



Mark Isherwood MS  
Chair of the Public Accounts and Public  
Administration Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

27 February 2026

Dear Mark,

### **Covering Teachers' Absence**

Thank you for your letter of 4 February requesting further information following our attendance at the Committee in January 2026 and our follow-up response of 29 January.

Please find below a response to the points raised in your letter.

### **National Supply Pool for Wales**

A number of employment models were identified during the initial scoping. These included a roll-out of the cluster supply model, which had been previously piloted, regional supply registers or lists, or school-led arrangements. All were discounted following discussions with local authorities on the basis that they would not be practicable, cost effective or sustainable. It was subsequently agreed that a web-based booking system would provide the best potential national solution.

Due to the nature of the changes required to implement the booking platform and the individual circumstances of the local authorities at the time, it was agreed that a staggered roll-out would be the best approach. Anglesey agreed to participate in the initial roll-out as they already had a local authority managed supply list. At the time of deciding to proceed with the booking platform option, local authorities had indicated that they were broadly supportive of a technology solution, provided that another body took responsibility for recruitment, vetting, and overall support to schools. It was initially expected that local authorities would provide a payroll service for the technology solution

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to ensure that supply teachers were within scope of the School Teachers Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document (STPC(W)D) and able to access the teacher pension scheme (TPS). However, during the initial roll-out it became clear that not all local authorities would be able to support a payroll service.

In terms of key learning, we held a summit in 2024 with key stakeholders, including unions and local authorities, to review progress in the implementation of the national supply pool and to discuss next steps for supporting supply teachers in Wales. Initial feedback on the national supply pool was broadly positive. Anglesey remained the employer and payroll was therefore managed by the local authority ensuring that access to the TPS was possible. They continued to operate a dual system as some schools preferred to use personal lists of teachers and under the Staffing in Maintained Schools (Wales) Regulations 2006, this is supported.

There were clear benefits for schools and supply teachers to be able to book directly through the national supply pool platform. The ease of access to the system was highlighted as positive, along with the idea that supply teachers would eventually be able to work across local authorities. However, ensuring pan-Wales access to the TPS and the STPCW(D) remained the biggest barrier alongside the fact that as schools would continue to be able to make their own decisions on cover preferences in line with Regulations, it would make it more challenging to guarantee volume of usage and therefore viability.

Covering teacher absence is a complex matter, and the funding for covering teacher absence remains with local authorities. Although a national supply pool would have provided a consistent approach across Wales, local authorities were not in a position to fully support the roll out. Reflecting on the decisions taken, it is clear that it may not be possible to have a one size fits all model for Wales and that a range of models may need to be adopted based on individual local authorities' preferences.

Regarding the cost for the Teacher Booker licences and vetting, it was originally estimated that costs for the licences would increase gradually during the roll-out up to approximately £1m per academic year. The spend on licences was, therefore, well within the expectations of the contract. The vetting contract was established at a later date when it became clear that local authorities would not be able to provide this service. This was an unforeseen cost, however, as the spend on licences was lower than expected due to the pace of the roll-out, there was sufficient budget within the £1m annual budget to pay for the licences.

There were specific Welsh language requirements set out within the tender documentation for the procurement of the supply platform, referring to the Welsh Language Standards and the requirement for the successful contractor to adhere to them. An extract of the section within the tender specification can be found at Annex A.

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Once Teacher Booker Ltd had been awarded the contract and had developed the front end of the platform, a thorough check of all Welsh content was completed by fluent Welsh Government officials and by colleagues in Anglesey prior to launch. There was a contractual obligation on Teacher Booker Ltd to notify the Welsh Government of sub-contract changes. However, Welsh Government were not notified of the change that led to the complaint.

## Teacher recruitment and retention incentives

### Information related to the three incentive schemes and Welsh Government expectations

The [Teacher Planning Supply Model](#) provides a [national allocation](#) of the number of teachers required each year. The Education Workforce Council (EWC) then determines how this national allocation is broken down by phase and priority subjects. Information on EWC's initial teacher education (ITE) provider level allocations can be found here [Initial teacher education \(ITE\) intake allocations](#).

The incentive schemes and their budget are demand led and therefore the uptake and spend are directly linked to actual levels of recruitment and completion of ITE Programmes. Budget allocations are balanced between minimising potential pressure on the BEL should levels of recruitment exceed previous years, but also previous years spend. Should recruitment rise to the level of allocations (see above) the materialised pressure would have to be managed within the BEL/MEG as appropriate. Where excess demand in one scheme does occur, this is initially managed across all three incentive schemes.

In terms of wider workforce demand the ITE Incentives schemes are intended to encourage certain cohorts of graduates to consider teaching as a career and to incentivise entry to and completion of their statutory training in Wales. The graduates that the different incentives target are those identified as both difficult to recruit into ITE and most required in our school teaching workforce.

