

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr [ymchwiliad i recriwtio a chadw athrawon](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) on the [Inquiry into Teacher recruitment and retention](#)

Ymateb gan: Undeb Addysg Cenedlaethol Cymru

Response from: National Education Union (NEU) Cymru

Terms of Reference

The inquiry will focus on:

Barriers to recruitment:

Intake into ITE and factors impacting recruitment into post (including a focus on priority subjects, Welsh medium, secondary schools and the impact of Wales' educational reforms on teacher recruitment).

Factors affecting retention:

(including a focus on priority subjects, Welsh medium, secondary schools and the effectiveness of early career support).

School Leaders:

specific factors affecting recruitment and retention of school leaders.

Diversity of the workforce:

whether the current and future workforce reflects the diversity of the Welsh population including gender, race and ethnicity and disability.

Impact on learners:

of the current position on and the delivery of education and on wider support for learners.

Impact on delivering educational reforms:

including the Curriculum for Wales. Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

Impact on teachers and wider workforce:

including impact on use of teaching assistants and support staff, effect on use of supply teachers.

Addressing recruitment and retention:

What actions should be taken, and by whom, to ensure the sustainability of the education workforce and how such actions should be prioritised.

Background

Before we look at the Terms of Reference of the inquiry, it would be beneficial to look at some of the current Education Workforce Council's workforce statistics for 2024¹.

Section 1 – All registrants in schools and FE

	Number of individual registrants by category	Number of registrants eligible to practise in each category
School teachers	29,988	35,865
School learning support workers (TAs, etc.)	39,204	46,962
FE teachers	3,485	6,702
FE learning support workers	2,158	6,212
Total	75,135	95,741

It's worrying that 5,877 schoolteachers have also registered in other categories. We do not know in which other categories they have registered, but there are 7,758 Teaching Assistants who have also registered in other categories. Over 9,000 individuals have registered in both teacher categories (school and FE). This could be teachers registering in both categories.

In 2019 there were 31,371 individuals registered as teachers only, and 31,307 individuals registered as support staff only. The decrease in teacher only registrations (1,383) and increase in support staff only registrations (7,897) since 2019 is stark.

Section 2 – School teachers

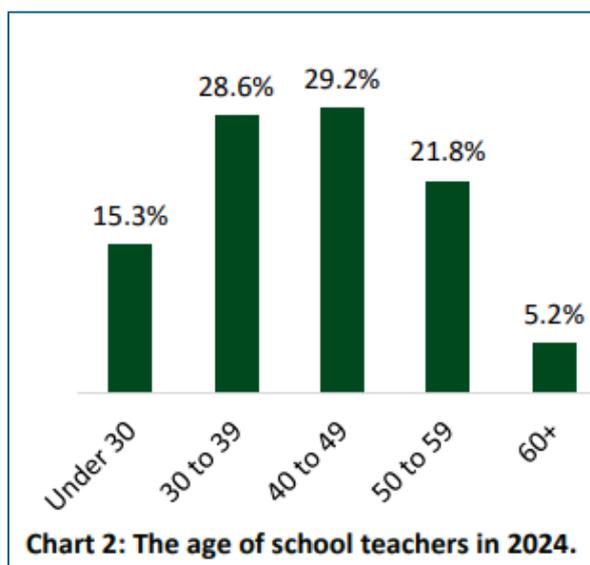
2.1 Number of registered schoolteachers.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of teachers	35,171	34,766	35,256	35,837	35,865

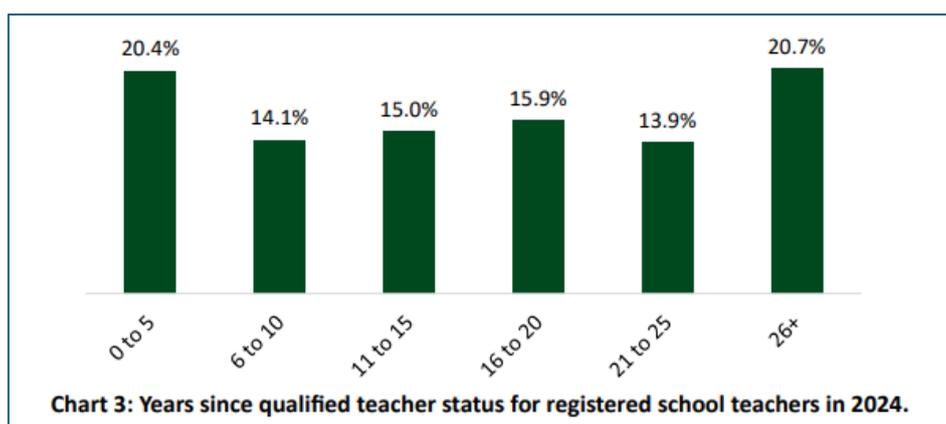
There are over 3,000 less teachers in Wales since 2010.

¹ [Education Workforce Statistics 2024](#)

2.3 Number of registered schoolteachers by age.



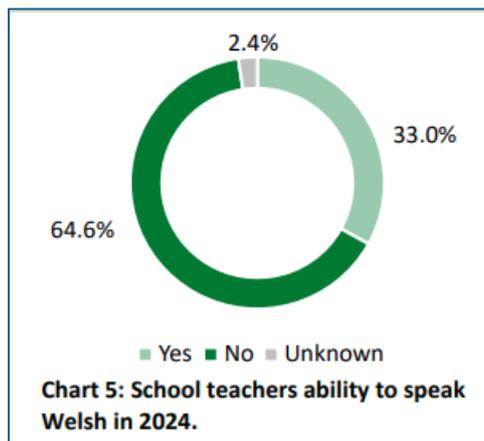
2.7 Number of registered schoolteachers by years since qualified teacher status.



2.8 Number of registered schoolteachers by phase employed.

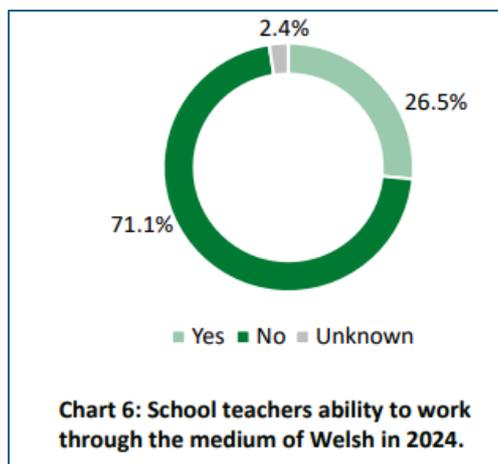
	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Nº	%								
Primary	13,219	37.6	13,260	38.1	13,289	37.7	13,409	37.4	13,141	36.6
Middle	1,141	3.2	1,208	3.5	1,371	3.9	1,625	4.5	1,716	4.8
Secondary	11,024	31.3	11,246	32.3	11,295	32.0	11,400	31.8	11,189	31.2
Special	800	2.3	812	2.3	856	2.4	910	2.5	953	2.3
Supply	4,635	13.2	4,222	12.1	4,058	11.5	3,867	10.8	4,051	11.3

2.10 Number of registered schoolteachers by ability to speak Welsh.



Those able to teach in Welsh has stayed roughly the same since 2015 (33.3%).

2.11 Number of registered schoolteachers by ability to work through the medium of Welsh.



Those able to work in Welsh has stayed roughly the same since 2015 (26.9%).

