

Written evidence submitted by AULRE, Culham St Gabriel's Trust, RE Council of England and Wales (REC), RE Today Services, The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)

Recruitment and Retention inquiry. Executive Summary

This response from the RE Policy Unit which is a strategic partnership between NATRE: The National Association of Teachers of RE, AULRE: The Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education, REC: The Religious Education of England and Wales and RE Today Services with support from the Culham St Gabriel's Trust. We offer evidence to the inquiry in relation to the recruitment and retention of teachers of RE, acknowledging that many of the issues raised will be similar for some other subjects.

Factors leading to difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified teachers:

1. Unintended consequences of Government curriculum policies and use of performance measures
2. Removal of short course GCSE RS from performance tables
3. Decline in recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies Degrees
4. Lack of parity for subjects in relation to a training bursary
5. Demand far exceeding supply, especially in regions where HEI courses have closed

Impact on pupils

1. Poorer quality provision when teachers who teach RE as an additional subject have not been trained in line with the Teacher Standards.
2. Loss of pupils' statutory entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes RE on a par with subjects of the National Curriculum
3. These factors disproportionately affect disadvantaged pupils who the evidence shows often have the most to gain from RE
4. Pupils in less diverse areas appear to be less likely to have the opportunity to study GCSE RS

What action should the department take to address challenges

1. Address regional variations including the availability of suitable courses, the demand for teachers and where HEI courses have not been replaced by school led ITT
2. Consider the target audience for recruitment campaigns which are often different for different subjects, including career changers, mature entrants etc
3. Work more closely with subject associations in recruitment campaigns and in the case of RE, faith and belief organisations, perhaps through the RE Council
4. Address inequalities in relation to the support of ECTs – so support Hubs for all, not just English, Maths, MFL, Computing etc.

Impact of Bursaries and Scholarships

1. The withdrawal of bursaries for RE deters people who want to train in RE who cannot afford the costs, especially mature entrants given there are so few salaried routes available for RE
2. Bursaries for others subjects draw graduates outside these specialisms, who might previously have applied for RE, towards bursary subjects.

Current system

1. Closer monitoring of ECT programmes needs to ensure the subject specific elements of the teacher standard are delivered to a high standard.
2. The diversity of training routes should be increased with more part time and more salaried/ apprenticeship routes supported

3. Beyond the two ECT years, teachers need ongoing professional learning that is subject specific.

Impact of the Early Career Framework

1. Teachers and leaders have given negative feedback about the ECF's impact on curriculum and subject knowledge.
2. A NATRE Flash survey showed ECT concerns that ECF could limit their flexibility in providing high-quality training for trainee teachers. Only 8% of current secondary ECTs described the subject specific aspects of the programme to be good. 2/3 of respondents described the programme as poor or very poor.
3. The implementation of the ECF needs to be closely monitored to ensure it is achieving its intended aims.
4. ECF may harm RE trainee teachers due to curriculum misalignment, limited professional development, and inadequate support from DfE for the teaching workforce.

Benefits and Disadvantages of the English System – International Comparisons

1. The English ITT system is highly regarded for producing well-trained teachers who are in high demand internationally.
2. The English system emphasizes subject knowledge, pedagogy, practical experience, and evidence-based practices with strong support for trainees.
3. Such strengths are important for RE education as they ensure effective delivery of lessons that align with national guidelines and frameworks.
4. Disadvantages in English teacher training include a shortage of school places, insufficient support, and limited focus on developing broader skills.

Comparing Challenges in Teacher Recruitment and Retention with Other Professions and Sectors: Lessons to Be Learned

1. Challenges faced by teacher recruitment, training, and retention, include high workload and stress levels, limited career development, and low pay.
2. The lack of diversity in the profession and limited public awareness of teaching as a desirable career choice are also areas of concern.
3. Opportunities to learn from other professions and sectors to address these challenges, include, flexible working arrangements, ongoing professional development, clear career pathways, collaborative working, and fair pay.

Trainees from Different Demographic Backgrounds

1. Recruiting, training, and retaining teachers from diverse backgrounds face significant challenges.
2. Barriers to underrepresented groups in teacher recruitment include limited awareness, lack of diversity, and bias/discrimination.
3. Significant training challenges include limited cultural sensitivity or awareness among ITT providers, opportunities for practical experience, and diverse representation in teaching materials.
4. Retention challenges include bias, limited career opportunities, lack of support for personal or cultural needs, high workload, and stress levels.

Demographic makeup of the teaching workforce versus pupils.

1. The teaching workforce in England does not reflect the diversity of the communities it serves, with only 13.8% of teachers in state-funded schools coming from a minority ethnic background compared to 33.1% of pupils.
2. Teachers are more likely to come from higher socio-economic groups.
3. A diverse teaching workforce in RE lessons can provide a range of perspectives, cultural sensitivity, positive role models, and break down stereotypes.

