



Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Evidence paper for the Children, Young People and Education Committee

11/09/2025

Summary

This paper provides written evidence to the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee to inform the inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention.

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1. Strategic Education Workforce Plan

In January, I set out my intention to develop a Strategic Education Workforce Plan in partnership with local authorities / governors as employers, union partners and school staff, parents / carers, and learners. The strategic plan will ensure we are focusing clearly on delivery and improvement for our education workforce.

Work to develop the Strategic Education Workforce Plan is progressing. The plan will set out our vision for supporting the school workforce in four key areas:

- Supporting our workforce to deliver quality teaching and learning to improve outcomes for learners
- Addressing workload issues
- Responding to new challenges for the school workforce and ensuring access to support through a specialist workforce
- Ensuring that teaching, leadership and supporting teaching remains an attractive career pathway.

The well-being of staff will be a key consideration across all four areas.

The details of the plan will continue to be developed with the profession, local authorities/governing bodies as the employers, the education workforce unions and our key partners over the coming months. I will also be taking account of the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Retention, and my aim is to publish the plan during the spring term.

2. Recruitment

Routes into teaching

The Welsh Government considers high quality ITE that is fully engaged with the wider education sector an important factor to attracting graduates and ensuring a supply of new teachers into the teaching profession. The reformation of the ITE system in Wales was implemented following the [Teaching Tomorrows' Teachers](#) report. This reform was supported by other interconnected and interdependent reforms including new profession standards, our new curriculum, and changes to student finance.

The [Criteria for the accreditation of ITE programmes in Wales](#) (the 'criteria') set out a model whereby both schools and HEIs have their equal part to play in offering the balance of theoretical and practical input to ensure a high-quality experience for our future teachers. These partnerships extend to schools being an equal partner in the initial development and ongoing quality assurance of their ITE programmes, staff training, and recruitment strategies and activities. Promising teacher preparation (ITE) practices highlighted under the OECD's [Flying Start report](#) highlighted our approach to recognise schools as an important partner in the design and delivery of initial teacher education programmes and the creation and use of research as a strength.

It is important to note the reformed and increased role of schools in Wales' ITE system. The ITE Partnership arrangements between schools and universities support a system that is self-improving with the profession working for its own improvement and for others. Schools within Wales ITE Partnerships are responsible for, and are a vital component of, ensuring ITE student teacher recruitment nationally.

There are currently 5 providers delivering ITE through the more traditional undergraduate and postgraduate full-time routes:

- Bangor University
- Swansea University
- University of Wales Trinity St David
- Cardiff Metropolitan University
- University of South Wales

In addition, as part of the ITE reforms the Welsh Government procured and continues to support the pan-Wales alternative ITE routes. The Open University (OU) won the contract and developed the [Salaried PGCE](#) and the Part-time PGCE. These PGCE's are intended to support graduates wishing to enter the teaching profession who would not otherwise be able to via traditional full-time PGCE (such as career changers, parents/adult-carers, those from low-income households/backgrounds, and those living in rural areas unable to access a regional university). Both PGCEs have been available since AY2020/21 and analysis undertaken by the OU on their student teachers indicates that they are a unique cohort, representing additional student teachers studying to become a teacher that would not have otherwise been able to do so.

The secondary subjects available have been expanded several times in recognition of evidenced demand from applicants and schools and the priorities of Welsh Government. From September 2025 all priority subjects and English, English with Media Studies and Primary can be studied via the Part-time PGCE or Salaried PGCE. Student finance is available to student teachers studying the Part-time PGCE and we have committed to supporting the student teachers and their employing schools on the Salaried PGCE via grant funding for a further three academic years (2024/25 to 2026/27). This includes the cost of their PGCE, and a level of salary contribution provided to support their employing schools.

Changes to the grant funding available to schools (the Salary Contribution Grant) since the initial implementation of the Alternative ITE routes are as follows:

In 2022 my predecessor, via the Welsh in Education workforce plan, raised the Salary Contribution Grant for Welsh medium Secondary schools (or for English medium schools with Welsh subject student teachers). This was doubled and is now 100% of Band 1 of the Unqualified Teachers pay scale.

I also recently agreed that from September 2025 that all maintained Primary schools could also access the Salary Contribution Grant at 50%, and that Secondary schools within a transitional language category (along with other operational requirements) could access the Salary Contribution Grant at 100% for supporting Welsh medium student teachers. English medium Secondary schools continue to access the Salary Contribution Grant at 50%. This is intended to support schools and local authorities' workforce planning under their WESPs and the introduction of the Welsh language and Education Act (Wales) 2025.