2.20 School teachers registered in March 2019 and their registration status in following years.

	March 2020		March 2021		March 2022		March 2023		March 2024	
	N ²	%								
Registered Teacher	31,123	86.6	29,380	81.8	28,120	78.3	29,380	81.8	27,026	76.0
Another category	287	0.8	351	1.0	364	1.0	351	1.0	576	1.6
Not registered	4,519	12.6	6,198	17.3	7,445	20.7	6,198	17.3	7,943	22.3
Total	35,929	100	35,929	100	35,929	100	35,929	100	35,545	100

What the above tells us is that **22.3%** of those teachers who registered in 2019 have left the profession for whatever reason. However, in 2023, the Education Workforce Statistics² showed that **39.1% (6,122)** of those who left the profession were under 55 and couldn't access their Teachers Pension. A further **7,921** were aged between 55 and 64, which means that if they drew

² [Education Workforce Statistics 2023](#)

their Teachers Pension, they would receive an actuarial reduction of over 4% per year if they drew their pension rights (minimum 12% reduction for those aged 64, minimum 48% reduction for those aged 55).

What we can conclude from these figures is that **90%** of those who left the profession needed to find another income to assist with living costs.

This cannot be compared to previous years, or indeed subsequent year, as this was the first and only time that this was included in the workforce stats.

Barriers to recruitment

Initial Teacher Education

To be a teacher in maintained schools in Wales, a person must hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and complete a period of induction. QTS is gained through undertaking a programme of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), be it through the undergraduate or post-graduate (PGCE) route for the primary sector and the PGCE route for the secondary sector.

The Welsh Government sets a national intake figure for recruiting students onto primary and secondary ITE programmes in Wales. This takes account of the estimated demand for new teachers. There are separate allocations for primary and secondary teaching, undergraduate and PGCE routes and for secondary teaching there are specific allocations for individual subject specialism.

Welsh Government expects that ITE partnerships work towards an intake of 30% of students preparing to teach through the medium of Welsh, and 5% of students from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background.

Since 2021/22, the allocations for the primary sector have been met with more trainees gaining QTS than there were allocations. However, this is not the case for the secondary sector as the allocations for secondary school trainees have been well below the allocation since 2016/17³. See the table below for allocation figures⁴.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Primary	724	662	662	631	653	593
Secondary	1,003	948	948	1,056	1,056	1,037

The number of entrants to primary school ITE courses in Wales was 20% higher than the allocations in 2021/22.

The number of entrants to secondary school ITE courses in Wales was 34% lower than the allocations in 2021/22.

The number of trainees that gained QTS in each year is in the table below which has been taken from the Education Workforce Council's *initial teacher education (ITE) student results 2023-24* document⁵.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Primary	627	627	676	636
Secondary	604	504	378	369

Also bear in mind that over the four-year period shown above:

- 59 trainees failed to gain QTS
- 418 withdrew either before or during the course
- 471 were deferred

³ [Senedd Research - Teaching matters - Nov 2023](#)

⁴ [Initial teacher education \(ITE\) intake allocations](#)

⁵ [ITE student results 2023-24](#)

Ninety-eight (98) trainees who had previously been recorded as deferred or withdrawn gained QTS at a later date and this figure is included in the table above.

The surplus / shortfall for each sector is shown below.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Primary	-97	-35	+45	+5
Secondary	-339	-444	-570	-687

In addition to the secondary allocation targets, the Welsh Government also has a list of priority subjects that currently reflect the recruitment priorities within the teaching workforce in Wales.

A Welsh Government Priority Subject Incentive Scheme has been in place since 2016/17, which offers incentive, or training, grants for students to train to become a teacher in one or more of those priority subjects, but the subjects chosen as priority subjects have changed over the years.

This type of incentive scheme has been in existence since 2000/2001 and possibly sooner.

The current priority subjects are:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Design & Technology
- Information Technology
- Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)
- Physics
- Welsh

The allocation targets for these priority subjects since 2020/21 were / are:

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Biology	-	62	62	73	73	73
Chemistry	62	57	57	67	67	73
Design & Technology	-	-	45	53	53	53
Information Technology	50	50	50	58	58	58
Mathematics	116	116	116	136	136	136
Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)	59	59	59	69	69	70
Physics	63	58	58	67	67	72
Welsh	74	74	74	87	87	87
Chemistry and Physics	-	10	10	11	11	-
Total - Priority	424	486	531	621	621	622

The number of trainees that gained QTS in the priority subjects each year is in the table below⁶⁷⁸⁹. Trainees who gained QTS in the priority subjects through the medium of Welsh are in brackets but 2022-23 is the first year that the language medium of training was recorded for trainees who completed a postgraduate ITE course.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Biology	32	38	22 (0)	27 (5)	-
Chemistry	27	14	8 (0)	7 (2)	-
Design & Technology	31	16	18 (0)	22 (2)	-
Information Technology	13	7	5 (1)	4 (0)	-
Mathematics	59	53	33 (4)	27 (3)	-
Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)	16	20	8 (1)	11 (2)	-
Physics	24	17	3 (1)	7 (2)	-
Welsh	24	26	11 (11)	20 (20)	-
Chemistry and Physics	-	-	-	-	-
Total - Priority	226	191	108 (18)	125 (36)	-

The **shortfall** for each priority subject is shown below.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Biology	-	-24	-40	-46
Chemistry	-35	-43	-49	-60
Design & Technology	-	-	-27	-31
Information Technology	-19	-43	-45	-54
Mathematics	-57	-63	-83	-109
Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)	-43	-39	-51	-58
Physics	-39	-41	-55	-60
Welsh	-50	-48	-63	-67
Chemistry and Physics	-	-10	-10	-11

The number of first year ITE students in Wales training to be able to teach in Welsh was 4% lower than it was in 2020/21, standing at 325 students in 2021/22. However, this accounts for 20% of the total number of first year ITE students in Wales, the same proportion as in 2020/21

Mathematics, Biology and Welsh were the most common priority subjects for entrants to secondary school ITE courses in Wales.

5% of new ITE students in Wales whose ethnicity was known were from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic group in 2021/22, the same as in 2020/21.

⁶ [ITE student results 2020-21](#)

⁷ [ITE student results 2021-22](#)

⁸ [ITE student results 2022-23](#)

⁹ Ibid

Pay

The evidence from NEU Cymru members is compelling. Current pay rates do not fairly reflect the skills and demands of teaching. Each year that pay correction is not addressed then recruitment targets to secure adequate retention levels will not be met. Welsh Government has choices, if they continue to fail to make the right pay and funding choices, then the professionals they seek to deliver the high-quality education system that all children and young people in Wales deserve will not be achieved.

Any credible assessment of the value of pay, must encompass the demands of the job, including workload and professional autonomy. It must be clear to what extent pay levels reflect the challenge of the job and therefore the impact on recruitment and retention.

The huge real-terms cuts to teacher pay against inflation has hit living standards, and in damaging the competitiveness of teacher pay has driven recruitment and retention problems. Members tell us about the problems they face in dealing with the cost-of-living crisis. Our members are clear that the huge challenges of teaching and the skills required are not appropriately valued. This must be urgently addressed if we are to secure healthy levels of recruitment and retention, now and in the future.

Please see the next section on 'Factors affecting retention' for more detailed information.

