

# Public Accounts Committee

## Oral evidence: Increasing teacher numbers, HC 825

Monday 19 May 2025

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Members present: Sarah Olney (in the Chair); Mr Luke Charters; Anna Dixon; Peter Fortune; Rachel Gilmour; Sarah Green; Lloyd Hatton; Helen Hayes; Rebecca Paul; Oliver Ryan.

Education Committee member present: Helen Hayes.

Gareth Davies, Comptroller and Auditor General, National Audit Office, Emma Willson, Director, National Audit Office, and David Fairbrother, Treasury Officer of Accounts, HM Treasury, were in attendance.

Questions 1-73

### Witnesses

I: Susan Acland-Hood, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education, Juliet Chua, Director General for Schools, Department for Education, and Julia Kinniburgh, Director General for Skills, Department for Education.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Susan Acland-Hood, Juliet Chua and Julia Kinniburgh.

**Chair:** Welcome to the Public Accounts Committee on Monday 19 May 2025. Recruiting and retaining secondary and further education teachers has been a long-standing challenge for the Government. Teacher shortages can lead to schools and colleges using non-specialist or supply teachers, having larger class sizes or limiting the variety of subjects offered, all of which impact the quality of education that young people receive.

In July 2024, the Government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers by the end of this Parliament. However, the Department for Education has predicted that the secondary school population will peak in the coming years, with secondary school pupil to teacher ratios at their highest since 2010. Today we will therefore be challenging the Department's current efforts to ensure that secondary schools and colleges have enough teachers, and assessing its understanding of teacher workforce needs. We will also be challenging it on whether its pledge of 6,500 new teachers is sufficient to address the current shortages, and achievable.

We welcome our witnesses: Susan Acland-Hood, permanent secretary at the Department for Education since 2020; Juliet Chua CB, director general for the schools group since May 2023; and Julia Kinniburgh, who was appointed director general for the skills group in December 2022 and previously held the position of director general for the strategy group. Thank you all for coming today. We also extend a warm welcome to our guest member for this hearing, Helen Hayes, who is Chair of the Education Committee.

We are going to ask a couple of questions at the top of the session, and I will go to Anna Dixon first.

Q1 **Anna Dixon:** Thank you, witnesses. When the Committee concluded our inquiry into support for children and young people with special educational needs—thank you for the Treasury minute you followed up with—our Report highlighted the critical and immediate financial challenge facing many local authorities. We recommended that central Government urgently involve local authorities to develop a fair and appropriate solution for when the statutory override ends in March 2026. We wondered whether you could update us at the beginning of this Committee hearing as to what steps have been taken to ensure that local authorities are involved, informed and supported. Before you come in, I apologise because I am going to try to get into the Chamber for a UQ; although I am asking this question, if the answer is very long, I may have to leave, but that will not be because I don't like the answer.



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**Susan Acland-Hood:** We will try not to take it personally. I thank the Committee for their sustained interest in this topic, which is incredibly important. We accepted all seven recommendations set out by the PAC in their Report, and that joint work, as I have said, is incredibly important.

We are working really closely with local authorities, and doing so under three headings. The first is the work that we are doing through the SEND and alternative provision change programme, which is working with 32 local areas across the nine regions to do, now, practical things that could improve provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. I know that that is not where the question starts, but I wanted to start with it because I think it is really important that, as well as looking forward at change and reform, we are working now on things that can improve children's experiences. That includes things like the work on partnerships for neurodiversity in schools, on early language support for children and on helping local authorities to design really good-quality plans for supporting children with SEND.

The second thing we are doing is working with local authorities and schools that are currently really successful in delivering inclusive mainstream education—because that is such a central pillar of our direction of travel on SEND—to try to identify what it makes easier for them to do that, and what makes it hard in the current system, and to spread that good practice.

The third strand is to look at further system reform going forward. That has to take in that question about the statutory override. Whatever we do on the statutory override has to be consistent with our longer-term direction. On that, we have experts working with us—both clinical experts and experts in education for children and young people with SEND—who are consulting extensively and listening to parents, teachers, and leaders in local authorities who are working effectively on inclusive mainstream. That is a really important part of this.

As part of that, they are having those conversations about Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value—past programmes to look at the deficit position and the statutory override—and they are thinking about what the construction of the system is. Fundamentally, there are some drivers in the system at the moment that keep creating these unsustainable pressures. If we do not address the drivers, the risk is that what we do is sticking-plaster, rather than a permanent solution.

Q2 **Sarah Green:** This is a follow-up question, but more of a practical, on-the-ground one. Twelve months ago, Buckinghamshire council received the green light to build a special school. Obviously, there has been a general election since, but it is still waiting to hear whether it still has a green light. That is 152 places, which will have a significant impact locally. Are you able to give any indication of when the council might hear whether that can go forward?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I am aware of the case. I also completely understand the frustration of having been told yes, and then waiting for

the link-up with the trust. What we are doing with the new Government is working through the waves—that is part of wave 4 of the free schools programme. What we are doing is making sure we work through all those, starting with the earlier waves, because they are even closer to needing to be opened and in delivery. I do not have an update for you today, but we are working through them as quickly as we can.

**Sarah Green:** Okay. Thank you.

Q3 **Chair:** We will now progress to the main session. My first question is very much about teacher vacancies. As an outer London MP, I am obviously concerned to see in the NAO Report that outer London has seen the largest increase in the number of teacher vacancies—55% of schools now have vacancies. I am interested to know, Ms Acland-Hood, how those vacancies and the increasing pupil-teacher ratios are impacting outcomes for students.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The total vacancy rate across state-funded schools is about 0.6%. Compared with many other sectors, as a headline level, that feels quite low, but it is historically higher than it has been. In particular, it has been growing recently in secondary schools. We keep a very careful eye on vacancy rates, but we also try to triangulate against other things, including things like pupil-teacher ratios and looking quite carefully at rates across different subjects. We see quite different rates across different subjects, for example.

The vacancy rate can be a product of changes in pupil numbers or in funding and how much funding schools have available to create the vacancies that they then seek to fill. We also have to look carefully at how it intersects with use of supply teachers, because the vacancy figures show up in our numbers if a position is advertised and unfilled for a term. If it is filled with supply, if it does not last for a term or if a school chooses not to advertise a post, because they are worried they will not be able to fill it, that will not show in the vacancy numbers. We then have to find it in another way and understand that pressure differently.

On the translation into pupil outcomes, there is incredibly good evidence that quality of teaching is the single most significant factor for pupil achievement in school. It does not come quite as high as some of the out-of-school factors that impact on pupils' learning, but the evidence is quite closely tied to quality of teaching. The evidence on pupil-teacher ratios is that until you get to very small or very large numbers—it depends exactly which study you look at, but it is from under about 15 pupils in a class to over 60—it is quite difficult to discern effect, and that the quality of the teacher is more important than, for example, going from a class of 20 to a class of 22.

Q4 **Chair:** If quality is the key indicator, rather than the number of teachers, what is your measure of quality?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I should say that we care about both, because whether you do not have a specialist teacher in your classroom is important. We look at teachers who are specialists in the area that they



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are teaching. We look at the proportion of hours of a subject taught by someone with a relevant post A-level qualification in that subject.

We also look at training and experience. One of the reasons we have invested heavily in continuing to change the specification for initial teacher training in both the early career framework—which gives teachers two years of early career support rather than one year, as it usually was previously—and the national professional qualifications framework is that we know that you can improve the quality of teaching through those well-structured and well-designed programmes. We run evaluation of those programmes to try to assess that.

But, as I say, this is one of the reasons we would look at vacancy rates within specialisms, as well as the overall vacancy rate.

**Q5 Chair:** What are you finding with specialisms?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We see significant variation. We see more vacancies in, for example, areas such as computing. As I said, the overall vacancy rate is 0.6% across all state-funded schools and 0.8% in secondary schools, but for computing, it is 1.4%. You can see that significant difference. Again, that lines up with what we see when we look at the number of hours of the subject being taught and the number of hours being taught by a specialist.

**Q6 Peter Fortune:** I want to move on to the FE sector. I am grateful to NAO colleagues for their briefing, which sets out some of the challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers, and to Dr Sam Parrett, the executive of London South East Colleges, which has a big campus in my constituency. There seem to be some real challenges in keeping teachers, especially specialist teachers, in the sector. What are your thoughts on why that is?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** First, I would say that we are concerned about the position in FE. The FE vacancy rate is significantly higher than the school vacancy rate, as is set out in the NAO's Report. Again, there is a circularity here, which is that many of the things we most want to be able to teach in larger numbers in FE colleges are in professions and disciplines where we see shortages in the labour market. People who are expert in professions and disciplines where there are shortages in the labour market tend to be able to command very high salaries. It then gets harder for colleges to recruit those people to teach the next generation. We can see that really clearly.

Again, we can identify more recruitment challenge and higher vacancy rates in some of the subject areas where we know we have a shortage in the general labour force. Construction would be quite a good example. When we go out into colleges, principals are telling us at the moment that construction feels really tight. They know that there is demand out there and they want to put on more construction courses, but it is hard to recruit people with good-quality, real-world experience of construction, because those people can earn quite a lot of money in construction.



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One of the things we have done about that is, relatively recently, to extend targeted retention incentive payments, which give up to £6,000 of additional pay each year, to cover those teaching in FE. We have also extended the list of subjects to cover professional and technical areas such as construction in order to enable colleges to give more incentives to attract more teachers.

**Q7 Peter Fortune:** But while there is that disparity between industry and school pay, this will continue to be an issue in FE colleges.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** You are absolutely right. As Susan says, there is an issue. We are pushing a number of different areas to try to tackle it. One of those is thinking about how we bring more people from industry to teach in FE colleges. There are various projects going on at the moment. There is a project being led by the Gatsby Foundation, which is working with Edge Hill University. They are setting up a training curriculum so that people from industry can come and work in colleges and be what are often called dual professionals—they work in colleges part time and work in their industry part time.

I was in a college recently and met a teacher who was doing exactly that: she is a designer two and a half days a week and teaches in the college two and a half days a week. Not only does that give a great advantage to the college in terms of filling the teacher gap, but she is then able to upskill other teachers on the latest techniques from her profession, and the students gain an awful lot from having someone who is actually in that sector.

Various colleges have tried this, and with good success. For example, 80% of the workforce at the City of Liverpool college are now dual professionals, and the college has worked hard to create links to local employers and bring people in. We are looking hard at whether we can extend and expand that, share good practice and support that. Indeed, one facet of our latest construction package, which was announced recently, is funding and supporting a dual professional scheme for the construction industry in particular. We are looking at it in construction, but we are also looking at it across other sectors.

