

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: Cyngor y Gweithlu Addysg
Response from: Education Workforce Council

Dear colleagues

Inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Retention – written evidence from the Education Workforce Council (EWC)

Introduction

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

- The EWC's Register of Education Practitioners (the Register) - offering comprehensive intelligence on workforce composition and trends over the past 25 years¹, our Register includes information not captured elsewhere (including in relation to supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and education professionals working across independent, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and non-maintained settings²).
- Our role in accrediting programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales and, based on national ITE intake allocations provided by Welsh Government, working to distribute numbers to accredited programmes and pathways and thereafter monitor recruitment monthly.
- Administering the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) and publishing annual data in this regard.
- Engagement with registrants, employers, agencies and other stakeholders from across Wales, including leading a number of national workforce surveys and policy events.

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

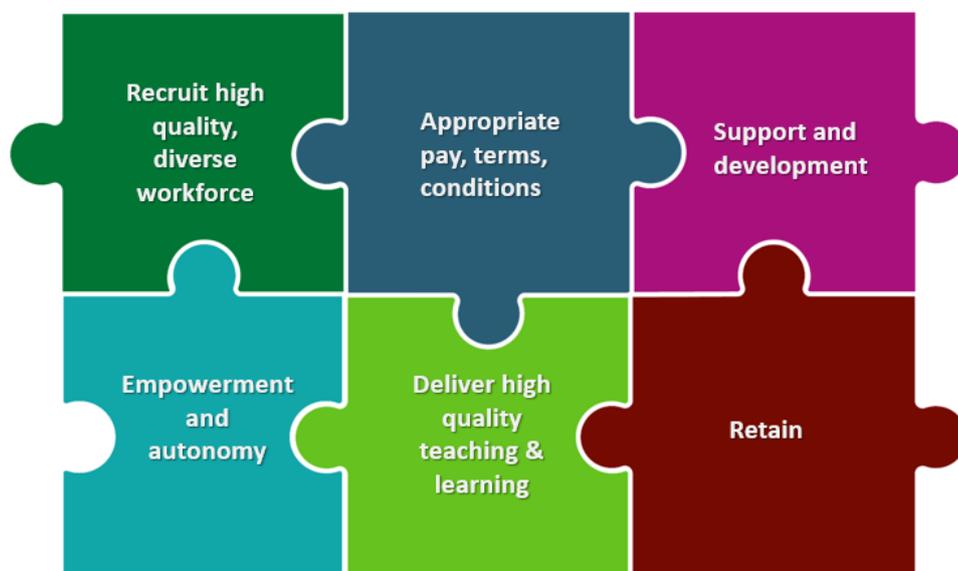
² Unlike the School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC), the Register provides real-time data on the registered education workforce. The register also captures movements between roles, sectors, and settings over time (while the SWAC provides a snapshot of the workforce at a specific point in time).

- Our work to promote careers in the education professions, for example, by attending general or targeted careers/recruitment events and meetings and directly engaging with individuals, community groups, providers and employers.

As an independent body, the EWC provides authoritative and impartial insight into the education workforce. We act in the public interest and are uniquely placed to highlight issues and opportunities across the system. Our core interest lies in ensuring a sustainable, high-quality education workforce.

Creating the Conditions for a thriving teaching profession

We advocate for a system that attracts the right number of suitably qualified and diverse practitioners, provides them attractive pay and conditions, supports their professional growth, empowers them to thrive in their roles and encourages them to remain in the profession. We believe that creating the conditions in which practitioners can deliver high quality teaching and learning (and experience long-term career satisfaction), is essential to improving both recruitment and retention within the profession.



Teacher recruitment

Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced globally. According to UNESCO's [2024 Global Report on Teachers](#), there is a significant shortage of teachers around the world. The report estimates that an additional 44 million primary and secondary teachers will be needed by 2030 to meet educational demands.

In Wales, despite a sustained national effort to promote the teaching profession and boost recruitment, the number of individuals registered to work as teachers has fallen over the

past decade. Between 2015 and 2025³, the overall number of school teachers registered with the EWC fell by 5.6%, from 37,355 to 35,266. Our Register data suggests that this reduction is mainly driven by recruitment challenges, rather than retention problems. Crucially, the inflow of new teachers into the profession has not been sufficient to replace those leaving.

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

Newly Qualified Teachers Working in Wales by Country of Training (2020–2025)

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Number	%										
Trained in Wales	873	75.3	883	74.5	1,121	76.0	1,093	80.0	1,055	83.9	984	85.4
Trained in England	287	24.7	303	25.5	354	24.0	273	20.0	203	16.1	168	14.6
Total	1,160	100	1,186	100	1,475	100	1,366	100	1,258	100	1,152	100

Primary

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

Secondary

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

³ Note that 2025 Register data included within this submission is unpublished and unverified. Our detailed Education Workforce Statistics document will be published later in 2025.

secondary ITE in 2023/24 was 1,056 (this remained the same for 2024/25 and has been slightly reduced, to 1,037, for 2025/26).

