

Emma Williams

Director General of Education, Culture and the Welsh

Language

Welsh Government

Via email

04 February 2026

Dear Emma

Covering Teachers' Absence

Thank you for attending the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee meeting on Thursday 22 January 2026. I write to follow up on several issues raised during the evidence session and in light of the additional information provided in your follow-up response of 29 January.

National Supply Pool for Wales

The Committee's previous report supported the principle of the National Supply Pool and the outcome from the pilot is, therefore, disappointing. I have written to the WLGA to invite their perspective but would also welcome any further clarification / explanation that you are able to provide on the following points:

- Why a pilot model was chosen that appeared to have some obvious possible constraints from the outset; whether these issues had been foreseen before launching the pilot; and whether there had been any previous indication that an organisation might be willing to take on some of the related responsibilities on a national basis?
- What, if any, consideration was given to further exploring or testing alternative models alongside the pilot rather than, as appears to be the case, needing to now consider other options after the event?
- What key learning has the Welsh Government taken from the pilot?

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

- Whether the costs that the Welsh Government expects to incur through its contracts with TeacherBooker for vetting and licences – said to be around £475,000 – have been in line with expectations when the contracts were let, and if not, why not?
- Your follow-up letter of 29 January states that TeacherBooker appointed a new subcontractor to support vetting during the contract period which affected the bilingual functionality of the platform, adding that “We would have expected to have been informed about this change and the implications but received no communications – though we could have made our expectations clearer”. Could you confirm what TeacherBooker’s contractual obligations were in terms of notifying you of the changes made and whether this was a change of sub-contractor or an entirely new sub-contracting arrangement?

Teacher recruitment and retention incentives

You provided some facts and figures about uptake and costs across the Priority Subject Incentive, Iaith Athrawon Yfory, and the Ethnic Minority ITE incentive. You also provided some information about the Welsh in Education Teacher Retention Bursary. We would welcome if you could set out comparable information about uptake and costs for each of these four initiatives, tracking back three years where data is available, including the current year (and on either an academic or financial year basis as appropriate).

It would also be helpful to understand whether these figures on uptake/spending are in line with the Welsh Government’s expectations for these initiatives in the context of wider demand. We recognise that there will also be further evidence to come about the overall impact/effectiveness of such initiatives following your data matching exercise with the Education Workforce Council and the wider evaluation you have commissioned.

National framework contract for agency staff

You indicated that expenditure on the national framework contract for agency staff in education for the 2024-25 financial year came to “£137 million or thereabouts”. We noted this was a lot more than the £101 million figure previously reported for 2022-23. You explained that there were various factors behind that increase, but the Committee would welcome any data that shows trends in the number of days of cover booked through the contract between 2022-23 and 2024-25 (particularly for teaching or teaching support cover). Any in-year position on days booked or costs for 2025-26 would also be of interest, and we also ask for this information to be provided.

Other matters

Finally, you offered at the start of the evidence session to provide a fuller written summary report with an update on actions in response to our previous recommendations. Our questions during the evidence session were intentionally framed around issues that were at the heart of our

recommendations. On that basis, and apart from addressing the specific follow up queries raised above, a full written update will not be necessary at this time. However, if you wish to add anything further on other matters covered during our evidence session then please feel free to do so as part of your response.

Any issues in this area that may require further follow up work will also be reflected in our legacy report.

The Committee would be grateful to receive a response by **Friday 27 February**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Isherwood', written over a horizontal line.

Mark Isherwood MS

Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee