

TRR 22

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: Gymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru a Chymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg Cymru

Response from: Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales



WLGA & ADEW Inquiry response

06 June 2025

WLGA and ADEW response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

We are The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); a politically led cross-party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales. The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

Our ultimate goal is to promote, protect, support, and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

This response has been informed by the knowledge and expertise of the Association of the Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW). As such this is a joint consultation response on behalf of the WLGA and ADEW and represents the collective views of local authorities in Wales. The response also includes contributions from the local authority Human Resources Directors Network (HRD) and National Neurodivergence team within the WLGA.

Mae'r ymateb yma ar gael yn Gymraeg / This response is available in Welsh



RESPONSE

1. Barriers to recruitment: Intake into Initial Teacher Education (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).

The WLGA and ADEW are concerned by the current recruitment challenges faced by the education sector in Wales. The Secondary Recruitment and Retention research project group recently reported that *“there was approximately a 62% shortfall in recruitment to the 1-year- PGCE Secondary ITE programme with only 424 of the 1109 places allocated being filled”*¹ in 2023-24. The challenges are even greater in the Welsh medium sector and in recruiting teachers that can teach Welsh as a second language across other schools. ADEW colleagues are particularly concerned about Welsh medium recruitment for Mathematics and Science teachers. The lack of ITE provision across mid-Wales is also a concern. Local authorities are reporting critical shortages in the following areas:

- Welsh language
- Mathematics
- Science (especially Chemistry and Physics)
- ICT
- Technology
- Geography
- Modern foreign languages

As outlined in recent evidence provided by the WLGA to the Independent Welsh Pay Review Board (IWPRB), there is a strong view that recruitment and retention is multi-factorial and salary and allowance ranges are just one part. Cultural and environmental factors such as pupil behaviour, workload and the increased demands of teaching are all impacting on wellbeing and are important influencers of recruitment and retention. Reports from within the teaching profession, as well as other negative press, is having a negative impact on recruitment. There is a strong public perception of poor pupil behaviour, pupils having complex needs and an increasing pastoral burden which is deterring prospective applicants. Budget pressures and an expectation to do more with less, are also potential factors.

¹ [A future teaching profession for Wales by Cardiff Metropolitan University - December 2024](#)



Recruitment and retention challenges are exacerbated in rural areas, particularly where new teachers or trainees aren't familiar with the area or need to depend upon public transport. Local authorities are also seeing a decrease in the number of courses provided due to restructures or closures of university departments as a result of financial pressures. Again, the negative impact of this seems to be exacerbated in universities that typically serve rural authorities. In North Wales for example, there are reported shortages in Technology and Maths teachers which may be linked to fewer courses now running at Bangor University.

Broader challenges such as the lack of affordable housing and increasing costs of living also impact ITE recruitment, particularly in areas that have been hit by the increases in second-home ownership and holiday homes. Typically, these are areas with higher numbers of graduates from Welsh-speaking communities who currently find it difficult to compete with the rising house prices locally. This in turn places additional pressure on Welsh language education workforce recruitment.

There are similar challenges for schools serving pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Specialist provision settings require specific experience and qualifications, narrowing the recruitment field even further. The commitment by Welsh Government to review the salaries for ALN Co-ordinators in Wales is welcomed to support the further development of this role.

Recruitment challenges aren't limited to ITE recruitment. Local authorities are also reporting challenges in appointing suitable candidates into senior posts too. These challenges have largely affected faith, Welsh medium and small rural primary schools, although some secondary schools have also faced difficulties attracting applicants to senior leader posts. Faith schools encounter additional difficulties with leadership recruitment due to the requirement for alignment with specific religious values.

Another factor which is affecting both recruitment and retention is the competition from other professions. Other graduate careers are seen as more attractive due to better pay, flexibility, or perceived status. The post pandemic effect, where flexible working has become more available, is also making other professions more desirable. Teaching has limited options to support flexible working, but the pandemic altered working patterns and expectations for many. The ability to work flexibly and occasionally from home, is now a big factor in an individual's career and employment decisions.



Several councils also advocate the need to offer greater flexibility to qualify in Wales with Assessment Only routes into teaching and reintroducing schemes such as Teach First. In England this greater flexibility exists with those having worked as unqualified teachers having routes to secure [qualified teacher status](#) through an assessment only programme. While ADEW understands that Education Workforce Council's (EWC) role is as an accrediting body, we believe that WG, EWC and others should be proactively working with providers to develop more flexible routes given the recruitment challenges facing our schools.

Providing targeted financial incentives and enhanced professional development opportunities would help overcome some of the barriers. Providing high-quality teacher education and building strong societal respect for teachers could also be beneficial to the sector.

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

Local Authorities are reporting a significant rise in school workforce redundancies compared with previous years. A recent budget pressures survey found that in 2024/25, twenty Local Authorities reported having a significant increase in teacher redundancies, both at voluntary and compulsory levels. School workforce reductions are also due to a significant number of fixed term contracts not being renewed, leavers not being replaced, and maternity cover not being sourced due to current budget positions.

There is also a problem with teachers leaving their posts after only a few years. Many teachers leave within the first few years due to lack of support and mentoring. Teachers who leave after a few years of teaching also report unmanageable workloads impacting on health and wellbeing and work-life balance. Early career support should be strengthened and workload protected until teachers become more experienced. Many Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are entering the profession underprepared, with ITE often not equipping them for the realities of the roles, including the behavioural challenges they may face. ITE training can be fragmented and overly focused on irrelevant paperwork or academic studies, leaving less experienced teachers with limited practical exposure. Councils have suggested spreading the support over the first three years of teaching, citing some examples in England of impactful mentoring programmes for new teachers and flexible working arrangements to improve retention.



The education sector is currently experiencing reform fatigue with teachers reporting the follow key factors as issues which affect job satisfaction and retention; increased workload including more administrative tasks and additional work in implementing reforms, staff shortages including support staff which reduces teacher capacity, behaviour including pupils exhibiting higher levels of defiance and aggression in schools. Persistent pupil absence also adds to teacher stress and undermines classroom morale.

More than one Council has questioned the role of EWC and its effectiveness in promoting teaching as a profession. EWC claims that it actively promotes careers in education in Wales through the [Educators Wales website](#) and advice service. This is funded by Welsh Government but it is not clear the effectiveness or the impact resulting from the investment.

3. School Leaders: specific factors affecting recruitment and retention of school leaders.

The factors negatively affecting the recruitment and retention of school leaders tend to be due to the demanding nature of the roles themselves, as opposed to related to pay. The pay structures for school leaders are well understood and experienced teachers who take on additional responsibilities are rewarded and paid well. As referenced in recent evidence to the Committee on school improvement, it is financially challenging where headteacher salary ranges are far ahead of everyone else in the system. A significant number of primary and secondary headteachers for example earn more than senior council officers who hold them to account. This makes it difficult for local authorities to be able to afford to second staff from schools due to the disparity in terms and conditions, as well as pay. Any review of pay awards should therefore consider this to avoid any unintended consequences for recruitment and retention within local authorities.

Some Governing Bodies are currently increasing headteacher pay ranges outside of their schools grouping to address retention challenges which is resulting in significantly inflated pay ranges in comparison to the size of the school. A recruitment and retention allowance could provide Governing Bodies with a means to facilitate retaining headteachers who may otherwise leave, whilst ensuring that no changes are made to the actual grade of the salary range. It is suggested that recruitment allowances should be for a temporary period of up to 2 years and should not be subject to safeguarding arrangements in place under the STPC(W)D.



Councils are reporting on a decrease in the number of applicants for headteacher and deputy headteacher roles. They are also seeing fewer experienced applicants for senior posts. Some headteacher applicants are put off by roles where there are some teaching requirements alongside headteacher responsibilities, again this is more prevalent in smaller schools. As pay is not the only incentive, school leaders need increased support and clearer career progression pathways to improve retention and progression.

The age profile of headteachers and senior leaders is a risk, however leaders retiring is not the only challenge. The local authority HRD network also note that school leaders are leaving the profession to take up alternative professions. Reducing the workload for senior leadership and reducing national pressures would help. The feedback from all levels of the sector is that reducing school budgets leads to a smaller workforce but that this leaves more work for everyone else to complete. Those leaving the profession have stated that the workload is excessive which in turn has an impact on their mental health and work-life balance.

There are also issues with the leadership pipeline in schools. One significant barrier is the current slowdown and inefficiencies in the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) process. Unlike in the past, when the Welsh Government regularly sent lists of potential candidates to local authorities, there is now a lack of clear communication. This has led to delays in the leadership pipeline, with a two-year cycle limiting the availability of future headteachers. It is felt the cohort size could have been doubled to meet demand. Furthermore, there are some concerns where local authority staff feel that deserving candidates, such as Assistant Headteachers in Welsh-medium schools, have not been accepted on to the NPQH programme. Local authorities would therefore welcome a stronger role in validating and supporting applications to ensure the right candidates are progressing. This is particularly important in shortage areas, for example in the Welsh medium sector, faith sector and for applicants from smaller rural schools.

