head of department used to call it the silent killer, because it would stalk you and sneak up on you without you really realising.

DEITH: Tom lives somewhere in South East England. Yes, Tom: we've changed his name and voiced his words, is another teacher who can only talk to us anonymously, because again, a gagging clause stops him from talking about his old school on this subject.

TOM: It started off as a sense of restlessness, sleeplessness, anxiety, till in the end, for want of a better word, you start to go mad. For a long time I was in denial, like, oh yeah, it's a stressful job, you're not a special case, have a look around, everyone else is the same, they're just coping with it better than you are.

DEITH: Tom is hunched in a brown hoodie, his arms wrapped round him. When the secondary school he taught at slipped and lost its Good rating, the next rung down was no longer Satisfactory. In 2012, Ofsted changed that to Requires Improvement in order to, quote, 'raise the bar'. Tom was told his teaching required improvement. For Tom it felt like he was only one observation away from losing his job.

TOM: The frequency of observations increased. They were sort of quite freely telling me that I could improve in all aspects because it wasn't just in the teaching, it was in everything else.

DEITH: Some parents might say, 'Well, you know, if you're a good teacher you've got nothing to fear in observations. Nothing against this guy but maybe he just wasn't cut out for teaching.'

TOM: Yes, I can understand from the outsider view. If I wasn't a teacher I would probably think exactly the same thing. But in the old days, it always seemed to be that it was like you were being observed in order to help you develop, it was always from a positive angle, it was always very constructive. It seems as though it became much more punitive. And I don't think that I was the only one that wasn't coping, because at one of the meetings, one of the union reps put their hand up and said to the Executive Head, 'What about work life balance?' He said, 'Well, while the school is under a notice to improve, there really isn't any such thing as work life balance.' And I think the point I cracked was when I got home one Friday at 8 o'clock after the cleaner had basically said, 'Look, I'm locking up, you've got to go.' And I just sort of stood in the bedroom and started crying.

DEITH: The school couldn't start competency proceedings, because Tom was signed off sick, diagnosed with depression. Just how depressed came spilling out during an argument with his wife.

TOM: I just kind of sort of threw down whatever it was I was holding and I said, 'Look, I just can't be bothered, I just cannot be bothered,' and she said, 'Do you have suicidal thoughts?' And without hesitating I said yes, and that's when I realised, you know, I was kind of in trouble. I did consider it quite often. My decided method was to take a kitchen knife, because I considered that to be a sort of manly way of doing it.

DEITH: Why would you do this?

TOM: All my morale, all my enthusiasm, all my self-confidence, self-belief - it was gone. I didn't see anything happening other than ultimately me losing my job, and as a family man with a mortgage, that was the worst scenario I could consider. So there was a time when all I could imagine as being the feasible way out was by dying.

DEITH: Mercifully Tom's wife and GP talked him out of it and he recovered. He's a supply teacher now, quite often covering for teachers off with stress. The Teacher Support Network took 26,000 calls last year. In their recent poll of

DAY cont: accountability or are the results of that accountability always negative? I think they can be negative, but I also know that they can be positive. I think what research tells us is that we should be concentrating less on stress and more on the positive aspect of fostering commitment and fostering resilience in schools.

DEITH: It sounds a little bit as if you're saying schools don't really need to do anything differently, it's the teachers who need to adapt and perhaps develop a thicker skin.

DAY: Adaptation isn't entirely the responsibility of individual teachers. Because they work in an organisation, it's also the responsibility of the organisation and that would bring us back to head teachers who, if you like, lead the organisation, that would bring us back to the particular culture, for which the head teacher is responsible in the school.

DEITH: But does Ofsted, which inspects schools, also have a responsibility for some of the stress teachers are under? Some feel that, instead of being rightfully accountable for pupils' progress, they're now held responsible, by head teachers living in fear of the next inspection. Sean Harford is Ofsted's National Director for Schools.

HARFORD: You can't deny that people are responding in different ways to the demands of the accountability system, and I think it would be wrong of us to say that we aren't aware of that because, as I say, from the conversations I've had with teachers and head teachers and unions and the Department for Education, it's clear that there are concerns. In the autumn we published a document which we called our clarifications document, Clarification for School Inspections and that sought to take some of the myths that teachers and unions told us were out there about things that Ofsted inspectors expect when they go in to inspect a school. Only this week I'm writing out to inspectors about the marking issue that's been brought to my attention as National Director.

ACTUALITY IN CLASSROOM

DEITH: Last year Ofsted acknowledged the toll inspections were taking on teachers by ending the practice of grading their lessons - for example, judging

HARFORD cont: children are making the same mistakes, for example, in spring that they were making at the start of the autumn term, and the evidence for that can be seen in books.

DEITH: Would evidence like oral feedback to pupils be good enough for Ofsted?

HARFORD: Well, I mean, clearly, and this is one of the things I've been talking to teachers and head teachers about recently. We think oral feedback is important from teachers to pupils, but head teachers have been asked, some head teachers have been asking their teachers to record that, you know, the date and time, what have you, of giving that oral feedback. And clearly we don't want to over-bureaucratise the system by that being expected and our inspectors aren't expecting to see that kind of evidence. On data, we're very clear to say, 'Look, data is important in schools for tracking the progress of pupils, but we don't want to see it cut or cast or formatted in any particular way. We need to see the kind of data you're using in your school and the way you use it, so we can make a judgment as to whether you're using that effectively and whether the children are making progress.'

ACTUALITY IN PLAYGROUND

DEITH: Ofsted says a lot of the fear surrounding inspections is based on myth. But what isn't a myth is that a disappointing Ofsted report can be the end of a head teacher's career. In Broadstairs in Kent, inspectors said Nigel Utton's primary school required improvement. Bromstone had a really high number of children on free school meals, children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. Nigel Utton loved this about his school, and Radio 5 Live chose Bromstone for a special programme. Mr Utton did an interview with Nicky Campbell.