Specific areas of concern in teacher recruitment

Recruitment in priority subject areas (secondary)

Our most recent (2024) QTS data highlights the recruitment challenges in priority subject areas, with only a small number of individuals enrolling on ITE programmes and subsequently and being awarded QTS. For example, in 2024, across Wales, QTS awards (set against the programme allocations agreed by Welsh Government) were made to just 27 Mathematics (136), 20 Welsh (87), seven Physics (67), seven Chemistry (67), and 11 Modern Foreign Languages (69) students. Some of these numbers are the lowest that EWC has seen in our 20+ years of administering the award of QTS.

Practitioners teaching outside their specialist subject areas

Practitioners who are working outside the subject area in which they were initially trained are a stable and longstanding feature of the Welsh education workforce, with Qualified Teacher Status being non-age and non-subject specific. The Register shows no increase over time in the number of teachers working outside their original area of specialism, however, due to the current recruitment issues this picture could change, with potential negative implications for teaching quality, professional identity, and long-term retention.

Our 2025 Register data shows that 19.2% of maths teachers, 22.1% of English teachers and 56.1% of IT teachers were trained in a different subject. There are particularly high numbers of teachers working outside their specific subject areas in the science subjects, however, in considering this data it is important to remember that, within the sciences, many teachers are delivering broad, general curriculum rather than teaching a single discipline in isolation⁴. In 2025, 56% of teachers employed to teach physics had not trained as physics teachers. Similarly, 50.8% of chemistry teachers and 41.4% of biology teachers had not trained in these subjects. Many teachers working in ALN provision (either in special schools or in ALN roles within mainstream settings) have not undertaken specialist initial teacher education in additional learning needs.

Cross subject deployment is not permitted in a number of countries, in Scotland for example, teachers are registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland to

⁴ It is common, for example, for a biology or chemistry specialist to be timetabled to teach physics, especially at Key Stage 3 or within integrated science courses.

specific subjects and phases and are not permitted to teach beyond their area of specialism.

Welsh medium

Ensuring a sufficient supply of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh continues to be a significant challenge. Despite a range of initiatives aimed at increasing Welsh medium recruitment, our data shows that the number of Welsh-speaking teachers and those able to work through the medium of Welsh has remained largely static for many years, standing at 26.9% of the workforce in 2025. Welsh Government's aspiration for 30% of ITE recruits to be trained through the medium of Welsh is not being realised. This is in spite of a range of initiatives designed to increase Welsh medium recruitment, including Welsh Government's (2022) Welsh in Education Workforce Plan.

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

Ethnic diversity

In the 2021 Census, the non-White population in Wales made up approximately 6.2% of the total population, while Welsh Government data shows that over 15% of pupils in schools across Wales are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds⁵. However, as of 2025, only 2.1% of registered teachers identify as such. A more diverse teaching workforce is essential to ensure that the teaching profession better reflects the communities it serves and is relatable for all learners. Moreover, in order to tackle the broader recruitment challenges in teaching, it is essential to ensure that the profession is seen as a viable and rewarding career for people from a variety of backgrounds, helping to widen the talent pool and foster a more inclusive and representative education system.

Welsh Government's aspiration for 5% of ITE recruits to come from ethnic minority groups is currently not being realised. This is despite all ITE partnerships being required to publish a recruitment plan addressing ethnic diversity and targeted initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive Scheme. However, data for 2024 indicates that 4.6% of newly

⁵ Welsh Government's 2024 Pupil Level Annual School Census found that 15.3% of pupils aged 5 to 15 in primary, middle or secondary school in Wales came from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background.

qualified teachers (NQTs) registered with the EWC are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds.

School leaders

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

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

There is also work to be done to broaden the diversity of those in leadership roles, particularly with respect to gender and ethnicity:

- In 2025, 61.4% of registered Heads were female and 38.6% were male. This contrasts significantly with the gender split across the teaching workforce as a whole, which was 75.8% female and 24.2% male.
- Women are more prevalent in other senior leadership roles, making up 69.2% of Deputy headteachers and 65.4% of Assistant heads, suggesting that there may be structural or cultural barriers preventing women from progressing into headship.
- Just 0.6% of Headteachers, 0.6% of Deputy headteachers and 0.5% of Assistant headteachers were from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This stark lack of ethnic diversity amongst school leaders in Wales is indicative of both a pipeline issue (stemming from the low overall number of teachers from diverse backgrounds) and deeper structural barriers to progression. These issues must be addressed in order to prevent talented educators from racially diverse communities leaving the profession (thinking that leadership roles are inaccessible) and to ensure that there are diverse role models in senior roles within schools in Wales.

