



Welsh Government response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee 'Teacher Recruitment and Retention' report

MARCH 2026

We thank the Members of the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Committee for their comprehensive report.

It is important to highlight that implementing several of the recommendations will require close working with local authorities and other key partners. I hope the responses provided are informative and helpful.

The Welsh Government welcomes the findings of the Committee's report and offers the following response to the recommendations contained within it.

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Responses to the Committee's Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government provides more information on the effectiveness of the previously run Teach First and Graduate Teaching programmes in Wales, including how effective they were in supporting a broader range of people into the teaching profession, and why it was decided to discontinue support for the programmes.

Response: Accept

Following a review into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales undertaken by Professor Furlong, *Teaching Tomorrows' Teachers* was published in 2015. Welsh Government accepted the recommendations in the report, which formed the basis for our ITE reforms.

In 2013, the Welsh Government introduced an employment-based route into teaching, called the Additional Graduate Training Programme (AGTP), and awarded Teach First a contract to run a three-year pilot AGTP in Wales. The programme awarded the professional status of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) but not a teaching qualification.

In 2016 Estyn published a thematic report on the impact of the AGTP in Wales and this concluded that there was not any marked improvement in learner outcomes overall within the participating schools that could be attributed directly to Teach First's work over and above other school improvement interventions. The report also advised that whilst many of the participants who achieved QTS (as part of the first cohort in 2014) were in teaching posts in September 2015, two years after starting the programme, only a minority (32%) were still teaching in Wales. 40% were in teaching posts outside of Wales with the remaining participants seeking teaching posts or employment other than teaching. This meant that any benefit of the AGTP investment in these participants was lost to the education system in Wales.

In September 2016, it was decided that the Welsh Government's AGTP pilot would be ended and would not be re-tendered beyond academic year 2016/17. It was determined that the pilot did not demonstrate value for money.

For academic year 2017/18 Teach First entered an arrangement with Central South Consortium Joint Education Service to provide provision in the region.

As part of the ITE reforms in Wales new accreditation criteria were developed by an ITE expert panel, and regulatory responsibility for accreditation of programmes against Welsh Government's new criteria was moved from the former Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to the Education Workforce Council's (EWC) new Teacher Education Accreditation Board. All ITE providers were required under the amended regulations to gain accreditation against the new criteria to award QTS from academic year 2019/20. All existing ITE providers and potential new providers could apply for accreditation in 2017/18 ready for delivery in academic year 2019/20. Teach First did not apply for accreditation at that time. Teach First retain the opportunity to submit a programme for accreditation but to date have chosen not to do so.

In 2017, with the implementation of the recommendations of *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* well underway with regards to 'traditional' undergraduate or postgraduate routes into teaching, it was identified that the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) would not be able to meet the improved quality requirements under accreditation for ITE programmes in Wales.

The principal purpose of the ITE reforms was to improve the quality and consistency of ITE provision, introduce a new approach to ITE and ensure that all programmes meet our high aspirations for evidence based, world class ITE in Wales. For this to happen it was imperative that quality was assured across all entry routes via accreditation. Welsh Government therefore committed to developing an improved employment-based route into teaching for graduates, whilst ensuring that high quality support and provision was assured. The aim was to have a suite of routes into teaching with the same vision and understanding of the role of our future workforce in delivering Curriculum for Wales, whilst also meeting the needs of talented potential teachers, whatever their background and circumstances.

We required new pan-Wales routes into teaching, involving effective professional support and development, meeting the same high-quality requirements of the new accreditation criteria. It was also a key aim of the new routes to support diversification of the workforce for those unable to access 'traditional' full time ITE programmes. This commitment led to an open competitive procurement exercise, with the Open University successfully winning the contract and subsequently developing the salaried Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and part-time PGCE. Both routes were successfully accredited by the independent EWC Teacher Education Accreditation Board against Welsh Government's new criteria. Support was thereafter transitioned from the GTP to the new Salaried PGCE reflecting the new regulatory requirements and Welsh Government's commitment to the principles of our ITE reforms and the recommendations within *Teaching Tomorrows' Teachers*.

