

Written evidence submitted by the National Education Union (NEU)

Introduction

1. The National Education Union (NEU) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry by the Education Select Committee into teacher recruitment, training, and retention.
2. The NEU is an independent trade union and is the largest education union in the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe. We represent half a million serving teachers, headteachers and support staff in maintained schools, academies, independent schools, maintained nurseries, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the UK.
3. We recognise the link between education policy and members' conditions of service. The NEU exists to help members, as their careers develop, through first rate research, advice, information, and legal counsel. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate locally and nationally.

Executive Summary

4. The key issues impacting teacher recruitment and retention, which diminish the attractiveness of the profession, are:
 - pay
 - the pay structure
 - workload
 - the excessive accountability regime
 - routes to teaching and funding shortages.

These issues are covered in detail in the NEU's March 2023 written evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) and our supplementary written evidence to the STRB of April 2023. The latest NEU Pay and Progression Survey includes further evidence on recruitment and retention, as well as on the inequality caused by the current pay arrangements. The united position of the profession on the key issues, and the isolation of the Government, is demonstrated by the joint union statement to the STRB from the NEU, ASCL, Community, NAHT, and NASUWT.

5. All these documents can be found on the NEU website¹ and we encourage the Committee to review the strong evidence set out in those documents on the causes and extent of the teacher recruitment and retention crisis in schools.

¹ Pay campaign | NEU : <https://neu.org.uk/pay/pay-campaign>

including:

written evidence to STRB : <https://neu.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/NEU%20evidence%20to%20the%20STRB%20March%202023%20FINAL.pdf>

supplementary evidence to STRB : <https://neu.org.uk/media/26976/view>

NEU pay and progression survey report : <https://neu.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/NEU%20-%20Teachers%20Pay%20and%20Progression%20for%20September%202022%20-%20Final.pdf>

joint union statement to STRB : <https://neu.org.uk/media/26151/view>

6. NEU believes the time is now right for government to review and revise the DFE recruitment and retention strategy, considering the role of pay, workload, accountability, wider government policy, perceptions of the profession, and the impact on teaching & learning – including the workload and quality of education impacts of teaching outside subject specialisms.

Attractiveness of the Profession

7. Recruiting and retaining the education workforce is a fundamental responsibility of government. Ensuring the profession is attractive to those already in the career, and appears (and proves to be) attractive to those considering teaching, is essential.
8. Everyone in the system has a role to play in making teaching an attractive profession and rebuilding it as a hugely fulfilling career for life. Making certain that teachers, leaders, and support staff have a positive story to tell about their work in education is important.
9. At the heart of this must be government and unions working amicably and effectively to make teaching (and the role of support staff and leadership) a feasible, achievable, and sustainable job. Burnout must end and aspiration to stay and progress through the profession become widespread. It is likely this will require a substantial and serious review of teacher pay levels, excessive and intensive workload, accountability pressures, and wellbeing.
10. The framework for this collaboration lies in the report of wave 1 findings from the Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders longitudinal study². Specifically, that means exploring and agreeing solutions that address the following:
 - **Dissatisfaction with pay levels** - only a quarter of teachers agreed with the statement *I am satisfied with the salary I receive for the work I do* – Black teachers and leaders were more likely to be dissatisfied
 - **Disagreement that the pay structure allows fair recognition of growing expertise**
 - **Only 1 in 5 are satisfied their longer-term salary prospects compare well with other career paths** - with significantly higher disagreement amongst science, computing, and maths teachers
 - **Only 6% of the profession think teachers' views are valued by policymakers / government** – three-quarters of the 85% who disagree do so strongly
 - A high proportion of **teachers and leaders do not think the teaching profession was valued by society**; just 17% said it was valued while four times as many (69%) disagreed (a third disagreed strongly)
 - **Full-time teachers' average working week is almost 52 hours. Part-time teachers (of all contracted working hours) work a full 37.3 hours on average.**
 - Teachers' and leaders' **reasons for considering leaving** the state sector in the next 12 months:
 - 92% cite **high workload**
 - 76% cite **government initiatives / policy changes**
 - 69% cite **pressure relating to pupil outcomes or inspection**