**Q8 Peter Fortune:** It feels like these are bolt-ons and incentives, and that is positive, but when you have that £10,000 difference between a schoolteacher and an FE teacher, there is always going to be the question of value, isn't there? Would you say that that makes teachers in the industry feel undervalued?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** As the NAO Report points out, there is a gap in terms of average teacher pay. That is an average, and colleges have discretion to set their pay as they see fit. In relation to pay, the way that we work with colleges is different from the way we work with schools. It is for them to set; we do not have a national pay review body. I know that college leaders think very hard about how they should use their funding and where they need to put more funding to attract people in.



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It is clear that the Government really value those technical teachers, and that is why we are focusing hard on this. As Susan was saying, the targeted retention initiative that we launched in the last year was the first time we had extended it into FE—that is up to £30,000 in the first five years of your teaching career. We have just published figures that show that 6,000 people received those payments in the FE sector, the largest chunk of which, in subject terms, went to construction, then maths, and then engineering and manufacturing. That is really working to attract and encourage people to stay.

We have also had some good feedback. Middlesbrough college has said to us that it has made a difference; it had 74 teachers who received the £6,000 this year. The college is saying that it has made a difference in terms of its retention—more teachers are staying on than would have previously. We are really pushing all those different buttons.

Q9 **Peter Fortune:** Did you say about £6,000?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** £6,000 tax-free per annum for the first five years.

Q10 **Peter Fortune:** How many did you say had taken it up?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** That is 6,000 as well.

Q11 **Peter Fortune:** This is a mean question, but do you have any idea what sort of percentage of the workforce that is?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** The total workforce in colleges is 54,000 FTE.

**Peter Fortune:** That is very good. Thank you.

Q12 **Helen Hayes:** I just want to push a bit further on that. I accept that DFE has a different relationship with colleges as compared with schools in relation to pay, and that colleges have discretion, but FE is the least well-funded part of the whole education system, and has been for a very long time. I think that response—that colleges have discretion—makes leaders in the FE sector slightly weary; if they do not have budgets that are commensurate with the rest of the sector, then, with the best will in the world, they simply do not have the flexibility to pay their staff more.

As you know, the Education Committee has an inquiry into FE and skills at the moment, and a view that we have heard many times over in the course of our inquiry is that the sector feels somewhat patronised when it hears Government telling it how important it is, in a way that simply is not reflected in the funding that it gets. The measures that you have mentioned are welcome, but they are not being delivered at scale, and there does not seem to be a reflection that the recruitment needs in FE are different, that a different response, at scale, is therefore needed, and that pay is a material part of the problem here.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** We do accept all that. We have put another £400 million into the sector recently, to recognise the need for additional funding into the sector. We are very focused on how we help the sector to bring more people in; we have had lots of conversations with FE leaders





about the advantage of bringing people in from industry. It is important, and it makes a difference to their ability to be up to date and to teach.

We also have programmes around bursaries to encourage people to do teacher training in the first place. We have a programme called Taking Teaching Further, a two-year programme to attract people and then support them through their first two years—so, a bit like we have the early career framework in schools, we have something similar in FE. At the moment, we are looking at how we can maximise that and support the sector more, in terms of those choices and questions, working with them. That is not to disagree with your analysis of where the relative funding is, but we have done a lot in recent months.

- Q13 Helen Hayes:** You have also just decided not to renew the contract for Now Teach, which supports mid-career switchers into teaching. They are quite an important part of the teaching workforce in FE, because that workforce relies on people who have gained experience of technical trades being able to go into teaching. Do you think that the failure to renew the contract for Now Teach will have an impact on the challenge of recruiting into FE and into the profession more widely?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** We agree with your point about bringing people in who are mid-career. Indeed, the age profile in FE is older than in schools, for exactly that reason. That is why we have our programmes around bursaries, we have our programmes around Taking Teaching Further, and we have our new targeted retention initiative. That is based on evidence that we have seen. We had a study that showed that a £5,000 payment would have a 37% increase in retention, so we have evidence-based programmes that are in there and acting. It is relatively early days with the targeted retention initiative, but the take-up from this first year has been really positive and really good. Like I was saying, we are having feedback from colleges and it is making a difference to retention.

- Q14 Rebecca Paul:** Before I begin my questions, I want to disclose that I am a serving county councillor on Surrey county council.

Thank you for your time today. I want to move on to the £700 million that has been put into initiatives to recruit and retain teachers. It seems fairly clear—there is a quite a lot of evidence—that financial incentives work quite well in recruitment and retention. Why are you not spending the whole £700 million on that, given that there is evidence for it, whereas the evidence for non-financial incentives is not so clearcut?

**Juliet Chua:** We have looked carefully, in terms of guiding the investment decisions for this year, and overall we have been pleased to see some green shoots, with progress on overall recruitment numbers into postgraduate ITT. The use of our incentive package is obviously a key part of that. Our strategy overall is to make sure both that we have strong retention and strong recruitment and that we are supporting the workforce overall, as Susan has described, with a strong focus on making sure that we have the right specialisms.





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The £700 million is allocated in a way that reflects a package of interventions to ensure as much progress as possible against that strategy overall. There is £233 million around the bursaries and scholarships, essentially targeting our resources into support for particular subject areas, and £130 million to make sure that we continue to invest strongly in retention. As we have touched on, that critical support for teachers in the first two years of their career makes a huge difference, and we can see from the evidence that it makes an impact on further retention. We are making sure that we have a package of support in the recruitment incentives that we have described, supporting teachers to stay in roles. It is particularly targeted and tilted towards the most disadvantaged areas, where we see higher rates of turnover in relation to schools with higher rates of disadvantage.

Then there is a set of additional interventions, which are our programmes to support quality and sufficiency across both FE and schools. We have touched on some of them already, but we are making sure that we have support for other drivers with non-financial incentives, like our support for our workload and wellbeing service.

Although we have built some really strong evaluation evidence on the impact on motivation and support for new routes through our financial incentives, we do think, because we see in all our survey data that aspects like workload and retention are absolutely critical, that we need to make sure we have a balanced investment package.

**Q15 Rebecca Paul:** I completely agree about the importance of retention as well as recruitment, but we are putting 43% of this budget towards non-financial incentives. I am not seeing any clear evidence that that leads to the outcomes we are seeking. I totally appreciate that there will be other upsides to it for the teachers going through training, but at the end of the day, the purpose of the £700 million is to ensure that we end up with increased numbers. For example, the early career framework is £131 million, which is 19% of the £700 million. My understanding from the Report is that it shows no significant impact on retention, so how are we justifying that spending?

**Juliet Chua:** I do not quite recognise that. We are obviously continuing to evaluate the early careers framework. The year 1 retention rate for new teachers coming in rose by 1%, whereas retention rates for teachers at two to five years look different. We are seeing a higher retention rate by up to 88.7% after a year among teachers who have gone through the early careers framework, so we do think it is beginning to have an impact on retention.

**Q16 Rebecca Paul:** Have you worked out how much that cost? For every teacher we are retaining, how much is that costing from that £131 million?

**Juliet Chua:** I do not have the figures in front of me. I know that the number of teachers going through the early careers framework this year is 18,000. We could come back to you with the exact unit cost on that.

**Q17 Rebecca Paul:** Yes, it would be helpful if you could come back to me,



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because £131 million is a lot of money. It is really important that we ensure that we are getting better value by spending it in that way, rather than just putting it into teachers' pay and other financial incentives. That is the point that I am getting at: is it giving us a better result than if we just put it into teachers' pay?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We have to measure it on quality as well as on quantity. That 88% retention rate for teachers at the end of their first year is the best we have seen in the time series. It is a significant shift.

**Rebecca Paul:** Okay—that's good.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The ECF was designed because we see much higher drop-out rates from teaching in the first few years. If you can support teachers to stay through those first few years, they become increasingly likely to stay. The longer you have been in teaching, the more likely you are to stay.

If you hold people through those early years, when the drop-out rates are high, you have a strong chance of keeping them for longer. Those are more experienced people, so, net-net, it is better to hold an experienced teacher in the classroom than to lose them and recruit a new teacher. If you can, privileging retention over recruitment is right, not just from the point of view of numbers but because of the experience that those teachers have and the skills that they bring.

In addition, the ECF is adding content to teacher skills. It is helping to support effective behaviour management in the classroom, which we know is raised when teachers talk about pulling out. We should be able to look at what it is doing on retention, but we should recognise that it is also contributing to teacher quality. As I said at the beginning, the evidence base shows that it is teacher quality that makes the biggest difference of all, even more than the number of teachers.

Q18 **Rebecca Paul:** I note that we have a "Get Into Teaching" website, which has had £26 million allocated to it. I had a look, and it seems an awful lot of money for a website. I do not necessarily expect you to have this information right now, but, if the Chair agrees, I would find it helpful to have a breakdown of how on earth the website is costing £26 million. How many full-time equivalent people are working on that? It would help us to better understand, because that is quite a chunky percentage.

**Juliet Chua:** Can I come back on that directly? "Get Into Teaching" is an end-to-end digital marketing service. The website is at the heart of it—it allows us to attract and retain initial applicants all the way through their teaching service, and it is giving us a wealth of data so we can track and understand candidates as they come through, to get the widest possible pool—but that budget also includes the activities that we do to market, to reach out to teachers with a really strong campaign, as you will see in the cinema or on your phone, and to reach the broadest range of candidates.

I can certainly come back to you with the full breakdown if that is helpful, but it is not just the cost of the website. It is absolutely the cost of the

end-to-end digital marketing programme that allows us to try to reach as many candidates as possible.

**Chair:** We would definitely welcome that further breakdown.

Q19 **Peter Fortune:** I am just trying to find the numbers on retention. What year do they come from? I wonder whether there has been an assessment since the changes to national insurance contributions and the pressure that has put on some schools. I read in *The Times* this morning about teacher redundancies across some academy trusts. Do you know how current those retention figures are?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The retention figures that I have just given for ECF?

**Peter Fortune:** Yes.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** That is the group that started training in 2022. When you are studying retention, you have to wait until people have had time to have left.

Q20 **Peter Fortune:** Of course—that is axiomatic. Having read the article this morning about potential redundancies, I just wondered whether there was any sign of those pressures around NI costs. I think £1 billion was contributed to cover those costs, but I think that they are short by about 30%—this is off the top of my head. I was wondering whether you are seeing or hearing any impact of those extra costs that schools are facing starting to come down the line, in terms of teacher retention or recruitment.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The next run of school workforce census figures will be published next month. Again, that lags a little bit, but we will be able to see a bit from earlier in the year.

We have very strongly rising pupil numbers in secondary, still. We have more teachers than we have ever had now, and we are starting to see the effect of pupil numbers dropping in primary. The biggest impact on teacher numbers is pupil numbers, because we fund on a per-pupil basis and generally that is how people set up their schools.

What we typically see is that when pupil numbers drop for a bit, schools will manage with slightly reducing resources. We also insulate it a little bit; when your pupil numbers drop, we protect you for a bit, so that you can make a plan. Then we see schools just having slightly smaller class sizes for a bit. When class sizes get really small, we start to see schools consolidate classes.

In primary, we passed the hump a while ago. We are getting to the point where schools are starting to consolidate their classes. We can see that in the numbers: we can see the effect of falling primary numbers coming through in reducing numbers of teachers. It is patchy across the country, so it depends a bit on the demographic patterns. We see it really strongly



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in London, not only because of the demographics of birth but because more families are moving out of London with their children.

In secondary, we are still seeing numbers rising, both among pupils and among teachers. I would expect to continue to see secondary teacher numbers rise, even when schools are under pressure, because there are more students coming in and they bring the unit of resource with them.

**Peter Fortune:** And we will start to see some of these numbers next month.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Correct.

- Q21 **Oliver Ryan:** May I return to a topic that was covered by my colleague Rebecca Paul? The marketing budget for "Get Into Teaching" is £26 million, and you employ something like 180,000 to 200,000 people. The Army, Navy and RAF spend something like £70 million or £80 million trying to advertise in the same space for a similar number of personnel. Are you spending enough on marketing, from where you are standing?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I am always happy to have that conversation with the Treasury. We think that it is really sensible to spend money on marketing to make sure that people know about teaching and understand the offer that we are making. Again, we have an extensive package of bursaries and scholarships. We still find that some people coming towards teaching do not know enough about what is available. You can get a scholarship of up to £31,000, tax-free, while you train. You can get six grand on top of your salary for your first five years if you are teaching in a shortage subject. That is higher if you are in a disadvantaged area.

We really want people to know those things, as well as knowing that teaching is an amazing career in which you get to do wonderful things for children. We often talk about the things that put people off teaching, but when we survey teachers, we also hear the things that they love about teaching and why they want to be there.

We will always try to use the money as well as we possibly can. As Juliet has said, it is a combined budget for marketing and for a service that helps people to step through the stages of applying to be a teacher and becoming a teacher. That is really important, because it allows us to see clearly in our data where people might drop out, where the drop-off points are and where things aren't quite working, and to go back into the system and try to make it better.

- Q22 **Oliver Ryan:** Fair enough. We will leave that until we get the breakdown and then see how we go. I will move on.

The DFE met its overall target for the numbers starting postgraduate initial teacher training only once in 2020-21, and has consistently failed on subject-specific recruitment targets for the last few years. I think it predates all of you, given what you said about when you started your positions. Other than in, strangely, PE and classics, which are great successes for this country, I would like to know what is happening in that



area.

The Committee told the DFE in 2016 that we needed to look more at incentives in the system, and in 2018 the Committee told the DFE that it had dropped the ball on recruitment overall. It does not feel as if it has improved much since that point, so what more are you doing and what plans do you have to tackle the fact that too few people are signing up to train as teachers? I know you have touched on some of that already, but if I were to read this as a layperson, I would put it to you now that you have a recruitment crisis on your hands.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Historically, we have regularly met our primary recruitment targets, which is worth saying, and we expect to meet our primary recruitment targets—

**Chair:** Just to clarify, do you mean primary school?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Primary school recruitment targets, yes. Again, that is partly because there is a very strong demographic driver. We would expect primary recruitment to be relatively easier. In secondary, you are right: we have struggled to meet the subject-specific recruitment targets, and we particularly struggled through a period of very rapid pupil growth. That is because we set the targets by looking at the number of people who are in the system, and then inflating for demographic growth and trying to chase it.

Again, I will be very open with the Committee. In preparing for this hearing, we have all sat and reflected on the way we set those targets—very focused on PGITT. We look at all the routes, because that is only about a third of the people coming into teaching, but the modelling treats everything else as an input and looks at the outcome for PGITT and sets the target for that.

We have actually reduced our most recent set of targets, because we have had significant success in recruiting. We had about 2,000 more teachers coming in this year compared with last year. The fact that we accepted the STRB's recommendation for a 5.5% pay rise meant that our projections for retention have changed, and we expect to retain about 2,500 more teachers than we had previously projected. We are also seeing about 1,000 more teachers coming through initial teacher training in the coming year, compared with the previous year.

We can see all these leading indicators pointing in the right direction, which has caused us to adjust our secondary targets. But we are in a position where, even when we have recruited more secondary teachers year on year, we have struggled to keep up with that big demographic shift. It is not that we are recruiting fewer. We are recruiting more; it is just not enough to meet the increase in demography. We have to keep going on the incentives, particularly for the subjects where we have the most significant gaps.

Q23 **Oliver Ryan:** Indeed. You say that you have reduced the targets by something like 4,500 next year compared with this year. Is that because,



as you have just explained, you are expecting retention to increase because of the pay rise? It is not necessarily because you have not met the targets and you want to bring the numbers down?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** No, no—we absolutely would not do that. In fact, if we do not meet the targets in an earlier year, we add to the targets the following year, which is one of the reasons why the targets are challenging. We take the shortfall from the two previous years—it is two years because the starting point for the projection is the school workforce census, and that has a lag in it—and we add it back in again.

The other thing that is worth noting is that in many workforces you would not aim to fill the whole of whatever gap you had in a single year, but we set the targets as though we were trying to fill the gap that we can see in a oner. That is one of the reasons why they are quite challenging to meet.

Q24 **Oliver Ryan:** I have a couple more questions about the targets, but I will leave it there for now, other than to ask—Juliet might want to come in on this—whether you have an answer on PE and classics. Should we all explore these careers?

**Juliet Chua:** Overall, the targets are important, but they are part of the story, not the whole story. Part of what we are doing is about wanting to make sure that, as we describe, we retain as many people as possible right across the workforce. Yes, absolutely, our forecasts for this year contain an expectation that 2,500 more teachers will remain within the workforce. Positively, we have seen 2,000 more teachers in training, which is really exciting in terms of being able to see the green shoots. That will contribute to the calculation of the PGITT.

We have also seen a historical high in terms of the number of returners coming back to the profession this year. Some 39% of those who will be considered new entrants are actually returners coming back in, and they will bring with them experience and specialist knowledge. There is a wider story overall as we think about both our modelling and how we think about supply.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Do you want to say something about PE and classics?

**Juliet Chua:** Oh yes. Individual schools will make decisions about the curriculum they offer, the resources and how they want to make things available to children, so they will make judgments about the numbers of teachers they want to recruit and about their ability to deliver that. We see increases in terms of the numbers of teachers who have been recruited towards some of the core subjects—English, history, biology and similar areas. We obviously see a relatively high supply of PE teachers. I could not comment on the question of classics specifically, but we have not seen a problem, particularly in terms of being able to fill roles.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** On classics, it is worth saying that the overall number is very small, whereas it is very large in PE, which is a compulsory curriculum subject. There is an effect in PE that is a bit like the dual-





professional route we described in FE. Quite a lot of people want to spend time doing sport, and they find that teaching PE is compatible with that, so historically we have not struggled to recruit PE teachers, which is excellent.

- Q25 **Mr Charters:** I sort of declare an interest, because I am proud of my wife being a primary school teacher. We have some phenomenal secondary school teachers in York—I named my son after one I had—but there is a shortage, particularly when it comes to vacancies in specialist subjects. How can we make sure that those who complete their teacher training get into the specialist roles so that we do not have vacancies in York and beyond?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I might hand over to Juliet in a minute.

We start by offering significant bursaries and scholarships for those who are going to train in the specialist subjects where we see particular shortages. As I say, there are tax-free scholarships of up to £31,000 and tax-free bursaries of £28,000, and up to £31,000 in FE. Those are targeted on the subjects where we have the greatest need: maths, computer science and STEM subjects. That is for when you are training. We also offer the targeted retention incentive for the first five years of teaching in those subjects. Again, that is targeted on the subjects in greatest need.

We also offer subject knowledge enhancement programmes. We offer people the opportunity to build their knowledge in subjects that they might not already be specialist in, and we partner with some of the learned societies to do that.

We have run a successful programme for engineers to teach physics, which started as a pilot and then grew. One of the challenges in recruiting physics teachers is that, when you look at the overall numbers, including the overall number of physics graduates, the total proportion of physics graduates we would have to recruit to fill the whole gap is quite high. So we are interested in trying to make sure that other people who have a good-quality base understanding of the principles of physics, like engineers, can be retrained so that they can teach physics. That has been a successful programme and we have seen significant numbers of people come through.

- Q26 **Mr Charters:** Let us say you are a specialist teacher and you are in. You are then struck with this massive risk of burnout. The DFE's own stats show that teachers work on average over 50 hours per week—that is more hours than I think some MPs work. How can we address the workload of teachers in specialist roles, particularly at the start of their career? I have heard from a teacher in a secondary school in my constituency who feels they have more work precisely because there is a shortage of specialist teachers.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** That is absolutely a risk, isn't it? If there are fewer teachers in a particular specialism in a school, they might end up teaching more classes. When we look at the total hours taught in each subject and



the number of teachers, we see that teachers in areas where we have more shortages do look like they are ending up with more teaching hours in front of the class. The early career framework is there partly to try to make sure that we support teachers in the early years, including teachers in specialist subjects. They get mentoring, dedicated support and also some extra time to support them in those early years to make sure they can step into that.

**Juliet Chua:** Workload is a critical issue. We see it very much in the survey data, where we look at teachers' reported data experience in schools. The numbers are coming down slightly, so I did not quite recognise your data point. Teachers have reported year-on-year improvements in overall working hours for the last three years.

We have been developing a much stronger set of tools and support for schools in our workload and wellbeing toolkit. There are some great case studies. It is worth dwelling on the role of leadership in supporting teachers and leaders to think about how they work within the school. We can think about the school's organisation, planning and preparation time, and supporting young teachers. The role of mentoring is critical as part of that, in terms of thinking about how day-to-day planning and activity takes place within the school. We see significant variation in school practice in relation to thinking really carefully about how workload plays through into individual departments.

Q27 **Mr Charters:** Teach First has had some phenomenal outcomes, particularly in disadvantaged schools, where it has actually had an effect on academic results, but I hope you would acknowledge that the long-term retention of Teach First participants could be better. Are we at risk of it becoming Teach First and have a career in the private sector later?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The retention rate for Teach First is a little bit lower than the general retention rate for teachers in schools, but it has been improving. We have seen it improve over the lifetime of Teach First. It is one of the things that we make a KPI as part of the contract: we ask them to look at and try to improve the retention in schools.

