

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Teacher recruitment, training and retention](#), HC 1551

Tuesday 16 December 2025

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 16 December 2025.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Helen Hayes (Chair); Darren Paffey; Manuela Perteghella; Mark Sowards; Peter Swallow; Chris Vince; Caroline Voaden.

Questions 1 - 41

Witnesses

I: Jack Worth, Lead Economist, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER); Daniel Kebede, General Secretary, National Education Union (NEU); Kathryn Morgan, Leadership and Workforce Specialist, The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL).

II: Melanie Renowden, CEO, National Institute of Teaching; James Toop, CEO, Teach First; Dr Jasper Green, Head of Initial Teacher Education, Institute of Education; Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler, CEO, Now Teach.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Jack Worth, Daniel Kebede and Kathryn Morgan.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's oral evidence session of the Education Committee. This is a single deep-dive evidence session on the important issue of teacher recruitment and retention. I will ask our witnesses to introduce themselves in a moment, but first can I invite any members of the Committee who would like to make a declaration of interest to do so?

Peter Swallow: I declare that I am the chair of the all-party parliamentary group for schools, learning and assessment, for which the NEU provides a secretariat.

Q2 **Chair:** Can I invite our witnesses to introduce themselves, starting with Daniel Kebede?

Daniel Kebede: I am the general secretary of the National Education Union.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Kathryn Morgan: I am the leadership and workforce specialist at ASCL, the Association of School and College Leaders.

Jack Worth: I am the education workforce lead at the National Foundation for Educational Research, NFER.

Q3 **Chair:** We know that teacher recruitment and retention have been a matter of debate and a significant challenge within the education sector for a very long time. There are multiple dimensions to this challenge and we hope to explore some issues today. Our predecessor committee described teacher recruitment, training and retention as a persistent challenge for over a decade. Can I start by asking how this challenge continues to manifest in 2025 under a new Government and what are the most serious concerns? I will start with Daniel.

Daniel Kebede: There have been some green shoots—some improvement in recruitment—but we have to take that in the context of the wider economy: there is a restriction on the number of graduate jobs in the wider workforce at the moment. There have been some positive improvements but we also need to remember that we are starting from historic lows: recruitment targets have been missed 12 times in the last 13 years.

There is really a huge issue around retention. Even if current recruitment levels were sustained, it is like trying to fill with water a bucket that has a hole in. The issue around retention is pretty dire at the moment. The statistics still remain that around a quarter of teachers are leaving within three years and a third within five years.

We have a real issue around the retention of school leaders at the moment: heads are leaving the profession at record levels—quadruple the rate of 2010. So while there are some positive shoots of improvement, the situation is still fairly dire because persistent problems remain. We really support what the Secretary of State has done around the issues of child poverty and so on, but the day-to-day experience of teachers and support staff on the ground in school is still pretty dire because of restrictions in funding, high levels of workload and pay that is being held back.

Kathryn Morgan: To build on what Daniel has just said and focus on school leadership, that is a huge area of concern. Obviously we need teachers in the classroom but we also need schools where there are leaders who are able to serve the school community, children, teachers and so forth.

At ASCL we are increasingly aware—through our membership surveys and hotline data—that things are really tough out there for school leaders. Obviously you have reports such as the Teacher Wellbeing Index, which points to an increasing amount of people who are feeling really stressed in the profession.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

We have just run a series of leadership conferences the length and breadth of the country, and the qualitative feedback that we are getting from our members is that things are really tough. As Daniel has said, there are some green shoots with recruitment but there are real challenges about people choosing not to go into school leadership. We have an increasingly younger leadership workforce where we are losing so many of our more experienced school leaders.

There is now research that is about to be published in January by Professor Toby Greany at the University of Nottingham that points to the fact that people do not want to go into headship. We now have a mixed economy in our country where we have local authority-maintained schools and multi-academy trusts and a huge problem with a lack of people wanting to go into headship. Whether you are in local authority-maintained or a multi-academy trust, people are opting not to take on that really important job. From our perspective, we have huge concerns. When talking about recruitment and retention, we are really focusing on the retention of school leaders and thinking about how we can maintain that expertise within the system.

Jack Worth: We have seen some improvements in the last few years but that was from quite a low base. There has been an increase in recruitment into initial teacher training, primarily because of the slowdown in the wider labour market. That cannot be guaranteed to stay around forever but it has been positive and has meant that some shortage measures that we have in terms of the flows of teachers coming in seem much more positive. That has meant we have been able to meet a lot of the targets in key subjects but not for secondary overall: we are still 12% below the target in secondary teachers, including 100% over-recruitment of PE teachers and under-recruitment in other subjects.

Despite that more positive picture, there are still challenges. Before the pandemic when there was still concern about the number of teachers coming into teacher training, the level was 85%. There have been a lot of challenges, particularly at secondary because that is where we have seen recent growth in pupil numbers, and that has impacted on schools and the quality of education that they are able to deliver. For example, one in eight maths lessons continues to be taught by a non-specialist teacher. That is higher in key stage 3, Year 7 to Year 9, and much higher in schools in disadvantaged areas, which are the ones that are most likely to struggle with recruitment and retention. The fact that the shortages over the last 10 years have impacted schools and left them in a worse place in terms of their staffing needs to be borne in mind. Simply getting to the ITT target is a replacement metric. We are replacing the teachers who are leaving with new teachers coming in; it does not mean that we are reversing the damage that has been done over many years.

The challenges certainly remain despite the increase in recruitment and improvement in retention. It is worth saying that retention has improved slightly but 9% of teachers still leave every year. That was 10.5% maybe



10 years ago so it has improved. There are positive signs that recruitment and retention are showing some signs of improvement.

- Q4 **Chris Vince:** I declare an interest as a former teacher. Kathryn, you touched on the fact that there are different institutions. Without giving my view, I would just put it to you that we have quite a fragmented education system at the moment: we have free schools, multi-academy trusts, single academy trusts, very large MATs and very small MATs. I wondered if there was any data or evidence that you may have with regard to whether there are particularly good examples of recruitment and retention in different areas, or even—the flip side—particularly bad examples of recruitment and retention and why that might be. Do you have any good examples where institutions, MATs or whatever, have done a good job at recruitment and retention, and why?

Kathryn Morgan: That is a really good question. There is a growing body of multi-academy trusts—particularly large ones—that are able to target their recruitment initiatives perhaps a little more than a local authority-maintained school because of the size and capacity that they have. We are then potentially creating a challenge for colleagues who perhaps find themselves in an area where there is not a multi-academy trust.

To pick up on Jack's point, fundamentally, whether it is an MAT or a local authority, these challenges are felt so much more acutely in our most disadvantaged communities. In terms of case studies of best practice, we do not necessarily have any to hand at present, but it would be really interesting for the Department for Education and other leadership and teaching unions like ourselves to really focus on how we can capture some good practice, particularly for those disadvantaged areas because they are the ones that struggle the most.

I am actually a trustee at Greenshaw Learning Trust. I know from that experience that the recruitment of new teachers into some schools within Greenshaw has been really positive because they have been able to spread the message and success of schools within local areas and use teachers and leaders to go in to advertise. There has also been a growing focus on recruiting previous students back into the teaching workforce, which has worked quite well.

- Q5 **Darren Paffey:** Obviously everything that you have just said in describing the lie of the land at the moment is in the context of the Government's commitment to recruit 6,500 teachers. Even if every single one of those 6,500 is recruited, to what extent will that meet the workforce need at the moment? Is that target sufficient, in other words? Jack, maybe we can start with you.

Jack Worth: It is ambitious and has been framed in the right areas because of the shortages in secondary schools as well as the challenges in FE of attracting teachers, which is really important, especially when student numbers are likely to grow over the next few years, and the



challenges in special schools and alternative provision, where again there is really some evidence of struggling to recruit and retain the teachers they need. Those areas are good to focus on. On the flip side, you have primary schools where pupil numbers are falling and recruitment and retention have been relatively healthy in the past, so focusing on those areas makes sense.

In terms of whether it is sufficient, that really depends on the nature of those teachers. The manifesto talked about key subjects and the definition is broader in terms of the overall number of teachers. Clearly if there are a lot more PE specialists at the end of it and not quite as many in physics, maths, computing and chemistry—the kind of subjects that really struggle with recruitment and retention—then it may have met the target but missed the point. There are variations in terms of how that is delivered. It seems proportionate to the challenge but it is not going to solve all the challenges or reverse all the effects on the quality of education that have been happening over the last decade.

Kathryn Morgan: Building on what Jack said, it is about ensuring that those new teachers stay and that they are able to enter a workforce that is not constantly feeling depleted and on its knees because of the growing expectations and challenges that teachers and leaders face. At ASCL, we recognise and stand behind the target of 6,500 teachers, which is ambitious. Again, you share news of the target at the Autumn Leadership Conference and the response from members is, “But what does that actually mean in real terms?” We are struggling to recruit to certain subjects and secondary, and in some areas primary is also struggling. If you are a coastal school or perhaps a small rural school—as Jack alluded to—that target is one thing, but making sure that it is distributed into the areas that most need that recruitment is the key thing.

Daniel Kebede: I reckon the 6,500 pledged from the Government at the election was a real recognition of the pressure in the system. Where are we in terms of reaching that? We have 2,300 more secondary and special teachers but 3,000 fewer primary teachers, so actually there are currently fewer teachers in the system. What we do not have is extra resource, which is very much needed. What does that look like on the ground? That means we have 1 million children at the moment being taught in class sizes of 31 or more. The student:teacher ratio in England is actually one of the highest in the OECD.

We have an opportunity to change that because of course there is a declining pupil roll. When the last Labour Government were faced with a declining pupil roll in the 2000s, they used that as an opportunity to bring class sizes down. That is certainly what we would like to see because there are real issues in the system at the moment around student behaviour and student engagement. A smaller class size would make that much more manageable for teachers.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

We have to really deal with some day-to-day issues that are facing the profession. As I said previously, the profession does not feel better under this Government at the moment and it really needs to. There are some things that we can do that are quite simple.

First, we should recognise that teaching is a gendered profession: three-quarters of the profession are female. A catalogue of policies on endometriosis, menopause and maternity that were rolled out and enforced across every school would be a way to improve things for the majority female workforce. Maternity is an issue. If you look at the DFE, it gets 26 weeks' full pay. A teacher gets four weeks' full pay plus a series of half pay and statutory maternity pay. It is pretty dire. That would be a simple, cost-effective measure that would improve retention in particular.