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-1>

- 57% cited **dissatisfaction with pay** in Spring 2022
 - Lower confidence levels (with accompanying workload implications) for secondary teachers when having to teach outside their specialism – almost a third of teachers are **not confident in at least one subject**
 - **Just 4 in 10 teachers feel their school provides staff with opportunities to actively participate in whole school decisions** – Black teachers and leaders were less likely to strongly agree
 - 86% of teachers and 92% of headteachers experience **stress** in their work
 - Large numbers reporting **negative impact of work on personal wellbeing**
 - Two thirds report insufficient time for their personal life
 - Majority too (56%) saying job negatively affecting mental health
 - The material difference in **anxiety levels** between the profession and the general population
 - The link between lower **Ofsted grades and wellbeing** levels
11. In addition, it should be noted that whilst the sector was dealing with the pandemic, the world of work around it changed substantially. Technological adoption, increasing remote working, different childcare arrangements, reduced frequency commuting, and work-life balance became features of many people's working lives, especially in graduate-level work. Teachers know this, observe this generally, and experience it close to them with friends and family members in other sectors. Though unions and the department have expressed interest in increasing the range and availability of flexible working options in education, a step change is now required to deliver this and contribute to securing the attractiveness of the profession for current and future teachers and leaders.

Teacher Training, Induction, Development and Early Career Framework

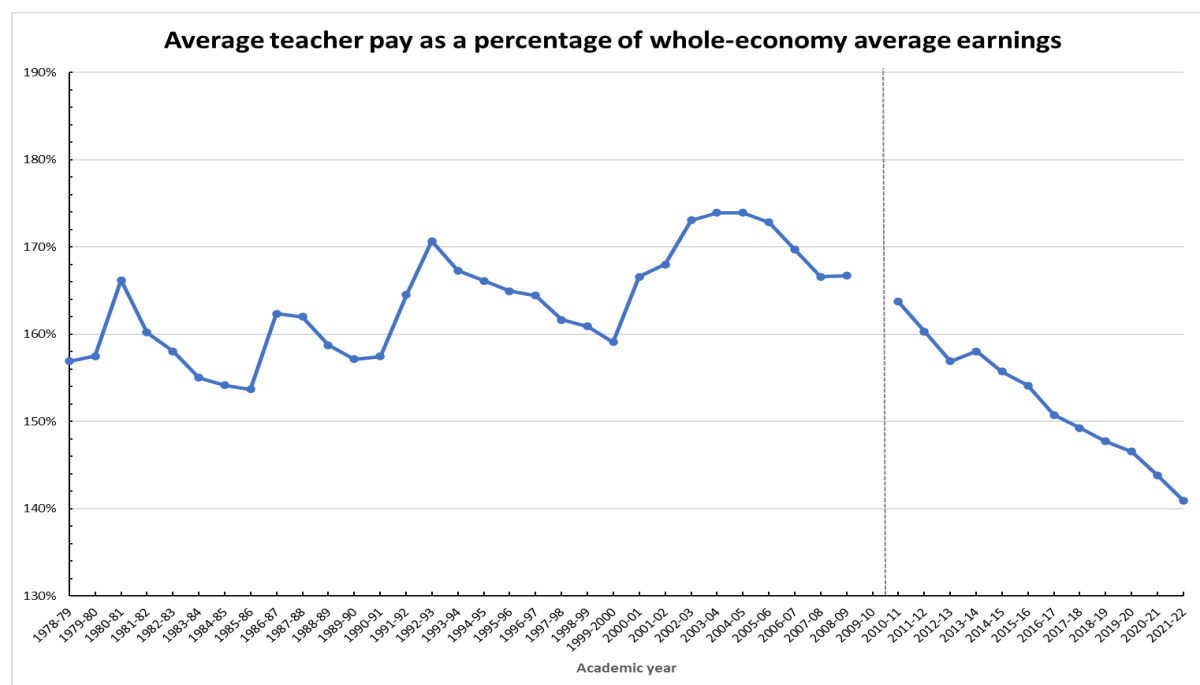
12. There are still numerous routes into teaching that lead to qualified teacher status (QTS) but have subtle or larger differences between them; school-based employment routes, university routes, paid and unpaid routes. It is important to have a range of routes that can suit a wide range of applicants in order not to exclude any potential good candidate but there is some confusion among potential trainees and schools around the choices.
13. Not enough people are being drawn to the teaching profession and schools find it difficult to recruit to vacancies at all levels and across primary and secondary. Often there are not enough applicants for competitive interview. We have heard of physics teacher trainees being offered permanent roles in schools early in the training process, with no interview at all to determine their suitability.
14. Equally important to retention, is professional worth. Research shows that professionals who have a greater sense of agency in their professional lives and feel trusted, have higher job satisfaction and are therefore more likely to stay in their profession for longer. Teachers often feel that they have little or no professional agency in most of their working lives and this is particularly true when it comes to their professional development. The most engaging and successful continued professional development (CPD) is selected by individuals according to their personal and professional aspirations and comes at a suitable point in their career. A formulaic route does not promote a sense of professionalism.