ADEW colleagues have also raised the issue of limited career development opportunities influencing recruitment and retention. There should be a clear and ambitious pathway for career development and opportunities for professional growth for senior leaders, such as clear steps for headteachers to become School Improvement specialists, Executive Headteachers or system leaders.



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

Areas of the education workforce in Wales are underrepresented in terms of ethnicity, gender, transgender, age, disability and sexual orientation. Targeted recruitment campaigns and support networks as well as diversity training and inclusive hiring practices could help improve workforce diversity. Stronger promotion of teaching as a viable and rewarding career path for underrepresented groups, including targeted outreach, mentorship, and support throughout teacher training and progression into leadership would also help increase workforce diversity.

Recruitment and Retention – A Neurodivergent perspective

The National Neurodivergence Team funded by Welsh Government and hosted by the WLGA works closely with the neurodivergent community across Wales, local authorities, local Autism/Neurodivergent leads, Health Boards and advisory groups. As such, this team also offers a unique perspective on some of the recruitment and retention challenges for neurodivergent teachers. From a neurodivergent teacher's perspective, a school environment and necessary reasonable adjustments can be difficult to navigate. The lack of flexibility in schools can make it difficult to recruit or retain neurodivergent teachers, which contributes to a smaller and less diverse workforce. There are many aspects of school life which initially appeal to the neurodivergent community. This could include factors like the regular timetabled structure of a school day, the opportunity to work and focus on one subject of significant interest and expertise, and the opportunity to work in familiar environments, particularly for recent graduates.

However, anecdotally many teachers who are neurodivergent do not receive the support or adjustments that enable them to thrive while working in schools. In many cases, this could be because the teachers themselves are undiagnosed or are more likely to avoid disclosing a diagnosis due to the fear of stigma or due to the general lack of understanding around neurodivergence in adults. Many undiagnosed teachers are waiting more than 3 years for diagnostic tests for Autism or neurodivergence, with waiting times of 5 years within some Health Board regions.

Training on what reasonable adjustments are necessary and what is protected under the Equalities Act would help in building this diversity within the workforce. There may be simple adjustments that can support neurodivergent



teachers at the recruitment and interview stages. One example is providing interview questions beforehand, understanding differences in communication and ensuring interviewers are clear and concise throughout the interview process. Support for trainee teachers during placement would also need to be tailored to ensure successful outcomes. The National Neurodivergence team also advise that emphasis on a neuroinclusive environment, which takes into consideration communication and sensory processing differences, are essential in improving teacher wellbeing. Having a strengths-based approach to support neurodivergent teachers would also help increase retention. Every neurodivergent teacher will present in a different way and may need different reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Developing supportive, inclusive, working environments would help recruit and retain more teachers with diverse strengths. For more information from the National Neurodivergence Teams please see the links in Appendix 1.

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

Teacher shortages and retention issues negatively impact learners by reducing the quality of teaching and increasing class sizes. Teacher shortages also reduce the depth and breadth of the curriculum offer, as schools are unable to run certain subjects due to a lack of qualified staff. The narrowing of subject choices and inconsistent teaching quality risk widening inequalities and diminishing the overall educational experience. Increasingly, lessons are being delivered by non-specialist teachers, meaning students are sometimes taught by individuals with little or no subject-specific knowledge. This undermines the quality of teaching and limits learners' understanding and engagement.

Reduced school budgets make it difficult to recruit permanent members of staff and it leads to higher staff turnover. The current budget pressures also result in schools cutting support staff which has a detrimental effect on education provision, teacher capacity and staff wellbeing. The targeted interventions around behaviour, attendance and pastoral support that non-teaching staff provide play a fundamental role in improving pupil outcomes for all. In schools that are struggling, there tends to be a higher rate of staff sickness absence which in turns places more reliance on supply teaching which is costly and affects the consistency of the teaching, especially where supply staff cannot match the specialisms needed. Moreover, there is shortage of supply staff in many rural areas which also has an adverse effect on pupils. There is a higher turnover of staff in schools serving low-income communities



which in turn widens the attainment gap. Investing in improving teacher wellbeing and professional development would lead to improved educational outcomes for learners.

6. 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.