We also see that Teach First participants—we sometimes refer to this as high-potential ITT, but it is the same thing—are more likely to stay teaching in disadvantaged schools. When they move school, they are more likely to go to another disadvantaged school compared with teachers who enter via other routes. Teach First is there to consciously place teachers in more disadvantaged areas, but when other teachers who have started their careers in more disadvantaged schools move, they are more likely to move to a school that is in better circumstances, whereas Teach First teachers tend disproportionately to stay in their schools or move to other disadvantaged schools.

Q28 **Mr Charters:** I have a final retention issue. Why should we expect dads-to-be to become teachers when they have two weeks' paternity leave under the Burgundy Book? That is absolutely rubbish and does not support families at that critical start in life. When it comes to retention, two weeks'

paternity leave is not really in lockstep with where a lot of the private sector is heading. Should we not go further on paternity leave for dads in schools to help the teacher retention crisis?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** That is absolutely something we should look at. As you say, the challenge is that it is governed by the Burgundy Book, which is one of the pieces of the pay and conditions framework that we do not have a role in as Government, technically. It is for employers and the trade union side to discuss and negotiate. There have been similar questions about maternity, which is also governed by the Burgundy Book rather than by a framework in which the Government have a clear role. There is something for us to do there. It is worth us looking at and raising that, including through our partnership work with those who have the direct role in setting conditions.

**Mr Charters:** So there is a clear signal today to look at paternity and maternity leave in the Burgundy Book, to perhaps drive up teacher retention.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** It is a very sensible thing to raise. When we look at Juliet's figures on returners, we are seeing record numbers. A large number of our returners have been out of teaching for only a year, and I think that some of those are teachers who made their own choice to try to effectively extend their maternity or paternity period.

Q29 **Rachel Gilmour:** Following on from what Luke said, I have had constituents visit me who have bursaries, but it does not cover childcare, so they are out of pocket. Perhaps you could look into that.

My main question builds on what my colleagues have said about state schools and further education. How will you encourage those who complete teacher training to head towards rural schools and colleges? I have in my constituency Stogursey, which will be somewhere that you know. It is often very difficult to recruit new teachers and staff for the secondary schools in my constituency; what can be done to encourage a more regional balance?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We do not currently have programmes that direct where teachers end up. We look at the regional balance of where teachers are training, but we also see quite a lot of teachers moving between where they train and where they end up teaching. It can be really helpful to look at some of the salaried routes in respect of where teachers spend time in schools. When teachers go through the salaried routes and are supported by a school, they are more likely to stay in that school for their subsequent career.

One of the things we have done recently, which could make quite a big difference, is the changes we have made to the postgraduate teaching apprenticeship. That has been really helped by the change in the rules on apprenticeship lengths. It was required to be a year long, which was quite an odd thing in the school context, as you ended up artificially trying to think of things for them to do over the summer holidays in order to make it a year long.



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Allowing the apprenticeship to be nine months, which follows the pattern of the year more naturally, and getting your accreditation at the end of that year, fits much more sensibly with the framework of how schoolteacher training and retention works. That provides a route that should allow more schools to support people who are local and embedded in the community to become part of their teaching workforce. Again, trying to make people move around the country may have some part to play, but growing people in places who are deeply connected to those places is also very powerful.

**Rachel Gilmour:** That is what Chris Whitty says about doctors and dentists.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** On FE, we have talked about how to bring people in from industry. Lots of colleges work very well with their local community. It is really important in more rural areas to have those connections and to allow people to teach in colleges perhaps part time rather than full time. That really does work in some areas.

If I may, Chair, I said earlier that there were 54,000 full-time equivalent teachers, but it is 54,000 in total, not full-time equivalent. Sorry: I added "full-time equivalent" in my excitement.

**Chair:** We are going to move on.

Q30 **Sarah Green:** Staying with the recruitment and retention theme, paragraph 1.11 of the NAO Report states that "38% of those who had worked within the education sector at some point between the ages of 17 and 29 were still doing so at age 30, compared with 44% in health, 48% in the public sector and 49% in the private sector." What work has the Department done to understand why fewer people stay in the education sector compared with other sectors?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We look quite hard at the reasons why people leave. We also look quite hard at the reasons why people come back, and we are seeing record returner numbers at the moment. We have also recently done quite a significant piece of work looking at the cross-fertilisation between parts of the education sector, and extending that out into children's social care as well.

We know that, of those who leave teaching in a school, for example, by far the most frequent route is to go into another part of the education system. It may be lower than others, but it is still the most common place for a teacher to go when they leave teaching. Trying to think a bit more about the whole of our ecosystem, how people might move around it and how you might make it easier for people to build careers across the system is part of our thinking on that. We still do not do that as well as in health, where there is a stronger sense of how you might create career pathways across different disciplines or professions. That is coming in the education system, but we still expect people to figure that out for themselves a bit. We could do more to show and illustrate some of the possible pathways that allow people to move around different parts of the sector.

**Q31 Sarah Green:** Juliet and Julia, what has the Department learned from other sectors in terms of what works for recruitment and retention?

**Juliet Chua:** We are very interested to look at what other sectors have been doing, both within Government and more widely, so that we can attract the widest possible pool of high-quality teachers, and at some of the best practice in terms of recruitment and retention activities. We have talked to the Health Department about its 10-year workforce plan and some of the learnings from that.

We have talked a little bit about the postgraduate teaching apprentices, which is an example of how you can use apprenticeships actively to create stronger career paths. You see some lovely case studies of really experienced teaching assistants being able to move into teaching. There was a very nice case study recently in which somebody got an outstanding ITT award off the back of that. We saw some of that learning coming through from health.

We have also looked at some of the lessons from the MOJ's digital service. If you have a candidate who was nearly successful, you can go back and find out why, and what extra support would enable them to make the transition into a training placement.

When we look more widely—we touched on the Get Into Teaching campaign earlier—we are absolutely thinking about what innovative practice looks like in terms of marketing and reaching some of the critical groups we want to reach. We are an international outlier in having a young teaching workforce. That is a brilliant asset and strength, but it also means we need to be imaginative and innovative in our on-campus activities, so we look closely at what other employers are doing and how they are thinking about that.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** All that applies across FE as well. I would add that for FE we also take a sectoral approach. We look at what colleges have done to try to learn from them. Colleges will often have recruitment that is focused into particular sectors. If they are looking for teachers in construction or design, they will focus on those communities for their recruitment. That is important, because when we are looking for people who are going to be career changers or potential dual professionals, you need to approach them in the sphere in which they operate, and consider where they look and what they look at online, rather than expecting them to happen upon an advert for an FE teacher.

That said, we do have an equivalent to the recruitment campaign called Teach in Further Education—which is a simpler title. That is basically a very similar system to Get Into Teaching. It has been really successful: we have had over 6,000 applicants come through that route, which is really good. We have recently been working on how we best join up our marketing for FE and schools so that people can have a single front door, and then, depending on their background and their preference, they can work out which bit of the sector they might like to teach in. That is part of

the steps, as Susan has set out, for how we start to think about the education workforce as a whole ecosystem and not individual workforces.

**Q32 Sarah Green:** That is really helpful. Thank you.

Figure 3 in the NAO Report has a stark number on people leaving the teaching workforce. Of those, 7% are retiring, but 92% are still in the workforce but have just left the education sector. What are you doing to understand why they are leaving and what you can do to retain them? Those people are still in the workforce, but we have somehow lost them from the education sector.

**Juliet Chua:** We touched on this earlier. We have increased our understanding of teacher's experiences through our working lives of teachers and leaders survey, which is an annual longitudinal survey. That is building a detailed picture of the day-to-day experience of teachers and what makes them want to stay or leave. We are using that information to inform a more targeted effort on retention and reduce, as you describe, too many teachers leaving the profession. We know that quality also comes through continued experience in the classroom and building up impact through that.

We see quite a varied rate of retention across the country. It is worth drawing out that across schools and different locations there is a variation in retention. There is quite interesting research that talks specifically about the relationship between leadership, job satisfaction and retention. It is about using some of that as well, recognising that for all of us in our day-to-day jobs strong leadership makes a difference in terms of the likelihood of a teacher remaining within their post.

We use multiple data sources to build a picture of the drivers of retention and what our responses should be in terms of supporting schools and colleges with a toolkit of different activities. That includes tackling workload and thinking thoughtfully about things like the difference flexible working can make, which has definitely come through as a bigger theme since the pandemic. As the wider labour market has been able to offer greater flexibility, we see the sector increasingly thinking innovatively about how to respond to that in a way that recognises that, of course, teaching is an activity that happens in classrooms with children, but there are ways that schools and colleges can think about how they organise the day-to-day experience in schools. That can build out our evidence base on flexible working as part of the offer and in respect of supporting retention.

**Q33 Sarah Green:** Talk to us a little more about flexibility. Are there parts of the country where that works really well, from where you can copy and paste? We have already had a question about paternity leave.

**Juliet Chua:** We are building our evidence base. We will be really interested in the research by the Education Endowment Foundation looking at initiatives such as nine-day fortnights—so particular offers on flexibility. In the sector overall, about 15% of teachers work part time, and close to 50% of teachers need to have some sort of ad hoc arrangement with more flexibility.



It is definitely an area where there is more of an ask to test whether there is greater scope to make sure we have flexible working arrangements that, obviously, support people's lives and their day-to-day employment, but also work in schools so that they are able to deliver high-quality outcomes for children. It is an area where the evidence base is growing. We will be really interested to see the outcome of the EEF work that is currently running. They are working on that with providers such as the Ambition Institute.

A specific case study that often is quoted is the work that Dixons is doing in Bradford. It has been looking closely at how to think innovatively about workforce design to support greater flexibility as part of its offer to teachers, and to translate that into being a competitive employer who can attract teachers on the basis of having a really great package that includes flexibility.

- Q34 **Sarah Green:** On workload, paragraph 2.26 of the NAO Report says: "The most common non-teaching tasks that teachers in primary and secondary schools felt they spent too much time on were general administrative work (74%) and following up on behaviour incidents (60%)", which is quite high. What work has the Department done to understand and address those drivers, particularly the behaviour one?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I will start and then hand over to Juliet on behaviour.

On workload overall, for a number of years we have had a pattern whereby, when we look internationally, our teachers report working more hours than their international counterparts, but are actually spending fewer hours in the classroom in front of pupils. It has been incredibly important to understand what is taking up that time that is not spent in the classroom but is contributing to teachers' working hours.

We saw reported hours fall quite significantly in response to the last plan on teacher working hours that was put together with the sector. Some of the things that made the biggest difference were working with Ofsted to explicitly state that nobody was going to ask to see particular types of marking or evidence of particular types of data tracking, which lots of people were preparing because they were worried that somebody would check up on it during an inspection. It was important to promise that they did not have to record things in a particular way because it would not be tested and checked in that way.