Two brand new programmes have been recently accredited and are being piloted:

- Cardiff Met's ITE for school-based employees (intended to provide a route for unqualified teachers already working in schools)
- Bangor's Primary PGCE with a Neurodiversity specialism.

We remain committed, that all student teachers, regardless of ITE route taken, are entitled to, and receive high quality ITE that prepares them to enter the teaching workforce. All ITE programmes in Wales that award qualified teacher status (QTS) are held to the same high standards via our [evidence informed](#) regulatory framework (see also Welsh Journal of Education: [Furlong, 2016](#), and [Furlong, 2020](#)). This protects against a two-tier workforce and ensures properly prepared, high-quality teachers in Wales' schools.

Initial teacher education recruitment

Initial teacher education recruitment into the primary sector continues to be buoyant. However recruitment into secondary remains challenging, with strong competition from other sectors for graduates with STEM specialities, compounded by even smaller numbers with Welsh language capability.

We are aware that other UK nations and Ireland are encountering similar issues attracting sufficient STEM graduates to enrol for secondary initial teacher education.

The committee has already heard evidence from the Education Workforce Council highlighting some of the recruitment challenges into secondary ITE. Our recent publication [Initial teacher education: August 2022 to July 2024 \(headline results\)](#) shows that the number of entrants to secondary school ITE courses in Wales was 56% lower than the allocations in 2023/24. This is clearly a major concern.

Initial teacher education incentives

We offer a range of incentives to attract applicants into ITE in Wales. These schemes are targeted at those areas and subjects where recruitment is most challenging; priority subjects, the Welsh-medium sector and attracting more entrants from ethnic minorities. Eligible individuals can avail themselves of each of the incentive schemes. In academic year 2024/25, a total amount of £25,000 is available to those that meet the requirements of all three schemes:

- [Priority Subject Incentive scheme](#) (£15,000)
- [Iaith Athrawon Yfory scheme](#) (£5,000)
- [Minority Ethnic Incentive scheme](#) (£5,000)

National marketing and advocacy activity to support ITE recruitment.

Our national teacher recruitment campaign Teaching Wales/Addysgu Cymru focuses on attracting applications into secondary education within priority subject areas where there is a shortage of teachers, increasing the numbers who can teach in Welsh, and improving the representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic teachers.

Teaching Wales/Addysgu Cymru has an annual budget of around £250k. The approach we have taken is a targeted rather than a blanket approach. This decision has been taken after research and insight undertaken to understand the motivations and barriers to becoming a teacher in Wales.

Based on the identification of motivations and barriers we have re-aligned our campaign to target the following audience segments, selecting the channels that are most likely to reach them:

- Learners/undergraduates studying priority subjects
- Priority subject graduates, potential career changers
- Teaching Assistants

Within the first two groups we are targeting Welsh and English speakers with different messages. This is a result of the insight showing that within these groups, a significant number of Welsh speakers, have different motivations and

barriers to consider teaching as a career. This has been reinforced in the creative testing.

Teaching Wales/Addysgu Cymru features real teachers in Wales. The latest burst of activity was held during July and August. There will be additional bursts of activity in October and in the New Year running to the end of March 2026.

Activity includes a wide range of communication techniques including targeted social media (Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, X), online advertising, radio, TV catch-up, PR, outdoor advertising, UCAS mailers and attendance at key events. We have undertaken TV advertising in the past on S4C, targeting Welsh speakers. We have not undertaken mass media advertising (national TV, cinema advertising) as it is not the most effective way of connecting with our target audiences. National TV or cinema advertising would be a blanket approach that doesn't align with our strategic targeting. Our audiences are mainly under 40 and tend not to watch traditional television. Evidence demonstrates targeted digital channels provide better engagement and value when reaching these groups. The campaign would need a very significant increase in budget if we adopted mass marketing techniques.

It's important to keep the campaign relevant, authentic and engaging. In the autumn we will be recruiting Teach Tomorrow Today ambassadors - inspiring teachers who will become the faces of our campaign. Their stories, faces and advocacy will be at the heart of our campaign storytelling across multiple touchpoints: including on Teaching Wales' social channels, in advertising, through earned media coverage (publicity gained without requiring advertising spend). From April 2023 – June 2025, the Teaching Wales Addysgu Cymru campaign activity has delivered over 234,000 users to the Educators Wales website and generated 11,199 click-throughs to the ITE Partnership's websites.

Schools can be powerful tools in the recruitment of teachers, including former pupils. We are working on producing content for schools to share with their Alumni. We are also exploring how we can work closer with local authorities to help with local labour market trends, engage them in our campaign work and tailor our campaign activity to work on a local basis.

We work closely with Education Workforce Council (EWC) to integrate the national campaign with their advocacy service. The Educators Wales recruitment, advocacy, and support service (led by the EWC and funded by Welsh Government) was launched in September 2021 and has engaged with over 27,000 individuals (correct as of January 2024) interested in a career in education. The advocacy service offers a single point of information to individuals on all aspects of teaching as a career as well as a free recruitment and information service to individuals seeking progression opportunities as educators. This includes comprehensive support including application and CV writing, and interview skills workshops. As well as working closely with Teaching Wales the service seeks out opportunities and partnership working, such as supporting ITE Partnerships with innovative ideas to implement activity in their own recruitment strategies and plans, such as on campus promotion of ITE.

Educators Wales also deliver information sessions on careers within education in Wales in schools and school careers fairs alongside larger scale events such as the Eisteddfod.

In addition to the above, the ITE Partnerships are required under their accreditation guidelines to have their own recruitment strategies in place. Welsh Government communications team work closely with EWC and HEIs' marketing teams to ensure synergy, value for money and aligned messaging across all Welsh Government, EWC and ITE Partnerships promotional activity in the ITE recruitment space.

We also work closely with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Educators Wales on increasing the number of Welsh speakers interested in teaching as a profession. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has several schemes aimed at increasing the number of Welsh speakers training to become teachers. Over the summer the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Educators Wales have specific Welsh language focused activities at several key Welsh language summer events such as Eisteddfod yr Urdd, the Royal Welsh Show and the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol.

Ensuring that teaching remains an attractive option for graduates in an ever changing and flexible jobs market is essential. An independent annual omnibus survey that we commission shows that graduates who speak Welsh are more likely to consider teaching as a career.

Subject specialism

I recognise the vital importance of having this specialism in our schools to enable learners' progression, and the Curriculum for Wales expects learners to be able to increasingly specialise as they move forward with their learning.

The ITE priority subjects and/or phases are determined annually using School Workforce Census Data (SWAC) and Higher Education Statistical Authority (HESA) Data. They represent the subject or phase where there are immediate issues in both ITE recruitment and within the workforce nationally (including the Welsh-medium workforce). Identification of these subjects and/or phases enables the Welsh Government to provide targeted incentivisation to graduates in these areas to consider entering ITE, and thereafter the teaching workforce, via the Priority Subject Incentive (PSI) scheme. It should be noted that this is not a statistical exercise alone and that contextual factors must be used in determining the final list of priority subjects.

For a number of years STEM subjects and languages (including Welsh) have been a priority. In many instances recruitment into ITE has been insufficient as the pipeline of students, from A-level Welsh for example, has been small and is further compounded by smaller numbers studying their undergraduate degree through the medium of Welsh. In addition, STEM graduates particularly have a wide range of competitive career options available to them. The current priority subjects are:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Design & Technology

- Information Technology
- Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Physics
- Welsh

We are also taking action to help build specialist capacity within the existing teaching workforce. In the 2024-25 financial year, the Welsh Government provided nearly £163,000 to the Institute of Physics to deliver the Stimulating Physics and Whole School Inclusion and Equity networks. The Stimulating Physics Network provides targeted coaching to early career and non-specialist practitioners to design inspiring and engaging physics lessons and improve their understanding of physics qualifications and career pathways. Our Global Futures Programme for international languages is also focused on building the skills, knowledge, and experiences practitioners need to plan and deliver effective international languages provision.

We have recently awarded over £1.8m to a collaborative Learned Societies bid, led by Institute of Physics (IOP), under the [Curriculum for Wales Grant Support Programme](#).

The purpose of the project is to address the issues arising from a shortage of physics and chemistry practitioners in Wales by enhancing science teaching and learning outcomes in primary and secondary schools. The project focuses on:

- Enhancing practitioner's pedagogical and subject knowledge
- Building confidence and expertise
- Mentoring current and potential future practitioners

The project will support practitioners and technicians through; specialised mentoring for practitioners and technicians; science teaching resources and online learning modules; the creation of network to foster peer support; and evidence-based professional development, coaching and mentoring, such as the IOP's Stimulating Physics Network, the Royal Society of Chemistry's Teach Chemistry activities and the Thinking Doing Talking Science Primary professional learning programme. These programmes will focus on supporting early career and out-of-field practitioners and promoting equitable science capital in schools through an Inclusion and Equity Network.

We are also taking action to help support specialist capacity within the existing teaching workforce. Our Global Futures Programme for international languages Welsh Government works with a range of partners to build the skills, knowledge, and experiences practitioners need to plan and deliver effective international languages provision. The existing Global Futures strategic plan has been extended for a further year, to 2026, to ensure continuation of the strategic direction for international languages while allowing the changes that are taking place in the Welsh education system to become established. We have established a sub-group of Global Futures partners, including Cardiff Met University and school improvement partners, to review the strategic plan to ensure it has robust actions to support our practitioners. The revised plan will reflect a range of evidence

including from the recent Estyn thematic review on international languages. This work is ongoing, and I expect advice at the end of the year on the next steps of the programme.

This work is developing alongside ongoing work to upskill practitioners and engage learners in interactive language lessons through:

- our E-sgol languages programme which is an interactive on-line programme designed to boost primary practitioners' confidence to deliver and engage learners in interactive language lessons.
- the Literature Fires the Imagination project which will design two professional learning programmes which cover a range of languages and bi-lingual materials to be hosted on Hwb for all primary and secondary schools
- the Cardiff University mentoring programme which has been extended for a further three years and is aimed at changing learner attitudes and engagement to boost the take up of modern foreign languages at secondary school.

In terms of the data the average number of applications for posts advertised have decreased for most subjects between AY2020/21 and AY2023/24, with the average number of applications for Welsh as a subject seeing an increase. The average number of applications for priority subject posts, as identified above, are consistently below the average number of applications for all secondary posts (5.2). Chemistry (1.8 applications per post), Information Technology (2.0), Biology (2.9), Design and Technology (3.0) and Welsh (3.2) received the lowest number of applications per post in AY2023/24. This compares to Physical Education (8.3), History (8.0) and English (5.0) which consistently receive a greater number of applications per post on average.

Table 1: Average applications per advertised post for priority subjects and selected other subjects, AY2020/21 to AY2023/24

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Biology	4.5	4.3	3.5	2.9
Chemistry	6.4	3.6	2.8	1.8
Design & Technology	6.2	2.8	3.4	3.0
English	8.7	6.5	5.0	5.0
History	24.4	8.8	9.7	8.0
Information Technology	3.6	2.6	2.2	2.0
Mathematics	4.7	4.6	3.5	4.6
Modern Foreign Languages	7.8	4.5	3.5	4.3
Physical Education	14.3	10.3	6.9	8.3
Physics	3.7	2.4	2.3	3.6
Welsh	2.6	2.3	1.8	3.2
<i>Primary Schools</i>	<i>19.3</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>12.3</i>	<i>15.2</i>
<i>Secondary Schools</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>5.2</i>
All Posts	12	9.1	7.8	10.0

Source: School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

It should be noted that these are national subject priorities identified utilising national level data sets. There may be different recruitment concerns at a local authority or school specific level.

Welsh-medium teachers and proficiency in Welsh in both Welsh-medium and English-medium schools

Our ambition for a million Welsh speakers by 2050 demands far-reaching changes and actions to be taken. Our new curriculum puts the Welsh language at the heart of learning in Wales but if we are to create a nation where people speak and use the language as part of their everyday lives, increasing the number of learners in Welsh-medium schools is vital. For us to do that we need a strong and skilled workforce.

The Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 sets out a requirement for Welsh Ministers to prepare a National Framework for Welsh Language Education and Learning Welsh that sets out how we will promote and facilitate the use of Welsh. The National Framework must set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take to ensure that training, professional development and support is available for education practitioners in Wales for the purposes of improving ability in Welsh. It must also:

- (a) include an assessment of the number of education practitioners needed in each local authority in order to meet any target, and
- (b) set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take, based on that assessment, for the purposes of ensuring that the number of education practitioners working in Wales meets the need.

We published the [Welsh in Education Workforce Plan](#) in May 2022. The plan included a range of actions for Welsh Government to take in partnership with stakeholders to address four key aims:

- Increasing the number of Welsh and Welsh-medium teachers
- Increasing the number of Welsh-medium teaching assistants
- Developing the Welsh language skills of all practitioners
- Increasing leadership capacity in the Welsh-medium sector and developing the leadership of Welsh in all schools.

In November 2024, we published an update to the data analysis and WESP analysis documents that sit alongside the Welsh in education workforce plan with the latest data on the workforce (see [Welsh in education workforce plan](#))

In light of the requirements of the 2025 Act and the development of the Strategic Education Workforce Plan, we will be working closely with stakeholders to consider what further actions can be taken.