Factors affecting retention

Workload

Workload is consistently reported as one of the key reasons teachers and leaders are leaving the profession. Workload has reached unprecedented levels, and teachers are working more hours than ever. High workload and high workload intensity are driving education staff out of the profession, contributing to the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector.

The NEU has analysed workload in education settings in England and Wales. Data from our 2024 NEU State of Education survey¹⁰ of almost 13,000 NEU members tell us that among teachers in English and Welsh state schools, only 20% find their workload manageable all or most of the time and over 40% find it unmanageable all or most of the time.

This is a cause and consequence of current recruitment and retention problems: high workload drives teachers out of the profession, and the understaffing resulting from this leads to even more work for those who remain. Teachers report that this is having a substantial impact on their mental and physical health.

The extra demands placed on our members due to recruitment challenges and teachers leaving the profession due to excessive workload are having an enormous impact. Extra pupils, extra responsibility, and extra pressure are not sustainable. Our members are exhausted. NEU Cymru believes that unless more is done to alleviate teacher workload immediately, there will be high levels of burnout in the profession, which will inevitably exacerbate the increasing numbers of experienced teachers and leaders leaving the profession.

The Welsh Government's initiatives on teacher development, workload reduction, and flexible working are welcomed, but will not succeed without adequate funding and resources.

Research undertaken by alma economics, commissioned by the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB) in 2023¹¹ found that:

- In an average week, teachers in Wales work for more than 50 hours
- The average across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries is 39 hours
- Only Japanese teachers reported working longer hours (56) than teachers in Wales

The level of workload experienced by the workforce is unacceptable and unsustainable. At this point, over a year into discussions, we need more substantial and meaningful change for the workforce. The Workload Impact Assessment tool needs to be expedited, so that it can be rapidly implemented and rolled out. The Welsh Government cannot produce more guidance, more workload for our members, without telling them what they can stop doing.

Planning lessons contributes towards effective teaching and learning. However, teachers should be free to use their professional judgement when deciding how to plan lessons. The principal purpose of lesson plans is to support the professional practice of teachers, rather than act as a tool for holding them accountable for their work.

NEU Cymru members in the Primary sector tell us that the main workload issue they have is planning. Many primary school Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) require classroom teachers to present detailed short-term planning for checking at least one, possibly two weeks prior to delivering those lessons. This is in addition to all the other non-teaching administrative tasks that they are required to undertake, such as marking, data collecting, and meetings. The amount of Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time they have, which is 10% of timetabled teaching

¹⁰ [NEU State of Education survey](#)

¹¹ [Teachers' pay and conditions: international comparisons 2023](#)

time, is nowhere near enough to allow them to complete all the detailed planning they are required to do by their SLTs.

Our members are aware that planning is part of their professional duties, but they must be free to use their professional judgement when deciding how to plan and trusted to plan without having their planning scrutinised and returned to them by SLT with suggested amendments. Our members tell us that once the plans have been agreed, they are kept in a file (some electronically, some physically) and not referred to again. This practice does not happen in the Secondary sector and our members in that sector have different workload pressures.

Teacher Pay

The overarching need for an urgent pay correction is grounded in the history of teacher pay since 2010. The IWPRB and the Welsh Government must direct their analysis at this longer-term period, which has been characterised by huge pay cuts notwithstanding the above inflation pay rise of 2024.

We show below that teacher pay has suffered huge damage in real terms against inflation and relative to pay in the wider economy. Pay comparability is the credible assessment of teacher pay that is needed. Damage to the real and relative value of teacher pay drives recruitment and retention problems. Only an urgent series of fully-funded, significantly above inflation pay increases can repair the damage to teacher pay and supply.

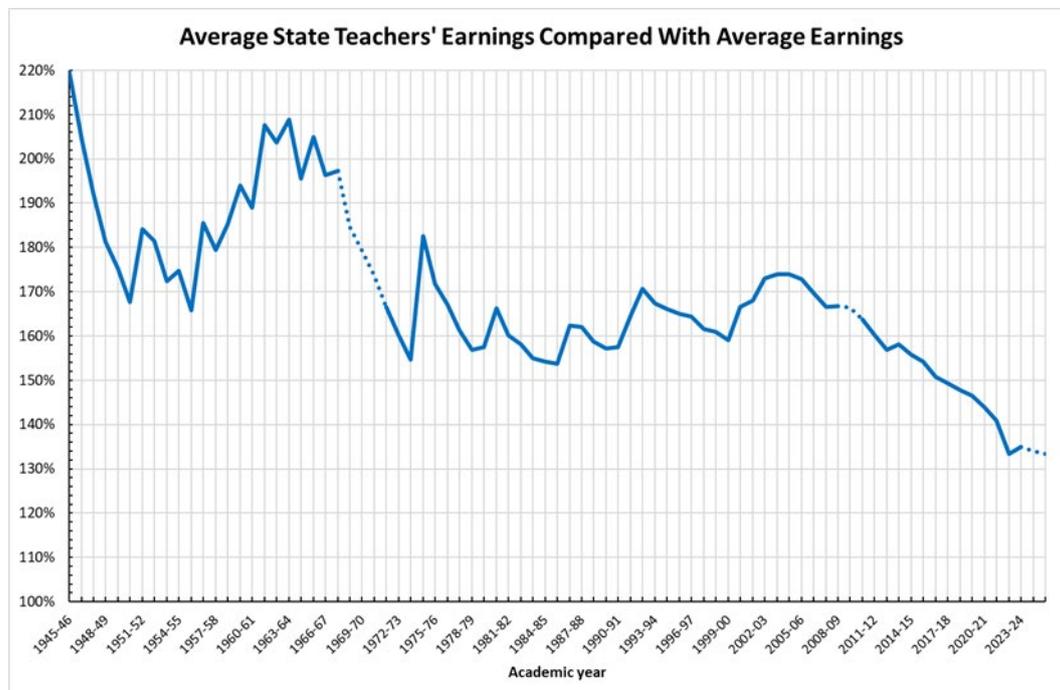
Teachers and school leaders are still feeling the effects of the massive cuts to the real value of teacher and school leader pay against inflation between 2010 and 2023. Even after the September 2024 pay increase, the value of experienced teacher and school leader pay is over 21% lower against Retail Prices Index (RPI) inflation than it was in 2010.

Pay increases for most teachers have been below RPI inflation in 11 of the 15 years from 2010 to 2023, and below CPI inflation in 10 of those 15 years.

Year	Salary increase (most teachers) September	RPI (September)	CPI (September)
2010	2.3%	4.6%	3.1%
2011	0%	5.6%	5.2%
2012	0%	2.6%	2.2%
2013	1%	3.2%	2.7%
2014	1%	2.3%	1.2%
2015	1%	0.8%	-0.1%
2016	1%	2%	1%
2017	1%	3.9%	3%
2018	2%	3.3%	2.4%
2019	2.75%	2.4%	1.7%
2020	2.75%	1.1%	0.5%
2021	1.75%	4.9%	3.1%
2022	6.55%	12.6%	10.1%
2023	5%	8.9%	6.7%
2024	5.5%	2.7%	1.7%

Independent research has confirmed the damage on teacher pay comparability. Analysis from the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has shown how teacher pay has dropped significantly in the overall hourly pay distribution.¹²

NEU research has shown the shocking extent of the long-term decline in the value of teacher pay. Our analysis is based on figures for England, but the damage shown by the graph below will be broadly similar for Wales, as the first Wales only pay award was made in 2019. The graph below suggests teacher pay is at its least competitive since at least 1945.