Information regarding the Teach First and GTP's effectiveness in supporting a broader range of people into the profession was not gathered during their delivery. Welsh Government therefore does not hold this information.

Financial Implications: Supplying the above information was accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 2

As part of its Strategic Education Workforce Plan, the Welsh Government either undertake or commission work looking at whether the costs to a student of ITE acts as a barrier to entry and successful completion; whether these barriers are higher for particular groups of potential students; and what options there may be to remove these financial barriers. This work should be done within the context of the current financial climate to ensure any recommendations for change are feasible and affordable and will improve recruitment and retention.

Response: Accept

We agree that undertaking ITE in Wales needs to be attractive and affordable for prospective teachers. The Strategic Education Workforce Plan will set out a range of actions to create the conditions for a highly attractive and respected education profession, supporting the recruitment, retention and development of our current and future workforce.

Our evaluation of ITE policy is due to report in Summer 2026. It will inform future policy development, including reviewing the effectiveness and value for money of our existing initial teacher education incentives and developing proposals for future recruitment and retention incentives.

Financial Implications: Funding has been allocated for the evaluation of initial teacher education policy, which will include consideration of the efficacy of incentives, and for wider policy development. However, there could be significant financial implications to the implementation of some options, which would need to be considered fully.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Government in responding to this report provides a timeline for the work examining the 50 per cent degree relevance requirement for joining ITE.

Response: Accept

This issue has been identified by the Welsh Government as a potential barrier to entry to otherwise suitable and qualified candidates to programmes of ITE. Work to review this entry requirement has begun as part of the current review of the *Criteria for the accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programmes in Wales*. We will explore this in more depth with the ITE sector with a view to changing the requirements in the third iteration of the Criteria document, which is scheduled for publication later this year. Changes will be made where they are deemed robust and professionally appropriate, in consensus with the ITE sector. This third iteration of the Criteria would apply to programmes of ITE from academic year 2029/30 onwards. However, should there be agreement amongst Wales' ITE Partnerships, Welsh Government would support an earlier implementation of any changes to entry applied pan-Wales.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should identify the factors which stop teachers with Welsh language skills from using them professionally. Once these factors have been identified, the Welsh Government should review the current support provided to these teachers to ensure it is meeting their needs and is directed in the most effective ways.

Response: Accept

We recognise the committee's finding that there are some untapped Welsh language skills within the workforce. This includes 1,590 teachers who are able to teach in Welsh but are not doing so in their current post. Also, there are currently 9,805 teachers with Welsh skills at intermediate level or above who do not currently feel confident to teach in Welsh. We agree that we need to better understand the factors which would encourage them to use the language professionally.

We intend to work with local authorities, as part of the implementation of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, to improve the use of workforce data and intelligence to support workforce planning. Identifying opportunities to support practitioners whose Welsh language skills are not being used in their current posts will be a key part of this work. We must recognise that some teachers in the English-medium sector will be established and happy in their current schools, and may not wish to move; however their Welsh language skills could be valuable within their current schools as primarily English language schools will be required to deliver more teaching through the medium of Welsh in line with the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025.

During 2024, the National Centre for Learning Welsh undertook a mapping exercise with local authorities to understand the Welsh language development needs of school practitioners. Data from the Schol Workforce Annual Census (SWAC) was used alongside a local understanding of schools. Based on this exercise, the Centre developed a comprehensive programme of Welsh language professional learning for practitioners, incorporating the Sabbatical Scheme, the employment of dedicated tutors to work within local authorities, and a range of other methods of delivery including self-study, virtual, face-to-face, and residential. The National Centre's staff and local tutors are engaging continuously with local authorities and schools to review and promote its provision.