We will need to review the existing targets, as set out in Cymraeg 2050, to take account of changing demographics alongside the local authority plans for

increasing Welsh-medium education in their areas. The current targets and progress is as follows:

Table 2: Cymraeg 2050 targets and progress

Number of primary teachers who teach through the medium of Welsh			
2024/25 baseline 2,678	2031 target 3,900	Gap to target 1,222	Approx additional no. of teachers per year 274
Number of secondary teachers who teach Welsh as a subject or subjects through the medium of Welsh			
2024/25 baseline 2,458	2031 target 4,100	Gap to target 1,642	Approx additional no. of teachers per year 235

Source: School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

The key challenge remains around the recruitment of secondary teachers for Welsh-medium schools and this has been the focus of the number of actions we have taken since 2022. These actions include:

- Continuing to provide opportunities through the Cynllun Pontio for teachers who have been away from the profession to return to teaching; for primary teachers to cross over to the secondary sector, and for teachers from the English-medium sector to cross over to the Welsh-medium sector. A further 19 have started this September in key subject areas such as Welsh, maths and science.
- Supporting schools to develop innovative ways to solve some of their recruitment challenges through the Welsh-medium workforce capacity development grant (approximately £800k per academic year).
- Funding the Open University to expand its employment-based teaching pathway, to include design and technology and computer science from September 2023; these are subjects where there are a shortage of teachers, and this route enables aspiring teachers to train in their communities and to be paid while training. The courses are available in both English and Welsh, however, for Welsh-medium schools the employment costs are fully funded by Welsh Government.
- Funding for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to establish Cadw Cyswllt (keeping connected) which promotes opportunities for students in England to return to Wales to prepare to teach.
- Funding for the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to provide mentoring sessions to approximately 50 individuals as part of the Addysgu'r Dyfodol (future teaching) programme. The programme provides 3 online mentoring sessions to undergraduate students and the opportunity to undertake 2 work experience days in a school (primary/secondary, Welsh-medium or bilingual) to encourage them to go into teaching. A tracking system has been put in place to understand the impact of the programme.
- Establishing the Welsh in education Teacher Retention Bursary. £5,000 will be available to teachers who have achieved Qualified Teacher Status since August 2020, and who have completed three years of teaching Welsh, or

three years of teaching through the medium of Welsh, in the secondary phase. This bursary will initially be available until Autumn 2028 and will provide us with data on whether the introduction of a bursary encourages teachers to enter and stay in the profession.

Alongside actions to support an increase in the number of secondary Welsh-medium teachers we have also been continuing to implement actions to support all practitioners to develop their Welsh language skills to be able to teach and use the language in all our schools.

We have developed guidance for local authorities to analyse workforce data in terms of practitioners' ability to teach through the medium of Welsh and the Welsh language skills of practitioners in the English medium sector. This will enable local authorities to report consistently on their workforce and training development needs as part of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.

The National Centre for Learning Welsh is now taking a co-ordinated role in planning the delivery of Welsh language professional learning for the education workforce.

A full scoping exercise has been undertaken, working with all local authorities to understand the Welsh language skills development needs at a local level. Based on the scoping, the Centre has now developed a plan for new delivery models to be piloted, including school-based support, residential courses, tutor-led online courses and professional learning resources. The full offer for the 2025/26 academic year was recently launched at the Senedd and information is available on the Centre's website.

From September 2025 the Centre will also be managing the intensive courses available through the Sabbatical Scheme alongside other courses being developed for the education workforce. The Centre has also been working with ITE providers to provide resources to support students to develop their Welsh language skills while they are training. These have now been shared with all providers and will be incorporated into courses since September 2024.

Recruitment in schools

Staffing challenges faced by schools are highly contextual and national level concerns (such as the level of ITE recruitment into primary, STEM subjects and Welsh-medium) may not be applicable at a local level. The responsibility for the employment of teachers in schools lies with local authorities and governing bodies as the employing bodies. They are responsible for ensuring that sufficient, suitable staff are employed or engaged to work at their school/s in order to provide education appropriate for the ages, aptitudes, abilities and needs of their learners.

The School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC) does collect information on the teaching of subjects in schools and the number of hours taught across a two-

week timetable. Further information can be found in the [School Workforce Census Results](#) publication and on the [StatsWales](#) website.

Information from the SWAC shows the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of teachers in academic year (AY) 2024/25 has decreased by 5.9% since AY2021/22.

Table 3: Full-time equivalent (FTE) number of teachers by sector, AY2021/22 to AY2024/25

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Nursery and Primary schools	11,950	11,770	11,245	10,835
Middle Schools	1,245	1,470	1,605	1,685
Secondary Schools	10,425	10,280	9,965	9,680
Special Schools	825	860	875	910
Pupil Referral Units (PRU)	255	260	300	305
Total	24,700	24,640	23,995	23,410

Source: School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) has increased in all school sectors apart from special schools in AY2024/25.