The chart above shows teachers’ pay was always more than 50% higher than average earnings until the mid-2010s; however, now that has slipped to just a 35% differential. The small uptick on the far right of the chart represents the 2023 pay settlement; the 2024 settlement may have a similar impact, but it is very clear that a much more significant correction is needed.

Research published by High Fliers, “The Graduate Market in 2024,”¹³ showed that graduate starting salaries increased for the third year running – to a median of £34,000. This is significantly higher than the current teacher starting pay in Wales of £32,433.

¹² [Pressures on public sector pay | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

¹³ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/statistics/highfliers-graduate-market-report-2024.pdf>

Pupil Behaviour

Behaviour that challenges

As a union, we feel that we do not need to rehearse with you again that student behaviour is a challenge across the education system in Wales, which has grown worse since the end of the pandemic. We have consistently raised the issues with Welsh Government officials, shared evidence and survey data, and you might be aware of the local industrial action which has taken place across Wales over the last school year.

However, it is worth remembering the most common reasons for exclusions in Wales are:

- ‘Persistent disruptive behaviour.’ The most common reason given for fixed-term exclusions of 5 days or less at 28% of those exclusions.
- ‘Physical assault against a pupil.’ The most common reason for fixed term exclusions of over 5 days, at 25.2% of those exclusions.
- ‘Physical assault against a pupil.’ The most common reason for permanent exclusions, at 32.8% of those exclusions.¹⁴

Our members know there are a range of reasons why behaviour that challenges is on the increase including reductions in support staff in classrooms and individual student support, the growth of unmet additional learning needs (ALN) due to long waiting times for assessment and specialist support, and increased child poverty leading to hunger.

Our members and the children and young people they teach are clear about the underlying reasons behind the rise in incidents of violence and aggression in our schools and colleges, what they want to see is a clear and collaborative plan of action that will deal robustly with incidents in a way that supports all students, staff and their communities.

We advise our members that conversations about behaviour should actually be conversations about well-being, setting clear expectations about school values and understanding what the barriers are to learning.

Supporting positive behaviour, social and emotional skills is a challenging part of professional practice. Staff need time to talk about the behaviour policy, collaborate with colleagues and refer students with specific needs for extra help.

A holistic approach utilising a range of practice is key to developing a whole school approach to behaviour management if settings are to genuinely tackle challenging behaviour and create inclusive safe learning environments for all learners and staff.

The NEU believes that any behaviour policy should have a Trauma-informed approach at its core. Trauma-informed practice in education focuses on understanding trauma’s impact, supporting affected students, and creating inclusive, safe environments.

¹⁴ [Exclusions from Maintained Schools: September 2022 to August 2023](#)

What do our members tell us? We surveyed NEU Cymru members across Wales and the respondent make up was as follows:

Education Setting	Respondent %	Member Role	Respondent %
Primary	46%	Teacher	76%
Secondary	46%	Support Staff	11%
All through Provision	4%	School Leaders	11%
Special School	4%	Other	2%

Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of respondents stated that there was a problem with behaviour and the way it was dealt with in their setting. Seventy-six per cent (76%) attributed this to low level disruption and fifty-nine per cent (59%) stated the problems were because of high level disruption.

We then asked our members to be more specific about causes, the responses below were repeated by all respondents.

Causes of Behaviour Issues	Percentage Response
<i>Lack of support for pupils with ALN</i>	55%
<i>High levels of children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)</i>	51%
<i>Lack of access to support services, e.g. CAMHS</i>	46%
<i>Lack of support from SLT (mostly relating to consistent implementation of policy)</i>	43%
<i>Unauthorised use of mobile phones and social media</i>	37%
<i>Vaping around school</i>	26%
<i>Lack of access to pastoral care</i>	18%

We then asked our members if behaviour from pupils' impacts on their emotional health and well-being. Seventy-three per cent (73%) stated that pupils' behaviour regularly or sometimes impacts negatively on their emotional health and well-being.

Seventy per cent (70%) of respondents stated that pupil behaviour and the lack of support in dealing with this behaviour in their school has made them think **about leaving the education profession.**

We allowed members to elaborate about pupil behaviour and the challenges they face in their school and below you will find seven out of nearly 250 comments that were made:

“This is worse than I’ve ever seen it, worse than any of my colleagues have ever seen it. Parents are apathetic, pupils are apathetic, soon teachers will be apathetic or just leave if they haven’t already.”

“It feels now that teachers are held more accountable for their actions in tackling behaviour than the children. We have to record disruptive behaviour on the school system, behaviour records for LA, record with parents and SLT. Also, we are dealing with very disrespectful pupils who shout, swear, talk over you, throw chairs etc. and confront you aggressively even in a Primary School. After 27 years of teaching and loving my job, I am now feeling I would like to leave the profession because of the negative impact it is having on my well-being and health. I also worry about the teaching profession being able to retain quality professionals for the job in the future.”

¹⁵ NEU Cymru Behaviour Survey April 2025. Survey Group - education professionals in all settings and sectors across Wales.

“The constant lack of respect and inability, or unwillingness, to behave appropriately in a classroom is wearing me down and making me want to leave the profession.”

“Children have no respect for adults around them, they are actively trying to hurt the feelings of staff by making malicious comments - I am only supply in year 5 and two teachers have been signed off due to stress from the behaviour in the class and I find this really challenging.”

“I have worked at the same school for 24 years. It is in a deprived area. Individual staff members and the school as a whole have dealt very effectively with pupil behaviour throughout those years. I have, however seen a marked decline in some pupils’ behaviour over the last couple of years. Parental support for what we are trying to do to support these children as best we can continue to decline. I have never felt as despondent as I currently feel in the profession that I once loved. It is becoming harder and harder every day to face the uphill battle both myself and other members of staff are having to endure on a daily basis. Unfortunately, I would not recommend this career to anyone at present. It is all - consuming and extremely overwhelming day to day. Recruitment and retention is already a huge problem and it's only likely to become much worse unless significant changes are made with regards to workload, pupil behaviour and the negative attitudes that some parents have towards school staff.”

“Ymddygiad yn dirywio yn ddyddiol ond neb yn barod i wrando. Mae sawl aelod o staff yn ystyried neu wedi gadael o ganlyniad uniongyrchol i ymddygiad heriol cyson disgyblion. Mae'r esgus "bydd yn well ar ôl i flwyddyn 11 adael" yn cael ei ddefnyddio'n llawer rhy aml yn hytrach na gweithredu. Mae sawl aelod o staff yn pryderu y gall rhywbeth mawr ddigwydd yn y pen draw.”

“I have been teaching for 30 years & I have never seen such bad behaviour in school. Over the past 5 years it has worsened to the extent where staff are verbally or physically abused almost daily - this is in a Foundation Phase setting too! This is not acceptable & I feel like leaving the profession as I am exhausted with it all!”

Teachers leaving the profession, for whatever reason, is a problem not only in terms of losing a valuable human asset regarding the experience and quality of those practitioners, but also in the sense that there is a time and finance cost of training new entrants to the profession to cover this turnover. From May 2024 to April 2025, **31%** of those members who had resigned their membership with NEU Cymru had done so because they had left the profession, for whatever reason. Of those that had left the profession, **38%** were aged 30 or under, **65%** were aged 40 or under, and **16%** were aged between 50 and 60 years. The most worrying statistic is that **29%** of those who had left the profession had been teaching for three years or less.

Of those NEU Cymru members who left the profession, **74%** were under 55 and couldn't access their Teachers Pension and needed to find another income to assist with living costs.

Diversity of the workforce

According to the latest census data¹⁶, **93.8%** of the population were recorded as white, **1.6%** were recorded as Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, **2.9%** were recorded as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, **0.9%** were recorded as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, and **0.9%** were recorded as Other ethnic group.

This is not reflected in the current teacher workforce when **0.7%** are Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, **0.8%** are Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, **0.2%** are Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African and **0.2%** are other ethnic group (see table below).

There has been a slight increase in the number recorded as being Mixed or multiple ethnic groups and Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh but this increase is minimal. According to the census data there are 90,848 people recorded as being Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh. The Education Workforce Statistics tells us that only 288 teachers are recorded under this group, which equates to 0.3%.

Number of registered schoolteachers by ethnic group.

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	N ^o	%								
White	32,075	91.2	31,847	91.6	32,421	92.0	33,186	92.3	33,167	92.5
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	189	0.5	182	0.5	195	0.6	214	0.6	240	0.7
Asian or Asian British	176	0.5	189	0.5	226	0.6	254	0.7	288	0.8
Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British	64	0.2	68	0.2	73	0.2	82	0.2	89	0.2
Other ethnic group	40	0.1	40	0.1	51	0.1	58	0.2	63	0.2
Does not wish to record ethnic group	447	1.3	467	1.3	472	1.3	463	1.3	454	1.3
Unknown	2,180	6.2	1,973	5.7	1,818	5.2	1,680	4.7	1,564	4.4
Total	35,171	100	34,766	100	35,256	100	34,766	100	35,865	100

5% of new ITE students in Wales whose ethnicity was known were from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic group in 2021/22, the same as in 2020/21.

The NEU allows members to choose to disclose their ethnicity in their membership details, therefore we're unable to provide accurate figures for our membership.

¹⁶ [ONS - Wales Census Data](#)

According to the latest census data¹⁷, 51% of Wales’s population are female and 49% are male. This is not reflected in the current teacher workforce as over 75% of the workforce are female and under 25% are male (see table below).

This is also not reflected in the NEU Cymru membership as 78% of the members are female and 22% are male.

Number of registered schoolteachers by gender¹⁸.

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Nº	%								
Female	26,562	75.5	26,301	75.7	26,562	75.5	26,301	75.7	27,116	75.6
Male	8,609	24.5	8,464	24.3	8,609	24.5	8,464	24.3	8,742	24.4
Not Specified	n/a	n/a	1	0	n/a	n/a	1	0	7	0
Total	71,090	100	34,766	100	71,090	100	34,766	100	35,865	100

The gender balance in Wales has been roughly the same since 2015.

According to the latest census data¹⁹, **21.6%** of the Welsh population is registered as disabled under the Equality Act 2010. This is not reflected in the current teacher workforce when only **1.2%** have made a declaration regarding their disability. The percentage number of declared disabled teachers has doubled since 2020 but is still considerably lower than what’s reflected in the Welsh population.

Number of registered schoolteachers who have made a declaration regarding their disability.

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Nº	%								
Yes	215	0.6	256	0.7	310	0.9	369	1.0	415	1.2
No	34,956	99.4	34,510	99.3	34,946	99.1	35,468	99.0	35,450	98.8
Total	35,171	100	34,766	100	35,256	100	35,837	100	35,865	100

The NEU allows members to choose to disclose any disability in their membership details, therefore we’re unable to provide accurate figures for our membership.

¹⁷ [ONS - Wales Census Data](#)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

Impact on learners

Teacher Absence

Concerned with a pattern of mental health related illness amongst teachers in Wales, the union began researching the amount of time lost to the problem on an annual basis back in 2012 and continues to do so via Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to the local authorities.

The figures for between 2012 and 2017 were relatively stable at around 50,000 days lost, but the 2018-19 figures uncovered a huge increase – more than double the number of days lost in previous years. This figure accounted for 25% of the total days lost to sickness absence.

Below is a table of the sickness absences for education personnel in Wales from 2018-19 to 2023-24. You will see that there are no figures for 2019/20 as this included the covid pandemic when most education professionals had to work from home during the lockdown periods, therefore calculating the sickness absence was going to be very difficult for the local authorities so it wasn't requested.

	Total sickness absence days	Days lost to Mental Health issues	Percentage lost to Mental Health issues	Total number of educational personnel who required sickness absence on mental health grounds
2018/19	565,413	144,900	25.6%	-
2020/21	357,083	103,006	28.8%	-
2021/22	608,110	127,324	20.9%	5,168
2022/23	553,059	129,165	23.4%	5,854
2023/24	590,413	151,169	25.6%	5,583

What this means in real terms is that in 2023/24, the equivalent of 775 education professionals were withdrawn from classrooms for that academic year due to stress related poor mental health²⁰.

As a result of the first two FOI responses in the table above, NEU Cymru conducted a Mental Health and Well-being survey in July 2021 and a follow-up survey in July 2023.

The 2021 survey attracted over 1,600 responses, and the 2023 survey attracted over 2,000 responses from workers across all job roles in schools, colleges and universities across Wales. Both surveys highlighted the strength of feeling amongst the education sector workforce on the impact of work-related issues on mental health and wellbeing.

The main findings from the 2023 survey indicate that:

- Excessive workload continued to be the leading cause of workplace stress and mental health issues. 92% of respondents regularly worked over their contracted hours – most feeling pressured to do so - with only 9% feeling that their workload was fully manageable. 73% of respondents said their workload had actually increased over the past 12 months (from 2022 to 2023).
- Despite efforts to implement the Welsh Government framework on the Whole School Approach to Wellbeing, negative workplace cultures persisted in over a third of all

²⁰ 151,169 divided by 195 academic year days = 775 FTE staff

workplaces. 27% of survey respondents felt they never have a voice or feel heard or listened to and over a third have witnessed unacceptable behaviours including bullying and emotional and verbal abuse.

- Support for workers experiencing poor mental health is sporadic at best. Only 28% of respondents said their workplace had a wellbeing policy and almost a fifth of those surveyed had unsupportive line managers.

In an ideal world, all workers should feel capable of handling the demands of their role. They should have achievable tasks within their contracted hours, and they should feel comfortable voicing concerns about their role, work, and environment, with the assurance that their concerns will be heard and addressed.

Almost all survey respondents felt that their workload was impacting negatively on their emotional health and wellbeing. Forty-three per cent (43%) of respondents felt pressured to work additional hours and that their workload is unmanageable with deadlines that are neither realistic nor achievable. Seventy-three per cent (73%) of respondents said their workload had actually increased during the 12 months from 2022 to 2023.

Maintaining a healthy workplace improves productivity, employee retention, and overall mental wellbeing. It involves collaboration among workers, managers, and wellbeing teams to enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of all employees. When asked if school was a positive place to work, the average rating was 5.7 out of 10 (where 1 is not positive at all and 10 is great place to work).