Text for specific questions

The current situation regarding teacher recruitment and retention

1. What are the main factors leading to difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified teachers?

Government curriculum policies and use of performance measures

Since 2010, the unintended consequences of government policy is a decline in the status of RE e.g. omission of Religious Studies from the Humanities basket of the English Baccalaureate and consequential downgrading of the value of GCSE in performance measures including progress 8. The then Secretary of State for education, Michael Gove MP admitted to assuming that the subject's statutory place in the curriculum would protect it. It did not.

Removal of short course GCSE from performance tables

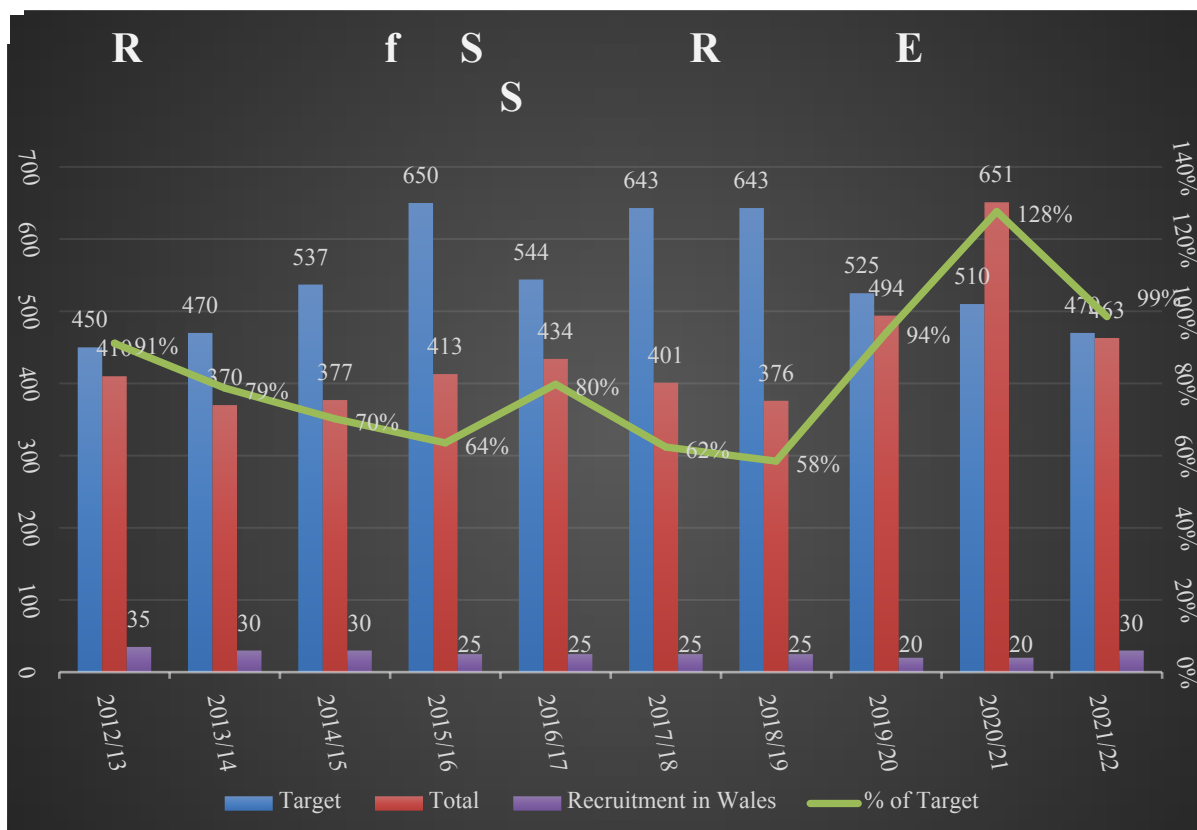
The removal of GCSE RS Short Course from the list of qualifications that can contribute to performance measures means the entries have fallen from 254,698 in 2010 to 18,257 in 2022. So, a staggering **236,441 fewer pupils** in England now leave school with an accredited qualification in Religious Studies and many of those will not have studied the subject past key stage 3. More than 500 schools (school workforce data) report offering zero hours of RE in Year 11 and thousands of others offer only a token amount of RE as part of a PSHE or Life programme.

Decline in recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies Degrees

This lack of exposure to Religious Education for so many pupils, has obviously had an impact on recruitment to Theology and Religious Studies degree courses. At last count, there were only 1400 graduates from Theology and Religious Studies of whom around 10% follow a career in an education related subject. So with a pool of around 140 graduates, Religious Education needs to recruit from other graduate subjects including Philosophy, Social Sciences, Law and Education Studies for example. However, by failing to offer bursaries for RE trainees, graduates are deterred from training for RE because of the financial disincentives.