Table 4: Pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) by sector, AY2021/22 to AY2024/25

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Nursery	10.9	10.5	11.4	11.5
Primary	21.0	20.9	21.3	21.4
Middle	17.4	17.2	17.2	17.6
Secondary	16.8	16.6	17.0	17.5
Special	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.5
Total	18.5	18.4	18.6	18.9

Source: Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)

The patterns seen in both the teacher numbers and pupil-teacher ratios may be partly due to the Welsh Government funding provided to schools under the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) plan to recruit extra staff to support pupils during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Welsh Government provided the RRRS funding to schools during the pandemic and the recovery period up to financial year (FY) 2023-24, though the amount distributed decreased since the initial funding in provided in the first 2 years (2020-21 and 2021-22).

The average number of applications received per advertised post in AY2023/24 was 10.0, up from 7.8 in AY2022/23. However, this continues to be lower than the average number of applications of 12.0 in AY2020/21. This pattern is reflected in all sectors with advertised posts in primary schools receiving 15.2 applications on average in AY2023/24 compared to 5.2 for posts in secondary schools.

Table 5: Average applications per advertised post by sector, AY2020/21 to AY2023/24

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Primary Schools	19.3	14.1	12.3	15.2
Secondary Schools	7.3	5.5	4.6	5.2
All Schools	12.0	9.1	7.8	10.0

Source: School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC)

3. Factors affecting retention

Early career support and professional learning

There is growing recognition that supporting teachers' professional learning from the beginning to the end of their career is critical to fostering high-quality teaching.

Ensuring all practitioners have access to guaranteed career-long professional learning is integral to our vision for education in Wales to ensure that practitioners are supported to develop throughout their careers and remain within the profession.

We revised the arrangements and support available for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in 2022. All NQTs are now supported during their first year of teaching with a funded mentor and a professional learning programme to provide the support they need as they embark on their careers. I will be asking Dysgu, the new professional learning and leadership support body to review the professional learning programme for NQTs to ensure that it aligns with my priorities and provides a clear continuation of support from ITE as they progress through their first few years of teaching as part of an early career programme.

We also fund a National Masters in Education (MA) for up to 200 individuals per year. I have also committed to funding the National Doctorate in Education (EdD) which has been available since January 2025. Together these provide an accredited academic pathway for our practitioners.

We continue to provide a total of 6 INSET days and the professional learning grant, worth £13.5m per annum, to support schools to enable practitioners to engage with professional learning.

Dysgu, the new national professional learning and leadership support body will play a key role moving forward in supporting the development of our practitioners. From September 2025 it will bring together professional learning across the country. This approach aims to create a unified system delivering consistent support that improves learning outcomes.

During its first transitional year, the organisation will take on responsibility for national programmes in areas such as literacy, numeracy and well-being, alongside support for leaders. It will also assume responsibilities previously managed by National Academy for Educational Leadership and the regional consortia, including supporting teaching assistants.

This reorganisation represents a significant shift toward a more streamlined, consistent approach to professional development in Welsh education, ultimately aiming to better support educators and improve outcomes for learners across Wales.

Teacher Professional Identity

In March, I welcomed the publication of the OECDs report 'Constructing scenarios for the future of teaching in Wales.' This was part of a global new professionalism research study, to inform our ambitions for the future of teaching in Wales. In conjunction with wider research, OECD findings will inform the Strategic Education Workforce Plan, and in particular our work to raise the profile of teaching as a career, support teacher and teaching assistant retention in schools and settings and positively impact on the experiences of learners as a direct result.

The Curriculum for Wales also presents an opportunity to change perceptions and raise the profile of teaching. This fundamental change not just to what we teach, but how we teach and the understanding of why we teach it, offers a new opportunity to inspire the next generation of teachers to join the profession. The ways of working that underpin the curriculum – teacher creativity, agency, and leadership at all levels – also have the potential to encourage more into the profession. We will continue to showcase what practitioners in Wales are achieving and how they are supporting their learners to reach their potential through the Curriculum for Wales.

Teachers' Pay

For teachers' pay and conditions in Wales there is an agreed annual process in place involving social partners and recommendations from the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body (IWPRB). All IWPRB remits have asked them to have particular regard to supporting recruitment and retention of sufficient quality and quantity of teachers and leaders, whilst reflecting the challenges of sustainable public sector finances. We continue to address any issues and concerns through our social partnership network with a view to making the teaching profession in Wales an attractive environment which will encourage and support recruitment into the profession.