Over the 12 months leading up to the survey, 25% of survey respondents had taken time off work due to poor mental health. The main reasons given for their absences were due to stress, anxiety and/or depression, with a third citing work related issues and another third citing personal and work-related issues as the reason.

A worrying finding from the survey was that 56% of survey respondents (55% of which were classroom teachers) were planning on, or thinking of, leaving the profession.

In 2021, 44% were seriously considering leaving the profession, and 22% thinking about it – so the 2023 figures were better, however, those who were seriously considering leaving the profession might have left by the time the 2023 survey was conducted.

Even more worrying was that 18% of respondents said that they had had suicidal thoughts related to their work. This increased from 10% in 2021.

Absences due to mental health issues are inevitably going to have an impact on the continuity of teaching in schools and ultimately on standards.

Those education professionals who have been signed off with mental health issues don't want to be away from work. For many it is incredibly difficult to return to the role due to:

- a loss of confidence
- fear of a reprisal (of the pressures that caused them to become ill in the first instance)
- a concern for the educational wellbeing of their pupils
- the worry of slipping behind the curve of new initiatives and practices

Indeed, for a significant minority of individuals sickness absence is the first stage to the end of their careers as they never return to education.

Impact on delivering educational reforms

Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

Following the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunals (Wales) Act, education professionals have been faced with significant challenges in terms of implementation. This has partly been driven by the Code, which lacks clarity for the education workforce.

Overall, the Code is confusing for our members and needs to set out clearly what is required of them by law, in a way that is easily accessible to them. They need time to complete the requirements of the Code, set aside from their other duties. They also need training, which unambiguously explains the legal requirements of the legislation – suitable to their roles as school leaders, Additional Needs Learning Co-ordinators (ALNCo), class teachers, or support staff.

The reforms to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) legislation have been wide ranging and had a huge impact on the education system in Wales. These reforms have come at a time when there are other significant systemic challenges, including the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, the Covid-19 pandemic and qualifications reform. The education system has also struggled with challenges related to funding in a time of high-inflation and a cost of living crisis, whilst young people are struggling to access services to provide critical support, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and speech and language therapy, despite high incidence of children with ALN being identified as having speech and language or emotional and social difficulties²¹.

NEU Cymru agreed with the principles behind the legislation and would value a system with early intervention and support for children who have, or may have, additional learning needs. However, “early, timely and effective interventions”²² are only possible if there are education professionals there to support them – not spending precious time completing paperwork, when they could be supporting children and young people.

We welcome that the Welsh Government has recognised the impact the implementation of the Act is having on workload for staff across the education sector, and we ask that the recommendations from the ALNCo Task and Finish Group are implemented as soon as possible²³.

Members are consistently telling us that the workload is unmanageable, and they want to be focusing on delivering the early interventions for children, which is meant to be a core aim of Welsh Government policy relating to ALN. Instead, they are filling in paperwork, without sufficient time, training, or resource.

In a survey of members in March, only 1% of members told us their workload has decreased, with 73% telling us it has increased somewhat or substantially since March 2023.

Currently the lengthy Individual Development Plan (IDP) process is inhibitive and is causing significant workload challenges for our members, and expectations are inconsistent across Wales. Whilst the aim to avoid an adversarial relationship between parents and schools and local authorities is important, the current system is not working and the IDP needs to be more manageable. The current system does not result in enough support for children and young people and places greater expectations on schools than they are enabled to deliver.

Many members tell us it is taking seven (7) hours to complete one plan, with teachers struggling to coordinate all the essential experts who need to feed in, before having to exercise their duty to

²¹ [School Census - January 2024](#)

²² [ALN Act Explanatory Memorandum](#)

²³ [ALNCo Task & Finish Group Report](#)

decide. They also tell us they need more training on completing IDPs, and are very conscious they are a legal document, which they believe should be completed by someone with legal training.

The very nature of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act means that responsibilities which previously belonged to the local authorities, now sit with schools. This puts increased pressure on schools and is unsustainable.

Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill

Whilst we welcome the introduction of this Bill, we anticipate that it will have an adverse effect on staff, especially if staff aren't confident in teaching through the medium of Welsh. With Welsh Government introducing a minimum amount of Welsh language provision, the delivery, depends on the number of teaching staff that are confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh. If the mapping of school staff, to establish staff proficiency and confidence in teaching through the medium of Welsh, hasn't been completed (or started) then this needs to be undertaken immediately. The union has consistently raised this issue since our response to the 'School categories according to Welsh-medium provision' consultation back in 2021.

We surveyed our members in Wales on the proposals, and asked respondents to place themselves in one of seven Welsh speaking categories, e.g. *I am a confident, but not fluent, Welsh speaker, and would like more support to be confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh*. Fifty-five per cent (55%) of respondents who either speak a lot of Welsh, are confident, or fluent Welsh speakers said they'd like more support to be confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh.

With the aim being for all pupils to develop oral skills equivalent to level B2, at least, of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), we therefore believe that education staff would need to be synonymous with B2 at the very least, possibly C1 or even C2, to allow them to have enough confidence to be able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Cambridge English²⁴ say that learners take approximately 200 guided learning hours for a language learner to progress from one level of the CEFR to the next. So, to arrive at an outcome that's synonymous to level B2 from a starting point of level A1, will take between 500 and 600 guided learning hours in total.

However, there are several factors that can affect how long it will take to increase your level in the language, including:

- your language learning background
- the intensity of your study
- your age
- the amount of study/exposure outside of lesson times

If they were synonymous with level A2 at the start, which is:

- He/she can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to the areas of experience most immediately relevant to him/her (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, places of interest, employment, etc.).
- He/she can communicate in simple, everyday tasks requiring no more than a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
- He/she can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her past, environment and matters related to his/her immediate needs.

²⁴ ²⁴ [Cambridge English - Guided Learning Hours](#)

they would need between 320 and 400 guided learning hours to reach level B2, between 520 and 600 guided learning hours to reach level C2, and between 720 and 900 guided learning hours to reach level C1.

Unless Welsh Government are willing to invest in the upskilling of the current education workforce, experienced teachers who are not confident enough to teach through the medium of Welsh will leave the profession. In addition to this, recruiting teachers who are synonymous with level B2 at the very least, is going to be extremely difficult. This is already the case in the Secondary sector as can be seen in the number trainees who gained QTS in the priority subjects through the medium of Welsh in 2023-24.

With Welsh Government expecting that ITE partnerships work towards an intake of 30% of students preparing to teach through the medium of Welsh²⁵, 114 Primary and 317 Secondary PGCE trainees should have qualified as teachers in 2023-24. In addition to this, 79 Primary undergraduate trainees should also have qualified as teachers in 2023-24. According to the EWC ITE Students results 2023-24 figures²⁶ only 79 (69%) Primary and 65 (21%) Secondary PGCE trainees, and 46 (58%) Primary undergraduate trainees qualified.

This shows that there is a significant recruitment problem and that recruiting teachers who are synonymous with level B2 at the very least, is extremely difficult.

Curriculum for Wales

Whilst our members welcomed many aspects of the curriculum reform that enabled them to plan and teach creatively and responsively, their overwhelming message to us was the pace and timing of the reform. NEU Cymru accept that the roll out of the introduction was staggered, in theory giving schools time to plan and consider the changes required. NEU Cymru called for Welsh Government to slow down the programme of change, which included the new Curriculum for Wales, to enable educational establishments time to recover after the Covid pandemic, but this didn't happen.