Q6 **Darren Paffey:** A couple of you mentioned what needs to happen or what we have to ensure is the case at the end—I do not imagine there will ever be an end to this, but certainly the end of this concerted effort to recruit. Would any of you like to share any thoughts on the progress so far on that and whether you are convinced that this is gaining the traction that it needs to?

Jack Worth: Do you mean with meeting the target? It is going well, with 2,500 more teachers in the key areas identified, as Daniel said, so that is positive. The positive recruitment figures are likely to mean there is a further increase next year, plus an increase from further education. All that is positive.

What I worry about is the slightly longer term: that we hit that target and then fall away. For example, the Government have decided to reduce the number of bursaries for initial teacher training this year, which will affect people who are applying now for next September and then entering the labour market the following September. It feels a distant way in terms of them entering the profession and getting counted in the census and towards the target, but then reducing those bursaries, therefore counting against that attractiveness of the profession.

So more are currently coming in because of the opportunities that are out there in the wider labour market, but we know how effective bursaries are for increasing recruitment and retaining those additional teachers. It is not just a short-term thing; those additional teachers get retained in the profession. There is basically a risk of short-termism: that you meet the short-term target but do not address the issues for the long term and make sure that pay is competitive and workload is manageable long term so that those teachers are coming in, attracted and retained in the long term.

Q7 **Peter Swallow:** We will return to the 6,500 target, but I just wanted to come in on the back of what Daniel was talking about in terms of the particular challenge in retaining women teachers in their 30s. In some estimations, it is the biggest cohort leaving the profession. I will put it to the rest of the panel: what more can we do to increase retention in this



particular cohort?

Kathryn Morgan: There are so many challenges for women working in the education system, and not just the challenges that Daniel mentioned. We have a huge pay disparity between female and male school leaders. As Daniel rightly said, if we are talking about a sector that has more women than men, it is crazy that we still have more men in CEO or headteacher positions than women.

There are challenges around pay and supporting women to be able to serve in a system that does not discriminate against them and changes that they will go through at different stages, not to mention choices around having a family and whether they feel that is a viable decision while also having a career. It continuously strikes me that for women—this is never more true than in education—you have to make a choice, “Am I going to continue to focus on my career or on having a family?” The third option is, “Am I going to try to do both and just become incredibly frazzled?” I look at colleagues and my sisters, and the third option is not a viable choice any more. This is an education system that is built on a huge amount of discretionary effort but it is getting to the point where people no longer have any option than to make a choice that is best for them and their family circumstances.

I also want to talk about women who perhaps do not have a family, because they can get missed here as well. There are a considerable number of factors that are contributing to more women deciding that actually this is just not a sustainable career for them. There needs to be a really joined-up conversation about how we can support that particular group of the workforce, and not to the detriment of men, because they are working in the same conditions. It is a huge challenge, and definitely a concern for us.

Jack Worth: It is a really important group to think about. If you cut by age and gender, women in their 30s are the largest group of leavers, but that is primarily because they are the largest group of teachers in the profession. The leaving rate is actually relatively low, but because of that large size it is an important group to think about in terms of the number of teachers that are leaving.

I have also seen some compelling evidence that an organisation called the MTPT Project got from the Department for Education and its school workforce census, which really shows that there is a high leaving rate in the year after women go on maternity leave. Addressing the challenges there is really important, because you potentially lose a teacher for having a child, which is not a good situation to be in; we need to be retaining those teachers long-term. It should be possible to return to work and continue to work in a sustainable job. It is about whether the workload is manageable.

Teachers work long hours. If you are a young teacher who has just qualified, maybe you have the time in your life to be able to commit to



those hours, but with other responsibilities, that is when the personal pressure on teachers really tells. We end up losing too many teachers who should be supported through flexible working. But it is not just about flexible working. It should be possible to choose to work full-time, be supported through that, have a sustainable workload, a work-life balance, and deal with all the other responsibilities of being a parent of young children. It is a very important area to look at in terms of retaining those teachers, because chances are they will stay for the long term.

Daniel Kebede: Not only are women in their 30s the biggest group exiting the profession, but what is becoming an increasingly common experience—because teaching is no longer compatible with family life—is that after having children, teachers are dropping a day a week or going part-time. But they are essentially still working full-time by doing other tasks on their non-working days so that they can have a weekend and quality family time.

One measure that would really help retain teachers would be to increase non-contact time—PPA—to 20%. Teachers in England and Wales have an incredibly high amount of teaching time relative to their planning and preparation time, so an increase in PPA would make a real material difference. Everyone around this table cares about equity and standards, but it is the education systems that are able to retain the experience in their classrooms that have the highest standards and the most equity in the system.

Q8 **Manuela Perteghella:** I should just put it on the record that I was a school governor of a rural school for many years. Following on from Darren's questions, the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee raised concerns earlier this year about the lack of detail surrounding the 6,500 teacher target/pledge. Do you share these concerns, and what further information would it be helpful for the Government to provide? I will start with Jack.

Jack Worth: It has taken a long time to get a definition just to understand what we are supposed to be achieving as a sector and what the focus is, which has been problematic. It is becoming increasingly clear that it is focused on secondary and the number of teachers, so it includes retention as well as just recruitment of new teachers into initial teacher training, which is good and makes sense.

The thing that is outstanding now is the Government's plan for delivery, and that has been delayed again to the new year. It has taken a long time to get a delivery plan and we still have not seen it. I was saying to Darren earlier that because of the way the flows into the profession work, the teachers who are going to deliver that target are already training, thinking about training or in the profession and thinking about whether to leave. The action needs to happen now but we still do not have a delivery plan, so the two are completely out of whack in terms of timing. To achieve it by the end of the Parliament, stuff needs to have happened a year ago.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Kathryn Morgan: I would agree with what Jack said. There is a question here around transparency and making sure that there is a clear action plan so that—as Jack said—everybody understands what the delivery looks like and the implementation of that delivery. That is something that we have certainly asked questions about, and similarly to Jack we are waiting to see.

Daniel Kebede: In terms of the monitoring, we certainly feel that there is a bit of cherry-picking at the moment. Just to recap, there are 2,500 more teachers in secondary and special, but 3,000 fewer in primary. So fewer teachers in the system in total, which means that we are essentially moving around resource. What was the purpose of the pledge? It was about reducing pressure on the system and that is what should be really monitored.

Q9 **Manuela Perteghella:** In fact, my next question was about how the Government should monitor progress on this target. Does the panel have any suggestions on what measures or data sources the Government should use to inform the monitoring of the target?

Jack Worth: The main data sources will be the censuses of teachers in terms of just counting the number of teachers. That will continue and should be the main source of monitoring progress on the overall target. It is also really important to measure things that are underneath that, for example, how we are doing on the flows of initial teacher training. We had the census a couple of weeks ago, which is showing some positive improvements in new teachers coming through, and we monitor the applications data, which is the new applicants coming through for next year. So we keep an eye on monitoring those things that happen underneath as well, which will inform the future number of teachers once it becomes measured.

It is not just the numbers in, numbers out and the flows of teachers across the system as a set of statistics, but also how teachers are feeling and that sense of their experience of the profession. The Government's Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey is a really important resource. It is a yearly survey of 10,000-plus teachers that is representative, has a constant set of measures, and has been showing some improvements in some areas, such as working hours for full-time teachers reducing and some small increases in job satisfaction—admittedly from a relatively low base. It is also important to measure these things in terms of whether we are going in the right direction, supporting and retaining the profession and increasing job satisfaction, which we know will matter.

Q10 **Mark Sowards:** Sticking with the theme of retention and to plug the holes in the bucket that Daniel was talking about earlier, one reason that I stayed in teaching for eight and a half years is that I had excellent training right at the start from Teach First, the mentors in school and the NQT programme as it was known then. My question really is for Kathryn and Daniel. To what extent is the Initial Teacher Training and Early



Career Framework—as it exists now—supporting retention in school and retaining those teachers at the early stages of their career?

Kathryn Morgan: It is probably important for me to say that I have been involved in several aspects of this, both in terms of designing the Early Career Framework and then working for the Teaching School Hubs Council and implementing that policy area. Broadly speaking, thinking about members at ASCL, there has been a really positive response. There have been challenges that have already been noted around workload, but essentially the challenge has always been workload; that is not necessarily an ECF issue.

It remains, though, that even with revision—so that we now have the CCF-ECF and that alignment from ITT into early career teaching—it is so dependent upon the implementation of that, the quality of mentors in school and the provider, making sure that we are responding to the needs of the early career teachers and thinking about joining up with initial teacher training. There have been challenges over repetition and that has required the workforce to understand that it is not necessarily about just repeating the same thing but really deepening and broadening your understanding. There is lots of opportunity for deliberate practice.

I am a firm believer that the Early Career Framework itself is doing tremendous good, but the challenge then is in supporting those early career teachers in that school environment. They are going to end up in a variety of different schools with different cultures and ways of working, so it is making sure that even though the training is a lot more robust than we have ever had before, there are still going to be variations because it is still dependent upon the leadership support that you have back in your school environment.

Q11 **Mark Swards:** Just before I bring Daniel in, could you elaborate on those workload issues? How do we solve that?

Kathryn Morgan: That is the challenge, is it not? Making sure that we are finding a better balance between early career teachers accessing the national programme of early induction while also recognising they will have day-to-day challenges—marking, planning and preparation—just because of the very nature of teaching. It is making sure that the quality of mentoring supports early career teachers with time management. That is still one of our biggest challenges, and when I was an early classroom teacher, it was something that it took a while for me to be able to get my head around.

It is about having really sensible policies and making sure that actually that school culture—the working environment—is in support of ongoing career life development and removing any unnecessary burdens, but also really listening to the feedback of early career teachers on how they are finding things and being able to then make some adjustments.



Daniel Kebede: It is our view that the frameworks and their content are not really the major issue. Like you, when I was a young teacher, it was mentoring from experienced colleagues that really developed me and got me through my career. But we have an issue in the sense that we have haemorrhaged a lot of experience from our classrooms. We are still losing quite a lot of trainees: a quarter of postgraduate trainees and a third of undergraduate trainees are not within the state sector after 16 months. Mentoring is highly valued by ECTs but the picture is patchy. I know of colleagues who have been mentored at ECT1 by an ECT2, which is highly problematic. What we really need is more staff with more space away from planning and preparation to allow that mentoring to happen.

Kathryn Morgan: There is a broader challenge here about professional development in general. Arguably over the last decade, we have made huge strides with professional development, our understanding of what quality professional development looks like and how to then design and implement that at scale. As Daniel has just said, the No. 1 challenge is still time, which then exacerbates workload issues. I completely agree with what Daniel said about mentoring. It is freeing up funded time for mentors to be able to really develop early career teachers in a way that they do not feel is just another thing that they have on their to-do list.