The number of claimants for each incentive scheme is not equivalent to ITE recruitment data. For all ITE incentive schemes the number of students receiving the incentive are indicative of:

- the students that applied to the scheme/s via their ITE Partnership within the required timeframes, and
- went on to successfully complete their ITE programme, and
- receive an award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Information on ITE recruitment including breakdowns of Welsh-medium student teachers, ethnicity and subject specialities can be found at [Initial teacher education | GOV.WALES](#).

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Additionally, the number of Induction claimants does not indicate NQT induction completion rates for specific cohorts, but successful claimants for the induction instalment payment of a particular incentive scheme/s. There are specific criteria and timeframes for claiming the induction instalment so not all teachers completing induction who received the QTS instalment may be eligible for the induction instalment. Data on NQTs and induction can be found at [Education workforce statistics](#).

### Priority Subject Incentive

The Priority Subject Initial Teacher Education Incentive Scheme has been available in some form since the 00s. Following the research into incentives in 2019 the scheme was reviewed and from academic year 2022/23 a single incentive rate was agreed for all priority subjects and the payment instalment structure altered. The incentive is now paid in three instalments and there are specific eligibility criteria for each instalment:

- £6,000 on completion of the first term with intention to complete the programme (for part-time student teachers this is split into £3,000 in year 1 and £3,000 in year 2)
- £6,000 on award of Qualified Teacher Status
- £3,000 on completion of statutory induction period

Only those who have successfully claimed the previous instalment can go on to claim the next instalment (should they meet the instalment criteria).

Information on the incentive scheme and the criteria for each instalment can be found here [Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Priority Subject Incentive Scheme: guidance for students | GOV.WALES](#).

In financial year 2023-24 the budget was £3.095m. In both financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26 the budget allocation for this incentive was £2.47m. This budget also covers administrative costs for all three of the incentive schemes; these are not included in Table 2. The current budget allocation covers induction payments for students for previous academic years cohorts (AY2022/23 onwards) the QTS payment for students from academic year 2024/25 (awarded summer 2025) and the in-year payment for academic year 2025/26. Due to low recruitment into secondary programmes despite forecasting a pressure at the start of the financial year a full spend is unlikely to be achieved.

Table 1 details the number of claimants from each academic year cohort at each stage of the incentive scheme instalments as above. Table 2 provides the current spend as of 10 February 2026 for each academic year cohort; this spend was paid over several financial years up to each cohort's specific deadline date where applicable and does not include administration costs.

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Table 1: Number of claimants for the Priority Subject Incentive scheme by academic year cohort and payment instalment as of 10 February 2026

Academic Year Cohort	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
In-year Claims (January)	170	180	135	170*
QTS Claims	150	165	120*^	n/a
Induction Claims	110*	85*	n/a	n/a
<b>Total Claimants</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>175*</b>

Table notes:

- Only those claiming the prior payment are eligible for the next payment
- \* indicates that this number may rise as the deadline has not yet passed for payment and/or there may be late awards of QTS due to re-sit periods and University Exam Boards
- ^ indicates this number may rise as part-time students will not achieve QTS until Summer 2026
- n/a indicates that the time for claiming has not yet occurred
- Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5

Table 2: Total paid for each academic year cohort under the Priority Subject Incentive scheme since academic year 2022/23 as of 10 February 2026

Academic Year Cohort	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Incentive instalments paid to date (10 February 2026)	£2.22m	£2.3m	£1.54m	£1.02m

Table notes:

- Some late applications for academic year 2025/26 are currently being processed so that figure is subject to change
- No Induction instalment deadlines have yet passed; figures subject to change as rolling claims are made.
- The totals for each academic year cohort indicate monies paid over several financial years up to their specific deadline date where applicable

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## Iaith Athrawon Yfory

The Iaith Athrawon Yfory incentive scheme makes payment to student teachers / new teachers learning to teach through the medium of Welsh in the secondary sector. Since inception the incentive has been paid in two instalments; there are specific eligibility criteria for each instalment:

- £2,500 on award of Qualified Teacher Status
- £2,500 on completion of statutory induction period

Only those that successfully claimed the first instalment can go on to claim the second instalment (should they meet the criteria).

Information on the incentive scheme and the criteria for each instalment can be found here [Welsh medium initial teacher education incentive \(Iaith Athrawon Yfory\): guidance for students | GOV.WALES](#)

The annual financial year budget allocation for this incentive is £0.72m. This allocation has remained static since FY2023-24. This allocation covers payments for students across multiple academic years cohorts.