Lack of parity for subjects in relation to a training bursary

The RE community has campaigned for many years for a bursary. Even when one was offered, it was of a lower value to that for other subjects. When our campaigning drew attention to a long history of under recruitment to the target of around 650 trainees, the target was cut. Except for the year at the start of the pandemic, when most subjects recruited above expectations, the DfE has failed to meet its target for a decade.



Demand far exceeding supply

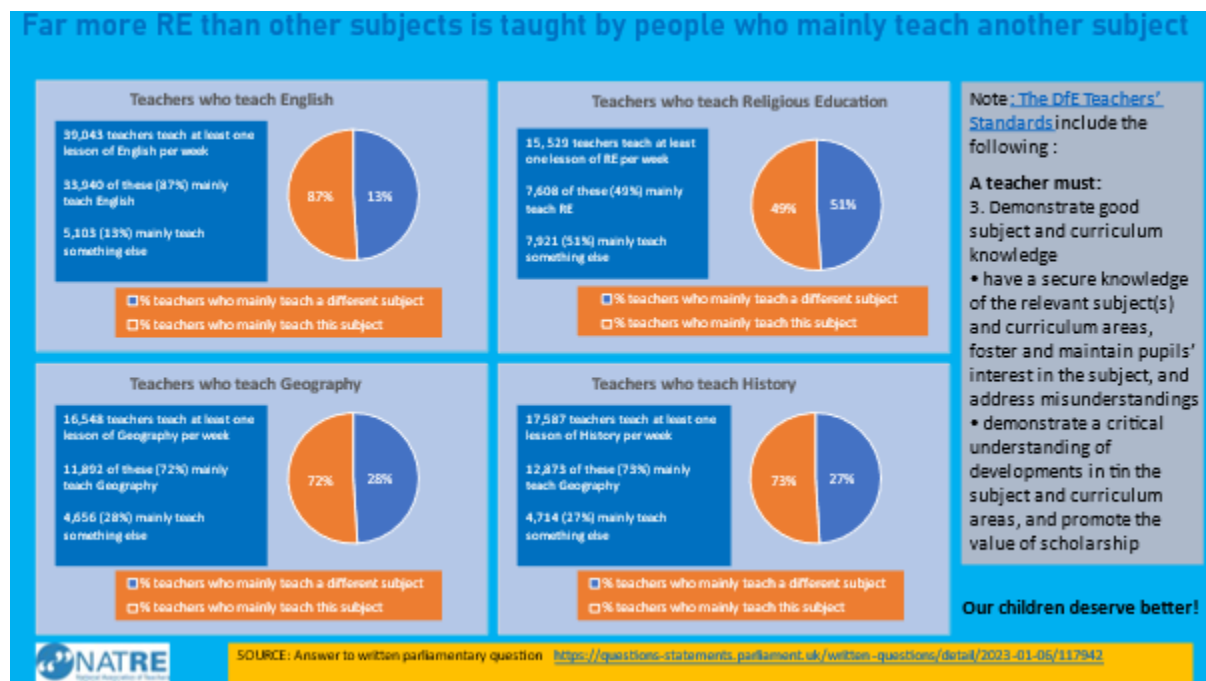
A count of advertised posts in May 2021 after the final resignation date for teachers in service, was over 100. Prof John Howson of TeachVac calculated that at this point in the school year, all but a handful of that year’s trainees, who were seeking employment, had secured a post. The implications of this is that those 100 posts would have remained unfilled. In the last week of March 2022, almost 200 RE posts were advertised. See the regional distributions below, remembering that this is just one week of advertisements. Even though there are fewer trainees available in 2022/23, we can use the most recent published data to show how some regions are worse affected than others.

Row Labels	Advertisements in the region in the last week of March 2023	Trainees available 2021/22
East	7	28
East Midlands	17	18
London	39	137
North East	4	14
North West	25	84
South East	59	60
South West	11	41
West Midlands	20	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	14	39

2. Which subjects are most affected?

Religious education is listed as one of the subjects most likely to significantly under recruit this year by [NFER](#). In January 2023, according to the UCAS monthly data, applications for all subjects were down by 22% on the previous year and down by 32% for religious education.

Despite the government quoting high numbers of ‘teachers of RE’ in responses to questions by concerned MPs from across the political spectrum, these figures for the number of teachers of RE or even of the number of full time equivalent posts hides a vital fact. The DfE school workforce data counts a teacher of RE if they teach just one lesson of the subject per week. In this case, the total workforce is made up of far more teachers with other specialisms than most other subjects. The [NFER report of 2022](#) includes information about the number of non-specialists teaching at least ‘some lessons’ subjects like Maths (45%) Physics 39% and MFL (17%) but this year, the [minister for schools](#) admitted that according to the school workforce census, 51% of those teaching RE, spend most of their time teaching a completely different subject. This means that unlike the subjects above, where ‘some’ lessons are taught by non-specialists, in the case of religious education, MOST lessons are taught not just by non-specialists, who might have developed expertise in the subject through experience or further training, but by people who mainly teach another subject and might have a few lessons free on their timetable.