To go to your earlier point around workload and early career teachers, if you are in a school environment where your workload feels insurmountable, then the Early Career Framework training that you are having also feels like another thing on your to-do list. So it is quality time, valuing professional development, and then seeing that through for every stage of a teacher and leader's career.

Daniel Kebede: I would add that what is not helping is that there has been a real increase in precarious and short-term contracts. If you are an ECT entering a school and the contract ends before your induction is completed, it does not really give you faith that your employer, or indeed the system, is going to develop you over the long term.

Q12 **Mark Sewards:** The evidence you have given today of mentors certainly lines up with the anecdotal experience I have of mentors because it certainly helped me. Just as an aside, then, before we move on to the next question, we have also heard evidence that some teachers really like it when schools say that their children can attend that school if they come and teach there and stay teaching there. Have you heard anything about this?

Daniel Kebede: Only anecdotally. It is certainly something that is supported.

Kathryn Morgan: Again, only anecdotally.

Q13 **Manuela Perteghella:** My question is for Jack. How effective are financial incentives—such as bursaries, scholarships and retention payments—in improving teacher recruitment and retention? We know



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that some bursaries have been reduced quite a lot in certain subjects, so that might be an issue for concern.

Jack Worth: There is a growing body of evidence showing that financial incentives are important and change can affect teachers' behaviour. For example, increasing bursaries is then associated with an increase in the number of trainees coming into that subject; it is very clear through years and years of data that that happens. There has been a lot of change, which you can assess.

We also looked at subsequent retention of those teachers because there is often a worry about giving lots of money to a trainee who trains and then goes, "Oh, see you later, I'm off to do something else." They enter the state sector at the same rate and are retained at the same rate as everyone else, so it seems like an increase in a bursary will increase the number of trainees coming in and the number of permanent teachers in that cohort. They are really powerful and cost-effective.

Importantly, they can be targeted at subjects that are particularly in need; they are at a very high level at the moment for physics, maths, chemistry and computing, and lower for other subjects, especially after reductions. It is important that resources can be directed at those particular subjects in a targeted way to improve recruitment and retention in those subjects.

Q14 **Manuela Perteghella:** Will you be monitoring the impact of any reduction in bursaries? For example, biology was reduced by 80%.

Jack Worth: We absolutely will be monitoring that. We keep an eye on the applications data. It is early on in the cycle and we have only had one bit of data, but there is already a difference between those subjects that had their bursary reduced. These are art subjects, so art and design, music, and the kinds of subjects that the curriculum review was suggesting might be areas of growth. But at the same time it seems a disjointed decision in terms of the long-term needs of the sector and recruiting teachers in the subjects where they are needed, particularly for music, which is already below target even though the number of trainees has increased this year.

Q15 **Manuela Perteghella:** Languages have gone down as well. From your experience, are these financial incentives delivering sustained improvements in attracting new teachers into the profession but also keeping experienced teachers, so retaining that expertise?

Jack Worth: Bursaries, for example, are not designed to retain experienced teachers so I do not think it will have an impact. In the very long term, those additional teachers—at least some—who are brought in by bursaries are likely to stay for the long term. There is attrition, teachers leave, but ultimately it is contributing to more teachers than it would otherwise.



There are also financial incentives aimed at early career teachers, which target these particular shortage subjects; so again being able to target the subjects that particularly need retention. They are targeted at early career teachers where turnover tends to be higher among those groups. There is some evidence that they improve retention as well. Again, that will not necessarily affect the more experienced teachers; their retention rates tend to be better, but I think that is just because of the nature of experience and once you are in.

What we have really seen over the last 15 years is an erosion in the level of competitiveness of experienced teachers' pay. Average earnings have grown in real terms by 7% since 2010, but experienced teachers' earnings are 9% lower in real terms compared to 2010. If it had kept pace with average earnings, the pay of an experienced teacher would be £9,000 higher. So there has been a real erosion of experienced teachers' pay, despite having relatively high retention rates compared with those early career teachers. It could be even higher if the competitiveness of teachers' pay had kept up over that period.

- Q16 **Manuela Perteghella:** What can be done to improve these incentives and maximise their impact? One thing is to tackle pay erosion for experienced teachers. Is there anything else that we can look at?

Jack Worth: That is right, but obviously there is a constrained fiscal environment, so it is thinking about the balance between those targeted incentives and the design of them. For example, broadening out the early career retention payments to include all teachers in those subjects would support the retention of more experienced teachers in those subjects while still targeting those subjects.

There is a balance to be made in terms of cost-effectiveness when increasing pay to address that erosion. In terms of having a long-term career pathway, it is important that it is not constantly being eroded in real terms, but at the same time, that pay is not differentiated by subject. It is for all teachers, and the system currently has enough for PE teachers, history teachers, and primary teachers in other subjects. So there is a balance there between the level of targeting to particularly look at those subjects that are struggling, but also not losing sight of the fact that the general attractiveness and competitiveness of teachers' pay matters for every teacher's decision to enter.

- Q17 **Chris Vince:** Continuing on the topic of pay, to Daniel's earlier point, I felt I should also declare an interest as the husband of a teacher who has just gone on maternity leave. What do we think future pay awards need to do to ensure that teaching remains attractive but also competitive?

Daniel Kebede: We need to see a correction in teacher pay to allow it to be competitive as a graduate profession among the rest of the economy, as Jack has already pointed out. The bursaries do have some use, but four in five postgraduate trainees received a bursary last year, 2024-25,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

and we still have a recruitment and retention crisis. We really cannot avoid the system-wide response, which is a correction in teacher pay.

It is also very important that those pay awards are funded as well as being restorative. Something that is really impacting the profession is the feeling that they just cannot complete the job in the day because there have been a series of unfunded pay awards in which support staff have often been cut from their schools and their class sizes have increased, and that has made the day much harder. What we really need to see over the course of this Parliament is a correction in teacher pay, but also that it is fully funded in terms of those pay awards.

- Q18 **Chris Vince:** On the point of fully funded, is there a danger that if it is not fully funded, obviously then the schools themselves have to find some funding, things like PPA are potentially cut, and obviously that has an additional impact on retention?

Daniel Kebede: Honestly, when I am talking to teachers at the moment, they are saying that the job is as hard as it has ever been. That is because there have been a series of unfunded or partially funded pay awards in which every year teachers are being asked to do that bit more with a little less, and we are now in a crisis. I will just give you some examples. This has been corrected now, but I know a teacher who stopped drinking water in the day because the toilet next door to them was broken for months. I know teachers who are having an hour added on to their morning routine because two out of three photocopiers are broken. This is the impact of underinvestment in education and we need to see a shift.

- Q19 **Chris Vince:** Just one more from me on the cost of living, particularly housing costs. I have heard some horror stories on this, but do you think there is a particular issue in areas such as London? It is on my sheet as south-east, but it would be remiss of me not to mention the eastern region as I represent it.

Caroline Voaden: So Devon as well?

Chris Vince: Yes. I am sure there are lots of affected regions.

Jack Worth: As long as you mention the south-east.

Chris Vince: Yes, but are housing costs in whatever region affecting teacher retention? Because that is a serious consideration for teachers.

Daniel Kebede: In terms of where pay is on the agenda of concern for teachers, we survey and talk to our members all the time and there is certainly a geographical difference, which is down to the cost of living and the cost of housing in particular. Pay is much higher on the agenda of issues of concern for teachers in London and the south-east in particular.

What unites all teachers around the country, though, is the disappointment in school funding generally, and they certainly view the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

partial funding of pay awards as an issue. Every teacher in the country recognises that when there is a partially funded pay award, they might see an increase in their pay but that is going to make their job harder at the same time so we need to see some action to address that.

Jack Worth: Teachers have told me that it is definitely an issue around Oxfordshire—where I am based—as well because there is less of a London weighting. We did some research a few years ago looking at London, and London is—what, 10% weighting? It is not a big difference when the housing cost difference is very large. It is a big issue, especially for less experienced teachers who are obviously not paid as much as they work through the main pay scale. The solution is to pay teachers more. Rather than a housing policy solution, it is an issue in terms of cost.

Q20 **Chair:** Can I just drill down on that question a little more? We talk about recruitment in and retention out of the profession, and the question that we are keen to drill into is whether there is a particular retention issue for teachers remaining in the profession but choosing to move to more affordable areas of the country to continue working in the profession as a separate dynamic that contributes to the pressures. Certainly anecdotally within my constituency—a London constituency—I know of teachers who tell me that they have moved out of London but are continuing to work at the school, and within a year or 18 months are not working in that school any more but are still within the teaching profession. It is a complicated dynamic of movement with the specific role of high housing costs in some parts of the country.

Jack Worth: We have seen that in our research, particularly with teachers in their 30s moving out of London to other areas, so still remaining within the system but moving out of high-cost areas. That is certainly the evidence we have seen.

Daniel Kebede: You should look at the retention picture as dire nationally, but there are different reasons teachers will exit the profession in different localities. In London, the south-east and so on, pay and the cost of living might be an issue, but then areas of great deprivation where the cost of living is cheaper are also really struggling to retain teachers because of other issues, such as high accountability, high levels of pupil need and not enough resource to deal with it. Look at it as a dire picture nationally, but the reasons in each locality might be slightly different.

Q21 **Peter Swallow:** We have already talked a lot this morning about teacher workload but I thought it would be helpful to really boil down to the specific challenges that are driving that. We often talk about teacher workload as a monolithic thing, but actually there are lots of specific challenges day-to-day that teachers are facing that are affecting that overall workload. What are the key issues that are driving up that workload, Kathryn?



Kathryn Morgan: As you have just alluded to, workload is a really nebulous topic and it means different things to different people. Some of the greatest challenges that our members feed back to us remain around behaviour. It is not just about the actual physical activities that people might be experiencing in school; it is also the emotional load that is then contributing to their workload.

Increasingly, members talk about some really challenging situations with behaviour among students and members of their community. It is very well documented that there are huge challenges for schools in terms of SEND and inclusion provision, being able to serve students' needs and making sure that they have resources to do that. Safeguarding and attendance more broadly are increasing teacher and leadership workload.

There are always going to be administrative and accountability burdens. There are obviously things that the Department for Education has tried to do to mitigate against those, such as the workload charter and encouraging schools to sign up to that. But fundamentally, is that making a difference day in, day out to the lives of teachers and leaders? I would be of the opinion probably not, because when you are faced with such challenges you have to deal with them there and then.