15. The style, content and mode of delivery are also important to good professional development activity. Due to understaffing and budget constraints, time out of school is difficult to get and attending online courses after a long day's work is gruelling and counterproductive. If CPD and professional development are to be properly valued, they must be funded to cover both participation fees and release time.
16. New teacher and mentor members tell us that the Early Careers Framework (ECF) is adding to workload and that schools' capacity to support it is limited. The stated aims of the ECF, of support and retention of early career teachers, are yet to be measured in outcomes but we have concerns that the associated workload for early career teachers (ECTs) and their mentors might have the opposite effect. Mentors tells us that they love helping to develop newer teachers, but the workload associated with the role is far from compensated for by the release time and is largely an unremunerated role.
17. We hear reports that the ECF content is both too basic and repetitive of ITT and, in other places, too heavily academic and detached from the reality of school experience. We also hear from members that some National Professional Qualification (NPQ) modules are lifted straight from the ECF with little building on skills already developed in early career. The NEU would like the Government to take a more critical look at the Core Content Framework (CCF), ECF and NPQs to ensure there is real progression across them, more opportunities to make them bespoke to individuals, and cover more deeply areas of concern, for example, but not limited to, SEND teaching.
18. Proper funding for mentors of trainees and ECTs, for ECT work and other career development must be provided to support this. Reliance on goodwill will not suffice.

Pay

19. There have been major real terms cuts to the value of teacher pay against inflation. The pay freeze for school teachers of 2021 and the significant real terms pay cut of 2022 were the most recent manifestation of Government policy choices to cut the value of teacher pay going back to 2010. School teachers have lost 23% in real terms against RPI inflation since 2010.
20. The pay increase of 5% for most teachers in September 2022 came at a time when RPI inflation was running at 12.6% - so this was not in reality a pay rise for teachers, but a significant pay cut to add to the dismal story of Government policy on teacher pay since 2010. This pay cut came during the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades. High inflation has baked in higher prices, so that even if the rate of inflation eases back from current levels, teachers have experienced a huge pay cut which will not be reversed without the fully funded above-inflation pay rises for which the NEU has called.
21. In addition to the huge damage caused to teacher and school leader living standards, the cuts to the real value of teacher pay have contributed to the recruitment and retention crisis that the Government has allowed to develop.