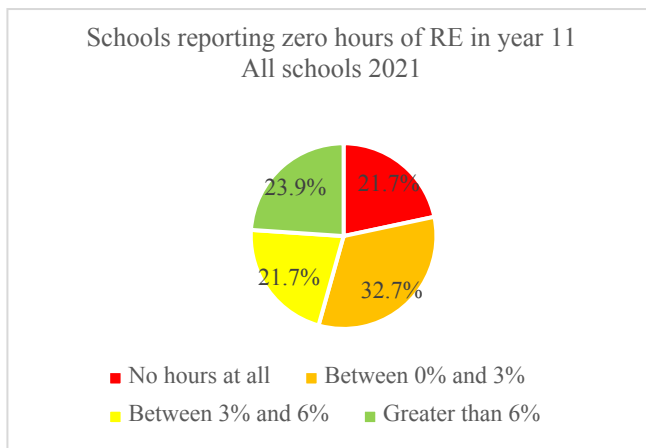


School leaders then face an impossible choice. If they continue with their planned curriculum, they know that at best, the standard of delivery will not be as high as if a specialist or trained teacher were leading the lesson, they know that a teacher who mainly teaches another subject would be much less likely to be able to answer pupils' questions but at worst, they may provide inaccurate or even cause offence to pupils with religious or non-religious worldviews. [A report from members of the Hindu community](#) following a public

survey, provides a useful source for evidencing this issue with accounts of the experiences of parents from a specific faith backgrounds.

Consequently, there has been a rapid increase in the number of schools that have removed discrete lessons of RE from their curriculum, instead offering much less ambitious programmes that combine PSHE, Citizenship and aspects of RE in a programme that does a disservice to all these subjects. A recent Ofsted school inspection report says this about the curriculum in one such school: *“Some curriculum plans are not ambitious enough. This means that pupils do not develop rich knowledge in some subjects. This is particularly the*

case in religious education, which is delivered through ‘life’ lessons. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans are ambitious in all subjects, particularly religious education”.



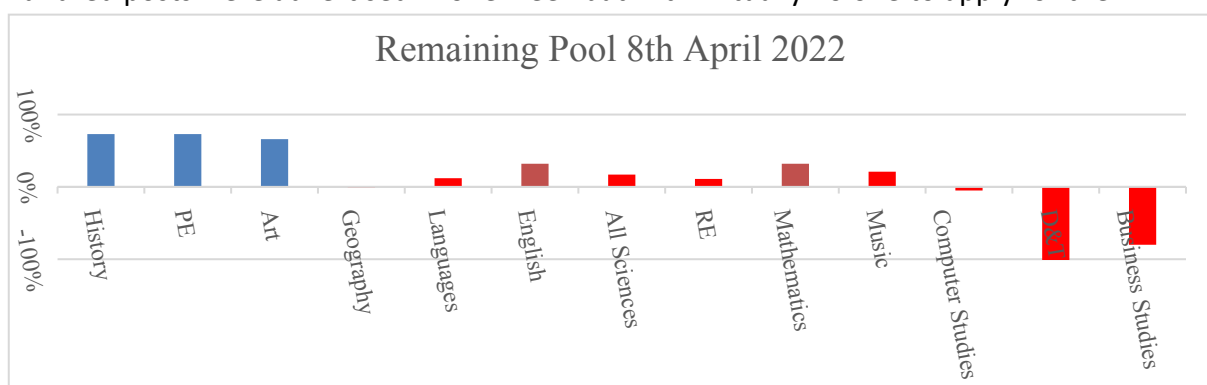
In other schools, the subject has disappeared from the taught curriculum entirely, especially in years 10 and 11 (14-16 year olds). This chart was constructed from the DfE school workforce census:

3. How does the situation differ across the country and across different types of schools and colleges?

There appears to be a correlation between areas where there is a poor supply of specialist teacher training, particularly at higher education institutions and areas with shortages of RE teachers. The availability of school-led training places has not kept pace with the closure of HEI programmes where the number of suitable applicants has meant that group sizes are unviable. In the last round, around 75% of religious education teachers were trained in HEI institutions, however, there were significant variations between regions.

The table below provides an indication of the situation this year. Although we do not yet have the figures for the 2022-23 training year, the previous year’s figures provide an indication of the likely pattern. However, fewer RE teachers are being trained in 2022-23 than 2021-22 so the situation is likely to be worse. It is clear that the situation in the South East and the East Midlands is particularly difficult with almost as many posts advertised as there will be new teachers in just one single week.