The new curriculum is obviously going to present more work for schools, even though we welcome some changes that will be taking place in terms of what the review has put forward. Essentially, we want to get to a place where teachers and leaders are not having to spend all their time on really low-level administrative tasks because of the accountability trail; that really drives a lot of workload challenges in the school environment. But it is a really nebulous concept and is similar to wellbeing, because that often gets tied up in the workload conversations as well. What might be good for my wellbeing could be very different from others in this room, and that is the challenge, is it not?

Daniel Kebede: In terms of workload, the No. 1 thing that our members tell us is that it is not only about the number of hours but the intensity of the work that is currently required of teachers. The primary driver of workload at the moment is pupil need and behaviour. The Secretary of State has made some really welcome moves this week around pupil need; the £50,000 extra SEND places and £3 billion of investment are really welcome, but they are going to take some time to work through the system.

In terms of pupil behaviour, nobody around this table should see it as a surprise that we came out of the pandemic and there was a real failure to invest in post-pandemic recovery by the previous Government. Who would want to be a child these days with social media and technology? It is no wonder we have a real crisis in behaviour at the moment, and that is certainly quite rapidly moving up the issues that should be prioritised by our members at the moment. That is why I think we should really take



this opportunity of the declining pupil roll to reduce class sizes, because that makes managing behaviour much easier.

Q22 Peter Swallow: That is really interesting to hear in the context of a Government who are about to set out some reforms to the SEND system. Obviously it is really important for young people themselves with those additional needs, but also for the teaching community.

I wanted to ask specifically about AI, because there are those who suggest—although some have actually never set foot in a classroom—that AI is the panacea or the silver bullet that will help address teacher workload. I have slightly suggested in the way that I framed this question what I think about that, but it is not about what I think. What do your members think about this? Jack, do you want to start? I saw your hand, so I called on you.

Jack Worth: I was sceptical, like you, until recently. At NFER, we conducted a randomised controlled trial of teachers using ChatGPT for their planning time. Planning time is an area where teachers say they spend too much time: around 40% at the moment. There is a real danger of offloading the intellectual work of being a teacher and just saying, “Oh, the computer will do it.” But there were actually several really interesting findings from this randomised controlled trial. One was that it reduced teachers’ planning time by around 30%, which is quite impressive.

What I was most impressed with was the ways that teachers were using it. It was not, “Here, computer, design me a lesson,” and then just pick it up and go. It was reducing the grunt work of planning, and freeing up time to engage with the intellectual exercise of planning, thinking about what pupils had shown in the previous lesson and how to build on that in the next lesson. The tedious, time-consuming bit is, “Oh, I’ll make a quiz about this.” Teachers were using it in particular areas such as the mundane aspect of planning and retaining that time for the intellectual exercise. I was actually quite optimistic about the ways teachers were using it in that study. They had the support to be able to use it with the good policies that schools have in terms of appropriate uses of it. Making sure things are checked is important because it is not always the most accurate thing, but it showed some decent potential that was more than just saving a bit of time.

Q23 Peter Swallow: What strikes me about that is how anyone who is using AI to improve their efficiency is using it to help take out some administrative burden but with the creative stuff still being very much human-led. That is very interesting.

Daniel Kebede: We know that a lot of our members are using artificial intelligence at the moment and we are trying to ascertain how the profession is using it. We have real concerns around deprofessionalisation. Anecdotally I know early career mentors who are working with ECTs and planning is being done through artificial intelligence. We should look at artificial intelligence like any other form of



automation. All other historic forms of automation have not reduced workload. Over the long term in education we don't think it will because we have a high-stakes system of accountability. You might reduce time in one area but it is going to get filled up with another area.

What I would love the Education Committee to do is to have some investigation into what artificial intelligence actually means for teaching and learning over the long term. What is teaching and learning going to be like in the next five years when a child who is 13 can ask ChatGPT to write them an essay on Shakespeare in the style of a 13-year-old and submit it? I have real concerns around artificial intelligence over the long term and cognitive decline for children. We have to get ahead of that and that is what I would appeal for you to look into.

Chair: While we are asking you the questions today, without giving too much away, you can watch this space for developments in that area.

Kathryn Morgan: Similarly to what Daniel just said, certainly when we have spoken to our members, they talk about using artificial intelligence for the grunt work—to use Jack's phrase—which we want to reduce, do we not? To your question, that is often where the workload tensions are: people are spending time on things because they are ticking boxes or because of accountability audits; dare we say Ofsted is going to be checking certain things. Artificial intelligence should be used as a way of carrying the load for things that people are wasting their time and energy on and that automation could be a better way of managing those particular tasks.

To Daniel's point around creativity, there is a moral imperative here that we should be ensuring that we are not creating generations of children and young people who are just defaulting to ChatGPT. We had that issue with Google, did we not? There was a campaign about a decade ago around, "Why can't you just ask Google?" There are lots of challenges there in terms of the answers that you get. It would be helpful to really take a very broad look at where artificial intelligence can actually provide some gains in terms of workload but where it perhaps then can have a detrimental effect. Creativity and creative thinking is one of the biggest areas that leaders are most concerned about.

Q24 **Caroline Voaden:** Just briefly going back to the workload question, the Department launched a Workload Reduction Taskforce in July 2023 under the previous Government, which published some recommendations in January last year. Do you think the Government should implement any or all of those recommendations? Maybe you could just summarise the workload discussion by telling us what your top two or three silver bullets would be to try to resolve this workload crisis. I will start with you, Jack.

Jack Worth: It had some good recommendations to take up, but something that was a shame with the taskforce is that it got slightly overtaken by events with the change of Government. Last night I reminded myself of the areas identified for the final set of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

recommendations, which were the unintended consequences of accountability including inspection, school culture and leadership in school practice such as behaviour, policies, parental expectations and complaints, and the impact of pressures on wider public services in schools. As Kathryn has just been saying, these are the really important issues in terms of how teachers are feeling the workload at the moment.

There has been some progress in terms of reducing planning time or making it more manageable and on marking. The data shows some improvements in terms of the proportion of teachers saying they spend too much time on those issues. It is issues around behaviour and support from external support services that are really driving teachers' workload in recent years and need to be the focus. It is a shame that the taskforce got curtailed before making recommendations on those really critical areas.

Kathryn Morgan: For us, we recognise that workload is a system issue as opposed to individual school issues. Just to Jack's point when he was listing off the recommendations, which we also went and had a look at, for me school culture and leadership underpins them all. There is a lot that still needs to be done to really understand what we mean by culture, which is another really nebulous topic. There are some schools and multi-academy trusts that are doing some really good work and have definitely worked hard to try to reduce unnecessary tasks and burdens on teachers' time, but they are in pockets. It is trying to then think about how policy and initiatives from the Department can shine a light on those in such a way that people can understand what might be applicable to their school context and what potentially might not work.

The fundamental thing with workload, initiatives and recommendations is what it looks like implemented on the ground in different areas, schools and regions. We have to move away from a one-size-fits-all because that phrase is often used but then very rarely implemented within a policy. I understand why, but we want to get to a place where we have a really clear understanding of those workload and wellbeing challenges, which are really interlinked, and then we have a very clear implementation plan.

As an example, a wellbeing charter is a step in the right direction to recognise that wellbeing and workload need to be prioritised. But it is not anything that affects the actual day-to-day, lived reality of teachers and leaders, because it is dependent upon whether that school actually decides to make a difference. We end up unpacking why people might not have made any changes and come back to accountability, high stakes and trying to have a really robust evidence trail because you are under pressure, because Ofsted might come and suddenly you have to produce all this information, irrespective of whether Ofsted says that it wants schools to produce or not produce extra work. I have been in 12 Ofsted inspections as a teacher and a school leader, and there is a considerable



amount of work, not just in that inspection but in the day-to-day, lived reality of being a teacher and a leader.

Daniel Kebede: The Workload Reduction Taskforce made some useful recommendations, but what more is to be done? At the moment, we actually have some concerns about the Government's direction of travel on directed time in terms of the contracted hours of 1,265. Obviously it has submitted evidence and has asked the pay review body to review this.

Teaching is a professional endeavour and teachers are essentially taking jobs where they are expected to work an untold amount of unpaid overtime. We would actually like to see 1,265 made enforceable so that there is a limit to the amount of hours that teachers work and for teachers to be compensated when they go over. This is what happens in Scotland, Iceland and Portugal, and they have better teacher wellbeing and lower attrition.

Q25 **Chris Vince:** I will just go back to something that is very dear to my heart, which is the welfare of teachers. The Education Support Teacher Wellbeing Index was published last month, which characterised teacher wellbeing as being in crisis. Obviously you have touched upon it a bit, but how would you assess the current situation and what further steps—that you have perhaps already outlined—would you like to see the Government take to strengthen their support for the workforce?

Daniel Kebede: They are right to point to a crisis. While we have seen positive steps in terms of recruitment, retention is still woeful and that is down to a crisis in teacher wellbeing. We have to make teaching a profession that is again compatible with family life. We would like to see an increase in non-contact time—planning and preparation time in particular—but whenever we talk to members, and indeed survey members en masse, they primarily feel not valued by Government.

When we have evidence submitted to the pay review body that is pointing to a 6.5% pay award spread over three years to come out of existing school budgets, that really does not do anything for the morale of teachers. As I have said, the Secretary of State has made some real positive steps in regard to SEND and child poverty, but until we see the day-to-day lives of teachers and support staff improve, we are not going to solve this problem.

Q26 **Mark Sowards:** Turning back to behaviour, which we talked about earlier. Again, when I was a teacher—head of maths—I did not lose a single maths teacher: a record I am very proud of to this day. I was the first person to leave my school and my department, and that was to do this job. One reason was that when I trained my staff, I was very clear with them: "In those first two weeks, I almost do not care if you teach maths"—which was an exaggeration—"I care much more that you have behaviour under control and establish relationships with your students. That is the most important thing." I attribute that small success to that.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

We have heard very recently in the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey that behaviour has been cited more and more as a reason that teachers are leaving the profession. We have also heard the Education Secretary point to figures that show behaviour in schools is improving, so there are potentially green shoots there too. What is your view on this? Is it a deterrent and how can we solve it? I am going to start with Kathryn, if that is okay.

Kathryn Morgan: When we speak to our members, it is certainly a key topic that they put forward as a reason for challenges within their school environment and their own personal stress as leaders. Your point around relationships is a really key one. I wonder if we are now in a time when people feel so pressured to be moving through the curriculum and ensuring that as soon as students are entering the classroom we are straight into instruction, that there is a danger that we have reduced the opportunity to build up some relationships. It is a balance.

