
The staff know to clearly brief each other when sharing roles or covering lessons. We also deliver all of our career progression development needs and ask all staff to be in school so they can also carry out any cross over observations briefings while we're all together.

Overall we've been able to save money on staffing by matching part time teachers within our larger departments @ some cases we have been able to accommodate flexible working within our smaller departments but it very much depends if another teacher with the right skills is happy to teach that subject and who else we have on the staff book at the time. @ can be tricky to have a flexible working policy that you can stick to as things can always change in school.

The only downside we've had with flexible working has been when splitting subject classes hasn't worked well. For example if you've got two math teachers with different teaching styles teaching the same class that can be slightly disruptive. In these occasions we've been able to work things out with the teachers making sure the pupils and their parents are happy with the outcome.

For more schools to adopt flexible working especially smaller schools like ours and those serving areas of particular disadvantage that could find it challenging to do so can be key. Timetabling alone can be a real challenge so any support in adapting teaching timetables to suit flexible roles could really make a difference. Schools leaders with pre existing mindsets on flexible working need to see how it's logistically possible and beneficial for everyone.

@ you want to retain brilliant teachers you have to be flexible. We can't keep losing staff to more flexible professions. We need to make sure teaching is a work life friendly occupation going forward. " believe me if you want to make it work for your school you can

Teach First welcomes DfE's efforts to increase the uptake of flexible working in schools, and we look forward to seeing the evaluation of the flexible working ambassador school scheme which ran until the end of 2022. As the next iteration of the scheme is rolled out, it is important to consider what has worked for schools participating so far and what schools are most commonly requesting, such as tools to support timetabling.

The rollout of the second iteration of the DfE's programme to promote flexible working must give schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas where the greatest benefits would be seen, the guidance and resources they need. This should include a guide to timetabling software, best practice models for job sharing, FAQs with advice from school leaders who are making it work. Schools in disadvantaged areas should have opportunity to receive customised advice from specialist organisations and schools experienced in supporting flexible working.

Pay

The current recruitment market is highly competitive and salaries in many sectors have risen significantly driven by inflation and skills shortages. The most recent analysis of the graduate market carried out by High Fliers Research, looking into the conditions for graduate employees at over 70 top employers in the UK, showed that their average starting salary has reached £33,500, a significant increase after a long period from 2015 to 2021 where it stayed at £30,000.¹⁶

Disadvantaged young people deserve excellent teachers to help them achieve their potential. To get there, people with high potential need be incentivised to choose careers in teaching and to work in the communities where they're most needed. For a number of years we called for an increase of teacher starting salaries to £30,000 so that teaching could be as attractive as other careers. We welcomed the government's commitment to make this increase, whilst emphasising that it must be fully funded.

To continue attracting the best and brightest to a career in teaching, and for it to remain a viable and attractive career over time, teacher pay must also stay competitive at later stages. NFER found that median teacher pay reduced by 12% in real terms from 2010/11 to 2021/22 compared to a 5% real terms increase in the overall labour market.¹⁷ If teachers' salaries cannot compete with other employers, we will continue to face real challenges in recruitment and retention.

Crucially, teacher pay increases need to be fully funded to avoid any adverse impact on pupils. We recently heard from one teacher that she was happy to see her salary increase, allowing her to keep up with bills, but found it crushing to see cuts being made to provision in her school, including their ability to buy new books. No school should be in this position.

The Government should create a fully funded plan to increase teacher salaries in real terms across the pay scale to make sure teaching is a sustainable career and remains competitive. We understand the constraints on the current public finances and the need for pay and funding increases across many sectors. But to invest in education is to invest in our country's future and we can't afford to ignore the growing pressures.

¹⁶ High Fliers Research, [The Graduate Market in 2023](#), 2023

¹⁷ National Foundation for Education Educational Research, [Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2023](#), 2023

Specific challenges for schools in disadvantaged areas

Teach First was established to address inequality in education and support pupils in schools in poor communities. Schools that were and still are those that struggle most to recruit and retain high-quality teachers and leaders. High-quality teaching is the most effective thing a school can provide to improve pupil outcomes and we are proud to have contributed by recruiting and training over 15,000 teachers since our launch nearly 20 years ago, of which more than 100 are now headteachers.