22. The real terms pay cuts for teachers have been significantly worse than those for other professions, as acknowledged by the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) last year in its 32nd Report.³
23. The latest ONS data⁴ shows pay growth in the private sector continuing to push ahead of pay in the public sector, alongside a strong labour market.
24. The latest High Fliers research⁵ shows a strong graduate labour market, with the biggest-ever annual increase in graduate vacancies in 2022 taking graduate recruitment to its highest level yet. Recruitment targets for the country's leading employers indicate further increases in the number of graduate jobs in 2023. Median graduate starting salaries are set to increase to £33,500 in 2023.
25. NEU analysis⁶ shows that average teacher salaries are at their lowest level compared to average earnings across the economy in over 40 years.



26. The disadvantaged position of teachers in England compared to their counterparts in Scotland and Wales presents another danger to recruitment and retention. Teachers in Scotland and Wales were already ahead of teachers in England in terms of pay levels even before the pay agreements in Scotland and Wales concluded earlier this year, which increased the gap compared to England. Teachers in Scotland and Wales do not face the unfair obstacles to pay progression caused by performance-related pay (PRP).
27. The teacher recruitment and retention crisis will continue without an urgent correction in pay and effective action to cut workload.

Pay Structure

³ STRB 2022, paragraph 3.27, page 31.

⁴ UK labour market: April 2023 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) : <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/uklabourmarketapril2023>

⁵ High Fliers Research, "The Graduate Market in 2023."

⁶ NEU research, as cited in the Financial Times 1 July 2022 <https://www.ft.com/content/c4774d52-e001-41f3-b8b9-b995c60311dd>

28. The dismantling of the national pay structure has resulted in pay arrangements, and imposition of PRP, that are not transparent or fair, undermining recruitment and retention.
29. Serving and potential teachers cannot plan their career development with any confidence because they know that PRP can be used to deny pay progression – including for reasons completely outside teachers’ control, such as the school’s funding position. This damages recruitment and retention.
30. PRP is used to deny teachers the incremental progression they deserve to recognise their acquisition of experience. It adds to workload, damages relations between teachers and undermines the positive appraisal needed to support career development.
31. The removal of pay portability represents a significant obstacle to teacher mobility. Teachers wanting to move schools for career development purposes risk a pay penalty due to the removal of pay portability.
32. Access to Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payments and Special Needs (SEN) allowances varies significantly across the country and between phases of education, instead of being based on clear and fair national criteria with mandatory payments supporting the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.
33. The latest NEU Pay and Progression Survey⁷ is a major piece of evidence, with responses from over 21,000 NEU members. The survey again highlights significant serious equal pay issues including the impact on teachers from Black, Asian, or mixed ethnic backgrounds, women, teachers in Primary schools, older teachers, disabled teachers, and part-time and supply teachers.
34. The survey also highlighted the dissatisfaction of teachers with their pay: 85% of respondents said that their current pay was less than they would expect given their job role, responsibilities, and workload. This is bound to have an adverse impact on recruitment and retention. Indeed, the survey also showed that 78% of respondents had considered leaving teaching due to poor pay levels, the unfairness of PRP or a combination of the two.
35. The NEU written evidence to the STRB sets out in detail the extent of the recruitment and retention problem.⁸
36. Recruitment to primary and the majority of secondary subjects are below target, with recruitment collapsing according to the most recent data. Teacher shortages exist across the curriculum, with a significant proportion of secondary lessons delivered by teachers without a relevant post A Level qualification in the subject concerned.⁹
37. There are already serious retention problems, with a third of teachers leaving within five years. Huge increases in teacher vacancies have been reported recently by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and others, indicating that the post-pandemic

⁷ <https://neu.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/NEU%20-%20Teachers%20Pay%20and%20Progression%20for%20September%202022%20-%20Final.pdf>

⁸ NEU written evidence to the STRB March 2023, pages 33-40 : <https://neu.org.uk/media/26331>

⁹ School workforce in England, Reporting year 2021 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

deterioration in already poor retention rates will be confirmed when data on the position in 2022 are published by the DfE in June.