Based on feedback from our members, there are also increasing challenges within the home and school contract, some of which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Post-pandemic, there is never enough time in education to press pause, course-correct, recalibrate, have a really thorough understanding of where the needs are, and then make those adjustments to be responsive. You keep going because obviously those children and young people only get one shot at their education; time is a real issue and has been mentioned a lot this morning. Based on our membership, there are probably pockets of green shoots and good practice across the country. Where the behaviour hubs are working well, they are really supporting schools to make some changes.

We have to invest beyond the schools. Schools are absorbing all society's challenges; that really needs to be addressed. Ultimately now you speak to school leaders about what they are spending their time and effort on and it is not teaching and learning or professional development of their staff; it is dealing with the societal challenges.

I will give you some examples. Our members cite dealing with people's disputes with neighbours, issues around parking, supporting people with passport applications, supporting people to get elderly relatives from Pakistan over to this country because there is a poorly child, finding out that there are X number of children living in a house that are not registered anywhere. I could go on. There are real challenges and you hear snapshots on the news, but it is only when you talk to leaders that you see these are actually challenges that they are dealing with day in, day out.

I do not think a report or survey can ever really capture that, so as ever, we have to really dig into the detail. People are finding it increasingly hard to spend the time on teaching and learning curriculum because they have other challenges that are far more pressing, which then exacerbates wellbeing, workload and the emotional load. There is a question around whether we should be supporting school leaders with supervision, for



example, because some challenges that they are dealing with are just unimaginable.

Q27 **Mark Sewards:** I am conscious that we are 10 minutes over. Daniel, can you just finish on this point?

Daniel Kebede: In terms of behaviour, who would want to be a child these days? They have just come out of the pandemic and there was no investment in recovery. We are seeing a rise in SEND need particularly. Child poverty has risen, although the Government have taken some real positive steps to correct this, but also children are on technology and social media for five hours a day. They are sitting in front of screens far too much and then we expect them to go into a classroom and be able to manage and behave.

The experience that we are hearing from our members is that they feel like the fourth emergency service at the moment; all the other areas of support that are around families have been stripped away, and they are just having to deal with more, with much less. What our members are saying they would really like is smaller class sizes and a much more flexible curriculum, but also funding to ensure that there is the resource available in school to support behaviour needs.

Chair: Can I thank you all for coming to give your evidence to us this morning? It has been a very interesting first session. If there is anything that you felt you were not able to adequately convey in the time that we had, please write to the Committee afterwards. We would certainly welcome that. Thank you very much for your time.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Melanie Renowden, James Toop, Dr Jasper Green and Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler.

Chair: Welcome to the second half of our deep-dive oral evidence session on teacher recruitment, training and retention, and welcome to our second panel of witnesses this morning. I invite you to introduce yourselves.

James Toop: Good morning, everyone. I am the chief executive of Teach First, a national education charity. We have been running the High Potential Initial Teacher Training Programme in partnership with the Department for Education for about 20 years, and have placed nearly 25,000 teachers through that programme. We also run a SCITT and other NPQ and ECF programmes.

Melanie Renowden: Good morning. I am the chief executive of the National Institute of Teaching.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: I am the CEO at Now Teach, a charity that focuses on the recruitment and retention of mid-to-late-stage career changers coming into the teaching profession. The average age of our



HOUSE OF COMMONS

recruits is 48, and our oldest new recruit was 73 this year, so we are working with a slightly different demographic than James.

Dr Green: I am head of initial teacher education at UCL's Institute of Education. We educate about 1,000 teachers each year, covering all phases of education from early years and primary to secondary and further education.

Q28 **Chair:** Thank you very much, and welcome. Can I start by asking each of you what trends you are observing at the moment in teacher recruitment, retention and initial training? Are there any particular current or future developments that the Committee should be aware of? I will start with James Toop.

James Toop: At Teach First we are seeing a similar trend to that reflected in the national data. Applications were up last year by 25%, and they are up again by 22% this year. A lot of that is being driven by recent pay awards and bursaries, but a declining job market in other sectors is also driving more applications into teaching. There is also an increase through AI; High Fliers Research has shown that the average graduate now submits over 20 job applications. However, we know that competition for graduate jobs is very high, and that over half of graduates will renege on an offer if they get a better one, so we really need to ensure that teaching is the No. 1 option they choose.

We have also seen a similar shift in subjects. STEM applications have increased; our cohort this year was 39% STEM against a national average of 23%. We have also seen an increase in maths; Teach First contributed 12% of all maths teachers to the sector, against an overall contribution of 6%.

You can market and promote teaching as the No. 1 choice for graduates if you have high-quality campaigns that are targeted, high prestige, and really show that there is an opportunity to make a difference through teaching. Our research with Public First showed that 86% of graduates want to make a difference through their jobs; we have an opportunity here to shift the narrative on teaching and show that it is a profession where you do not need to be behind a desk on Teams, you are in person, you are leading, and you can see the direct impact that you are making on the children in your classroom. If we can do more targeted campaigns like that we can really push teaching up the agenda for graduates.

Melanie Renowden: Applications for trainees who will start training to teach with us in the summer are broadly on track this year with last year. Acceptances are slightly up, so our trend is the opposite to what we are seeing in the rest of the system, where there is a big increase in applications and a slightly lower level of acceptances; we are pleased about the quality of applications that are continuing to come through.

As for emerging trends, I would say, "Mentors, mentors, mentors." We know that mentors are so crucial to the trainee experience and their



ability to develop effectively in role and go on to be successful in sustained careers. That continues through into the early career teaching phase in their first two years of teaching. Mentor roles are under pressure, and we are losing the experience of school staff who are our natural mentors; the supply of mentors, particularly in schools that are serving the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, is a challenge.

Likewise, placement supply for initial teacher education is under pressure. Having the right numbers of teachers coming through into teaching is, of course, partially a product of the number who apply, but it is also about the provision of placements so that there are schools with skilled mentors where they can train to teach. Those are definitely the emerging areas of pressure.

There are increased trainee support needs, including higher numbers of trainees who require adjustments, trends in terms of willingness to travel and ability to travel, and financial pressures; it is really difficult for some trainees to continue with their studies. Schools continue to be under pressure in terms of their ability to support both trainee teachers and those progressing through their careers and into leadership. Their ability to keep a bandwidth focus on professional learning in all its forms and to integrate it into school improvement is under pressure because of all the factors in wider society.

We are keeping an eye on the trickle-down effect of the changes coming out of the Curriculum and Assessment Review and Ofsted, including in terms of the workload for schools and potentially the impact that will have on their ability to support new and existing teachers.

There is an awful lot of variance in the system, but the most important thing is the geographic variance, and what the situation looks like for those schools where it is hardest to get and keep skilled teachers.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: It will not surprise you that we are focusing on the mid-to-late-stage demographic entering the teaching profession, using the over-40s age group as a proxy for potential career changers. It is interesting to note that this group has grown by 38% since 2022 compared to 10% for the under-40s group, so it has potential. While it is great to hear that acceptances are going up, acceptances for the over-40s are actually lower than for the under-40s; we need to nurture that group to make sure they get through to starting in schools.

We are also interested to note that the increasing use of AI could potentially increase the pool of people considering a career change into education. We undertook a survey of 2,000 people with Slack Adapt; 40% were worried that AI would affect their job security, 28% were thinking they would actively have to change career, and 3% said they might consider education. If we extrapolate that percentage out, that is potentially up to 1.3 million people. We need to think very carefully about



HOUSE OF COMMONS

how that demographic can be inspired, nurtured, and supported to come in and be retained.

Now Teach have worked with over 1,300 recruits since 2017; 60% of that group have been STEM teachers in comparison to 24% of all postgrad entrants, so, with the right support, there is potential to address STEM challenges through a career changer group.

To link to the points made by the previous panel about the male/female statistics, from our perspective at Now Teach the career changer pool also has a potential to address that balance; 51% of our applicants this year were male in comparison to 35% nationally.

So we think there is an opportunity with this demographic, and there are certainly green shoots there, but more work is needed to make sure we realise that opportunity.

Dr Green: I echo what many of the members have said already. We have seen an improvement in numbers over the last three years, both in applications and in those students who go on to enrol. Last year there was a 15% increase in applications, which is around 7,000 applicants. It is worth stating that we have seen bigger increases in international student applications—around 20% versus 13% at home—and this year is looking positive too, with an increase of 46% overall.

What we have not talked about is further education/early years more broadly, but we should note that there is a national need in further education, and that last year there was actually an 8% decrease in recruitment into EYITT.

Q29 Chair: Based on those analyses, what is your assessment of the feasibility of the Government's 6,500 recruitment target for teachers, and is there anything to say about the long-term prospects for recruitment and retention into the profession based on your experience? Again, I will start with James.

James Toop: The Government are heading in the right direction in terms of the teacher recruitment target. The question is, as Melanie raised, whether it is being spread evenly across the system; the answer at the moment is no. We need more focus on ensuring that we attract teachers to the schools that need them most. Those schools are often far away from the major cities, in rural coastal areas, post-industrial towns and areas of significant disadvantage. We also need to recruit graduates for the subjects that we need the most; although targets have been met for certain subjects, that is also because the target has come down in this particular year. We are seeing a significant demand for STEM, computing, and modern foreign languages for the types of schools that we place, and we place exclusively into schools in low-income communities.

Melanie Renowden: I would say that it has an appropriate amount of ambition, although we need to make sure that we are not missing the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

focus, first on schools in areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage, and secondly on special schools. That is really important. I welcome the target, and I think it has the right level of ambition; we are collectively making some steady progress towards achieving it. It is helpful to have it as a focal point, but it is important that we do not hit the target and miss the point. You have to have that more granular focus underneath, making sure that teachers at a national level are hitting the schools and getting to children where the needs are greatest.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: I would agree with both panellists. It is clear, and there is progress being made. I feel that we need more detail as to the delivery plan and how that links to recommendations around triple science in the Curriculum and Assessment Review, and I am hopeful that will come in January.

I am keen to understand the different demographic groups that the Government want to prioritise coming into schools to really diversify the workforce. It is a fact that we have the youngest age demographic in the OECD; we need to be working to retain older, more experienced teachers, but also using the opportunity to bring experience in from outside of education.