Table 3 details the number of claimants from each academic year cohort at each stage of the incentive scheme instalments as above. Table 4 provides the current spend as of 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026 for each academic year cohort; this spend was paid over several financial years up to each cohort's specific deadline date where applicable. This spend does not include administration costs.

Table 3: Number of claimants for the Iaith Athrawon Yfory incentive scheme since academic year 2022/23 as of 10 February 2026

<b>Academic Year Cohort:</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
QTS Claims	75	90	80 <sup>^</sup>
Induction Claims	65 <sup>*</sup>	50 <sup>*</sup>	n/a
<b>Total Claimants</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>80<sup>^</sup></b>

Table notes:

- Only those claiming the prior payment are eligible for the next payment
- \* indicates that this number may rise as the deadline for claiming has not yet passed
- ^ indicates that this number may rise as there may be late awards of QTS due to re-sit periods and University Exam Boards
- n/a indicates that the time for claiming has not yet occurred
- Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5

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Table 4: Total paid for each academic year cohort under the Iaith Athrawon Yfory incentive scheme since academic year cohort 2022/23 as of 10 February 2026

<b>Academic Year Cohort:</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
Incentive instalments paid to date (10 February 2026)	£355,000	£352,500	£197,500

Table notes:

- The totals for each academic year cohort indicate monies paid over several financial years up to their specific deadline date where applicable

Welsh Government has an expectation that ITE Partnerships will work towards an intake of Welsh-medium students equivalent to 30% of their total allocation as set out by the EWC. For this demand-led incentive scheme, with rolling demand for each cohort and incentive instalment, officials currently utilise a figure of 100 claimants for budget management.

### Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive

The Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive Scheme makes payment to student teachers / new teachers that meet the criteria at each payment instalment. Since inception in academic year 2022/23 the incentive has been paid in two instalments; there are specific eligibility criteria for each instalment:

- £2,500 on award of Qualified Teacher Status
- £2,500 on completion of statutory induction period

Only those that successfully claimed the first instalment can go on to claim the second instalment (should they meet the criteria).

Information on the incentive scheme and the criteria for each instalment can be found here [Ethnic Minority Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Incentive scheme: guidance for students | GOV.WALES](#).

In financial year 2023-24 the budget allocation for this incentive was £0.125m increasing to £0.25m in FY2024-25 to reflect the potential spend related to the induction instalment for the previous year's cohort and the QTS instalment for the academic year 2023/24 cohort. The allocation continued at £0.25m in FY2025-26. The current allocation covers induction payments for students from previous academic years cohorts and the QTS payment for students from academic year 2024/25 (awarded summer 2025).

Table 5 details the number of claimants from each academic year cohort at each stage of the incentive scheme instalments as above. Table 6 provides the current spend as of 10 February 2026 for each academic year cohort; this spend was paid over several financial years up to each cohort's specific deadline date where applicable. This spend does not include administration costs

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Table 5: Number of claimants for the Ethnic Minority Initial Teacher Education Incentive scheme by academic year cohort and payment instalment as of 10 February 2026

<b>Academic Year Cohort:</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
QTS Claims	40	50	35*^
Induction Claims	15*	20*	n/a
<b>Total Claimants</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>35*^</b>

Table notes:

- Only those claiming the prior payment are eligible for the next payment
- \* indicates that this number may rise as the deadline has not yet passed for payment to be made and/or there may be late awards of QTS due to re-sit periods and University Exam Boards
- ^ indicates this number may rise as Part-time students will not achieve QTS until Summer 2026
- n/a indicates that the time for claiming has not yet occurred
- Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5

Table 6: Total paid for each academic year cohort under the Ethnic Minority Initial Teacher Education incentive scheme since inception as of 10 February 2026

<b>Academic Year Cohort:</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
Incentive instalments paid to date (10 February 2026)	£135,000	£175,000	£87,500

Table notes:

- No Induction instalment deadlines have yet passed; figures subject to change as rolling claims are made.
- The totals for each academic year cohort indicate monies paid over several financial years up to their specific deadline date where applicable

Welsh Government has set a benchmark for ITE Partnerships to work towards a diverse intake of ITE students equivalent to 5% of their total allocation. The current level reflects our initial benchmark as we implement the Anti-racist Wales action plan. Longer term it is our ambition that diversity in the teaching workforce broadly represents Wales' wider demographics. Since inception we have utilised a figure of 50 to manage the scheme day to day; should actual previous demand show sustained increases this figure will be adjusted accordingly alongside the 5% benchmark.

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## Welsh in Education Teacher Retention Bursary:

The Welsh in education teacher retention bursary was first open to applications in September 2023. In order to be eligible for the £5,000 bursary, teachers must have gained QTS from August 2020, have completed 3 years of teaching since being awarded QTS, and be employed in their fourth year of teaching either:

- teaching learners aged 11 to 19 in a Welsh-medium or bilingual secondary or middle school in Wales
- teaching Welsh as a subject to learners aged 11 to 19 in an English-medium secondary school

The Bursary is a pilot scheme, with a commitment to run for 5 years, until 2028, to enable us to gather sufficient data to monitor its effectiveness. A budget allocation of £850,000 has been made available each financial year to date.

Table 7: Number of successful applications and expenditure for the Welsh in Education Teacher Retention Bursary since its inception

Year	Number of eligible applications	Spend
2023	82	£653,400
2024	108	£809,924
2025	109	£828,400

## **National Framework Contract for Agency Staff**

### Cover booked through the contract between 2022-23 and 2024-25

Welsh Government began collecting data on the type of cover booked when the current framework commenced in 2023, data is therefore currently only available for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years.

Job Role	Measure	April 2023 - March 2024	April 2024 - March 2025
Qualified Supply Teacher	Days	291,276	260,572
Education Support Staff*	Hours	540,911	705,934
Cover Supervisor	Days	36,944	40,799
Classroom Assistant (TA)	Days	571,487	568,309
Tutor	Hours	17,366	21,238
Admin & Clerical	Hours	49,565	55,183
Caretakers, Cleaners, Maintenance	Hours	32,016	32,042

\*includes supply teachers working as support staff

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## In-year data for 2025–26

In-year data is available for April-September 2025 and is provided below. The framework spend during this period was approximately £54.022m.

<b>Job Role</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>March 2025 – Sept 2025</b>
Qualified Supply Teacher	Days	94,114
Education Support Staff*	Hours	50,952
Cover Supervisor	Days	16,324
Classroom Assistant (TA)	Days	212,814
Tutor	Hours	11,064
Admin & Clerical	Hours	20,458
Caretakers, Cleaners, Maintenance	Hours	14,067

\*includes supply teachers working as support staff

I hope you find the information provided helpful.

Your sincerely



**Emma Williams**  
Director General  
Education, Culture and Welsh Language Group

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## Annex A

### Welsh language requirements, as set out in the tender specification for the procurement of the national supply pool platform

#### Welsh Provision

- 9.1 The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (“the 2011 Measure”) makes provision for the specification of standards of conduct in relation to the Welsh language (“standards”).
- 9.2 Section 26 of the 2011 Measure enables the Welsh Ministers to specify standards, and section 39 enables them to provide that a standard is specifically applicable to a person by authorising the Welsh Language Commissioner (“the Commissioner”) to give a notice to that person requiring compliance with the standard (a “compliance notice”).
- 9.3 The Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015 (“the 2015 Regulations”) specify standards in relation to the conduct of the Welsh Ministers, county and county borough councils and National Park authorities.  
Details of country borough councils and National Park authorities can be found here: [Local government bodies | Law Wales](#)
- 9.4 The Welsh Language Standards (No. 2) Regulations 2016 specify standards in relation to the conduct of the organisations listed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/182/schedule/6/made>
- 9.5 The Welsh Language Standards (No. 4) Regulations 2016 specify standards in relation to the conduct of the organisations listed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/405/schedule/6/made>
- 9.6 The Welsh Language Standards (No. 5) Regulations 2016 specify standards in relation to the conduct of the organisations listed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/406/schedule/6/made>
- 9.7 The Welsh Language Standards (No. 6) Regulations 2017 specify standards in relation to the conduct of the organisations listed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/90/note/made>
- 9.8 The Welsh Language Standards (No. 7) Regulations 2018 specify standards in relation to the conduct of the organisations listed here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2018/441/schedule/6/made>

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- 9.9 The Commissioner has issued compliance notices to these organisations. The compliance notices, which may be amended by the Commissioner, set out which standards must be complied with by the organisations in question, and by when the organisations have to comply with them. They also specify in respect of certain standards circumstances and areas where they are and are not required to comply with them. A copy of the compliance notices for each of the organisations can be found on the individual websites of each organisation.
- 9.10 The Regulations also provide that, unless the compliance notices provide to the contrary, the standards will apply to an activity carried out or service provided on behalf of these organisations under arrangements made with a third party. That will include carrying out an activity or supplying services through contractual arrangements. This means that if a Supplier fails to comply with a standard where it acts on behalf of one of these organisations it will amount to a failure on the part of the organisation itself, rendering the organisation open to investigation and possible sanction from the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 9.11 The successful Supplier will be required to provide goods or services in a way which does not put a Customer Organisation in breach of Welsh Language Standards, and (where it is carrying out an activity or providing services on behalf of the organisation) to comply with the applicable standards, and indemnify the organisation against any failure.
- 9.12 Further sets of regulations may come into force over the duration of this framework.

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