

Education Workforce Council (EWC) submission on school teacher recruitment and retention, ahead of oral evidence to the CYPE Committee on 5 June 2025.

Introduction

The [EWC](#) is the independent, professional regulator for the education workforce in Wales. Our aims and functions are set out within the [Education \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). Our response to the CYPE Committee's inquiry focuses on matters specific to our remit, notably the workforce. Our evidence base in responding to this inquiry includes information and intelligence from:

- The EWC's Register of Education Practitioners (the Register) which provides unique intelligence on the composition of the teaching workforce in Wales over the past 25 years¹.
- Accrediting programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales and, based on national ITE intake allocations provided by Welsh Government and our work to distribute those numbers to accredited programmes and pathways and thereafter monitor recruitment monthly.
- Administering the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) and publishing annual data in this regard.
- Engagement with registrants, employers, agencies and other stakeholders from across Wales and leading a number of national surveys and policy events.
- Our work to promote careers in the education professions, for example, by attending general or targeted careers/recruitment meetings and events and directly engaging with individuals, community groups, providers and employers.

Teacher recruitment

Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced globally. As context, UNESCO's [2024 Global Report on Teachers](#) highlights a worldwide shortage of teachers, suggesting an additional 44 million primary and secondary teachers will be required by 2030.

Our ITE data on NQTs registering with the EWC, shows that, for a number of years, we have not trained or recruited the necessary number of teachers in Wales. The NQT workforce has been supplemented by individuals who trained to teach in England and returned or moved to Wales following their ITE programme. However, there are two issues to note about this specific part of the workforce: first, these individuals would not have been prepared during their programme of ITE to develop and deliver the Curriculum for Wales; and second, over the past two years the numbers in this category have begun to fall.

Primary

Data from our Register and our QTS data shows a stable supply of primary teachers. Recruitment into ITE for the primary phase has continued to meet (or exceed) Welsh Government intake allocations. ITE passes have increased from 570 in 2019-20 to 636 in 2023-24 (with a further 87 passes through the Open University (OU) postgraduate route). While the overall pipeline of primary teachers remains robust, we note there are some specific areas of concern outlined below.

¹ Dating back to the founding of our predecessor organisation, the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW), in 2000.

Secondary

Since the early 2010's, there has been a steady decline in recruitment to secondary ITE programmes. Although the COVID-19 pandemic promoted a temporary increase in recruitment, it has since reverted to the previous downward trend. The number of secondary trainees in teacher education has fallen, and ITE passes are down from 405 in 2019-20 to 369 in 2023-24 (with an additional 34 passing through the OU secondary postgraduate route). To put this into context, Welsh Government's desired intake for secondary ITE in 2023-24 was 1,056.

Specific areas of concern in teacher recruitment

Priority subject teachers (secondary)

Our QTS data highlights the recruitment challenges in priority subject areas with only very small numbers of individuals being recruited to programmes of ITE and thereafter being awarded QTS. For example, in 2024, across Wales, QTS awards were made to 27 Mathematics, 20 Welsh, seven Physics, seven Chemistry, and 11 Modern Foreign Languages students only. Some of these numbers are the lowest that EWC has seen in our 20 years of administering the award of QTS.

Welsh medium teachers

Despite a range of initiatives aimed at increasing Welsh medium recruitment, our data shows that the number of Welsh-speaking teachers and those able to teach through the medium of Welsh has remained largely static for many years. Welsh Government's aspiration for 30% of ITE recruits being trained through the medium of Welsh is not being realised.

In 2024, EWC data on newly qualified teachers shows that 19.7% of those qualifying through primary routes undertook their training through the medium of Welsh and 17.9% at secondary level. There are particular challenges in attracting new Welsh-speaking teachers in shortage subject areas (notably STEM). Last year, just three (of 27) new mathematics teachers and two (of seven) new physics teachers were trained through the medium of Welsh.

Ethnic diversity

While over 15% of pupils in schools across Wales are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds, only 1.9% of registered teachers identify as such. Welsh Government's aspiration for 5% of ITE recruits to be from these ethnic minority groups is not being realised. This is despite all ITE partnerships being required to publish a recruitment plan addressing ethnic diversity and targeted initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive Scheme. However, data for 2024 indicates that 4.6% of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) registered with the EWC are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds.

School leaders

From our data and through engagement with employers, trade unions and directly with leaders the following challenges have been highlighted:

- low volumes of applicants for some leadership vacancies resulting in a proportion of those vacancies being unfilled and advertised multiple times, this is exacerbated further
 - in Welsh medium settings
 - in certain Local Authorities particularly rural or disadvantaged areas
- issues over the adequacy and quality of support available to headteachers, aspiring headteachers, leaders and aspiring leaders - both in terms of formal programmes (including NPQH) and other professional learning opportunities and programmes

- addressing the diversity of those in leadership roles, particularly with respect to gender and ethnicity

Retention

The EWC is able to monitor teacher retention through the Register. Our most recent retention data shows that 76% of teachers in 2019, were still registered as school teachers in 2024, while 57.5% of those registered as school teachers in 2014 remained registered as teachers in 2024. This indicates that retention within the school teacher workforce in Wales is better than in England and many other countries.