By taking a social partnership approach, we support the teaching profession by ensuring their pay, terms and conditions are designed to best suit the profession here in Wales and currently provide higher salaries and allowances for both new and more experienced teachers than in England.

The agreed annual process has also allowed us to introduce some key changes requested by the profession to further improve the teachers' pay system over the last 5 years. Positive changes have included the reintroduction of pay portability and removal of performance-based pay progression. In 2024, we also removed the strict pro-rata principle for TLR allowances making these allowances more accessible and much fairer for part time teachers. This year, I have removed the application process to move from the main to upper pay scale whilst we work with partners to develop a single pay scale for classroom teachers. I have also committed to moving ALN co-ordinators to the leadership group pay scale and we are working with partners to achieve this as quickly as possible.

These changes implement some recommendations from the IWPRBs Strategic Review into Teachers' Pay and Conditions which was published via a written statement on 9th April 2024 as well as recommendations from the IWRPB's fifth report. The second part of the 6th remit is ongoing, and we will shortly remit the IWPRB to begin work on their 7th report as part of the annual process for Teachers Pay. We are continuing to work with partners deliver the most pressing recommendations from the IWPRB strategic review, subject to funding considerations and working through implementation requirements.

We continue to take opportunities to develop a more distinct national system here in Wales that not only improves and enhances the system but is also fairer and more transparent for all teachers.

Teacher Wellbeing

Recognising the inextricable link between workload and well-being, we continue to fund Education Support to provide additional well-being support for schools in addition to that provided by employers. Education Support, a charity with decades of expertise in supporting the education workforce with their mental health and well-being, provides a wide range of services including free advice and support for schools across Wales and bespoke mental health and wellbeing support via their well-received School Wellbeing Service, with continued support as needed. Alongside this Education Support provides webinars and masterclasses for all education workforce staff in Wales, which is supported by resources and information on the Education Support website, many of which are available in Welsh.

Education Support's Professional Supervision programme, aimed at school leaders, has been found to have particularly positive results around wellbeing and supporting leaders to remain in their roles and is a key part of the programme of work for this year. I have had an informative and insightful meeting with the Chief Executive of Education Support and I continue to receive positive feedback from school leaders on the services they provide.

In March 2021 we published the [Framework on embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing](#). The framework is statutory for all maintained schools and local authorities and is aimed at the needs of school-age learners and the workforce which supports their learning. It seeks to create a supportive environment where young people are encouraged to fulfil their personal and academic potential, where they thrive, learn and emotionally develop, supported by teachers who operate in a culture that equally values their own well-being.

Teacher Workload

Workload is a key factor which adds pressure to teachers and leaders, impacts their well-being and is one of the reasons cited for leaving the profession. As part of the Programme for Government commitment to reduce bureaucracy for school leaders, taking a social partnership approach, we have been working with stakeholders, education unions and employers to identify key areas of workload

that can be changed or removed from schools to reduce workload, eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, reduce burden and create space for teachers to teach.

The independently chaired Strategic Workload Coordination Group (SWCG) commenced early last year, with membership drawn from key stakeholders and representatives across the education system. It has been underpinned by three working groups focussing on finance; reporting and engagement; and policy development and implementation. The working groups have been independently chaired by education unions and school improvement partners and all have action plans, deliverables and targets. The SWCG and working groups ended on 30 June 2025 and the Chair of the SWCG has written to me about the achievements of the groups' work and where it would be helpful to focus further work. Action to reduce workload will continue under the Strategic Education Workforce Plan.

We will continue to work collaboratively and at pace to deliver changes. This includes direct action by Welsh Government as we implement our workload impact assessment. This aims to help us consider and assess the potential workload impact of any new or revised Welsh Government policy or guidance on the workload of education staff.

By taking this action and continuing to work in partnership, we want to make a real impact at school level, reduce burden and create space for teachers to teach.

4. School leaders

Following an extensive review of the qualification for headship, the new national programme for developing our future headteachers, leading to the award of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), began delivery in January 2025.

We need to better understand the future demand for headteachers. Following the first round of applications for the NPQH we worked with EWC to share data with each local authority on the 700 individuals who currently hold the NPQH but are not working as headteachers. We will be working with local authorities over the next few months to develop succession planning models.

Dysgu will now take forward the work of reviewing all the existing leadership programmes for middle and senior leaders and work with local authorities to develop a range of provision that meets the needs of our future leaders in a range of areas.