The National Institute for Learning Welsh (Athrofa) will be established in August 2027. It will have a statutory duty to make arrangements to improve levels of ability in Welsh amongst the education workforce. This will be key in improving the proficiency and confidence of staff with intermediate Welsh language skills, or fluent staff who are not confident to use the language professionally, to enable them to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 5

The Welsh Government should ensure that all promotional work about teaching in Wales makes it clear that people who have done teacher training in England do not face barriers to moving to Wales to teach.

Response: Accept

We will review our campaign messaging, to see if we can overcome any misconceptions and make it clearer that you can teach in Wales if you have done your teacher training in England.

One of our new campaign ambassadors undertook her teacher training in England and subsequently chose to teach in Wales due to the Curriculum for Wales. We will work with this ambassador to help dispel any myths. The Cynllun Pontio, aimed at increasing the supply of Welsh speaking teachers in secondary schools, also targets Welsh speaking teachers outside of Wales and those who have been outside of the profession for five years or more.

We will explore further targeting to enable us to reach those who are undertaking their teacher training in England with appropriate messages to encourage them to consider teaching in Wales.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government, as part of their Strategic Education Workforce Plan should include work on the current use of sabbaticals in Welsh schools, and how schools and school staff can be supported to take up sabbatical opportunities.

Response: Accept

One of the aims of the Strategic Education Workforce Plan is to ensure that the profession remains attractive. In order to achieve this, we will be developing career pathways for teaching assistants, teachers and leaders to set out how they can develop their expertise in specific roles or progress to become teachers, middle or senior leaders within a school or specialist, advisory or policy roles within the education sector.

As part of this development, we will work with our partners, including local authorities, Dysgu, the Education Workforce Council and our universities to identify opportunities for sabbatical or secondment opportunities for practitioners to develop or use their expertise, taking into account the work of the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body in this area.

We have established Dysgu with a view to the organisation providing a range of sabbatical or secondment opportunities for practitioners to ensure that the professional learning being developed and delivered is based on current effective professional practice. Welsh Government also continues to fund the Welsh language sabbatical scheme, which provides opportunities for practitioners to be released from school to learn Welsh. We also offer a range of secondment opportunities for practitioners to support policy development within Welsh Government and the work of the Education Improvement Team.

Practitioners could also use the National Masters or Doctorate in Education as an opportunity to take a sabbatical from work to pursue research interests.

School governing bodies can agree the release of practitioners for any sabbatical or secondment period. It would be for individuals to consider any implications for their income.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets,

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should outline how it supports schools and local authorities to identify good practice and then how it supports dissemination of this good practice across the Welsh education sector.

Response: Accept

In January 2026, we published our new school improvement policy which defines clear roles and responsibilities for improvement and accountability within the Welsh education system. It outlines our new national model for school improvement which is rooted in better collaborative and collective working across the system.

The policy sets out our aim for local improvement communities where schools work together, in partnership with their local authority, to secure sustainable improvements locally. Purposeful collaboration, both vertically (3–16) and horizontally (e.g. secondary to secondary), will provide regular opportunities for teachers to observe practice and learn from peers and leaders in other schools.

This will also be supported by the revised professional standards, on which consultation closed in January 2026. The standard for Collaboration states that professionals should “actively seek opportunities to engage with other schools and wider partners to enhance professional effectiveness and extend effective pedagogy and practice contributing to system-wide improvement”.

Alongside local arrangements, a new Education Improvement Team has been established within Welsh Government to engage more directly and proactively with local authorities and their schools, connecting local needs with national priorities. This includes identifying and sharing examples of strong practice and moving forward will involve connecting local authorities with each other around common areas of improvement.

Annually, the Education Improvement Team will visit each individual local authority during the spring term to undertake a focused workshop, designed to support the development of the local improvement models along with enabling a purposeful professional dialogue with local authorities and their school leaders around improvement priority areas. This will help the process of identifying and sharing good practice across Wales.

The Education Improvement Team has also brought together local authority inclusion and improvement officers at a national level to facilitate the sharing of learning and intelligence with a view to building a more consistent and agile system across Wales. This will be an ongoing forum to build capacity in the system at local authority / Welsh Government level. Connecting this to the

examples of effective practice shared by Estyn as part of their thematic studies will also be an important step.

The Ministerial Headteacher Advisory Group plays a key role in representing the voice of headteachers. Through their work, examples of effective practice have been identified and shared within the group. These headteachers play a key role in disseminating this intelligence back through their local networks.

Welsh Government continues to engage with stakeholders and national partners (including Estyn) across a range of policy areas with a view to capturing and sharing examples of good practice, for example, through the Hwb platform.

Dysgu will play a key role in supporting local authorities and their schools to identify and share good practice in specific national priority areas.

Financial Implications: Supplying the above information was accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 8

The Welsh Government should outline the impacts of the Strategic Workload Co-ordination Group on workload reduction and in which areas of school operations these benefits have been realised and what the impacts have been on the workforce.

Response: Accept

The Strategic Workload Coordination Group (SWCG) was made up of key stakeholders, including representatives from across the system, who worked together to identify and implement changes to reduce workload for our school workforce. Its three working groups focused on Finance; Policy Development and Implementation; and Reporting and Engagement. The groups developed and delivered their own action plans. Following the conclusion of the SWCG's work the independent chair, Anna Brychan, Assistant Dean at University of Wales Trinity St David, made a series of recommendations.

The key outcomes from the groups were:

1. The development and implementation of a workload impact assessment which has been adopted by the Welsh Government education department with further roll out to all Welsh Government policy department and other organisations planned.
2. Establishing principles for engagement which provide practical approaches around workload which have been adopted by Welsh Government, WLGA, and trade unions.

3. The reduction in reporting requirements in relation to Welsh Government grants from 50 to eight.

The SWCG recognised that the impact of their work would primarily be experienced by leadership rather than classroom teachers. One of the Chair's recommendations was for the Strategic Education Workforce Plan to focus on impact for classroom teachers, which has been at the forefront of considerations in developing the plan.

Financial Implications: Supplying the above information was accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should make reducing workloads for classroom teachers a key priority in the Strategic Education Workforce Plan. The Workforce Plan should have clear and measurable actions that seek to reduce workloads in a meaningful and noticeable way for teachers as quickly as possible. It should also include ways in which workload can be measured. As part of this, the Welsh Government should ensure it engages directly with teachers. It should also look at best practice from the other countries, both within the UK and internationally and seek to apply any of this practice which would work within the Welsh context.

Response: Accept

Reducing workload will be a key priority in the Strategic Education Workforce Plan, which will set out high level actions with indicative timeframes. As part of implementing the plan, we will work with partners, and use the international evidence base, to agree clear and measurable actions for maximum impact. We will be mindful of the risk of creating additional workload through measuring it, and will ensure that measures are proportionate, reflect teacher autonomy, and are linked to specific and meaningful objectives.

Financial Implications: Policy development work can be accommodated within existing budgets, and will take into account any additional costs relating to new policy options.

Recommendation 10

The Welsh Government should set an expectation to schools and local authorities that activities that do not need to be done at school, such as

planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) can be done offsite. In setting this expectation the Welsh Government should make it clear that timetabling should be done in such a way that would support off site working for PPA. As a minimum, where teachers do have to remain on site, PPA time must be protected so they cannot be disturbed and drawn into other school matters.

Response: Accept

We recognise the need to provide for flexible working models that support practitioner wellbeing, which do not impact negatively on learners. In delivering the Strategic Education Workforce Plan we will work with partners to consider how we can practically deliver improved flexibility, including where it may be reasonably appropriate for PPA time to be taken off-site and organised in such units as would support this opportunity.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 11

The Welsh Government issues clear, coherent and universal guidance on behaviour management that is explicit and open to as little misinterpretation as possible for all different types of school settings in Wales, as a matter of urgency. This guidance should ensure that a consistent approach is being taken across Wales to behaviour, and in particular serious behavioural breaches.