Retention

The EWC is able to monitor teacher retention through the Register. Our most recent retention data shows that 75.9% of teachers in 2020, were still registered as school teachers in 2025 (this is marginally higher amongst Welsh speaking teachers at 79.9%)

while 57.7% of those registered as school teachers in 2015 remained registered as teachers in 2025.

The EWC also collects data on those leaving the Register through our annual deregistration process. The number of school teachers leaving through this process has remained fairly stable at around an average of 2,400 deregistered each over the past five years. The key issue is that we are not recruiting sufficient numbers to replace those leaving. However, evidence obtained through our national workforce surveys and regular engagement with registrants (including headteachers), stakeholders, employers and trade unions, there are signs that pressures relating to workload, wellbeing, and job satisfaction are impacting negatively on retention in some areas. We will therefore be closely monitoring trends in this area in the years ahead.

School learning support workers

The school workforce of course extends beyond teachers. In fact, our data shows that since 2018 registered school learning support workers (LSW's) have outnumbered registered school teachers. For this reason, and in recognition of the vital contribution this workforce makes to learners, we believe the scope of the inquiry should be broadened to include school LSW's.

The range of work undertaken by LSW's includes assisting with classroom management, undertaking administrative tasks, managing behaviour, providing pastoral care and delivering one-to-one and small group support, is also crucial in helping to alleviate pressure on teachers. However, when budgets are tight, LSW roles are often among the first to be cut. The LSW workforce is also characterised by high turnover, illustrated by data which shows that 12,972 of 19,058 new applications for EWC registration in 2024/25 were from school LSW's, while 50.2% of those registered as school LSW's in 2020 remained registered within the same category in 2025⁶. This high level of transience directly impacts schools and its teachers, creating instability and ongoing recruitment issues.

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

⁶ 7.6% were registered in another category, while 39.3% were no longer registered with the EWC.

Post-16 education workforce

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

Impact of recruitment and retention challenges on the workforce

In many schools across Wales, recruitment challenges are leading to persistent teacher shortages, placing additional pressure on existing staff. For teachers, this can mean being required to cover additional classes, teach outside their subject specialism, or absorb other additional responsibilities. LSW's are also taking on additional work, beyond their usual duties, including (sometimes) providing cover for teachers. These pressures not only stretch staff capacity but also contribute to a working environment that can feel unsustainable over time.

Recruitment challenges can also reduce the amount of time available for practitioners to develop their skills, acquire new knowledge and expertise and engage with professional learning. Failure to successfully recruit, especially for leadership roles, can disrupt continuity, weaken collaboration and damage morale.

For school leaders there are additional challenges, as they strive to maintain standards, implement a range of new initiatives and successfully deliver the Curriculum for Wales, while managing complex staffing issues and sometimes having to step in themselves, to provide cover. The extent of the demands placed upon leaders means that there is often little space for strategic thought, pedagogic leadership or staff development.

Impact of teacher recruitment challenges on learners

Sustained difficulties in teacher recruitment are creating a less stable environment for learners in many schools across Wales, with increased use of supply teachers, cover supervisors and LSW's, who may not have specialist subject knowledge. Teacher shortages can also lead to larger class sizes, meaning fewer opportunities for relationship building, pastoral support and individually tailored learning. This can particularly disadvantage pupils who are struggling in particular subjects and those with ALN.

For secondary school pupils, recruitment challenges may also mean reduced choice, particularly in subject areas such as STEM and modern foreign languages. These issues can be particularly acute in Welsh-medium settings, where (as outlined above) finding suitably qualified staff, able to teach science and maths, can be hugely challenging.

Other significant impacts on learners can include:

- **Delays in ALN support:** When it is not possible to appoint staff in specific roles supporting ALN pupils (such as ALN co-ordinators), this can cause damaging delays in identifying and meeting learners needs.
- **Fewer extracurricular opportunities:** As staff become overstretched, pupils may have reduced access to extracurricular and after-school activities, which can play a vital role in enriching children's education and supporting their wellbeing.
- **Greater instability:** Workforce challenges can contribute to a more unsettled school environment, impacting negatively on behaviour and attendance.
- **Widening existing inequalities:** Schools in rural, remote and socially disadvantaged areas are often those most affected by staff shortages. This means that existing attainment gaps may become wider, further entrenching societal inequality.

Key issues impacting teacher recruitment and retention

The EWC welcomes the significant reforms to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) implemented by the Welsh Government in recent years. However, it is important to recognise that the challenges within the scope of this inquiry cannot be addressed by ITE alone. A more holistic and coordinated approach is required to ensure both the quality and quantity of school teachers needed to ensure a resilient and effective teaching workforce.