The Curriculum for Wales, implemented in September 2022, increased the workload for our members because teachers had to invest more time in planning flexible, cross-disciplinary lessons, which required increased teamwork. Ongoing training is also essential for teachers to understand the curriculum, placing pressure on schools to provide support while managing regular teaching duties. Additionally, assessments now need to meet individual student needs, demanding more time and focus on skills and knowledge. Collaboration is crucial for connecting curriculum elements and creating cross-curricular approaches, which can be time-consuming for subject leaders and staff.

Too many major initiatives and changes were introduced concurrently, meaning that the time for considered planning and implementation just did not happen. Workload increased to keep pace with reform.

Our members deserved and still deserve time and space to ensure they have continued professional development and increased control in respect of their own pedagogical approaches to curriculum content, planning and delivery in their workplaces and across year groups.

Introducing new exam qualifications in Wales will significantly impact teacher and leadership workload. Educators will need to invest considerable time in understanding new specifications, marking criteria, and assessment methods, necessitating extensive retraining. The increased emphasis on coursework and project-based assessments will add to our members' workload and potentially lead to longer working hours, creating additional workload pressures.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

Whilst we haven't looked at data over the Covid period with regards to members resigning their membership, we have no doubt that those experienced members close to retirement age would have considered leaving the profession (possibly retiring) due to the amount of work required to plan and develop the curriculum, a curriculum they probably wouldn't get the opportunity to teach, especially those members in Secondary schools.

Impact on teachers and wider workforce

One of the Welsh Government's well-being objectives in its Programme for Government is to "*Build an economy based on the principles of fair work*". Part of the Welsh Government's long-term programme of education reform included in the Programme for Government states that it wants to "*Develop a sustainable model for supply teaching that has fair work at its heart.*"

The increase in the number of support staff in Wales (from 16,556 in 2010 to 39,204 in 2024²⁷) and the rise in the number and strength of teaching agencies has led to an increase in schools utilising teaching assistants (TAs) and agency workers to cover absent teachers, to the detriment of qualified supply teacher members. This problem has continued to grow over the last 14 years and more of our supply teacher members are either not getting work, are forced to leave the profession or, even with the introduction of the new Welsh Government Commercial Delivery (WGCD) Supply Agency Framework Agreement for supply teachers (September 2023), where 41 agencies are currently on the framework, are being forced to register with agencies that have significantly lower rates of pay, to get work.

Nearly all local authorities no longer have a supply teacher pool which would pay teachers the correct rate based on their experience, and have turned exclusively to agencies to provide their schools with supply teacher cover. Because of this, many leave the profession as they cannot find '*fair work*' as the rates of pay do not cover their living costs. Most teaching agencies do not provide any lifelong learning for supply teachers and are therefore not providing '*opportunities for progression*' and not '*upskilling their workforce*'. This means that agencies aren't complying with the fifth area of action in the Welsh Government's Plan for Employability and Skills (point 45 – "*support workers to upskill or reskill to access a wider range of job opportunities*", and point 48 – "*by improving quality and access to skills based, formal, and informal adult learning and support progression.*")

Currently, and over the past 12 years, through Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) monies NEU Cymru has aided progression and maximised supply teacher members' skills by increasing their employability by providing them with essential transferable training which in turn raises the skills of the workforce and increases their employability in another sector if they leave education. If they remain in the Education sector, then the skills learnt can be seen as '*in work progression and career development*' and could enable them to gain an employment contract in a school with a local authority. Alternatively, they could look to gain more experiences in different sectors of education, such as training to be able to teach in the Primary sector when their expertise lies in the Secondary sector.

As mentioned previously, the increase in the number of support staff in Wales over the past 14 years, and the costs incurred in employing a supply teacher through an agency or the local authority has led to an increase in schools utilising teaching assistants to cover absent teachers. Most teaching assistants and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) do not have a Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) qualification and therefore should not be allowed to teach. Even if they have QTS, they should not teach as they are not employed as teachers. The practice of using TAs and HLTAs to teach pupils in the absence of a classroom teacher is widely used in schools across Wales.

²⁷ [EWC Workforce Statistics 2024](#)

Addressing recruitment and retention

NEU Cymru have been very clear that in many cases we do not need to reiterate what the issues are, they need no further identification or discussion. What we need to see now is movement, forward planning and evidence of progress towards securing the improvement of the myriads of issues connected directly to workforce recruitment and retention.

We cannot simply ignore the financial implications of securing such improvement and whilst NEU Cymru welcomes any time taken for cross party working, unless increased and sustained investment is secured, we hinder the ability of all stakeholders to urgently address key issues in ways that genuinely meet the needs of the workforce and all the learners they teach.

This must be addressed urgently by Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Associations and all 22 local authorities across Wales. There will be no resolution to major issues without resource, and resource costs.

Critically all evidence submissions will inevitably just continue to be talked about with no impact or change for those working and learning in educational settings across Wales.

We recognise that education is not the only consideration for Government and local authorities however, the education service is crucial to the health of the Welsh economy. Developing the skills and potential of young people in Wales is key to economic success. Investing properly in education and educators is not only vital for educators themselves, but for the parents, young people and communities supported by our education service.

NEU Cymru welcomes the Government report into the review of Local Authority Funding Formulae²⁸. The report recommendations need to result in enacted legislative change by Welsh Government in order that clear, consistent and fit for purpose formulae are used in all local authorities.

Reverse the pay cuts to secure recruitment and retention

The pay cuts have hugely damaged the competitive position of teaching, driving recruitment and retention problems. There is a clear and direct link between pay cuts against inflation and the recruitment and retention issues affecting education in Wales.

The 2024 IWPRB report included references to worrying signs on recruitment and retention. There are particularly high wastage rates in the first five years of a teachers' career, with a quarter of teachers leaving²⁹. The number of teachers leaving to pursue a different career, as opposed to those leaving due to early retirement, has increased significantly³⁰.

Healthy levels of recruitment and retention will not be achieved unless the pay cuts against inflation since 2010 are reversed. This must be followed by establishing pay levels to properly value teachers and ensure that teaching can compete effectively with other graduate professions.

Teachers and school leaders, as well as potential recruits and returners to the profession, know that the pay cuts since 2010 have hugely cut the real value of teacher pay. To stop the loss of existing teachers and school leaders, and repair the pipeline of recruits to the profession, a major and fully funded pay correction is needed in the shape of above-inflation pay increases applied equally to all pay points and allowances. NEU Cymru has submitted evidence to the IWPRB stating clearly that pay restoration needs to be a Welsh Government priority if they want to secure recruitment and retention of teachers.

²⁸ [Review of the school funding formula](#)

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ [IWPRB 5th Report - pages 33-36](#)

It is always possible to identify variations in the extent of the recruitment and retention problems across different parts of the country, subjects and sectors. There is a need for a clear, undifferentiated pay rise applied equally to all pay points and allowances. NEU Cymru is completely opposed to any targeting pay based on location, subject, medium or phase. Such an approach is divisive and would add to pay inequality. We need an unambiguous whole market signal on teacher and school leader pay to secure healthy levels of recruitment and retention to the profession.