Implementing several significant educational reforms over a short period of time has been challenging. However, the workforce has responded positively to these major changes and have developed effective collaborative practices which has enabled them to work effectively on many national priorities. As mentioned earlier however, the sector is experiencing reform fatigue and a commitment to keep embedding reform through impactful professional learning, and not introducing any new reform, would be welcomed.

It is difficult to quantify the precise impact of each of the individual reforms on teacher recruitment and retention, but the following areas have been identified as possible contributors to these challenges:

- There are some concerns that curriculum reform may require teachers to work outside of their subject specialisms which is off-putting to some prospective teachers and causes existing teachers some stress and additional work.
- As mentioned earlier, the decline in ITE enrolment and critical gaps in key subjects places a further strain on schools' capacity to implement all reforms effectively.
- Developing a new curriculum and preparing for new qualifications is a lot of additional work on top of existing work priorities.
- High levels of staff sickness can lead to young people being taught by a number of different supply teachers which can be particularly difficult for pupils with ALN/vulnerable pupils and makes it harder for all teachers to achieve better educational outcomes.

7. Impact on teachers and wider workforce: including impact on use of teaching assistants and support staff, effect on use of supply teachers.

Teacher shortages lead to increased reliance on teaching assistants and supply teachers, which reduces the overall quality and consistency of the teaching and educational outcomes. The growing reliance on teaching assistants, especially



(HLTAs) for other duties beyond their remit, such as cover in some cases, also means that key interventions are delayed. The shortfalls in school budgets however also mean a reduction in school support staff as schools struggle to maintain the necessary teacher pupil ratios. This in turn places added pressure on classroom teachers which is likely to negatively impact retention. Recruiting teaching assistants is also challenging when the pay for these roles is comparatively low and yet the demands on teaching assistants are increasing.

The quality and availability of supply teachers, especially in secondary schools, is also a growing concern, with many schools struggling to secure suitably qualified or experienced individuals. This inconsistency impacts teaching quality, learner progress, and staff morale. Teachers are often stretched as they are needed to cover absent colleagues or manage even larger workloads.

8. 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.

Councils have stated that improving professional development, improving support systems and reducing teacher workload would all improve recruitment and retention. Specifically, the following actions should be prioritised:

- Implementing comprehensive professional development programmes and making teaching an ambitious pathway for graduates.
- Improving collaboration with key stakeholders and partners to expand access to training.
- Providing strong mentorship, reducing timescales and increasing wellbeing support to NQTs and early career teachers.
- Providing specialised training for teaching staff to support neurodiverse learners and pupils with ALN, and equipping them with the skills to implement universal provision effectively.
- Addressing workload issues through better resource allocation and administrative support to help retain teachers.

The Welsh Government will need to develop innovative strategies to address the stark decline in ITE enrolment and address the critical shortages in key subjects, including shortages in the number of teachers who are able to deliver on the ambitious aims of Cymraeg 2050 and the upcoming Welsh Language and Education Bill. Additional work is needed with Further Education colleges and Universities to promote the teaching profession and encourage graduates to train as teachers. Welsh



Government must also ensure that all pay increases, and targeted initiatives are fully funded to avoid school headcount reductions. Any additional costs from educational reforms, whether direct or indirect, must be fully funded on an on-going basis by the Welsh Government.

The HRD network has also suggested that local authorities should review their own coaching & mentoring models and recruitment and retention strategies with a view to enhancing existing practice. Potential strategies could include soft and hard federations, executive headships, and 'grow your own' models for teachers, as well as opportunities for bespoke leadership programmes.

As a sector, more could also be done to develop a positive narrative around teaching as a profession, including celebrating successes and sharing positive stories with the wider public. Positive media campaigns highlighting the rewarding aspects of teaching and showcasing success stories would also help. Teachers advocating for the profession themselves and modelling teaching as a fulfilling vocation for pupils is also likely to influence young people who are considering becoming teachers.

Appendix 1 – Links from the National Neurodivergence team

[I am a teacher or Early Years leader - Niwrowahaniaeth Cymru | Neurodivergence Wales | National Neurodivergence Team](#)

["Fostering Inclusion: How School Leaders Are Transforming Work Environments for Teachers with Special Needs and Disabilities" - Neuroteachers](#)

["There's Only So Much the School Can Change About Itself ... Before You Need to Change Something About Yourself"—a Qualitative Analysis of the Experiences of Neurodivergent Student Teachers | Autism in Adulthood](#)

[Final-Report-ACEN-2023-Grant-Becoming-and-Flourishing-as-a-Neurodivergent-Teacher.pdf](#)