In April 2022, Prof John Howson of TeachVac calculated that by the beginning of April, almost all that year’s recruits in RE and several other subjects, who were seeking a post, had secured one. Once the serving teacher resignation deadline was passed in May, over a hundred posts were advertised in one week but with virtually no one to apply for them.



Supply failing to meet demand

Row Labels	Number of advertised RE posts in the region in the first week of March 2023	Trainees available 2021/22 from that religion
East	7	28
East Midlands	17	18
London	39	137
North East	4	14
North West	25	84
South East	59	60
South West	11	41
West Midlands	20	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	14	39
Grand Total	196	475

4. What impact does this have on pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND?

Ofsted subject reports over recent years has described the impact of the use of non-specialists to teach RE on the quality of provision. However, the DfE does not appear to include this factor in the teacher supply model.

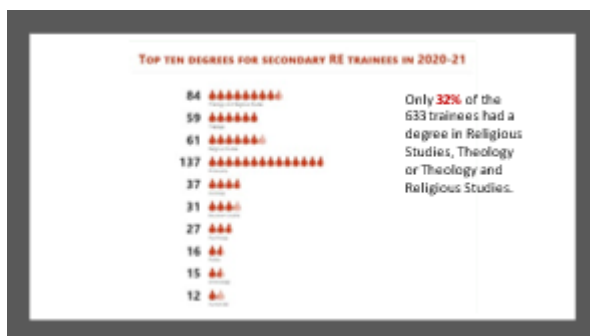
There is [plentiful evidence](#) that Religious education/studies at examination level, is a subject with one of the smallest participation and attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, in the curriculum. However, the lack of supply of specialist teachers is leading to fewer schools offering the subject at GCSE or A level. The deadlines of this research are as follows:

- a) Disadvantaged pupils less likely to be entered for GCSE Religious Studies than their peers
- b) Disadvantaged pupils twice as likely as their peers to choose RS at A level
- c) Attainment gap for A level RS at A*-E was the third smallest of all subjects
- d) Disadvantage gap for GCSE RS, narrowed with the introduction of 'reformed' specifications
- e) Religious Studies has a below average disadvantage and participation gap
- f) There is a close correlation between [areas with lower proportions](#) of people who identify on the census as belonging to a religion and lower levels of entry for GCSE RS. For example, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 81% of year 11 pupils are entered for a GCSE RS, but in Somerset and Wakefield

5. What action should the Department take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment and retention?

- A) The DfE needs to take more account of the regional variations in supply and demand that affect recruitment in different subjects. In areas where Universities no longer train teachers, this has a direct impact on recruitment.
 - B) Similarly, the age-profile of new recruits, varies between subjects and more mature students are less likely to be able to train when there is no bursary or salaried route or to travel large distances to find a provider offering such a programme.
 - C) The TV and other advertisement rarely features images of classrooms other than science laboratories, which is less likely to attract a person considering subjects like Religious education, Art or Music for example. Careful attention needs to be paid to the target audience for recruitment campaigns in subjects. E.g. those working in Youth Work, particularly faith and belief-based activity, might be attracted by working through their national groups.
 - D) New recruits need to know that they will be well supported throughout their training and early careers, especially in areas such as Religious education where subject knowledge is enormous and potentially contentious. Subjects should not be treated unequally, so for example, Mathematics, Languages and Science teachers can access support through subject Hubs. Religious education had to seek charitable trust funding to pilot regional hubs for teachers. [The Regional RE Hubs team is ready to go! \(natre.org.uk\)](http://natre.org.uk)
6. What has been the impact of the new bursaries and scholarships announced in October?

As the number of graduates in Theology and Religious Studies is insufficient to meet demand for RE trainee teachers, the subject needs to recruit from other subjects such as Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Education Studies and so on. However, when RE training does not attract a bursary or a scholarship, trainees are telling us that they need to train in a bursary subject for financial reasons, even when the subject they want to teach is RE.



- E) How well does the current teacher training framework work to prepare new teachers and how could it be improved?

NATRE – The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education has been running a programme called New2RE for seven years. This was grant funded. The scheme was introduced because teachers told us that they had insufficient subject knowledge to feel confident in the classroom and the programme aims to keep those new teachers in the profession by focussing on developing subject knowledge. In these early years of the ECF, the vast majority of the ECT1s and ECT2s have told us that they have had no subject specific sessions in their school-based programme and there very much appreciate the monthly subject knowledge webinars, offered through the New2RE programme which is part of the

NATRE ECT membership. The programme could be improved by ensuring that all the teacher standards are met, including standard 3:

“3. Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge

- *have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils’ interest in the subject, and address misunderstandings*
- *demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas, and promote the value of scholarship”*

In addition, too many RE ECTs do not have a subject expert as a mentor. This is unsatisfactory and must be a guaranteed part of the ECT programme.