5. Diversity of the workforce

I am committed to diversifying the teaching profession, not just in terms of ethnicity but of socio-economic backgrounds and life experience. I want Wales' learners to be taught by excellent teachers of all ages, career paths, backgrounds, and ethnicities.

As at January 2025:

- 340 teachers (1.3%) were of Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnicity compared to 15% of pupils
- 18,655 teachers (74.3%) were female. Females accounted for 66.6% of teachers in leadership.

The Alternative ITE routes attract and enrol student teachers that could not have accessed the profession otherwise. They are a unique cohort providing additional teachers to the profession with diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

The Salaried PGCE, our employment-based teacher training route is intended to widen access to those that cannot access the profession through full-time ITE programmes and has the additional benefit of enabling schools to grow their own teachers from their existing school workforce and wider community.

The [Initial Teacher Education Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Recruitment Plan](#) published by the Welsh Government in 2021 outlines a strategy to increase the representation of ethnic minority groups in the teaching workforce across Wales. The plan aims to boost recruitment of ethnic minority candidates into ITE programmes, addressing the current under-representation. The aim is to lead to more diverse cohorts of trainee teachers, enriching peer learning and perspectives within the ITE environment.

All ITE partnerships have developed and published specific recruitment strategies to attract ethnic minority students. These plans are tailored to address local and national barriers and are supported by community engagement.

The Ethnic Minority ITE incentive scheme was a commitment made under the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and awards £5,000 to eligible student teachers.

6. Impact on delivering educational reforms

I have set out my priorities for improving educational standards – improving attendance and delivering sustained improvement in educational attainment in literacy and numeracy so that every learner can fulfil their potential, across all ability groups and whatever challenges face them. Curriculum and ALN reform remain central.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of ALN and curriculum have identified increased workload pressures as a result of these reforms. The actions we are taking to reduce workload, as outlined above, will allow us to continue to consider how to support practitioners to deliver our reforms and priorities. I have also agreed the additional 6th INSET day for the 2025/26 academic year, and have commissioned research to better understand the use of INSET days by schools to inform our future plans. The workforce remains supportive and committed to the aspirations of the new curriculum and supporting learners with additional learning needs.

The workforce is key to the successful implementation of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act. I have set out above the current actions we are taking.

7. Impact on learners

The success of our education system and ensuring the best outcomes for our learners is reliant on a high-quality workforce, and it is essential that we provide the best support and conditions for them.

Learners are at the heart of all the actions that we are already taking to support recruitment and retention outlined in this paper.

In addition, this year, we are supporting the following which all contribute to ensuring that schools have sufficiently skilled workforce to support our learners:

- £44 million of National Support to schools. These programmes provide nationally consistent professional learning and support to professionals in areas including: maths, literacy, science and computer science, international languages, and Relationships and Sexuality Education.
- Through our curriculum design professional learning, we're providing national support for schools on the key issues of progression, assessment, and curriculum design, that includes intensive, targeted, and nationally available collaborative support along with practical tools and templates for professionals. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with 100% of participants finding the programme clear and relevant as well as benefiting from working collaboratively with other schools. This is giving all teachers access to the tools to build an excellent curriculum with high expectations of their learners.
- To take the pressure off teaching staff and to improve attendance as part of the 2025-26 budget, I was pleased to have secured £9.5m of funding for Family Engagement Officers - £3m more than in 2024-25. This is one element of over £11m in support for Community Focussed Schools approaches in 2025/26.
- In March we published [Multi Agency engagement guidance](#) to help schools to work with other sectors and services and support them and other agencies to develop more effective partnership working. This is the final piece in our suite of Community Focused Schools guidance.
- Our Pupil Development Grant has a key part to play in achieving Welsh Government's ambition of high standards and aspirations for all. The Pupil Development Grant provides schools with extra funding to help tackle the impacts of poverty on attainment for pupils from low-income households. A budget of around £128m has been allocated in 2025-26 with funding allocated via the equity strand of the Local Authority Education Grant.

8. Impact on teachers and wider workforce

Teaching assistants are a vital and valued part of our education workforce, and we want to make sure they have the recognition and support they deserve.

Supply teachers are also an essential part of the workforce and, along with partners, I remain committed to supporting them and to ensuring that their contribution is better recognised and rewarded.

As we further develop the Strategic Education Workforce Plan, we will continue to work with our social partners and stakeholders to:

- agree how we will take forward my commitment to improve pay and conditions for our support staff, who play a crucial role in our schools, and
- develop our proposals for covering teacher absence, which is a complex area due to the variety of different approaches used by local authorities to source supply staff.