However, through our engagement with stakeholders, employers, trade unions and registrants including headteachers, pressures relating to workload, wellbeing, and job satisfaction are seemingly impacting negatively on retention in some areas. Our data is also beginning to show early signs of these negative impacts. We will therefore be closely monitoring trends in this area in the years ahead.

Inevitably, the specific concerns outlined above in relation to recruitment (shortage of STEM teachers / ethnic diversity / school leaders) directly impacts retention. However, it should be noted that, amongst the cohort of teachers registered with the EWC in 2019, 79% of Welsh speaking school teachers remained registered as teachers in 2024, compared to 74.5% of non-Welsh speaking teachers, indicating a marginally higher level of retention amongst Welsh speaking teachers.

School learning support workers

The school workforce does not only include teachers, in fact, since 2018 our data confirms that registered school learning support workers outnumber registered school teachers. It is for this reason and for the significant contribution that this workforce makes to learners, that we believe the scope of the inquiry should be broadened to include school learning support workers.

School learning support workers account for 56.7% of the registered school workforce in Wales (2024). However, this workforce is characterised by high turnover, with only 53.1% of those registered in 2019 remaining registered within the same category in 2024². The transience of this workforce directly impacts schools and its teachers.

Promoting greater professionalism among school learning support workers, including through improving access to professional learning and progression, the introduction of minimum qualifications, better job security and improved pay and conditions would help schools to develop a more resilient and skilled support staff workforce.

Post-16 education workforce

Again, while this section of the workforce does not fall within the formal scope of this inquiry, it's significance to the education of young people in Wales must be acknowledged. Many of the challenges faced in teacher recruitment and retention are also relevant here.

Key issues needing to be addressed

The EWC welcomes the significant reform of ITE undertaken by Welsh Government over recent years and it is important to note that the issues within the scope of this inquiry cannot be resolved through ITE alone. It requires a more holistic approach to ensure a sufficient quantity of quality school teachers to safeguard the future workforce.

² 7.6% were registered in another category, while 39.3% were no longer registered with the EWC.

Another welcome initiative related to this subject matter, is the work that EWC undertakes on behalf of Welsh Government, funded by grant, to promote careers in the education workforce. This work includes two strands:

- The development, maintenance and growth of a national brand and website, including an integrated all-Wales jobs portal, a careers portal, and a training portal
- A national advocacy and support service

Efforts to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Wales must focus on the underlying systemic issues that impact negatively upon the working lives and wellbeing of teachers and leaders. Frequently these are the same issues deterring new entrants from joining, as they contribute to negative perceptions of the profession. These include:

- **Workload and bureaucracy:** Excessive workload - often driven by administrative demands and accountability requirements, remains the most frequently cited reason for low morale and early exits from the profession.
- **Declining autonomy and professional trust:** A lack of professional agency and autonomy, compounded by the pressures of frequent policy changes and rigid accountability measures (including inspections).
- **Behaviour and discipline:** Challenges in managing pupil behaviour, with frequent disruptions undermining teaching and learning.
- **Expanding role of teachers:** Schools are frequently being called-upon to help address a growing range of societal challenges – including a rapidly growing number of learners with mental health issues.
- **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision:** There are major challenges in effectively supporting students with ALN, hampered by a lack of resources, specialised personnel, and funding.
- **Access to professional learning:** The quality of the professional learning entitlement provision across Wales remains inconsistent and uptake can be constrained by time pressures and staffing capacity.
- **Competition from other sectors:** The wider employment market, especially for STEM graduates and Welsh speakers, is highly competitive. Starting salaries for teachers are lower than those on offer in many private sector careers, with limited opportunities for salary progression.

Key issues specific to leadership

- **Intense workload and accountability pressures:** Headteachers are experiencing a significant increase in workload and responsibilities, while also being held to high levels of accountability for school performance. The requirement to implement a growing range of new initiatives, while simultaneously embedding the Curriculum for Wales often allows little time for strategic thinking or pedagogic leadership.
- **Ensuring appropriate leadership pathways:** Many teachers and middle leaders are deterred from progressing, having witnessed the significant pressures faced by those in more senior roles. In addition, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has widely been seen as unfit for purpose and requiring reform.

Conclusion

The EWC welcomes the Committee's focus on teacher recruitment and retention and is pleased to support this important work. We will continue to contribute data, analysis and professional expertise on these matters to inform the development of policy, as well as

providing advice to Welsh Government and other stakeholders. We would also be pleased to provide additional data and intelligence to support this inquiry, upon the Committee's request.