Response: Accept

One of the five immediate actions announced following the 2025 National Behaviour Summit was a commitment to update national guidance for schools on behaviour, to ensure greater clarity and consistency across Wales. Delivery of this commitment is progressing at pace, as outlined in a written statement issued on 12 February.

In September 2025, we published a new behaviour toolkit to support schools to tackle behaviour. This resource provides access to classroom management strategies and the latest research on effective behaviour approaches. The toolkit will be reviewed regularly to ensure the content remains effective and relevant.

Following the Summit, we established two dedicated forums, bringing together a wide range of practitioners and experts. The exclusions and detentions forum has led a full review of existing guidance, while the mobile use in schools forum has co-designed new guidance and supporting resources. Both groups are concluding their work, ensuring stronger, clearer support will be in place for schools ahead of the next academic year.

Future revisions to wider national guidance on behaviour will be informed by ongoing engagement with schools led by university partners across Wales, to reflect current Welsh practice and international evidence.

This term, we also announced the development of new all-Wales resources to support school safety. This builds on the guidance launched by Cardiff Council in the autumn, to provide simple and practical advice to schools. Cardiff Council are leading work with local authorities and partners to develop a consistent approach for schools across Wales to manage incidents where children take weapons onto school premises, or are reasonably suspected of being in possession of a weapon on school premises. The new resources will help schools work closely with families and other services so that the right support can be put in place, whilst ensuring safety for staff and learners.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 12

The Welsh Government should ensure that schools and local authorities are providing sufficient shadowing and mentoring opportunities for classroom teachers to better understand whether they wish to move into school leadership roles.

Response: Accept

We recognise the Committee's finding that headteachers and senior leaders have an important role to play in inspiring teachers to consider moving into leadership roles and agree that teachers would benefit from shadowing leaders within their own schools and others to gain a practical understanding of leadership roles.

The Strategic Education Workforce Plan will set out a range of actions to ensure that there are a sufficient number of appropriately trained coaches and mentors available to support prospective leaders; to ensure that there is a comprehensive programme of leadership professional learning available through Dysgu, and to ensure that local authorities undertake succession planning for deputy and headteacher positions in their areas. This work will inform the allocation of places on the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the leadership pathway and their continued development, as well as ensure that local authorities identify and support individuals to pursue middle and senior leadership roles and headship. We will work with schools, local authorities and Dysgu, as part of this work, to encourage the use of shadowing, coaching and / or mentoring for teachers who wish to consider leadership roles.

Through our national school improvement model, local authorities should also be enabling the development of leadership capacity at every level of the system, which should present practitioners in middle leadership roles with opportunities to lead within and across schools; this approach is designed to enhance and refine school leadership skills.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Government should outline how it will evaluate the changes to the NPQH. Any such evaluation should ensure it looks at whether the course supports learners to develop the skills and knowledge to be an effective headteacher; and whether the course provides good value.

Response: Accept

Following an independent review of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which was published in 2023, the NPQH has been redesigned to ensure Wales continues to develop a strong pipeline of highly skilled school leaders capable of delivering our national education reform agenda and securing improved outcomes for learners. The new programme reflects the need for headteachers who are well-prepared for the increasing complexity and responsibility of school leadership. A rigorous assessment process to gain access to the new programme has been developed to ensure that only those individuals who are ready for headship are accepted. Dysgu is engaging with local authorities as part of the recruitment process and is developing a range of middle and senior leadership programmes as part of a leadership pathway to prepare future applicants for the NPQH.

The new NPQH is an 18-month programme that combines practical leadership experience in a range of environments with structured professional learning and a strong element of coaching and mentoring. It is grounded in the professional standards for teaching and leadership and has a strong focus on how leadership decisions impact teaching, learning and learner progress.