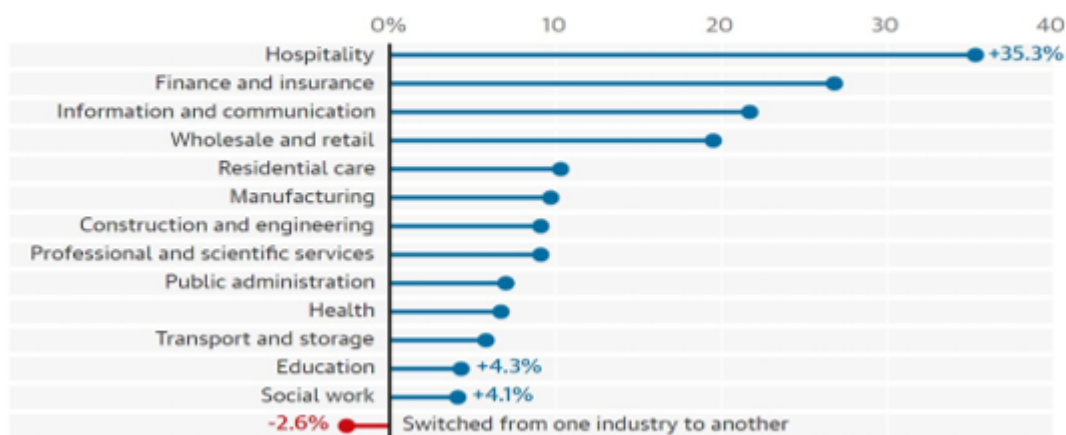
38. Our evidence to the STRB set out why so-called “targeted” approaches, such as higher increases to starting pay but lower increases for experienced teachers, do not tackle recruitment and retention problems which are evident across the school system. Such approaches create additional problems by angering experienced teachers – adding to retention concerns.
39. Variations in the extent of the recruitment and retention problem can always be found in the huge school system – but the Committee should focus on the whole market signal needed to respond to a problem that is system wide. A fundamental correction in teacher pay, alongside urgent improvements in workload, are needed to tackle the serious and embedded recruitment and retention crisis. Government must provide the additional funding necessary to repair teacher pay and conditions.

Pay comparisons with other sectors

40. Research from Public First¹⁰ has shown that those working in education had suffered the second-lowest pay growth over the last decade of the thirteen employment sectors covered in their analysis.

Teachers and social workers have experienced the lowest pay growth over the past decade

Change in UK real median pay in the UK, 2010-11 to 2020-21



Guardian graphic. Source: Public First analysis of Understanding Society data

Demographic make-up

41. There is disparity in progression rates in teaching, with female teachers and those from ethnic minority backgrounds under-represented in leadership roles.¹¹ We also know that year-on-year rates of teachers leaving the English state-funded system are higher among teachers from Black, Asian, and mixed ethnic backgrounds than among white teachers.

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/dec/21/teachers-and-social-workers-suffer-most-from-lost-decade-for-pay-growth-in-uk>

¹¹ DfE, School leadership in England 2010 to 2020: characteristics and trends, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1071794/School_leadership_in_England_2010_to_2020_characteristics_and_trends_-_report.pdf

42. On a national level, there is disparity between teacher and pupil demographics, with women making up around three quarters of the teaching workforce, and almost all ethnic groups other than White British being under-represented among teachers when compared to pupil demographics (albeit some of this reflects generational change).

FE Colleges

43. There is a high rate of staff turnover in colleges. Around 25% of college teachers leave the profession after one year. Three years in, almost half of college teachers have left. Ten years after beginning teaching, less than a quarter of college teachers remain in the profession.
44. The exit rate (i.e., the share of staff leaving the profession each year) among college staff is high relative to other public sector occupations: 16% of college teachers exit the profession each year, compared with 10–11% across most NHS occupations and 7–8% in the civil service.
45. The interrelation between low pay in the FE sector and a crisis in recruitment and retention is reflected by a recent IFS report¹². Not only have employers consistently offered below inflation pay rises but have also offered under average pay across occupational sectors. This has created a tension in teaching skills and performing them in the workplace.
46. Further, the poor levels of pay offer are related to the lack of robust and transparent collective bargaining in the sector. Pay offers are not implemented uniformly or even comprehensively with some colleges failing to raise pay over many years.
47. While the employers and the unions agree that funding is a crucial factor, the lack of credible collective bargaining for the profession has hollowed out permanent staffing structures and resulted in fractionalised staff contracts as the norm, casualisation, and expensive use of agency staff to plug the gaps.