7. What has been the impact of the Early Career Framework implemented in September 2021?

The Early Career Framework (ECF) was implemented in England in September 2021, so it is still relatively new, and its impact is yet to be fully assessed. Initial reports, however, suggest that has been negatively received by teachers and senior leaders in relation to curriculum and subject knowledge. A flash survey conducted by NATRE to RE ECT’s provides evidence that the current cohort of secondary early career teachers appears dissatisfied with the curriculum and subject knowledge aspect of the programme. **Almost two-thirds** of respondents rated this their programme as either **poor or very poor**. In contrast, only 1 in 10 rated it as good.



Thread



NATRE
@NATREupdate



If you are a SECONDARY early career teacher (ECT) – in your first 2 years in the profession, please answer this question: How would you rate your ECT programme to date in relation to standard 3 (bit.ly/43v7c75) – Demonstrate good curriculum and subject knowledge FOR RE?

Very poor	28%
Poor	37%
Acceptable	25%
Good	10%

60 respondents – survey conducted on Twitter in one week in April 2023

Some school led ITT providers have also raised concerns that the ECF may place additional pressure on them to provide high-quality training for trainee teachers, particularly considering the ongoing teacher recruitment crisis. There are also concerns that the ECF may lead to a more prescriptive approach to ITT, which could limit the flexibility of providers to tailor their training programmes to the needs of individual trainee teachers. While there

are some concerns about the impact of the ECF on ITT, many ITT providers are supportive of the framework and believe that it has the potential to improve the quality of training provided to trainee teachers and the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. It will be important to continue to monitor the implementation of the ECF and gather feedback from ITT providers and other stakeholders to ensure that it is achieving its intended aims.

ECF may impact RE trainee teachers, specifically, in several ways. For example:

- Curriculum misalignment: The lack of emphasis on ensuring that teachers have a secure understanding of the curriculum and the pedagogical approaches required to deliver it effectively in the ECF may hinder the preparation of RE trainee teachers to deliver high-quality RE lessons that align with the national curriculum and other relevant guidelines and frameworks.
- Professional stagnation: The ECF's limited range of professional development opportunities for ECTs may hinder the development of RE ECTs' subject-specific knowledge and expertise as they progress in their teaching career.
- Recruitment and retention challenges: The DfE's inadequate support for the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers in the profession, particularly in shortage subjects such as RE, may negatively impact the overall quality and sustainability of the teaching workforce, which could harm RE ECTs as well.

8. Are there ways in which teacher training could be improved to address the challenges in recruitment and retention?

Whilst there is some diversity in the system it is still focused largely on full-time, unsalaried routes particularly for religious education. The system would benefit from a larger number of part-time and/or apprenticeship routes into teaching. In addition, options to enable beginner teachers to balance teaching alongside childcare and other caring responsibilities should be considered. The lack of flexibility in the education profession was highlighted at a recent roundtable hosted by The Maternity Paternity Project.

<https://www.mtpt.org.uk/research>

In terms of retention, teachers in all stages of their career need quality on-going professional learning which is subject specific. This was highlighted in the Ofsted Research Review for Religious Education (2021). A professional learning entitlement should be introduced in England as identified by this report

<https://cms.wellcome.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/wellcome-cpd-challenge-pilot-delivery-report.pdf> which includes subject specific professional learning.

Being part of a subject community can support teachers, particularly those who may be the only subject specialist for religious education in their school. The work of subject associations should therefore be enhanced through government funding.

<https://www.subjectassociations.org.uk/>

In addition, reports from subject hubs (such as those for Maths

https://www.ncetm.org.uk/media/ivjdmdao/maths_hubs_annual_report_2022.pdf)

provide evidence that funding by the DfE of professional development helps to engage teachers with research, supports early career teachers effectively and equips teachers at all stages of their careers to become more effective. Currently an RE Hubs programme

(<https://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/the-regional-re-hubs-team-is-ready-to-go/>) is

grant funded by charitable foundations, with its sustainability fragile unless DfE funding is forthcoming.

9. How does teacher training in England compare internationally, and what are the benefits and disadvantages of the English system?

The ITT English system is known for producing excellent teachers who are in high demand internationally. According to UK NARIC's International Comparisons database, no other country has a teacher training system similar enough to England's to allow their teachers to apply directly for QTS without additional training. The countries that came closest to meeting the minimum thresholds of the English ITT system were ranked, and Singapore ranked the highest overall, followed by Hong Kong and South Africa.