Dr Green: In terms of progress towards the target, I would like to know a little more about the target. I am not sure if I agree that it is necessarily ambitious enough. It focuses on the number of applicants as opposed to the quality, but both are important. For example, what are the subject backgrounds of those applicants who are coming in through subject-specific routes? Through which route are they training? What is the degree classification? In what areas and what schools will these applicants work?

I want to go back to what Melanie said around partnership. We talk about the availability of placements being a challenge for initial teacher education. Certainly for us, that will limit how far we can recruit further in specific subjects. What we are really talking about is partnership and the ability of schools to partner with institutions over the long term and to engage in initial teacher education. That is a significant barrier to realising this Government's target.

Q30 **Peter Swallow:** We have already talked a little about the different pathways into teaching; it feels clear that if we are going to meet the Government's ambitions of recruiting more teachers and more specialist teachers, we need as many routes into the profession as possible. What would you like to see done to increase those different routes into teaching and support different ways to become a trained teacher? James, can we start with you?

James Toop: I echo what Jasper said about teacher quality being as important as teacher quantity. The high potential initial teacher training route is actually designed to decrease in scale over the next few years. This year we placed just over 1,400 teachers, but that will go down to



1,300 this year. This particular route—the high potential initial teacher training pathway—is about attracting graduates with leadership potential who would not otherwise have considered teaching, and to get them to come and work in the most challenging schools, the lowest-income schools and communities in the country. That reduction in scale is something that we support.

One thing that would be really helpful for the pathways is having more clarity for the incoming population about the role and specific purpose of the different pathways. If you are applying for a SCITT with a particular trust or a teaching school hub, what does that mean? If you are applying for Teach First, or Now Teach, what does that mean? There should be more clarity, and an understanding that Teach First, for example, is a very intensive, stretching, challenging pathway where you will be teaching in the job from day one and where there is rigorous screening and selection. While the number of applications has gone up by 25%, the size of the cohort has gone up by 1%, so we are broadly holding a similar cohort size against an increase in applications. You need to understand and know those things when you are coming in, and that will support retention; we want to get the right people on to the right pathways in a way that matches their ambitions and requirements.

Q31 **Peter Swallow:** Graihagh, I know the Government have chosen not to renew the funding for the Career Changers programme you oversee; what is the future of that pathway?

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: In my mind, the Career Changer route remains viable, and now more than ever it has huge potential. But there is a risk that it will not grow without prioritisation and incentives at the individual school and training provider level to understand this group in the way they need to be understood, and to help them maximise their potential, both in terms of age diversification and STEM specialism, but also those critical essential skills that we are now focused on, including broader links to industry and the workplace. There is huge potential there.

You are right that at the moment we are operating towards the end of our Government contract, and the current Government have not yet adopted the recommendations made by your predecessors on this Committee. We have been encouraged that philanthropists have stepped in for the short to near medium term, so we have some stability for our work. They have a real intuitive understanding of why this makes sense. We will be maintaining the number of teachers that we are recruiting at 250 a year, certainly for the next couple of years. We have an ambition over the next four years to recruit close to 1,600 STEM specialists, but we need to get our funding model in place. The risk that career changes do not convert from application to starting needs to be held in mind, and the distinct impact that we know career changes can have.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I would be very keen to see the Government making more of this potential group and setting out their strategy for that demographic in their workforce plans.

Q32 Caroline Voaden: The recent postgraduate initial teacher training census presents a fairly positive picture of teacher recruitment, particularly for primary schools, although the secondary school target has only been hit once since 2012-13. Could you tell us the extent to which you believe this survey aligns with the reality on the ground? Are you as confident as the Department appears to be about the projections of future teacher supply? I will start with you, Jasper.

Dr Green: It is absolutely a positive step forward, and it mirrors what we are seeing on the ground at UCL, but the context is challenging. We need to recruit urgently to fill urgent needs in schools.

It is worth stressing that this is not where we want to be in the long term. There was a 5% increase in the number of students who applied to teacher training last year, but an increase of 12% in acceptances. Has the quality of the applicants increased that much? When you look at specific subjects like computing, there was a 16% increase in applications last year, but a 42% increase in acceptances. That raises questions around how we can assure the quality of applicants into the profession. It may be that those were justified decisions, but what additional steps are we now taking to ensure that those entrants are getting the additional support that they may need?

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: The signs look good, but it is very early on to feel confident. We know that teachers are entering a profession where things have never been more challenging, so it is thinking about that longer-term retention and how the steps that we are putting in place now with candidates and through the early career framework can enable them to stay for the longer term.

We have noted that the over-40s age group are at risk of not being retained, but the support we have been able to provide through Now Teach has reversed that trend; they are 36% more likely to stay beyond two years than their age-matched cohort, and 27% more likely to stay beyond four years. But that is obviously a small group, so it is about how we can translate that experience and share it more broadly. Ultimately, we can have the green shoots, but we need to nurture them and feel confident that in five or 10 years current applicants will still be in the profession and thriving.

Q33 Caroline Voaden: Melanie, there seems to be more of a problem with recruiting secondary than primary teachers, particularly into STEM subjects and MFL. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Melanie Renowden: We are seeing changes in applicant rates to some subjects this year, and across our programme suite we are broadly tracking the changes to bursaries. Subjects that have seen reductions or



HOUSE OF COMMONS

removals of bursaries are down about 30% this year, but we have increases in other subjects: maths, physics, chemistry, and computing have all increased. As we heard on the previous panel, the bursaries track through into changes in behaviour in terms of applications, the relationship with the DFE targets, and how those inform choices about bursaries. We are dependent on a workforce model where some quite nuanced assumptions add up to big swings in terms of both targets and bursary decisions. We want transparency and understanding about the way that those decisions are being made, which would help us to stress-test them against what we are seeing on the ground.

Just to come back to the other question, I will say something quickly about routes because that is also in the workforce census. There is a relationship between demand and supply. With the postgraduate teacher apprenticeship we run—it is about 8% of our provision at the moment—there is a lot of candidate interest that needs to be met by the ability for schools to employ and support those apprenticeship candidates. That is both a practical and a financial affordability challenge for schools.

I would say the same is likely to be true for the teacher degree apprenticeship, which is a brand-new first degree for apprentice trainee teachers. The costs to schools of supporting apprentice trainee teachers, particularly in the early years of their training, are really significant, so we are going to see a suppression of growth in those pathways until those issues are addressed.

We also support a lot of part-time trainees—they are around 6% to 7% of our cohort this year—and we will see a continued growth of interest in part-time routes. Again, you can see that showing up in the census, but it needs to be matched with supply. Obviously, we need to know that those people are going to be able to get and then succeed in part-time roles in schools if that is what their situations demand. So the relationship between supply and demand is really important.

James Toop: We have also seen that primary has been more challenging to place. Primary is always the cohort that closes first and has the highest number of applications, but it is becoming harder and harder each year to place because of the over-subscription from other routes into primary.

What we have found in secondary, though, is that there is still significant demand from schools serving low-income communities. When you layer on those subjects we have talked about—such as STEM, MFL, and computer science—and add geographical location, it becomes even more challenging.

We have been targeting specific cohorts of graduates, working on campus with physics and computer science departments, and speaking with graduates and talking to them about the need for those subjects and the appealing aspects of the teaching role. We will work with specific STEM recruitment partners to increase the pool of STEM applicants who are coming to Teach First.



We are also working with candidates to increase mobility into areas where it is more challenging to recruit, through conversations with graduates when they apply, including talking about the specific needs and challenges of those communities, telling them that is where the forefront of educational inequality is now and it is why you should move to a particular rural coastal community that we have talked about. But when you layer on geography, there are specific challenges. The relocation costs are higher; often, it is really challenging to rent in communities that have mainly holiday lets or which do not have a rental market. Graduates often feel isolated, so we are doing more work to try to place them in clusters of three to four people in an area. Graduate salaries are also an issue. A lot of Teach First teachers start on unqualified teacher salaries; if you are out of London, that can be as low as £22,500, compared to inner London, which is over £28,000. So we are looking at how we can redress the balance to say, "You can get paid a London salary to go and work in Redcar, Blyth or Cumbria." But school budgets are more stretched in those communities.

So I would say that we are seeing the same headline numbers but when you start to drill down into the numbers, both on poverty and geography, you start to see a stark need. There are some underlying trends in that data that mean that we need a more targeted approach and funding to those particular schools and communities and the subjects where we are trying to recruit.

Dr Green: If I just can pick up on the subject-specific dimension, that is really important to us; we prioritise and pride ourselves on having 18 separate subjects.

When we look at the system as a whole and take, for example, MFL, which has a significant bursary of £20,000, then look at how those students track through the system, many of those students are struggling to get jobs in schools due to the costs involved both for the schools and for themselves, including paying for visas. You can go back even further in thinking about university departments where there is more MFL likelihood of closures. So it is important to think about the overall system as a long-term approach.

According to the Institute of Physics, 25% of state schools do not have a single in-field physics teacher at the moment, and there is a shortage of 3,500 specialist physics teachers. To address this is going to require a real long-term plan. The Institute of Physics is proposing a 10-year plan, and it is that level, that scale, that ambition, that we need to be thinking about—working with Government to identify these subjects and to plan a long-term sustainable model for teacher development and recruitment.

Q34 **Darren Paffey:** I declare an interest as the chair of the APPG for modern languages, so I have some involvement in this area.

I really wanted to unpack what you are saying—that despite some interventions, shortages persist in physics and modern foreign languages,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

and there is this double whammy. We talk about boosting the domestic market, but that does not exist; 50% of MFL trainees and 60% of physics trainees come from overseas. Then, as you say, they face hurdles like visas and costs, and schools are not sponsoring visas as they used to.

What impact is that having on teaching and learning? We have heard about non-specialist teachers or even subject provision reductions. You talk about the long-term plan that the Institute of Physics is proposing. What does that plan include that we have to start dealing with now? It could be across education, including what the Home Office is doing on immigration with visas and so on. What needs to happen next? Let me start with Dr Green, and then any others who wish to comment.

Dr Green: It is about identifying the different parts of the system and being explicit about both; thinking about university, thinking about the teacher training route that people go through, thinking about the barriers they face into recruitment and being explicit about those various stages. Then it is about removing barriers; visas, for example, could be centralised.

Once that level of thinking has been completed and a plan has been set out, it is around investing in departments, for example at UCL, so that over a period of time we have clarity around the targets that are needed, and we have clarity around the additional resource with which to develop these teachers. With short-term bursaries, the danger is that you will see a spike for a year and you therefore need to staff that, but you are not developing long-term expertise in teacher education. It is about that long-term view and having clarity around the targets.

To your point around the impact on schools, in terms of an MFL classroom there is definitely a value in students or teachers coming from across the globe. If they are not there, that cultural diversity is not there either.

Just to illustrate my point with the teacher degree apprenticeship, we are one of the pilot providers for the new secondary maths TDA. It is a fantastic programme, it is long-term, four years, and there is an opportunity to develop a really secure partnership, but at the moment the 40% funding subsidy has only been guaranteed for last year's pilot and one more year. That level of short-term thinking is unhelpful for institutions; we have invested, but at our own risk. So it is about giving institutions the confidence to invest in the people who are going to bring this about.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: My answer would be to look beyond the graduates. We had 20 new physics teachers change career and join us last September; a small but mighty group providing a much-needed contribution to the physics shortage.

We could be building the potential for people to have hybrid careers. There may be people working in industry with a physics degree who do



not want to give up everything, but might want to have a mixed model or hybrid career. In terms of our STEM specialist gaps, that is an opportunity that should be well considered.

It is also important to build links with industry. Ultimately the impact will be on the pupils; there will be pupils in schools who do not have those specialist teachers, so they do not go on to do the A-level or the degree subject, and the problem continues and persists.

One of our former students who heard that our funding was not going to continue, noted the fact that she was doing her MSc in machine learning because of a teacher who had not only taught her, but also provided the after-school enrichment activity that captured her imagination.

It is about the person who is not just teaching but inspiring students to understand how that subject can lead them on to their future path.

Melanie Renowden: It is absolutely about the long-term join-up; thinking about the problem and the opportunities end-to-end. Compartmentalising this is unhelpful, and thinking about it in short bursts of time is really unhelpful. We need a long-term pathway and we need predictability so that we can plan and invest, and schools can plan and invest. They can make decisions confident that the environment in which they are making them is going to be sufficiently stable, and that those decisions are going to prove to be good decisions several years down the track. That endurance is needed for the long term, which means bringing all the stakeholders together.

To the point about visas, that conversation should be had with the training providers as well. For employing schools, the visa experience can be labyrinthine. It feels counterintuitive, almost as if we are trying not to employ skilled teachers. Having a comprehensive understanding of all the stakeholders' voices is really important, and likewise in the long term.

I also think it is really important that we are generating new evidence and insights into how we can do all this better. The National Institute of Teaching was established by a national network of 200 schools, so we have been able to innovate and bring together the data that already exists in those schools, connecting up workforce data with pupil attainment data. That gives us a really powerful research engine that we can use to look at things such as the effect of teaching out of subject, and the relative effect of that compared to experience, or compared to the effects of different treatments or different interventions for teacher development.

We need to be getting much better research evidence, and that needs to be based in English schools. At the moment we are very reliant on research evidence that we are drawing on from outside this country, principally from the United States. We need to be much more forensic and curious about how we can make better decisions to support teachers throughout their careers.



James Toop: I will be brief. I agree with everything that has been said about partnership, long-term thinking, and a better review of the evidence. I guess the part that concerns us at the moment is that, because of a lack of teachers in the here and now, 23% of children in low-income schools and communities do not have access to French at A-level, and a third cannot do computer science at A-level; one in 10 of those schools cannot offer physics at A-level. That is widening achievement gaps. In the short term, our approach has been to go to university campuses and to speak directly to departments to recruit on campus, promote the programme and try to attract graduates in those subjects into those areas.

One aspect of diversity that we have also discussed is about having a teaching workforce which reflects the communities that they serve. That area was highlighted in the Teaching Commission report; only 10% of teachers are from global majority backgrounds, compared to 37% of the school population. We have been working not only to increase the population of global majority teachers but also of teachers who were on free school meals, because the evidence is that students are more likely to engage with someone who looks like them and has a similar background.

A lot of that work has come through targeted campaigns, hiring people for specialist roles who can go in and work with the graduate populations to inspire them to come and teach, targeted attraction, having role model ambassadors and doing research into the barriers with Mission 44, the NFER and the Ambition Institute.

What is coming through is that targeting campaigns at particular populations of graduates in the areas where we want to attract applications, works well and we could be doing this more.

Q35 **Mark Sowards:** The January 2024 review of the Early Career Framework and Initial Teacher Training highlighted several concerns including, but not limited to, unnecessary repetition, the fact that it was not subject-specific enough, that there was excessive rigidity, there was insufficient focus on SEND, and, as we heard in the last panel, there were challenges with mentoring, including the workload for mentors. To what extent do these issues remain, and what improvements, if any, have been made since the review? I am happy to take anyone who wants to answer.

Melanie Renowden: Obviously there has been a change to the Early Career Teacher Entitlement and now the Early Career Teacher Programme for those early career teachers who are starting on the programme from this September. That has provided an opportunity to listen to the feedback from early career teachers themselves, from their mentors, and from the leaders of their schools, and to refine the experience.

The feedback that you are reading out was from the relatively early days of the rollout of the programme. It was really helpful for everybody



involved in rolling out a substantial piece of reform to be able to get those early reports relating to how this was landing on the ground and the areas where we needed to focus for improvement.

Speaking for ourselves, in bringing together the ITT and ECF frameworks with the new framework, we have had a fantastic opportunity to really reflect that continuity, starting right from the very first initial teacher training and flowing into the first couple of years of teaching, building in increased flexibility. At the start of the early career experience, we begin with a diagnostic that looks at the knowledge, skills and competencies of the early career teacher and adapts their experience through the early career programme in response, while making sure that there is that consistent entitlement. It is really important that we have that consistent entitlement which draws on a secure, strong evidence base, so that all teachers can be confident that they are going to get that support in their first few years of teaching; but it also needs to be flexible and responsive to their circumstances and what they are bringing. That has been a really good opportunity.

Obviously we are only a few months into the rollout of the new programme, but the feedback from our teachers and mentors is really positive; 97% of early career teachers reporting a self-efficacy say that they strongly agree or agree that the programme supports them with their teaching, and 98% of mentors say that the programme is supporting them to mentor their early career teachers more effectively.

Adaptations for mentors have obviously been more significant in reducing from two years to one year, and that reflects much of what we have talked about already in terms of that precious mentor time. We are making sure we get the absolutely best value we can from their time on the programme.

Q36 Mark Sowards: Thank you, especially for the statistics. Anyone else?

Dr Green: UCL is a provider of the early career programme, and we have similar satisfaction rates to those you describe. It is early days.

I would like to comment on the fact that the experience of repetition for our teachers has gone away. Bringing the two together has been helpful but ultimately, when you look at the documents, it is not clear how progression is really articulated over the three years. It is the skill of the mentor and the programme that ensures that teachers are not experiencing repetition. It is a generic framework and that will always be its limitation, particularly for secondary in that it is the subject that really gets young teachers excited. In many cases, that is why they went into the teaching profession. While there are things we can do to help in terms of case studies, ultimately it is still a generic framework that applies across different phases, and I see that as a weakness.

Just to pick up on what James says in relation to black and global majority heritage students, our own data shows that outcomes in their



training year are typically comparable to their peers. However, getting jobs proves much more difficult. They face additional barriers, and those link to the diversity of literature that underpins the ITTECF; should there be further elements on discrimination, for example, and anti-racism?

Some things are positive, such as the focus on SEND and oracy, but I would caution that the underpinning evidence base that sits behind it is of a particular flavour, and there are other flavours that would be of benefit for teachers.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: In our annual surveys, we ask our trainees and our network members about sources of joy and frustration in the profession; that is not limited to the early career years, but many of them are at that stage when we ask those questions. Repeatedly we see feedback—it will be interesting to see if it changes in the next round—about the intensity of the workload beyond their contracted paid hours; 56% of career changers, who have often had 28 years plus in quite intense careers outside education, feel that they are working harder than in their previous professions. It is not that they don't want to work harder, but previously they would have had billable hours, TOIL policies or overtime expectations; so while they are up for it, they are slightly dissatisfied by what they are taking home. Many of them feel the workload is driven by the demands of the early career framework.

Again, 52% feel they have less trust and autonomy in their new role, which comes through in the way they are supported by mentors. We are trying to provide mentor training and support because mentors are working with someone who, although they may be a novice teacher, is in fact quite experienced; as you have said, they have knowledge and skills that need to be taken into consideration. That is something we are definitely hopeful can and will be improved.

There is also some concern that pay scales do not account for that prior experience on entry. Those who are particularly good, strong negotiators, potentially those in STEM subjects, might do better there, but there is something about recognising the starting points of people when they are coming into the profession, and that needs to happen through the early career framework.

James Toop: I would echo everything everyone has said. We have worked closely with the DFE and have seen really positive trends in terms of satisfaction around the ITTECF. It is early days, but retention has also increased and is improving, which is really positive. Where we see the need among participants, we have rounded out the programme with added additional content and modules around SEND and leadership.

I would just come back to the point about mentors. They are the really critical piece in the jigsaw, particularly when you are working in schools serving low-income communities where, as we have highlighted before, there is a shortage of subject specialist mentors to train the teachers. We need a solution to that as part of the long-term thinking we have talked



about. At Teach First we have heads of subject who work with mentors to support them on how to actually train the teacher in the subject, because all the evidence shows that training the teacher in the subject is the thing that makes the biggest difference. As Jasper says, the joy comes from the teaching.

That link between training and subject is absolutely critical, and our priority is to ensure that we get subject specialists into the schools that need them most.

Q37 Chris Vince: What developments have been made in the initial teacher training market since the ITT market review report published in July 2021? How have those changes affected the recruitment, training quality, and overall support of teachers?

Dr Green: I have first-hand experience of the ITT market review. At its core, it put the role of mentoring and lead mentoring as a key part of the solution to the experience of student teachers during their training year, and that was absolutely right. Beyond that, it has created an enormous amount of work for providers in implementing that policy.

It is those issues around policy implementation that are noteworthy for this Committee, in that hours are attached to things. So for example, hours are attached to mentoring: every mentor should do 20 hours, and lead mentors 30 hours. That has created an enormous work stream in terms of how we as providers quality-assure that each hour is completed. There are payments that follow through on that, so there is a whole raft of work that does not actually benefit the student teacher during that time.

For me, the learning is around focusing on quality as opposed to numerical values, because that distracts us from being able to help students and schools. It is worth also stating that the idea of the market review is to position teacher education and teacher training providers as a market, and to expect the market to behave in a supply and demand way. But we are in a really interesting place now; we know, for example, there is a shortage of maths teachers, and we have student teachers, but it is challenging to actually find placements. It does not in fact operate as a market, and to view it through that lens has been very problematic.