CLIP OF RADIO 5 LIVE

CAMPBELL: Go on ...

UTTON: Every child has special needs, we have to look at every single child individually

DEITH: But then something unexpected happened.

UTTON: It's wearing me down, it's worn me out and it's got to the point where I'm going to have to stop for a while. I want to be back because I love this job and that's the point where I've got to. Enough is enough; someone's got to turn round and say, 'I'm not willing to do this anymore in this way.' I'm measured, not on how brilliant Joshua's life is, but on how he performs in a test at the age of 11 and that's just disgusting.

CLIP PLAYED IN ROOM WITH NIGEL

UTTON: '...at the age of 11 and that's just disgusting.'

DEITH: So, what's it like, hearing that again?

UTTON: Well, that's the first time I've heard it for a year. Obviously I had reached a point where I didn't recognise it at the time, but I was suffering from stress, and I went to see my doctor. He did diagnose depression. I went to see a heart specialist and it has, it has damaged my heart. I think 23 years fighting against the education system rather than feeling that I could actually work within the education system that we had took its toll on me personally, and to so many colleagues as well, because the job we signed up for was one working with children and improving children's lives. And yet it's become a job about statistics. It's now about tests and statistics in tests and graphs and that's what schools are measured on.

DEITH: The pressure on head teachers now is in a different league. The analogy doing the rounds is that heads are now like football managers. One bad result and you're out.

ACTUALITY ON STREET

DEITH: Staying in Kent, there has been some publicity about 21 head teachers who've disappeared after bad Ofsted reports. With the county council often taking matters out of the hands of governors, heads are given a choice between some form of disciplinary action or gardening leave. The deal is struck largely in secret, with heads signing a contract to keep silent or lose their reference and therefore their career. It's been described as system of forced disappearances. My producer and I have spent the last two days on the ground in Kent, knocking on doors and following leads, and we've spoken to three of the disappeared. One's job ended with a phone call, another with a letter, one got a visit at school. All were too frightened to speak, even anonymously.

Kent County Council is unapologetic. It says 21 head teachers is less than 4% of school leaders in Kent. We've got a statement from Councillor Roger Gough, cabinet member for education. He says the county council has a duty to make sure leadership is doing its job properly and children aren't failed.

READER IN STUDIO: We work closely in partnership with schools that are judged to be inadequate and those that most require improvement. On occasions, this requires a change of leadership. We do not have a blanket approach when a school has an unfavourable judgement. There are many examples of where we have confidence in the leadership capacity of schools and have successfully supported schools and heads in achieving improvement which has led the school back to Good.

DEITH: It's not just in Kent – head teachers are being disappeared up and down the country. I have put out feelers with all my contacts, trying to find someone who has been disappeared. And I got the details of a woman who took on a failing secondary school in the North of England and got it out of special measures. But even that wasn't good enough. Hilary is not her real name and this is not her voice but these are her words.

Are you one of the disappeared?

HILARY: Yes, I am. Where the local authority is saying, 'You have to go,' I guess one is faced with the option of, do I fight it, kicking and screaming out the door? Which is what your heart wants to do, or do you go with the realistic thing in your

HILARY cont: head, which is, I need to work, I need a job and therefore I need a reference. So you might take the option which is the one which puts you at home on gardening leave for months. You get an agreed reference that all parties agree, a settlement agreement that you sign which means you can't talk about any of it to anybody at all.

DEITH: Hilary says being on gardening leave, bound to silence, was awful.

HILARY: I didn't get out of bed for a month. You've lost all your self-esteem, you've lost the support network of people who would be around you and the fact you had a job to go to, which give you self-worth and some reason to ... a reason to live. I had not seen it coming. I hadn't seen it coming. I felt such a failure and it was such an embarrassment for me that my children would see their erstwhile successful mother as a complete outcast on the scrapheap of society. And I have to explain that, I wanted to take my own life. It's really quite hard to say that to your own children.

DEITH: And you did feel that you wanted to take your life?

HILARY: Absolutely, yes. It destroyed me.

DEITH: Does Ofsted's Sean Harford think the rapid removal of heads from schools is the right way forward?

HARFORD: Our job is to judge schools, the quality of education in schools, so that the children get the best education they can. It's not our job to get rid of head teachers, there aren't any powers for us to close down schools or anything like that. Sometimes a head teacher moving on is the right thing for a school and other times it wouldn't be and I've certainly seen, when I've monitored schools in special measures, where the same head teacher that took that school in has been absolutely the right catalyst for change in that school going forward.

DEITH: What teachers and head teachers have said to me is that inspections have become penal and punitive. Doesn't Ofsted have some responsibility for that?

HARFORD: Well, I talk to many teachers, many head teachers, unions across the country and not one of them says that accountability is not right for education. Ofsted is a part of that accountability framework and what we've done over the years is too. For example, reduce the number of inspectors we put into schools, so that there's less burden on the schools. We're now increasing, greatly increasing, the number of people who are serving teachers into the inspection workforce, and by these methods and these processes I think that we are listening to what people are saying, responding appropriately but still making sure that inspection is a rigorous process. A fair process and one that gives the kind of information to the public that is necessary in a publicly funded system.

DEITH: There has to be a system for assessing the quality of teaching so that pupils have the same chances of success, no matter what school they go to. And the Government makes no apology for being ambitious for education. But in the drive to make sure we're not letting down children, are we driving out good teachers?

HILARY: This year I know four people like me. And I'm just one person; goodness knows I think it's well into the hundreds, well into the hundreds this year. I will never be a head teacher again. Never.

SIGNATURE TUNE