The strengths of English approach to teacher training include trainees observing other teachers analytically, spending at least 60% of their placement teaching full lessons with responsibility for lesson planning, using differentiated tasks with clear learning outcomes and potential barriers to learning, monitoring learners' progress to inform future teaching, and self-evaluating and responding to feedback for personal development. The following bullet points are also highlighted as comparable benefits:

- A focus on developing subject knowledge and pedagogical understanding, which helps trainee teachers to become effective teachers in the classroom.
- The use of a range of assessment methods to ensure that trainee teachers are meeting the required standards.
- The use of evidence-based practices and research to inform the design and delivery of ITT programmes.
- A high level of support and guidance provided to trainee teachers, with access to mentors and experienced teachers.
- Strong links between ITT providers and schools, with many ITT programmes providing opportunities for trainee teachers to gain practical experience in the classroom.

Such strengths are important to RE as they ensure that RE lessons are delivered effectively and that pupils receive a high-quality education that prepares them for life in a diverse and multicultural society. For the following reasons:

- Expertise: Teachers are better equipped to teach the nuances and complexities of religious and belief systems, as well as to address any challenging questions or issues that may arise in the classroom.
- Curriculum alignment: Teachers ensure that RE lessons align with the national curriculum and other relevant guidelines and frameworks, helping to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education that is consistent with national expectations.
- Professional development: Teachers continue to develop their expertise through ongoing professional development, ensuring that they stay up-to-date with the latest research, approaches, and best practices in RE education.
- Accountability: Teachers can be held accountable for the quality of their teaching, as well as for ensuring that pupils achieve the expected learning outcomes in RE lessons.

The English ITT system has some drawbacks, including a shortage of school places for trainee teachers, which limits practical experience, and a recruitment crisis that puts pressure on ITT providers to produce high-quality teachers quickly. Inadequate mentoring and support for trainee teachers, high costs for some without financial support, and a lack of focus on developing wider skills, such as leadership and communication, are also concerns. This can limit innovation and experimentation in ITT programs and potentially lead to a lack of diversity in the teaching workforce.

10. How do challenges in teacher recruitment, training and retention compare to those being faced in other professions/ sectors of the economy, and is there anything that can be learned from other professions/ sectors of the economy?

Teacher recruitment, training, and retention face challenges unique to the profession, such as high levels of responsibility and emotional demands. This can lead to high workload and stress levels, limited career development, low pay, and insufficient support for employee well-being and mental health. There is also a lack of diversity in the profession and limited public awareness of teaching as a desirable career choice.

There are several lessons that can be learned from other professions and sectors of the economy to address the challenges faced by the teaching profession. Here are a few examples:

- Flexible working: Many professions and sectors have introduced more flexible working arrangements to help retain staff and support work-life balance. This could be something that could be explored in the teaching profession, for example by allowing more part-time working or job-sharing arrangements.
- Professional development: Many professions and sectors invest in ongoing professional development for their staff, which can help to retain staff and improve the quality of their work. In the teaching profession, there is already a focus on ongoing professional development, but there may be opportunities to learn from other sectors and explore new approaches to training and development.
- Career progression: Many professions and sectors offer clear pathways for career progression, which can help to retain staff and provide them with a sense of purpose and direction. In the teaching profession, there may be opportunities to explore new career pathways or to provide more support for teachers who want to move into leadership roles.
- Collaborative working: Many professions and sectors encourage collaborative working and knowledge sharing, which can help to improve the quality of work and support staff development. In the teaching profession, there may be opportunities to encourage more collaboration between schools and to share best practices more widely.
- Fair pay: Many professions and sectors struggle with low pay and financial insecurity, which can make it difficult to recruit and retain staff. In the teaching profession, there may be opportunities to explore new approaches to pay and reward that better reflect the value of the work that teachers do.

11. What particular challenges exist in teacher recruitment, training and retention for teachers from different demographic backgrounds?

There are several challenges that exist in RE teacher recruitment, training, and retention for teachers from different demographic backgrounds. Focusing on these three areas, here are some examples:

Recruitment:

- Limited awareness and understanding of the teaching profession among certain demographic groups, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Perceived lack of diversity within the teaching profession, which can deter candidates from underrepresented groups.
- Bias or discrimination during the recruitment process, particularly in relation to age, gender, race, or disability.

Training:

- Lack of cultural sensitivity or awareness among ITT providers, which can create barriers for trainees from diverse backgrounds.
- Limited opportunities for practical experience in schools that serve diverse communities, leading to limited exposure to different teaching contexts and challenges.
- Limited representation of diverse teachers in teaching materials, which can limit trainees' exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences.