It is quite hard to get hold of what is underneath general admin. Again, internationally there is still definitely a difference in the amount of time our teachers spend planning lessons. It depends a bit on where you look around the world, but in other countries it is more common to have more standardised textbooks and schemes of work than we have.

It has been interesting to look at some of the work that has been done through Oak and Aila, which is its AI lesson-planning assistant, and through some of the EEF's work on using AI to help teachers to plan



lessons. You are seeing several hours a week's worth of impact on teacher workload. I think that is a really productive avenue. We should keep exploring and trying to do that in a way that retains the importance of teachers' professionalism.

One of the powerful things about the best of these AI assistants is that they are not substituting the teacher's judgment; they are allowing the teacher to drive and shape what the lesson should look like, without having to do the really laborious work of, for example, figuring out all the multiple choice questions that they want to ask at the beginning—that can be relatively readily pulled from good quality material through something like Aila.

We know that behaviour has an impact on retention as well. It is often cited. I think that point about following up on behaviour incidents goes to, again, a lot of the good practice work on having a really good quality, well-understood whole-school behaviour policy that, ideally, should be implementable by the teacher quickly. I think there is more that we can do on that. I do not know if you want to talk about the announcement on Friday on behaviour, Juliet?

**Juliet Chua:** Absolutely. Tackling poor behaviour—even low-level disruption—makes a profound difference in terms of lost learning time and the experience of children and teachers in that classroom. On Friday, we announced that we are establishing 90 new attendance and behaviour hubs. They will provide specific, intensive support, targeted particularly at 500 schools a year. We are thinking, exactly as Susan described, about whole-school approaches providing intensive support to tackle behaviour, but also best practice to be spread to 450 other schools—it is that network and regional learning about what works and what makes a real difference. We know that it is day-to-day classroom management and feeling confident as a teacher with that—we talked earlier about some of the professional development that we have done to support teachers in that area. We are continuing to invest with strong toolkits and strong learning for the system to make sure that we are really tackling behaviour as a critical part of the overall retention and support plan, as well as better outcomes.

Q35 **Sarah Green:** My final question is around the wellbeing charter, whether it is working and whether enough schools and colleges have signed up to it. The NAO reports that only 17% of those eligible to sign up to it have done. Is it fit for purpose? If it is, what are you doing to promote it and to ensure that as many schools and colleges as possible are benefiting from it?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** It is definitely something that we want to continue to work on. As you say, the numbers who have signed up are good, but they are not good enough, and we want more people. From the college perspective, we are we are looking at what is the blocker: why are colleges not signing up? Is there something in the charter itself, or is it a lack of knowledge of the charter? What is holding people back? Is it not the thing that is most helpful at this stage? We know that a good



proportion of colleges have signed up, but it is not high enough. We want to see whether we could increase that. I think it is pretty similar across schools as well. It is something that was a positive input into the system a couple of years ago. Now is a good time to look at whether we need to refresh the push on it or whether we need to refresh the content.

**Anna Dixon:** I was very pleased to hear Juliet mention Dixons academy, because I was going to raise it as an example of good practice.

**Chair:** It's named after you.

Q36 **Anna Dixon:** Dixons Cottingley is in my constituency, but it is nothing to do with my family—I have no conflict of interest other than to say that I am very proud that we have such an excellent school that is innovating around flexible working, with a nine in 10-day working pattern. It is already seeing good evidence of retention. I am delighted that you have already picked up on that example, and that it could be rolled out elsewhere.

Sadly, on the other hand, there is evidence from other secondary schools about the problems, particularly of behaviour and fear among secondary school parents almost driving a combative relationship with teachers, higher complaints and, in some cases, attacks against known teachers on social media. I did note in your survey that pupil behaviour as a reason for people leaving had gone up in just one year from 32% to 44%.

I was going to push the future of the behaviour hubs, but you have pre-empted that by saying that you announced their extension on Friday. Will it be focused on secondary schools where we know that the behaviour issues are particularly problematic? How will the resources of those behaviour hubs be focused where they are most needed?

**Juliet Chua:** It is part of our overall regional RISE architecture to provide support for targeted schools, as well as a universal offer. It will primarily be targeted to support secondary schools, where we see some of the biggest challenges. It is right that we are trying to make sure that we provide support for the schools that need it most.

Q37 **Anna Dixon:** You talked about AI in lesson planning, Susan. Are you also going to look at that in terms of assessment? A company in my constituency called Surpass does a lot of educational assessment globally, including a lot with the education system in Wales. Again, are there opportunities to take away some of the workload of administrative tasks that you were describing? One of my schools says that the old-fashioned form of marking is very much part of that. Do you see that as an area of opportunity for AI and technology?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Yes. We have specifically started some work—effectively, doing some pathfinding and then evaluation testing. We focused on not only lesson planning but marking. Again, we are trying to get that balance right between being really clear that teaching is and will remain a business in which the relationship between the teacher and the pupil is incredibly important—the humanness of the relationship matters—and having activities within that where technology can be used to make



them easier and more effective. We have pilot work going on, particularly focused on marking. There are a lot of products out there in that space. We think that there is real promise. We think it is incredibly important that, as we go through, we keep working really hard on all those principles that we have embedded through the EEF to try to make sure that practice in our schools is as evidence-based as possible, and that will remain really important when we use technology as well.

**Q38 Helen Hayes:** The NAO Report highlights that schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students have a significant deficit in the level of qualification of teachers, and of teachers in some subjects. They also have more teachers leaving. For example, the Report quotes higher proportions of unqualified teachers, a third of schools not being able to offer A-levels in computer science and a shortage of physics teachers.

This problem goes beyond what is available to children in schools, because if those subjects are not available, the poorest students are being locked out of careers in tech—careers where they can really thrive and achieve a level of social mobility. In the Department, what are you doing to tackle that particular disadvantage faced by schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students, to enable them to recruit and retain the teachers that they need at the level of quality and qualification that they need?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I will start, then turn to Juliet. We see higher turnover rates, that schools that have higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils tend to have more teachers who have been in teaching for five years or fewer—less experienced teachers—and that they have higher proportions of subject hours being taught by non-specialists. Everything you raised is correct.

Within that, we see quite a lot of variation. It is important to say that it is a strong pattern, but that there are schools that buck this trend. We see real variation in retention rates in particular between schools that otherwise have very similar circumstances. It is important to hold on to that, as well as the general pattern, when we look at this, because it is relevant to us thinking about what things we know work to help us retain teachers.

Across the board, we do a number of things to make sure that we are pushing against that trend. We have talked about this quite a bit already, but the targeted retention incentive—the £6,000 a year after tax for early-career teachers in key STEM subjects—is payable for the first five years in teaching. In schools, it is only available if someone is teaching in a disadvantaged school. They get a higher rate if there are higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils in the school. It is deliberately designed to both attract and retain teachers who teach in those schools.

In FE, we pay it across all FE colleges, although again the rate varies according to level of disadvantage—

**Julia Kinniburgh:** It is the same variation.



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**Susan Acland-Hood:** Yes. We pay it across all FE colleges, basically because there are higher proportions of disadvantaged students in every FE college.

I have talked a bit about Teach First and the high potential ITT programme. That is specifically designed to support recruitment of teachers and future leaders into disadvantaged areas. There are about 1,400 trainees per cohort, and as I say, we do see those recruits disproportionately staying in those disadvantaged areas or moving to other disadvantaged areas.

We also see some of the things I described earlier around the postgraduate teaching apprenticeship as an opportunity to try to support schools to recruit more people in places—sometimes we are also seeing place effects, around trying to attract teachers to more disadvantaged and challenging places. Where we see schools buck those trends, it is often because they are finding ways to grow their own and support people who are already located and embedded in the place.

- Q39 **Helen Hayes:** But the majority of the measures that you have described are interventions that apply either at the point at which someone is training or in the first few years after they have started teaching. One of the things highlighted in the NAO Report is that schools with high levels of disadvantaged pupils have fewer years of experience of teaching among their workforce. Where is the strategic approach from the Department to building the long-term expertise that we know is critical for driving excellence in the schools that need it the most?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** It comes down to what we know about teacher retention overall, which is that the highest rates of leavers are in the first few years of teaching. So if you can hold people through those early years, they are disproportionately likely to stay longer. I know it sounds a bit counter-intuitive to invest in the early years of teaching in order to keep people longer, but that is built on the evidence. Possibly in response to a recommendation from this Committee, we piloted a version of our maths incentives that spread the payments out over longer to try to stretch further into teaching careers, and the evaluation of that suggested that, because of the time value of money, it did not have the same impact on either recruiting or retaining those teachers as when it was more closely concentrated. It is a thing we continue to look at, but there is an evidenced reason why you concentrate on the part where you are holding people in teaching through early career, because once they have stayed, they are disproportionately likely—

**Helen Hayes:** There is a difference between staying in teaching as a profession and staying teaching in a particular school.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I agree.

- Q40 **Helen Hayes:** And that is the challenge that I am asking about. How do we build that capacity, expertise and excellence in the schools where the students need that input more than most?



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**Susan Acland-Hood:** Yes. Again, if you moved during those years to a school that did not attract this, you would lose it. So it is holding people in for that period. But I think you are right that we should continue to look at that, particularly as we roll through the TRI period.

The other thing is, again, hard to talk about because I do not want to suggest that we are trying to transfer responsibility, but the point I made at the beginning about leadership and trying to make sure we are supporting really good leadership in schools in the most disadvantaged and difficult circumstances is a really important part of this as well, because of the real differentiation we see within the overall pattern. So where we can support both good-quality trusts and other forms of supporting school leadership, through things like the RISE teams, we expect that to have an impact as well.

- Q41 **Helen Hayes:** Finally, this issue is critical to the Government's mission of breaking down the barriers to opportunity. It is an absolute example of some of those barriers to opportunity. When do you expect all these measures to have success, and students attending schools with higher levels of disadvantage to have as good a quality and experience of teaching as students in any other school?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** In some of these things we are seeing an impact already. The TRI had a predecessor programme, which was well evidenced for holding people in teaching. Similarly, we can see the evidence coming through from HPITT. I think we see some fruits now, but I expect us to continue to double down on that and to push as fast and far as we can.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** If it helps, under the figures that we have just published for the TRI in FE, almost 90% of the teachers who received the teacher retention incentive were in the colleges with the highest percentage of disadvantaged students, so it is being targeted in that way.