Workload

48. The NEU believes a recruitment signal can be made and that retention can be improved by significantly reducing workload, increasing wellbeing in our schools, and improving work/life balance and control in educators' working lives.
49. Workload, along with pay, is the main driver for teachers and leaders leaving the profession. Workload is impacting morale and leading to a recruitment and retention crisis in the sector as annual targets set by the Government are missed year after year. Analysis after analysis and survey after survey continue to demonstrate that teacher workload remains unsustainably high. The steps that the DfE has taken towards reducing teacher workload are welcomed but have not had the desired effect. In its evidence to the STRB, the DfE recognises the impact of workload on the profession but fails to propose any new measures that will be effective in reducing workload. The DfE's solution to workload consists of "more of the same" which we know doesn't work. Workload continues to rise and remains one of the main reasons for leaving the profession.

¹² <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/what-has-happened-college-teacher-pay-england>

50. The DFE Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders (WLTL) survey (published 2023¹³, fieldwork 2022) confirms that workload is a major factor impacting teacher retention. The survey lays out, for all to see, the failure of Government policy to reduce workload in our schools and confirms that the situation has not improved and is getting worse. The findings of the survey are stark but of no surprise to the NEU. Amongst other things, the survey reports that workload is too high, and teachers are spending too much time focusing on the wrong tasks. There were high levels of dissatisfaction with workload - 72% thought their workload was unacceptable, while 62% disagreed that they had sufficient control over it. Over half of teachers and leaders (57%) thought that their workload was both unacceptable and that they did not have sufficient control over it. A large proportion of classroom teachers and middle leaders reported that they spent too much time on tasks other than teaching, particularly general admin (75% said they spent too much time on this). Furthermore, the survey showed that teachers' working hours remained relatively unchanged between 2019 and 2022, whereas leaders were working longer on average than they did in 2019. For teachers and leaders considering leaving the state sector, high workload was the most reported factor in their considerations, with 92% saying it was an important factor in their decision to leave the profession.
51. If the Government is serious about improving retention within teaching, it must take the necessary action to reduce workload and improve wellbeing. This will involve reforming the current accountability regime, introducing effective measures to reduce the workload associated with data, marking, and planning, increase PPA time and remove or place a limit on the overarching requirement on teachers to "work such additional hours as may be necessary to enable the effective discharge of the teacher's professional duties". Teachers are the only profession where it is deemed acceptable for staff to work excessive hours without some form of compensation or reimbursement. Placing a limit on working time will go a long way to reducing workload. These sensible changes, including reinstating guidance to limit time spent on cover and administrative tasks, will reduce teacher workload to more manageable levels, increase morale, improve teacher professionalism, and aid retention.

Accountability

52. The tragic death of Ruth Perry and her family's campaign for justice have shone a light on the pressures this government's accountability system places on schools and the dedicated staff working in them. The levels of anxiety, sleeplessness, and distrust that NEU's leaders report in anticipation of inspection, or during inspection, is overwhelming and shocking. One NEU headteacher described Ofsted as 'arbitrary, ill-informed and brutalising'. For school leaders, the excessive high stakes and punitive nature of inspection can be intolerable and have a devastating impact on their professional and personal lives. NEU believes accountability is important but must be valid and reliable and not have the personal costs that Ofsted's inspection regime has.
53. Government and Ofsted have had plenty of opportunity to address the stress and workload they add into the system at a national level and have declined to do so. This is off-putting for

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-lives-of-teachers-and-leaders-wave-1>

those considering becoming a teacher and drives away those already in the profession. Children's education doesn't benefit, it suffers. There is little evidence to indicate that Ofsted is a force for improvement, and it does not support schools to meaningfully evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