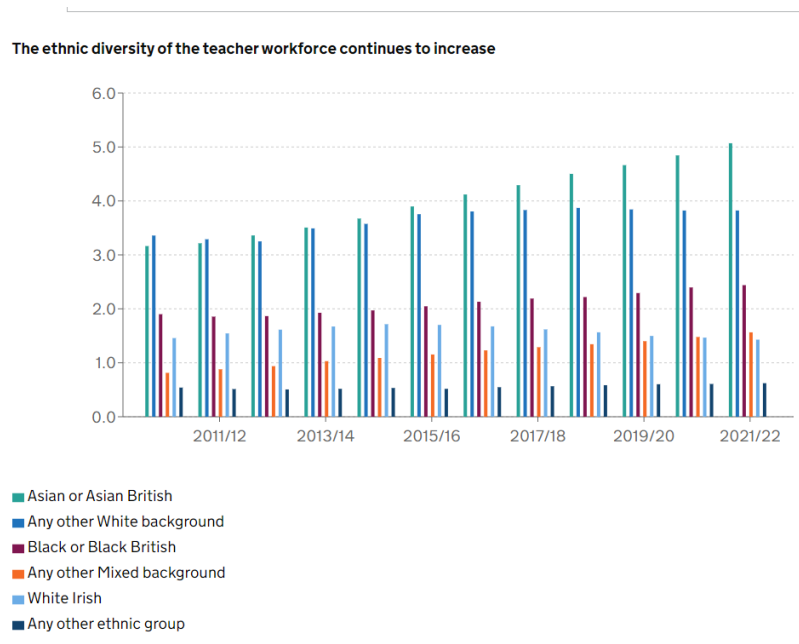
Retention:

- Bias or discrimination in the workplace, particularly in relation to age, gender, race, or disability, which can create a hostile work environment. Limited opportunities for career progression or development, particularly for teachers from underrepresented groups. Lack of support for teachers' personal or cultural needs, leading to feelings of isolation or disengagement. High workload and stress levels, which can disproportionately affect teachers from underrepresented groups who may face additional responsibilities outside of work.

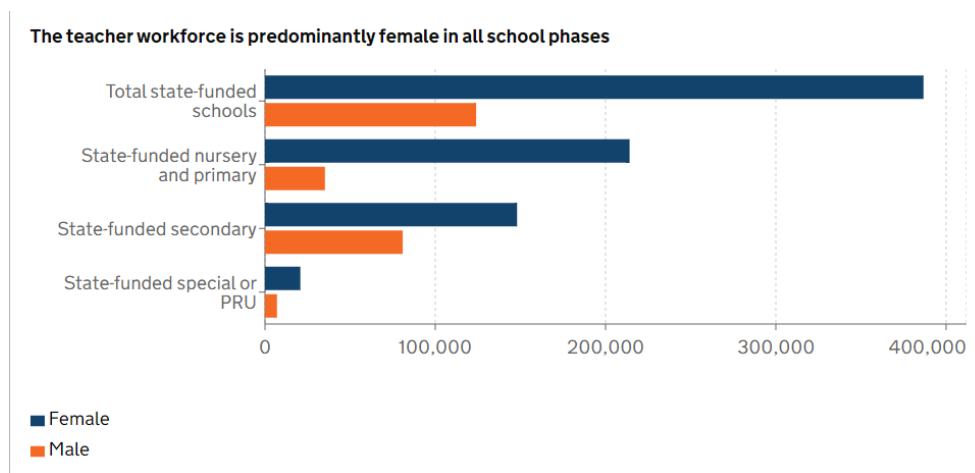
It is important to recognize that different demographic groups may face unique challenges in teacher recruitment, training, and retention, and increase efforts to improve diversity and representation within the teaching profession must take these factors into account.

12. How well does the demographic makeup of the teaching workforce reflect that of the pupils they teach?

According to the Department for Education, in 2021, 13.8% of teachers in state-funded schools in England were from a minority ethnic background, compared to 33.1% of pupils who were classified as being of minority ethnic origin.



This represents a significant disparity in representation. In terms of gender, the teaching profession in England is dominated by women, with 74% of teachers being female. However, this is somewhat reflective of the gender makeup of pupils, with 48.2% of pupils in state-funded schools being male.



Research shows that teachers are more likely to come from higher socio-economic groups, creating disparities in representation. Improving diversity and representation within the teaching profession is crucial for reflecting the diverse communities it serves and improving educational outcomes for all pupils, particularly in terms of race/ethnicity.

This is particularly pertinent for in RE lessons for several reasons:

- **Representation:** A diverse teaching workforce can help to ensure that a range of perspectives and experiences are reflected in RE lessons, allowing pupils to engage with and learn from different worldviews and ways of life.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Teachers from diverse backgrounds may be better equipped to navigate and understand the cultural nuances of different religious and belief

systems, enabling them to create a more inclusive and respectful learning environment for all pupils.

- Role models: A diverse teaching workforce can provide positive role models for pupils from a range of backgrounds, helping to inspire and motivate them to succeed and pursue their own educational and career goals.
- Breaking down stereotypes: By exposing pupils to a diverse range of teachers from different backgrounds, RE lessons can challenge stereotypes and biases that may exist in the wider community, helping to promote greater understanding and empathy between different groups.

April 2023