The pilot of the revised NPQH started in January 2025 and a second cohort started in September 2025. Dysgu took on full responsibility for delivering the NPQH in December 2025 and recruitment is ongoing for a third cohort to start in September 2026.

Dysgu will continue to refine the content and structure of the NPQH as it prepares to deliver for the third cohort, informed by the first two pilot cohorts. This will include assessment of the value provided by the various elements of the

programme, to ensure that as many participants as possible can participate without compromising the programme's quality and integrity.

Dysgu will be developing robust quality assurance and impact monitoring arrangements and applying these to the NPQH as well as its other provision. Dysgu is currently recruiting members for an Advisory Board to help further develop the qualification and to oversee quality assurance processes. This work will complement internal quality assurance procedures and will include commissioning an external review to ensure the highest standards are maintained.

We will consider the need for an independent, formal evaluation of the revised NPQH at a future stage, when its impact on the first two cohorts of aspiring headteachers can be assessed, and when the arrangements for the revised programme are well-established.

Financial Implications: Supplying the above information was accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 14

The Welsh Government commissions research to identify the factors that are causing the gender disparity in school leadership roles and then draw up an action plan to address any factors within the Welsh Government's responsibilities.

Response: Accept

We recognise that the percentage of female headteachers (62%) is not consistent with the percentage of females within the teaching workforce as a whole (76%). We note that the disparity is not as pronounced at the levels of deputy headteacher (70% female) and assistant headteacher (65% female).

We accept that the reasons for this are not established, and that witnesses suggested societal factors (such as an expectation for women to undertake disproportionate childcare) could contribute to the disparity and that it was unclear whether women were unsuccessfully applying for headteacher posts or were choosing not to apply.

As outlined in response to Recommendation 13 above, as part of the Strategic Education Workforce Plan, we will work with local authorities to undertake succession planning for headteacher positions in their areas. We will ensure this work considers gender disparity and explores the factors that prevent women from applying or being appointed to leadership and headteacher roles.

We will also ask Dysgu to consider the gender disparity as it engages with teachers and local authorities to promote the NPQH to future cohorts and as it engages with stakeholders to plan its leadership provision. We will also encourage Dysgu to ensure women are prominent as speakers and coaches within leadership programmes, to serve as role models.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Government ensures that the Strategic Education Workforce Plan has actions which will ensure the teaching profession more closely reflects the Welsh population, and the communities schools serve.

Response: Accept

Ensuring that our practitioners understand the central importance of the Welsh language and culture and are drawn from all the diverse communities they serve, including black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, will be one of the guiding principles of the Strategic Education Workforce Plan. Our actions to promote the profession will reflect this principle and will build on our current activity.

Our existing Teaching Wales campaign promotes teaching as a career to a diverse range of prospective teachers. We continually review and refresh the campaign and the Educators Wales website and will ensure that all activity promotes a profession that reflects the communities that schools serve.

We recently published an update to our recruitment and support for black, Asian and minority ethnic ITE students setting out the actions we are taking to increase the diversity of our teaching workforce.

Financial Implications: This work can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 16

The Welsh Government should establish a national body to set pay, terms and conditions for support staff.

Response: Accept

As per the Written Statement on 3 September, improving pay and conditions for our support staff is a key priority for the Strategic Education Workforce Plan. These individuals are a key part of a learner's education and support some of our

most vulnerable learners. They play an essential role in schools and deserve, in line with the Welsh Government's commitment to social justice, to be recognised, remunerated and treated fairly for the fantastic work that they do.

The Welsh Government's commitment to establish a School Support Staff Negotiating Body was reaffirmed on 2 December 2025, at the launch of UNISON Cymru's report 'Time to value school support staff'. Preparatory work on primary legislation has already started.

Financial Implications: The financial implications of establishing a new body would be included in a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) as part of a future Bill.