54. The wellbeing of staff is affected by high workloads that are driven by pressures on schools to be 'Ofsted ready' at all times. Just this week, a new study from University College London and the University of Cardiff, funded by the NEU, shows that teachers who believe an Ofsted inspection is likely in the coming 12 months have a higher work intensity with lower task discretion and are more likely to report always coming home from work exhausted than teachers not in 'the Ofsted window'.
55. Ofsted and related in-school accountability remain key drivers of excessive workload in schools, despite recent interventions by the DfE and Ofsted to tackle the issue. In response to our 2022 State of Education Survey, our members reported that getting ready for an Ofsted inspection and the inspections themselves led to significant increases in staff workload. Three quarters (74 per cent) strongly associate inspection from Ofsted with "a huge amount" of "unnecessary" extra work. These findings reinforce everything that the NEU has been saying about the impact of inspection on our teachers and leaders. Workload derives from uncertainty about the consistency of one inspection team from the next. It is the inspection process itself and the expectations which come with it that drives the increase in workload – primarily from the toxic mix of a high stakes, low quality system of inspection.
56. NEU believes Ofsted should be replaced with a system that is supportive, effective, and fair – and that this is an essential step in addressing the persistent recruitment and retention crisis in schools, colleges, and early years settings.

Funding

57. The additional funding needed to repair the damage to teacher pay, and secure the significant improvements needed to teacher workload and training, cannot be found within the existing inadequate funding envelope.
58. The 2010s was a 'lost decade' for education funding. Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies¹⁴ merely confirms what the education sector already knew. School spending per pupil in England fell by 9% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2019–20. Especially since 2015, billions have been cut from school budgets when the impact of inflation and additional costs imposed on schools are considered.
59. For years, the Government sought to deflect criticism by consistently arguing that more money than ever before was going into the education system. In pure cash terms, this was of course correct. But cost increases were outstripping funding increases, and this led both to cuts and to a crisis in planning and stability.

¹⁴ '2020 Annual report on education spending in England', Institute for Fiscal Studies

60. The NEU believes the initial boost from the 2019 Spending Round was a good start but was not sufficient to restore per pupil funding to 2015-16 levels and pay for the increase in school costs. It could only be seen as the first instalment of a long-term plan – and a long-term plan is needed to address the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention. The Government is now boasting that by 2024-2025 it will have restored real-terms education funding to 2009-2010 levels. It is a sign of how far expectations in the education sector have fallen that the Government thinks 15 years' stagnation is worthy of praise.
61. Full funding of the pay rises, and workload reductions needed is in the national interest – education is a key driver of economic growth. Teacher shortages are therefore damaging our country's economy and letting down the young people on whose skills and potential our country's future rests.

SEND

62. The well documented crisis in recruitment and retention of staff has a disproportionate impact on SEND students as many of them rely on routine and regular well-understood support to meet their needs.
63. When SEND students experience a revolving door of supply teachers in their lessons there can be a detrimental effect on their anxiety levels, mood and behaviour regulation, access to reasonable adjustments, which are necessary for them to access learning, and in many cases attendance levels.
64. The DfE SEND and AP Improvement Plan calls for improved 'Ordinarily Available Provision' in the classroom but offers no solutions to the recruitment and retention crisis which is currently one of the barriers to a more inclusive system. The Improvement Plan suggests nothing that would enhance teacher training and CPD on SEND support and fails to appreciate the important role that teaching assistants and support staff play.
65. The Education Select Committee must consider the issues causing a recruitment and retention crisis amongst support staff as well as teachers alongside the SEND and AP proposals. They are integrally related and essential to any future success in creating a more inclusive education system.
66. NEU is currently undertaking in-depth analysis of its recent *State of Education* survey. This demonstrated strong member feeling about the recruitment and retention of teachers and support staff and the effect of this on SEND students. We will be happy to share this analysis with the committee when ready.

April 2023