For us as a union there are some clear actions which will help address this challenge, support the workforce and support children and young people in their learning. We believe that the Welsh Government should consider:

- A moratorium on redundancies – we need more staff in the workforce, not fewer
- Workload reduction – to enable more time to support children with their range of needs. The actions on workload so far have hardly touched the classroom teacher and support staff
- Increased access to local specialist behaviour provision, ALN and mental health services to support pupils and staff
- Funding for increased pastoral teams in schools
- Funding for more support staff in every classroom
- Clear training and guidance to support consistency
- Support for the whole workforce – teaching assistants, teachers and leaders need access to tailored support
- Addressing inequality

Reduce workload

The Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills recognises that workload and working hours in education are widely considered unsustainable and detrimental to children's learning. Work/life balance entails supporting teachers in successfully managing their professional responsibilities alongside their personal interests and commitments. A good work/life balance is key to staff effectiveness and satisfaction, which in turn supports pupil learning. It can aid in recruiting and retaining more motivated staff by offering them greater control over their working lives. Regular surveys on workload and wellbeing should be mandated, and schools should dedicate time for staff to address workload issues during Inset days. The School Teachers Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document should require schools to take decisive action against excessive workload. These measures are essential for improving wellbeing and work/life balance.

Measures that reduce workload associated with implementing the new Curriculum for Wales, changing exam qualifications, and teaching the Welsh language in schools will reduce teacher workload to more manageable levels, increase morale, improve teacher professionalism, and help reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession.

PPA time is allocated for teachers to plan lessons, prepare materials, assess student work and undertake other professional responsibilities away from the pupils in their care.

Time is needed outside the classroom to support ALN, for planning and preparation, for assessment, for training, for collaboration. We know greater expectations of collaboration are coming to schools, as the middle tier is reshaped. But there needs to be a realistic understanding of the demands in a classroom. PPA time needs to be increased, and more flexibility given automatically, to undertake PPA time at home.

Currently the lengthy Individual Development Plan (IDP) process is inhibitive and is causing significant workload challenges for our members, and expectations are inconsistent across Wales. Whilst the aim to avoid an adversarial relationship between parents and schools and local authorities is important, the current system is not working and the IDP needs to be more manageable. The current system does not result in enough support for children and young people and places greater expectations on schools than they are enabled to deliver.

Many members tell us it is taking seven (7) hours to complete one plan, with teachers struggling to coordinate all the essential experts who need to feed in, before having to exercise their duty to decide.

Until workload is reduced, and teachers have a reasonable work/life balance, the Welsh Government will struggle to hit its recruitment and retention targets, which will only add to the problem. Significant reductions in workload, along with improvements in pay, are vital to ensure the necessary supply of the teachers and school leaders the education service needs.

We believe that the Welsh Government should consider:

- An increase in PPA across the teaching profession from 10 per cent to at least 20 per cent
- Advising school leaders that PPA time can be taken in one weekly unit and away from the school site, upon mutual agreement between the teacher and head teacher.
- Additional time for Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) holders who should be allocated a reasonable amount of time during the school day for the purpose of discharging their TLR duties in addition to their PPA time.

Initial Teacher Education – Welsh in education workforce plan³¹

Launched in May 2022, the 10-year plan sets out the steps the Welsh Government, along with its partners, will take over the next 10 years to increase the number of teachers and support workers able to work through the medium of Welsh and teach Welsh. The plan also includes actions to support the development of the Welsh language skills and expertise of the existing workforce.

The plan's objectives and key actions include:

- increasing the number of teachers able to teach Welsh as a subject and other subjects through the medium of Welsh
- increasing the number of practitioners able to work through the medium of Welsh who are supporting learners
- developing all practitioners' Welsh language skills and expertise to teach Welsh and through the medium of Welsh

Whilst it states that Welsh Government will '*continually monitor and evaluate the actions taken and formally review the plan after 5 years*', with three years having elapsed, and having read the latest update to the plan (November 2024) it would be good to get some Welsh Government feedback on the progress of the plan and whether any amendments need to be made bearing in mind that in 2023/24, only 69% of the Primary PGCE target, 21% of the Secondary PGCE target and 58% of the Primary undergraduate Welsh medium teacher target was achieved.

³¹ [Welsh in education workforce plan 2022](#)

Tackling Behaviour

As can be seen in the 'Factors affecting retention section, eighty-seven per cent (87%) of survey respondents said there is a problem with pupil behaviour and the way behaviour is dealt with in their schools. NEU Cymru members were specific about the causes of pupil behaviour and what needs to be done to address this issue. According to NEU Cymru members, their school needs:

- More support for pupils with Additional Learning Needs
- More support for pupils with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Better access to support services, e.g. CAMHS
- More support for Senior Leadership Teams from their local authorities
- Qualified teachers, rather than support staff, providing cover for absent colleagues

In addition to the school's needs, NEU Cymru members believe that staff need:

- More support for children with Additional Learning Needs and ACEs
- More support staff in the classroom
- More support from the local authority
- Opportunities to attend training to help them deal with difficult or challenging pupil behaviour in the workplace
- A pastoral care team

All the needs above need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, and it will be interesting to see the actions that will be taken as a result of the Behaviour Summit that was held on Thursday, 22nd May.

Our members still tell us that there are variable funding arrangements in place across Wales to access support for children with ALN.

In a recent survey carried out by NEU Cymru, when asked if there was enough money available to ensure that students with ALN receive the education they deserve, eighty-six per cent (86%) said that the school / college needs more or urgent funding to provide all the support they need.

Funding should be clear, and universal access to specialist support services is critical to help identify a child's needs and the ensure the right provision for them is available to all schools. However, currently, there is no clear mechanism for schools to access funding. This postcode lottery is felt by schools and families alike, leaving teachers to do their best for children, without support from local authorities.

Greater access to local support services to support children with ALN, ACEs, and other wellbeing needs, is critical. Specialist support is hard to access, and costs are high. Block funding is not supporting the varied needs of students. Therefore, we believe funding should follow the child and be targeted to their, and the education setting's, needs.

Once again, we ask Welsh Government to prioritise educational funding and investment, as a matter of urgency.

Strategic education workforce plan

The Cabinet Secretary for Education's written statement on developing a strategic education workforce plan (January 2025) was welcomed. In her statement she admitted that we have 'issues in recruitment and retention, and concerns around the wellbeing of teachers, school leaders and support staff'.

She also said:

"Increasing workload pressures are a theme I hear repeatedly in my engagement with the profession. This is impacting on time and opportunity both to participate in professional learning and to undertake relevant planning and administrative tasks.

Society's expectations of what we expect from our schools has changed. The cost-of-living crisis, increasing complex health needs of learners, and changes in society's expectations of what schools should do, all have an impact. Pressures on wider public services mean children need greater levels of support to be ready to engage with learning.

Leaders and practitioners highlight that this has changed the experience and nature of teaching, and the role of a teacher. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants are spending more time addressing these issues, which has a knock-on effect on teaching and learning.

This is beginning to impact on the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. All staff – leaders, teaching professionals, support staff - play a critical role in the life of the school and the progress of children and young people. It is critical to get the balance right in terms of workload, experience, as well as pay and conditions."

It's good to see that the Minister recognises that there are workload pressures, that children need greater levels of support to be ready to engage with learning and that leaders, teachers and teaching assistants are spending more time addressing these issues which is impacting on the attractiveness of teaching as a profession.

To address the issues that she has mentioned, substantial investment is needed.