**Chair:** Thanks very much. We are now going to take a short break. We will return in five minutes, at 4.55 pm.

*Sitting suspended.*

*On resuming—*

- Q42 **Chair:** Welcome back to the Committee's hearing on increasing teacher numbers. We still have quite a lot to get through, and it is quite warm in here, so if you can be quite succinct with your answers, that will help us. Ms Acland-Hood, what are you doing to understand better the competition between schools and colleges in terms of recruiting teachers?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We have been doing a piece of work that looks more widely across all the education workforces. We also see, as Julia has said, that in FE, some of the key competition is with external work in the relevant sector for the specialism that they are looking at. We do look at pay rates across schools and colleges, but we also look at the pay that typical graduates in those subjects can command, or the pay that is out there in the system. We also look at the places—both institutions and





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areas—where we seem to buck the trend and do something that does not look like it is entirely governed by the market, to try to understand those non-pay incentives, because we know that many people are really activated by the mission that teaching represents.

Chair, if you will forgive me, I realised that at the top of the hearing I did not say something that I really try to say in every hearing, which is thank you to teachers out there. They do the most amazing job, and we would be in real difficulty without them. I think that is important.

**Q43 Chair:** Thank you for saying that. I am sure it is something that all Committee members would wholeheartedly endorse. Coming back to the question, what are you doing to develop a cross-sector teaching recruitment and retention strategy to make sure that it is all lined up?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I might ask Julia to add to this. We have done the analytical work to try to make sure we understand those patterns that I have just described. We are doing some work on how we bring together—again, I think Julia spoke about this earlier—our work on attraction, and then on the processes that we use to support people through application. At the moment, some of that is very school-specific, but we are trying to put together a more effective joint front door that will allow people to be referred into the bit of the profession that most suits their attitudes and aspirations.

It is trying to get the right balance between mashing it all together, when we know that there are some important differences between the sectors, and recognising, as Julia said, that for many FE professionals, the key thing will be to be out there advertising in their industry publications. That is the Venn diagram that we are trying to manage: doing the things once and well where there is commonality, and recognising the differences where we know those are going to drive differences in behaviour.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** As we said earlier, we signpost people who come through our systems into both schools and colleges, so it is a single front door. We have also trialled what we call job show events, which are across the sector, so not just schools and colleges but also into early years, to really be able to have conversations across the piece and show potential staff members—teachers—where the different opportunities are.

It is definitely an area that we want to keep working on and doing more to link up. In the past, it would be fair to say that we were in two separate strands between colleges and schools. We have done a lot of work recently to bring those together, and there is more to do, while, as Susan says, recognising that there are differences. It is absolutely right that in the FE sphere, we are thinking about how we target into specific industry areas in a way that would not work as well for schools. We are trying to be quite discerning about where we join and where we separate.

**Q44 Chair:** Thank you. I will move on to further education and how your approach contrasts the two. Particularly given that there needs to be this focus on skills—the Government's priority of growth—do you think that

there is less focus on recruiting in further education than there should be, given the need to grow the skill space?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** We have a strong focus on recruitment into further education. We are really clear. We have higher vacancy rates in further education than we do in schools, and that is brought out in the Report. That is not to say that the vacancy rates in schools are not important as well, but we have higher rates in further education. We know that and we are working really hard on it.

I have given you a sense today of some of the new initiatives that we have brought on stream in the last year, really. We are pushing new things all the time, be it the industry professionals work or the targeted retention initiative. We continue to use bursaries, and we are working with the Gatsby Foundation to see whether we can take a pilot into something wider for industry professionals. We are absolutely focused on that. It is a really important part of our teacher recruitment, with the sphere of influence that we have. We have to do as much as we possibly can in FE.

**Q45 Chair:** Will you say a little more about retention in further education? We know that the data is not as mature as it is for secondary schools. Paragraph 1.13 of the Report says that only 43% remain in further education teaching five years after they have joined. What insights do you have as to why they are leaving further education teaching in particular?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** That is exactly why we have we have moved to this targeted retention initiative. With people leaving, it is similar to the data that we hear from schools, so sometimes it will be about workload; other times it will be about professional skills that are needed in the workplace, and they can command a higher salary if they are in the private sector than if they work in colleges. That is why it has been really important to us to extend this retention payment into FE. Now we have on offer £30,000 tax free if someone remains for the five years and is teaching in the most deprived colleges. As we have said, the majority of colleges have a really deprived cohort, and that is really important. As you said, that stat is about people leaving after five years. As Susan was saying, we know that those first five years are really important. That is why we have the payment.

The other important element is our Taking Teaching Further programme, which is not just support to bring people in, but support around them for the first two years to make sure that they land well. With the work that we are doing on the industry professionals, we know that the colleges that do really well do not just land industry professionals into colleges and hope that they swim and teach really well; they do work in advance and work with them to make sure that they are given support in how to teach. That is really important. That is part of what we are trying to understand through some of the pilot work and what some of the colleges have done.

**Q46 Sarah Green:** Sticking with FE, may I ask about the workforce modelling that the Department has, and what you are doing to improve that modelling? Figure 5, in that comparison between the schools model and

the FE model, states quite clearly: “DfE has not tested or modified the model”, and we know it is not being used at the moment.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** Our workforce model in FE is less mature than that in schools, and it is relatively recent. We have had two publications. Our next publication of workforce data is due on 29 May. It is an official stat, so we could not bring it forward for this hearing, I am afraid, but that will be the next drop of data, which will be good to see. We have moved from a position of trying to encourage more people to complete it. We have really high completion rates among colleges—they are in the 90% range—and a slightly lower completion rate from our more independent training providers and others who are not in the college sector. We are focusing on how we encourage more people to make sure they complete it, so we have complete datasets. We are at about 80% completion overall, which is definitely usable data.

We are also thinking about how we can do more to refine the data within that. We are able now to look at elements like ethnicity and gender, but all the time, we are looking at, “What questions do we want to ask of this dataset, and hence what do we need to collect and how do we want to grow this?” We work with the Association of Colleges, thinking about the data and the data collection. I know that they are really keen to drive up the completion rate, because it is a really important tool for them and the college sector as much as it is for us, to understand the make-up of the workforce and what is happening within the workforce.

Q47 **Sarah Green:** Apart from the completion rates—it is good that they are going up—what has the Department done to improve the quality of that data coming through, to make sure that it is information that you can actually use and work with?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** The data that comes in is good quality. It is where we have lower completion that it is difficult for us to make broader assumptions. That is why I mentioned the completion rate, because the more we can drive this up to 100%—that would be brilliant. Then we know that we have captured everything within the sector. It is really important that we now have this as a national workforce collection. It is a really important piece of the jigsaw. In the past, we did not, partly because the sector was only reclassified into the public sector in November '22, so it is relatively recently that the college sector has come back into the public sector. This collection is flowing off the back of that, but we recognise that it is not as mature, and we want to keep growing it.

Q48 **Sarah Green:** If I had to push you for a date when you think the Department will have data that is good enough, when would you say?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** I think we have data that is good enough now, in that the data that is there—the 80% completion—is good data. The question is, what more would we want to be asking of this? How much more refined do we want to get? It is not saying, “This data is unusable.” It is definitely really important data, and we use it and the sector use it, but it is about continuously just thinking, as we get the data and people start to use it,

"What else do people want to find from this data, and hence how could we adapt what we collect?"

Q49 **Sarah Green:** So in the near future, you think that you will start to have more confidence in those modelling assumptions?

**Julia Kinniburgh:** We have confidence in the data that is collected. It is more about, "How could we grow the completion?" and, "What are the questions?" but we do not ignore this dataset at all. This dataset is really important, but because we only have two years, it is hard to see patterns. We need to see longevity of the dataset. Having 80% is really good, but if you had 90% overall that would be even better, and if you had 100% that would obviously be ideal.

Q50 **Oliver Ryan:** Following on from that but talking about the secondary sector, the proportion of secondary schools reporting at least one position being vacant has more than doubled since 2010-11, from something like 17% of schools then to 46% of schools in 2023-24. The model that you have assumes that there are enough teachers and does not take into account the amount of held vacancies in those schools. I think for 2022-23, you have 1,500 teacher vacancies and 1,700 temporarily filled posts. Why does the model not account for those, and is it not somewhat an oversight that the model does not seem to take into account shortfalls in existing teacher stock? It only takes into account positions, if you like.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The way that the school workforce model works is that it starts from the teacher census, adjusts expected demand for things we know about—particularly for demographics, which are a big driver, but also for projections of retirement rates, other leaver rates, and entry through routes other than postgraduate initial teacher training; that includes things like retention—and then applies a lens for shortfalls in the previous two years before the school workforce census. You are right that it does not have an adjustment for vacancies, which we will absolutely look at. It is worth remembering, though, that the vacancy rate of 0.6% is still quite low overall, but I am not saying that means there is not a problem.

As I said earlier, the vacancy rate also does not tell you about the places where a school might be choosing not to recruit a teacher at all because they are worried that they will not be able to get one. You can see it shift with resourcing; when more money goes into schools, they create more posts. That might tell you that you need more teachers or that they have the opportunity to create some more posts. What we try to do is use the model as one input, not as the only picture. We would look at that alongside the vacancy rates and the specialist teaching rates.

Q51 **Oliver Ryan:** I understand the model. I suppose my concern is that the targets for your model in secondary are short by about 1,500 to 2,000 teachers, which is quite a chunky amount. I agree that this 0.6% is not necessarily of the whole teaching cohort. However, if your target is high, but you have already started in the negative and not accounted for that, it is not a real target, is it?



**Susan Acland-Hood:** The fundamental starting point of the model is that we do not have a national position on what the ideal pupil-teacher ratio is or how you should organise your workforce in a school. We operate a system in which we give a lot of freedom to school leaders to design their own workforce, and schools make incredibly different choices about that. You can see schools with very similar cohorts and levels of resources making incredibly different decisions about the design and shape of their workforce.

The starting point that says, "Let's look at how much demand has changed over the last year. Is it going to go up or down, based on demographics?", suffers from not including an ideal position on what the structure or the pupil-teacher ratio should be. You could change that; a Government could decide that they want to design the ideal picture of a workforce in a school and say what they think the pupil-teacher ratio should be, but that would imply taking a lot of freedom and self-determination away from headteachers and leaders in schools. Most Governments look at that, have a think about it and say, "That seems like quite a big intervention to make."

Q52 **Oliver Ryan:** To clarify, there is not a current guidance ratio for teachers and assistants, is there?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** No.

Q53 **Oliver Ryan:** So you could have 40 kids—you mentioned 60 before. I would like it to be in the 20s, as it certainly was when I was in school. Why is there not guidance for that?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** There is no evidence on which to base it. The evidence base says that you see a significant difference in the outcomes for pupils when pupil-teacher ratios get very small or very large. I am sure there is nobody out there who would want to write a mischievous story about a PAC hearing—that never happens—but to be clear, I was not suggesting that 60 was a good idea. I was just saying that the underpinning evidence suggests that you do not see much difference in pupil outcomes in changing ratios between really very small numbers and really very large numbers.

You see much more difference if you look at teacher quality. That is one of the reasons why we look at, for example, the number of subject specialists you have and the number of hours that are being taught by someone who is not a specialist. You would be making a very big intervention as a Government without having the evidence base to back it, so what we have done instead is to say, "We want to put trust in leaders in schools to organise their schools as they see fit." We then look at whether we think that we have more people going into the system overall, which will mean that the demand for teachers goes up or down. There is a peculiarity in it, in that it is based on existing practice and variations up or down, rather than setting an ideal level.

Q54 **Oliver Ryan:** It is an interesting point. Without getting into too much of a discussion of the politics, it seems strange to me that there is not



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necessarily an evidence base for that. When I was going through the education system, the whole political factor in education was bringing down class sizes. It was the 1990s and early 2000s, so smaller class sizes and better quality of education were seen as the key drivers of outcomes. When I speak to teachers and schools in my constituency, they tell me that they could have smaller class sizes, but do not necessarily have the budgets or the space to make that happen. Is it just that Governments do not want to bite off that particular bit of meat to chew?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I don't think so—not if we saw genuine, good quality evidence that said it was better. Some of this is about being serious about trying to invest in things that make the biggest difference. If you set a target for a pinpoint class size level, you would be investing an enormous amount of money in that as Government to make that real. If the evidence base tells you that it is not going to make very much difference, you could invest that money in something else, including teacher quality and making sure you have the right specialist in front of the class.

I appreciate that this might not be the exact nature of the choice to be making, but there is very good evidence that says that it is much better to have children in a class of, say, 25 with a specialist teacher in the subject in front of them than to split that class and have a class of 20, but not have a specialist in front of them. Do you see what I mean?

**Oliver Ryan:** I do.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The quality and quantity trade-offs are real.

Q55 **Oliver Ryan:** I am conscious that I have probably overstepped my mark on the questions, but I have another very quick one. We have talked about targets and modelling, and you have given us an explanation for that. Why did you not set a target for bringing teachers into the sector through routes other than the initial teacher training programme?

**Juliet Chua:** We touched on this earlier, and I think it is one of the conversations that we have been reflecting on in the context of making sure that we are able to tell the full story of the way we will make progress on overall entrance into the workforce. The targets have a role. They undoubtedly allow us to set out a strategic story. They create a degree of external accountability. They send signals into the system about where we want to see growth, and areas where we see less case for growth.

Those are important, but our reflection is that we need to think about the way we are publicly presenting the other routes and how critical they are alongside it, because we absolutely want to encourage as many returners as possible, as well as making maximum progress with initial teacher training. Being able to bring those datasets together and set that out really clearly feels important and sends important signals about the progress we making overall on the Government's ambitions.

**Oliver Ryan:** Thank you. I have a final comment—I will conclude shortly—





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on the model conversation we had earlier, about the carrying vacancies point that is included in the model. It might be worth taking away some work on those areas where there are vacancies carried, and there will be across the country—there may even be in rural areas or suburbs, as has been talked about in earlier questions—and, if we are going to recognise those places as FTE equivalents in the system, on whether there should be a specific programme for filling those vacancies, as opposed to just including them in the number statistics, which seem to favour urban areas and places that already have teachers that are interested in teaching in those areas.

**Juliet Chua:** It is worth drawing out that we see real variation at school level in terms of levels of leaver rates and vacancy data. This conversation has very much been about our system-level interventions and the way in which we try to tilt them very actively towards the areas and subjects that need the most, but we also see school-level variation too. That opens up a really interesting conversation about schools with comparable levels of deprivation—schools in comparable areas—where you see different levels of leaver rates. There is scope in that to explore more about the support for leadership, the sorts of tools they are using and how we make more progress. We see both of those as important.

**Rebecca Paul:** Very quickly, going back to the staff-pupil ratio point, it just made me think about previous sessions or discussions we have had about SEND and the move using mainstream more for that. I wonder if that would change the approach, with respect, to your answers on the ratio. I am not expecting an answer, because I know we are pressured for time, but I wanted to put that on the record, as it opened up the question of how this all interacts with the way we are moving with SEND.

**Q56 Anna Dixon:** If you feel that this has already been covered, please do not repeat yourself, because I know that you may have covered these issues when I stepped out of the Committee. This is about the bread and butter of this Committee: value for money. On figure 9 in the NAO Report on page 35, you have a range of initiatives to try to recruit teachers. It includes everything from the £14,000 average cost per teacher for the lower end of your teacher training bursaries, right up to a payment of some £79,000 for international relocation payments for a physics teacher.

You have obviously tried out, over the last decade, quite a lot of different recruitment initiatives. I understand that back in May 2016, this Committee very strongly urged the Department to evaluate these initiatives. Here we are in 2025, and I think there is some evidence to inform where you are getting the best value for money, but it does not sound particularly conclusive. I want to really press you on this: where are there still gaps and where are you confident that those are the right things to be doing in terms of value for money, across the full suite of your recruitment initiatives? I am talking specifically about recruitment, but there are also retention and FE initiatives that do not seem to have had any evaluation.



**Susan Acland-Hood:** We are really serious about evaluation, and we seek to evaluate all the initiatives we put in. Indeed, if you look at the figure 9 list, that table is quite a good illustration of why we have made the decision to change the position on international relocation payments for trainees but not for teachers. You can see that we get better value from the teacher relocation payment than from the trainee relocation payment. We keep that under review.

Where we have a relatively simple intervention designed for a relatively simple outcome—the classic would be a money-based intervention designed to increase the number of people we have—it is easier to estimate value for money. Where we are doing more complicated cultural things to try to influence things, such as the non-financial levers, it can be harder to get underneath the impacts and to disentangle all the competing factors. We work hard through the Department's analytical function to do that and to keep under review whether what we are doing is working. We absolutely do not want to be spending public money on things that do not work.

Q57 **Anna Dixon:** What would you like to be doing?

**Juliet Chua:** It is interesting thinking back to 2016, and the number of initiatives that we have tried and discontinued because they have not worked. At various points we have really used the evidence to discontinue things—as Susan says, most recently on some of those payments, looking back at pilots on things such as housing relocation. Over the last decade, there are quite specific examples of where we have very deliberately used value for money evidence to make sure that we are testing and then either proceeding or not.

We talked earlier about the non-financial incentives and continuing to build out our evidence base in that space. As I said, we are deeply interested in the work that is going on in flexible working and how to build a stronger evidence base, but also how we ensure that we have the most compelling case to both retain and recruit teachers in a modern labour market that reflects that. That is the area that we want to go further in in terms of more evaluation.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** On FE, we are evaluating the work we are doing. Some of it has less evaluation because it is newer.

**Julia Kinniburgh:** I have got an evaluation under way on the targeted retention initiative, which will report at the end of 2026. That is being carried out by NFER and CFE. The bursaries are based on an NFER evaluation that was completed in 2023 which found that there was a real positive to the bursaries; I think the finding was that a £1,000 bursary led to a 3% increase in applicants. We are basing that off evidence, and if it is something which is translatable from the evidence from schools into FE, then we will use the evidence that has been looked at in schools when we are thinking about what and what not to apply in FE. As Susan says, where we have got something new in FE, we have an evaluation running alongside that.

**Q58 Anna Dixon:** My concern is that a lot of that focuses on paying money and how much it takes to get a teacher in a classroom but does not factor in whether they serve in that job for three, five, 10 or 30 years in terms of retention. I also have concerns around who those people are. We have seen a decline in some of the mid to late career people leaving. Some of those may be leaving for reasons that we have looked at already, such as maternity and paternity interruption and not being given flexibility on return. I have also heard instances of ageism where, when cuts are made to jobs, more expensive, but more experienced teachers leave, with a preference for recruiting cheaper, newly qualified teachers. Those newly qualified teachers then do not stick around because they do not have the experienced teachers in the wider school setting.

In evaluating, how are you going to make sure that you are not just looking at crude numbers, but also things such as EDI initiatives and the retention and inclusion of older teachers, returners to the profession and so on?

**Juliet Chua:** We have talked through the course of the session about the different strands of our overall strategy and how we build out the strongest possible evidence base on each element of those. We have talked a lot about the investment choices we have made this year. We have been pleased to see the early green shoots in the response, which reflects the evidence of the impact of incentives and bursaries, particularly the investment in leadership and the early careers framework. That all informs the work that we are doing at the moment.

You pose good questions about how we understand the full population effect of the workforce. We have introduced the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders as a longitudinal study, which allows us to look at the training patterns within the workforce overall and their experience. That gives a really rich dataset to build a stronger picture of some of the patterns you are describing.

It is absolutely for individual leaders in schools and trusts to make decisions about what the optimal mix is for them, in their school, with the curriculum that they are offering, but part of what we have also talked about today is how we provide really good tools, and how we test how we support leaders as they think about how to make sure they have the most impactful teaching set-up. There are some interesting new thoughts coming through about the way in which you can match teachers at different stages in their career. We are also interested in the question about the way in which different layers of leadership have changed. We have seen more assistant leaders coming into the profession, which helps with some curriculum impacts, but also in keeping an eye on making sure we have strong teachers in every classroom as well.

**Q59 Anna Dixon:** I have a brief question on pay. I guess there is good news for teachers, with a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September 2024. I see in the survey that dissatisfaction with pay has gone down from 39% in 2023 to just 34% in 2024. To what extent do you think that has addressed pay as a factor in



teacher recruitment and retention? Do you think that there is further to go? I will direct that at the permanent secretary.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Teacher pay is always going to be an important factor in the recruitment of teachers. I think it was very important that the Government did accept that 5.5% pay offer. That means that over the past three pay awards, teachers have seen a combined increase of over 17%, but before that, there was a period when pay was held. We are thoughtful about the whole of that period. Looking forward, we also think it is important to make sure that we have teacher pay awards that recognise the important work that teachers do and reward it.

Q60 **Anna Dixon:** Obviously, one of the things that happened under previous Government pay settlements was that schools did not get funding to cover the pay. That is something that headteachers frequently raise with me. How will you ensure that the pay award can be afforded by schools?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We fund schools on the basis of pupil numbers, and we according to some of the characteristics of those pupils. About 80% of a school's budget is spent on pay. There is always a prior bit where sometimes people talk as though there should be some separate amount of money that is specially for pay, but that is a bit odd in a context where 80% of the average school's budget is pay anyway.

In past years, we saw affordability calculations being made about what could be managed from within school budgets. In some years, the affordability calculation means that we do not need to put extra money into the system; it can be afforded within the amounts that are already going into schools. In recent years, affordability calculations have suggested that it could not all be afforded. Typically, the Government have made a separate grant to make up the difference.

Quite often, there has been a debate about whether the award was going to be fully funded in advance. In recent times, those additional grants have been made. They are usually made in such a way that they go through a version of the main funding formula, so they are still funded on a per-pupil basis. That means that schools that have made very particular decisions about how they staff themselves might feel as if not every penny of the pay has been funded by the amount they get. The problem with doing something different from that—if we started funding on an activity basis and saying that whatever teaching set-up a school happened to have, we will fund them for every penny of the additional pay they give to their teachers—is that, effectively, we would be taking the schools that are best off in terms of their teaching and giving them even more money.

Some of the debate about whether it has been funded or not, therefore, is about the difference between how, at aggregate level, it has been funded, but how, at the individual school level, it might not always feel like that. That can feel difficult, but the alternative would be to embed differences in the system in a way that has not felt right to Ministers.

This year, because we can see real constraint across the whole public sector, in setting the remit for the pay review body we have said that we

could see enough headroom in schools' budgets overall to afford about 1.3% in pay for teachers and support staff across the system. If schools were able to make a 1% efficiency saving on their total budget, that would deliver about another 1.7% in pay, because not everything they spend is on pay. That was illustrative and a contribution to why the Government said that a 2.8% pay increase was affordable. We are waiting for the announcement of what the pay review body has recommended, but that represents a shift in saying, "We might want schools to fund some of that this year through making efficiencies across the rest of their budget." That is difficult, and we really appreciate that it is difficult.

The one thing I would say is that there are lots of organisations across the public and private sector that have become accustomed to being asked to find something like a 1%—or in some cases more—efficiency saving every year to put it back into their activity. We typically have not asked that of schools in the past, so I think that is going to feel different and maybe challenging for schools. Again, I would encourage schools that are thinking and planning around that to wait until we have the actual outcome of the STRB and its propositions, because then it will be clear.

**Q61 Anna Dixon:** But given that 80% is staffing, as you have said yourself, that drives either cuts to the other things that are non-pay—we have seen a lot of schools having to cut back on that—or behaviours such as those that I mentioned, where it is the roles of the relatively higher-paid staff that go first when there are redundancies. I hope that you will be monitoring the impact. Obviously, we have talked about a lot of positive measures today, such as those on flexible working and AI and productivity, which could deliver improvements, but I think that there is a risk.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We are also looking at an efficiency programme supported from the Department as well. What we have seen in the past, when there have been periods when funding is tighter, is that schools go to non-pay savings first. They recognise that teachers are really important to the learning of children and go to non-pay savings that they can make first, and that is a good thing. There are savings that you can make.

Again, there is always risk in using the word "efficiencies" because people just hear "cuts", but there are things that we know we can do to genuinely support schools to spend more efficiently. We can see that the services we have designed to help schools with buying in aggregate have saved billions over the course of their existence. The self-insurance scheme that we run for schools has saved significant money, and we are looking at energy schemes, for example, which we think can help schools buy energy more efficiently.

**Chair:** That is extremely interesting, but we have to move on. Helen Hayes.

**Q62 Helen Hayes:** I want to turn to how the Department is supporting the delivery of the Government's pledge for 6,500 additional teachers. The NAO Report notes: "The Government has not explained how it decided on



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6,500. Also, DfE has yet to commit to how the pledge will be split across mainstream schools, special schools and further education colleges". First, what is your understanding of how the 6,500 pledge was calculated?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The 6,500 pledge was part of the manifesto of the Government coming in. As I understand it, it was calculated by looking at a range of different factors that represented some of the pressures on teacher numbers across schools and colleges, such as vacancy rates and other types of pressure.

The critical thing on the 6,500 is that delivery is already under way, which we can see in those quick, early steps that the Government took to turn back on and scale up our recruitment activity, to accept that 5.5% pay award and to increase the financial incentives package going into schools—the £700 million that we have talked about is an increase on the figure from the previous year. We are seeing positive signs come through: 2,000 more secondary school teachers started training this year, compared with last year. Our retention forecasts are about 2,500 people more favourable than they were because of the 5.5% pay increase. We are also seeing early signs of about 1,000 more teachers applying for next year, so we can see both action that we have taken and outcomes starting to happen that relate directly to that 6,500 target.

We are also seeing those numbers coming through and the action happening in FE. Importantly, the NAO Report says that we should be looking at that 6,500 across schools and colleges, and I can confirm that we will be looking at 6,500 across schools and colleges, because we see the pressures so strongly in colleges.

Q63 **Helen Hayes:** What is the baseline? What is the 6,500 in addition to?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We have not set a year as a baseline, but we think it has to relate to this Parliament and has to mean something in natural language—in other words, it has to be 6,500 more than it was before you started; otherwise, it does not mean anything, does it? The detail on that is holding for the spending review. We are working through the really fine detail of a set of things. It is linked to the delivery plans as part of the spending review.

Q64 **Helen Hayes:** It sounds like it is under way, but you do not know what it is.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We know that we need to provide more teachers in the thousands and that we are seeing more teachers coming through in the thousands. We are working closely across Government on the fine detail of that, some of which will make a little bit of difference, but it does not fundamentally change the things you would do to meet such a target. We are getting on and doing that.

Q65 **Helen Hayes:** Finally, on the distribution, you have said very clearly that the target runs across the different parts of the school and college system. How is that split being calculated? How are those new teachers being distributed?





**Susan Acland-Hood:** Again, we will have to hold on announcing the fine detail of that until after the spending review. The 6,500 is an important spur to action, and it is important in making sure that we are focusing effort on teacher recruitment and retention. Incidentally, it is important that it is framed to include retention as well as recruitment, for all the reasons the Committee has discussed, but it is not a cap or a limit; it is a first step. It will not stop us trying to recruit as many teachers, in both schools and FE, as we can.

Q66 **Rebecca Paul:** That segues nicely on to my question. What numbers do you need to hit over the course of this Parliament to know that you are on track to deliver at least 6,500?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** Accepting that it has limitations and we have to look more widely, we would start from the analysis in the teacher workforce model, which is a good starting point for the number of teachers we need in order to meet demand and recognise shifting demographic patterns. We have analysis, which is reflected in the NAO Report, that does the same across the FE system.

There is a third component that is important to factor in. You rightly mentioned the reform work we are doing on special educational needs and disabilities, and the workforce is such an important component of that. That includes trying to make sure that we increasingly have really skilled teachers working with children and young people who have SEND. There is also a piece of this that needs to be informed by our SEND reform work. That has to be factored into the work that we are doing.

Q67 **Rebecca Paul:** When will you have numbers? I suspect some of it will link into the fact that you need the baseline first.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I am only going to keep saying the spending review.

Q68 **Rebecca Paul:** Okay. I would imagine that, quite far in advance of the end of the Parliament, we will know whether you are on track to hit it, because people apply in advance and you will have a good idea. So it is not four years, is it? The final opportunity to really boost it is probably in three years' time.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** For the new entrant applications, it is true that you—

**Rebecca Paul:** With retention, you have a little more leeway.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** And for some of the returners, you have a much shorter pipeline. We are seeing the returners making up an increasing proportion of the cohort, which is a good thing, as they are experienced. Again, I cannot prove it, but there is a hypothesis that we should test that that relates to some of the work that we have been doing on flexibility, wellbeing and supports. You are right that we will have a good sense of whether we are on track before we get to the end of the Parliament.

Q69 **Rebecca Paul:** Given the expected redundancies that we are likely to see



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as a result of the increase in national insurance and some of the issues that have been raised today about covering the pay increase, have you done any kind of assessment as to the numbers of redundancies that you might see, and how that might impact your 6,500 target?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** The work we have done has looked at the overall funding and demographic patterns across the sector. We see quite different pictures in primary and secondary, as I set out earlier. We are all expecting to see falling teacher numbers in primary schools, because we are seeing falling pupil numbers in primary schools, so it would be strange—

Q70 **Rebecca Paul:** I am talking specifically about redundancies that potentially will start happening shortly. Have you done, or are you planning on doing, any kind of assessment as to the impact on the numbers? I appreciate that there are lots of different moving parts, but that moving part is quite significant.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** We do it the other way around. We look at what we think is affordable. We look both at supply and demand when we do the workforce calculations, and at a workforce affordability calculation, which effectively factors that in, because we are looking at what we think is affordable within the settlements we are given. It is worth saying, £3.2 billion of additional funding is going into school funding this year, compared with last year. Net net, we would expect that to support more teachers, not fewer. Indeed, I do expect it to support more teachers, not fewer. There is no version of this where the overall amount of funding going into schools goes down rather than up, so the question is, does it affect the rate and does it affect the distribution of where those teachers are in the system?

Q71 **Rebecca Paul:** That tells me that you are saying that you are not expecting it to impact the 6,500. In a few years' time, when we say, "What were the problems? Why didn't we hit it?", it won't have been caused by this, because you are happy that more funding is going into schools overall. You are not worrying about the redundancy piece. I guess what I am trying to get to is whether you are worried about it, but it sounds like you are not.

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I am only hesitating because we are in the middle of a spending review. My expectation is that we will continue to see the overall funding going into schools going up, not down.

**Rebecca Paul:** Okay. I think that gives me my answer. You are happy that that is not a factor. I have a very last question, Chair.

**Chair:** Very quickly.

Q72 **Rebecca Paul:** How many of the 6,500 do you expect to come from overseas?

**Susan Acland-Hood:** A small but important proportion of the teaching workforce comes from overseas. We have been quite successful recently in trying to be more targeted in our recruitment from overseas. We have



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seen, for example, more overseas recruitment of modern foreign language teachers, which are good to recruit from overseas in all sorts of ways, and also in some of our shortage subjects. We have seen a significant increase in overseas recruitment of physics teachers. We have actually seen an overall increase in the recruitment of physics teachers, including domestically, which is excellent.

Q73 **Rebecca Paul:** So can you put a number on it? How many of that 6,500 are you aiming to—

**Susan Acland-Hood:** I would expect the vast majority of the 6,500 to be domestically recruited, which is the pattern we see overall in the system.

**Chair:** That brings us to the end of our hearing. Thank you very much to our witnesses for attending the Committee today. I would just like to add my personal thanks to the NAO staff for their excellent Report and briefing, and to the Clerks and the staff for assisting me with my chairing debut. Thank you so much for that. An uncorrected transcript of this hearing will be published on the Committee's website in the coming days. The Committee will consider the evidence provided and will produce a Report in due course.