Responsibility for promoting careers in education is shared across the system. Welsh Government invests significantly in national campaigns to promote teaching, while local authorities, supply agencies, and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) partnerships all play crucial roles in attracting and supporting new entrants to the profession. The EWC also undertakes work to promote careers within the education professions in Wales. Funded by Welsh Government and constrained by that funding, we have developed the Educators Wales brand, website (including a national jobs portal) and advocacy service. Through our dedicated promotion and advocacy service, we have provided direct support to individuals, employers, and education providers, with Educators Wales represented at over 230 events during 2024/25, engaging with thousands of people with the potential to pursue a career in education.

However, in order to effectively promote careers in teaching, it is crucial to ensure that the 'product' being marketed is right. This means addressing the underlying systemic issues that impact negatively upon the working lives and wellbeing of teachers and leaders, so that teaching is seen (and experienced) as a rewarding, respected, and sustainable career. As well as impacting the current workforce, these very same issues are deterring new entrants from joining, as they contribute to negative perceptions of the

profession (evidenced by feedback gathered by our Promotion of Careers team, at careers events across Wales). Without addressing these issues, even the most well-funded and co-ordinated promotional efforts are unlikely to succeed in attracting and retaining the practitioners our education system needs.

key issues relating to the profession that we frequently hear cited when engaging with registrants and stakeholders and attending events (as well as in the most recent National Workforce Survey) include:

- **Workload and bureaucracy:** Excessive workload - often driven by administrative demands and accountability requirements - is a key factor behind low morale and early departures from the teaching profession. The widespread perception that teaching involves excessive paperwork also discourages many potential recruits.
- **Declining autonomy and professional trust:** A lack of professional agency and autonomy, compounded by the pressures of frequent policy changes and rigid accountability measures (including inspections).
- **Behaviour and discipline:** Many schools face increasingly serious challenges in managing pupil behaviour, with frequent disruptions undermining teaching and learning.
- **Erosion of trust between schools, parents and learners:** In some areas, the relationship between parents, learners and schools has become strained, with increased absenteeism and parental disengagement sometimes leading to conflict and stress for teachers.
- **Expanding role of teachers:** Schools are being called-upon to help address a growing range of societal challenges – including a rapidly increasing number of learners with mental health issues. Teachers working in early-years settings are also increasingly being required to support learners with basic self-care.
- **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision:** There are major challenges in effectively supporting students with ALN, hampered by a lack of resources, specialised personnel, and funding.
- **Access to professional learning:** The quality of professional learning provision across Wales remains inconsistent, with uptake often hindered by time pressures, bureaucracy and limited staff capacity.
- **Competition from other sectors:** The wider employment market, especially for STEM graduates and Welsh speakers, is highly competitive. Starting salaries for teachers are lower than those on offer in many private sector careers, with limited opportunities for salary progression.

Key issues specific to leadership

In addition to the factors outlined above, school leaders face distinct challenges and pressures. In particular, headteachers face intense levels of accountability for school performance, while managing limited budgets, and being required to respond to a rapidly evolving policy landscape. Some further significant factors affecting recruitment and retention for school leaders include:

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

At a more fundamental level, many stakeholders that we engage with (including school leaders) report a growing sense of disconnect within the system between policy-making and the realities of both school leadership and the classroom. As a result, school leaders are often required to navigate multiple, overlapping initiatives (each demanding significant time, training and resources) while maintaining school performance and delivering on core responsibilities. This accumulation of competing demands can dilute strategic focus. As noted by Professor Dylan Jones in his [recent letter](#) to the Cabinet Secretary for Education⁷, many local authorities and school leaders have identified a 'need to align the whole system around a smaller number of national priorities', focussed around core areas such as numeracy and literacy.

Conclusion

Drawing on a wide range of evidence (most notably the comprehensive data from our Register), the EWC believes that the key challenges to be addressed relate to teacher recruitment, rather than retention. We believe that the only effective way to attract more high-quality teachers and leaders into the profession is through tackling the underlying systemic issues that are currently making teaching less appealing as a career, as outlined

⁷ Regarding the review of roles and responsibilities of education partners in Wales and delivery of school improvement arrangements.

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above. Addressing the significant recruitment challenge in Wales that we have outlined will require a coherent, sustained approach that acknowledges and responds to the complex interconnected challenges discussed within this letter.

As the independent professional regulator for the education workforce in Wales, we will continue to make our contribution through providing data, analysis and expertise on these matters to inform the development of policy, as well as providing advice to Welsh Government and other stakeholders. We would also be pleased to provide additional data and intelligence to support this inquiry, upon the Committee's request.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hayden Llewellyn'.

Hayden Llewellyn
Chief Executive