

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Lynne Neagle MS
Cabinet Secretary for Education

24 June 2024

Teacher recruitment and retention

Dear Lynne,

We are keen to explore issues relating to teacher recruitment and retention, and have started to talk to stakeholders and look at the latest workforce data to better understand issues facing the education workforce.

Over recent weeks, some of my fellow Committee members and I have met with representatives of science bodies to discuss the numbers of specialist science teachers in secondary schools in Wales. The Institute of Physics provided us with [a briefing note](#).

The concerns raised by the science bodies include that:

- There is a national shortage of specialist science teachers (although data setting out which schools do not have specialist teachers is lacking).
- Far fewer students qualify as science teachers through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) studies than the Welsh Government and the Education Workforce Council's recruitment targets.¹
- Wales' ITE Priority Subject bursaries are worth less than equivalent bursaries in England.

¹ For Physics, [EWC data](#) indicates only 3 students qualified in 2022/23 with 1 student deferring, compared to the [intake target of 58](#). The target was also missed, although not to the same drastic extent, in 2021/22 and 2020/21 (EWC data indicates that 17 of 21 students passed their ITE courses in 2021/22 against an intake target of 58, while 24 of 38 students qualified in 2020/21 against an intake target of 63).

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The Institute of Physics raised these concerns in the context of Wales' lowest ever PISA score in science in 2022.

We were shocked by the statistics that the science bodies shared with us. Although we recognise that the total number of registered schools teachers as [reported by the Education Workforce Council](#) has increased slightly in recent years, we are gravely concerned that these overall figures hide shortages within specific subject areas. We are also conscious that intake targets have been missed in other subjects, particularly the other priority subjects for recruitment.

Another area where we have concerns over teacher recruitment is the number of teachers who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh – a critical factor in the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 objectives. This is an issue previously raised with us by the [Welsh Language Commissioner's Office](#). We note from the [Welsh Government's annual statistical release](#), the latest being for 2021/22, that:

- The number of students recruited on to initial teacher education courses intending to teach through the medium of Welsh decreased in 2021/22 by 4% compared to 2020/21. It had previously increased for two years in a row in 2019/20 and 2020/21 following five years of decreases.
- A total of 325 students trained to teach in Welsh in 2021/22 – 20% of the 1,610 trainee teachers. This is the same proportion as in 2020/21. (There was a marked increase from 16% in 2018/19 to 22% in 2019/20.) We understand that the Welsh Government expects ITE partnerships to work towards an intake of 30% of students preparing to teach through the medium of Welsh.
- While the number of entrants training to teach in Welsh increased at primary school level (a 10% increase from 2020/21 to 2021/22), the equivalent for secondary school level decreased by 22% in the same period.

We have therefore identified teacher recruitment and retention as a priority area for us to investigate in more detail. To support us with our scoping work, I would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions:

1. What is your general assessment of the state of teacher recruitment and retention across Wales across the statutory age range, both in terms of the immediate staffing challenges facing schools and the Welsh Government's longer-term aims to raise educational standards?
2. How do you respond to the concerns raised by the science bodies about the sufficiency of science specialist secondary school teachers in Wales? Are there any other subjects about

which you have particular concerns (e.g. Welsh (as a subject), modern foreign languages, mathematics and IT)?

3. What is your assessment of the sufficiency of the education workforce who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh and the importance of this to the Welsh Government's ambitions for the development of proficiency in Welsh in both Welsh-medium and English-medium schools?
4. Do you believe that the bursaries currently offered to trainee teachers are sufficient, specifically within the context of higher bursaries offered in England?
5. Do you wish to raise anything else with us that you believe is relevant to any future work we undertake relating to teacher recruitment and retention?

I would be grateful for your response no later than Friday 30 August 2024.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.