For us, the benefit has been to really develop the lead mentor role, and to situate the leadership or mentoring and new teacher learning within schools. Bear in mind that student teachers are in schools or colleges or settings for 75% of their time, even with a university-led provider, so the quality of mentoring is absolutely paramount, as we have all joined up in saying.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: I would agree. I will let Melanie and James comment on this one.



Melanie Renowden: We came into the market review later on so we were not affected in quite the same way that Jasper, as an existing provider, describes. We also recognise the focus on the quality of the training experience, the absolute centrality of the mentor, and the structure for leadership of mentoring within schools; that is really beneficial. We have found the process of deep thinking about curriculum design and the addition of some experiences for the trainees, such as the intensive training and practice components of the programme, to be really beneficial. Student teachers feed back really positively on those intensive training and practice episodes where they are able to train in a way that gets them as close to practice as possible before they are in a school and in front of children. That opportunity to really hone their skills through deliberate practice is part of what equips them to go into schools and be successful, and it supports retention.

This point about professional development to support retention is another thread that runs through everything we are saying here. It has resulted in something that is quite opaque at a system level about where provision is and therefore what the areas of overlap, or areas where there is less provision, actually look like at a national level. That is quite hard for providers to work out. We are all concerned with meeting the needs of schools and making sure that we are both attracting and supporting new entrants into the profession but at the moment, because of this opaqueness in the overall system, it is hard to do that in a way that is absolutely responsive, particularly for schools with the biggest challenges.

If there is anything that the Department for Education could do to share a bit more about what that looks like at a system level, that would help providers to help the system.

Q38 **Chris Vince:** I agree with that. Could I just ask, in terms of ITT, are there any particular cold spots? I am thinking not simply in terms of subjects, but in terms of geographical locations.

James Toop: To go back to what I said earlier, what we have seen through the high potential ITT programme is that the cold spots are areas away from major cities, towns that are 30 minutes from a major city, maybe post-industrial areas or a rural coastal community. Those are very often the areas that are harder to penetrate. It is harder to attract teachers to go to those particular cold spots because they are more isolated, harder to reach, and there are relocation costs. In addition we try to avoid teachers going there on their own because we know they are not likely to remain. Feeling part of the community is really critical.

Melanie Renowden: We have found that cold spots language can obscure what we are trying to talk about, and it can mean different things to different people. When we talk about cold spots, we talk about individual schools, the circumstances of a school that makes it easier or harder for them to recruit teachers.



While I was making a point just now about the opaqueness of the system, which makes it quite difficult at a geographic level to know what the teacher supply and teacher training landscape looks like, it does remain true that it is way harder than it should be for schools that are serving areas with the highest level of disadvantage to recruit and train teachers.

I would always hope that, at a policy level, we are thinking about where the best quality teaching is going to deliver the biggest benefit for children.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: We see something slightly different. It is not a national picture, but there are areas or pockets where schools are in great need of teachers, where graduates cannot afford to buy houses, but actually somebody in their 40s or 50s might already be living. Those are the areas that we want to tap into and think about the role that we can play there.

James Toop: I would just add one thing. We have talked a lot about teachers and mentors; the other thing that creates the conditions for great teaching to thrive is great leadership, so linked to your question, what helps attract great teachers to go to some places is seeing great headteachers there.

The parallel challenge is around how we attract really strong headteachers to work in those schools that we have just talked about, because it is often a very risky professional, personal, and financial decision for them to make. That might be a separate conversation, but it is part of the picture.

Chris Vince: That is a really important point; thank you.

Q39 **Darren Paffey:** Forgive me, but for the sake of time we probably just need a brief response to this question. Melanie, you might be best placed to answer this: have the national professional qualifications improved since they were reformed a few years ago, and are they doing what is needed in terms of both recruitment and retention?

Melanie Renowden: They are playing a really important role, and the fact that they provide a consistent entitlement built on a common evidence base, which itself joins up with the evidence base that informs both the early career framework and the initial teacher training entitlement, means that you have the potential for this multiplier effect at a school level, where you are able to train and support your teachers in a way that brings in this consistency; you can get everybody pointing in the same direction. We are yet to see that join-up realised at a school level, so for the future of the NPQs it would be good for us to be focusing on tilting the balance towards it being a joined-up longitudinal school improvement focus, with NPQs playing a role alongside ECF, alongside quality mentoring and alongside the recruitment of new teachers and ITT.



We also need to recognise that even the national framework of professional development still does not reach lots of teachers. There is a very important parallel focus to the NPQs in making sure that everybody involved in teacher education has the support, the time and the access to evidence that they need to do the best possible job of supporting all teachers with professional learning. That is the reason we are in the process of building a professional development evidence portal, publicly available for all teacher educators to use, which draws from a living meta-review of global evidence on teacher preparation and teacher and leader development. We want to get that evidence into the hands of the 75% of teachers who say that they are personally involved in training other teachers. NPQs will play an important role, but we have to think about the whole school population.

Dr Green: Just to echo what Melanie said, in May 2025 Professor Qing Gu from the Centre for Educational Leadership published a report on NPQs and their impact that clearly showed direct improvements in the self-efficacy and resilience of those leaders. But to echo the point—it might even be an extract from the paper—NPQs are not a game changer: they play a key role, but overall culture and conditions are at the heart of the matter.

Q40 **Chair:** Just briefly, while we are on the topic of continuing professional development, our Committee has previously made recommendations in relation to SEND and the need for additional opportunities for SEND CPD, and indeed additional requirements for teachers to undertake SEND CPD. We have not asked particularly about the role of growing SEND need in relation to teacher recruitment and retention, so I wonder whether you have any brief comments to make on that topic.

Melanie Renowden: First, I would say that good teaching is good teaching for all children.

Peter Swallow: Hear, hear!

Melanie Renowden: Much of what we have talked about has that focus on high quality teaching. One of the first pieces of analysis we did in the teacher education dataset that I mentioned earlier on looked at teacher quality and how it is distributed for children who have and do not have a marker for SEND. That analysis, which was in English schools at scale, showed that a teacher who is adding lots of value for children without a SEND marker is also adding an equivalent amount of value for children who have the SEND marker. At its core, good teaching is good teaching for all children.

That is not to say that there is not also a need for additional support for teachers to make sure they are creating the conditions in their classrooms for all children to succeed. More needs to happen in addition to that. We need to be breaking down the barrier between the mainstream sector and the special sector. There is a huge amount of expertise in our special schools that can support leaders and classroom



teachers in mainstream schools as well, equipping them to better support children with SEND. There will likely be a need for some top-up provision for teachers and those with responsibility for progression for children's learning at a leadership level in schools, which will likely flow from the White Paper as well. We should be thinking about how we can make sure that we focus on core quality teaching and then, drawing on special provision, build around it with additional support.

Dr Green: The points I want to make are around the importance of teaching assistants and the new level 5 apprenticeship; having a real SEND focus there is going to make a key difference to teachers in the classroom. There are other opportunities, and obviously the NPQ SENCO has been a huge success for us.

An avenue that has not been fully explored yet is the opportunities for teachers who have graduated with a PGCE. They already have master's-level credits, and there are many M-level SEND programmes that provide the opportunity to go really deep and really focused, and yet our student teachers who graduate are not able to apply for postgraduate loans because you cannot get funding to take your PGCE credits into a master's degree. The system has already paid for their PGCE, which is 60 M-level credits, and it seems crazy to me that they cannot get support with funding to use that to develop their expertise in an area such as SEND. It feels like a real opportunity where we could work with Government to find the way forward.

Chair: Thank you very much; that is really helpful. I will just go to Manuela for a final question.

Q41 **Manuela Perteghella:** To what extent have schools taken up the early career entitlement, which is obviously a comprehensive training programme, and what potential does it hold for strengthening teacher development, including the skills to adapt to teach and support the needs of all pupils, but also mentoring, support, and ultimately retention? I will go to Jasper first.

Dr Green: Thank you. It is obviously still early days. From our perspective, feedback has been positive. Something that has been particularly positive is that in year 2 of our programme there is an opportunity for students to do practitioner inquiry. That gives them an opportunity to focus on an aspect of their practice that they would like to develop, and it is that type of agency in thinking about their own development that is absolutely at the core of the successful implementation of this entitlement.

Graihagh Crawshaw-Sadler: The feedback we get from career changers is that, as people who feel different in the profession, while they value the support of their provider and the ongoing support of their school as an employer, they also value having a third space where they are not being judged or intensively trained, and where they can unpack their experiences. There is something important about that broader



network and third space for different groups within the teaching profession as part of this entitlement.

Melanie Renowden: I spoke earlier about how the programme is going for us, likewise in early stages, of course. I would say a couple of things. First, it is going to be very important that we stay future-focused. The way to stop things becoming crises is to look at what is coming down the tracks, what is showing up in schools, and how we can best anticipate and support the needs of children. The changes that might be coming include, for example, the curriculum and assessment review, what implications it might have for schools, and how we can prepare and support teachers for it.

The National Institute of Teaching has recently opened the Centre for Digital Information Literacy in schools because of the increasing challenges that new teachers—in fact all teachers—are reporting in terms of children interacting with misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy beliefs. That has become part of how we need to be equipping and preparing new teachers, and it is already in our schools.

So yes, I would say it is going well in terms of rolling out the Early Career Teacher Framework, but we cannot be content. This is never going to be static. We always need to be looking further ahead and anticipating need.

James Toop: I would echo everything everyone has said. Early days indications are positive; the uptake has been strong. Mentoring will be critical, as we have discussed before, and we should obviously put a big focus on that.

One thing Graihagh touched on was the importance of teachers coming together in networks outside their school and having peer groups and cohorts; the classroom can be a lonely place if you are just in your school community. Getting groups to teach together, that stickiness and glue and connectivity, feels like it has gone out of the system in recent years; initiatives to bring people together are really critical. We find conversations coming up around things like relational practice and parental engagement, core skills that have maybe not received a focus in the NPQs but which present challenges for teachers and leaders working in schools in low-income communities. Teaching will get us a lot of the way there, but there are other things that are critical to ensuring our most disadvantaged pupils really thrive. Having spaces for that type of conversation and development is really critical as well.

Dr Green: Can I just add very briefly to James's point? Subject associations play a crucial role here.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for coming to give your evidence to us this morning; it is much appreciated. As I have said to all the witnesses, if there is anything you felt that you did not have the opportunity to adequately convey to us, please do write to the Committee afterward; we would welcome hearing from you again.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Finally, may I wish our witnesses, members of the Committee and our staff team a very happy Christmas. That brings our proceedings to a close for today.