But there is more to be done, as schools serving disadvantaged communities are still hit hardest by teacher shortages.

Survey data from 2019 showed that teachers in the most disadvantaged secondary schools were more than twice as likely to believe their department was not adequately staffed than those in the most affluent (30% to 14%).¹⁸

Schools in disadvantaged areas are also the most affected by wider societal challenges, which can make them more demanding places to work, with teachers more likely to support children from families struggling with the ongoing impact of both the rising cost of living and the pandemic.

However, while needs in these schools are growing, funding isn't keeping pace. In 2013, funding for the most deprived quintile of schools was about 35% higher per pupil compared to the least deprived quintile.¹⁹ This reduced to less than 25% by 2022/23.

Meanwhile the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils at the end of GCSEs has barely reduced in the past decade and still stood at 18 months of learning at the time COVID-19 hit – with no signs of improvement since then.²⁰

When disadvantaged schools do get extra resources, they can make a world of difference. Our partner school Noel-Baker Academy, led by Teach First ambassador Ann Donaghy, spent Pupil Premium and Covid catch-up funding to restructure timetables and reduce classroom hours for teachers, especially those with teaching and learning responsibilities.²¹ In the third year after the timetable restructure staff absences had gone down by 75% and no long-term teaching covers needed to be secured. It became easier for the school to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, and for the first time since being put into special measures by Ofsted in 2018, the school achieved a 'Good' rating in 2022.

*We greatly welcome the Government's decision to increase pupil premium rates by 5% next year. However, following years of a cash terms freeze, the value of the pupil premium is still far behind its real-terms value when it was introduced in 2015. We published a full report calling for a range of pupil premium reforms in 2022,²² but as a first priority we urge the Government to **bring the Pupil Premium line with its 2015 real-terms value, which would require an increase of over £200 per disadvantaged pupil.***

*As Teach First has previously recommended, **the Government should pilot a funded timetable reduction to make disadvantaged schools more competitive employers and help address some of the additional pressures associated with working in schools in areas of high deprivation.** It would also give teachers more time to focus on development and become even better practitioners over time.*

*We believe **the Government should expand incentives to attract new teachers to the schools where they are needed most.** The Government should extend the levelling up retention premium to teachers of all subjects in schools in disadvantaged areas, not only those teaching STEM subjects. This would ensure greater competitiveness for roles in disadvantaged schools and thereby give leaders the opportunity to employ the very best teachers and recognise the challenges of teaching in more disadvantaged communities*

Developing teachers

Professional development is essential for teachers to grow their expertise and give them confidence in their practice, supporting teacher quality and retention. We therefore welcomed many aspects of the Government's training and development reforms which expanded the role of mentors for early-career teachers and renewed the focus on high-quality provision of national professional qualifications (NPQs).

We are a provider of the Early Career Framework and National professional Qualifications and in the first year of the implementation of the Early Career Framework (ECF) we found from a survey of 2,400 early career teachers on the Teach First ECF programme that 82% were satisfied with the experience, 94% rated their mentorship positively and 80% were actively using content from the framework in their practice.²³

And while such findings provide grounds for optimism, we know through both qualitative and quantitative feedback that the workload of the programme can be challenging for both early-career teachers and mentors. In our programme survey, less than half of mentors agreed their workload was manageable.²⁴ We are working to make our delivery of the framework as manageable for participants as possible, but we also believe other system-wide measures need to be looked at for the full potential benefits of the initiative to be realised, including ways to reduce the workload for mentors.

The full first cohort of teachers who undertook reformed NPQs with Teach First recently completed their programmes and our initial evaluation is showing positive results, with 96% of those surveyed saying they were satisfied and 85% rating the quality of training as 'good' or 'very good'. Feedback from participants has indicated that their specialist NPQs are supporting them to engage with research, expand and implement knowledge, reflect on their practice and gain confidence, which are all essential aims of professional development for teachers.

We believe it is hugely beneficial for teachers to have access to free, high-quality formal training and development, and ultimately that it will support more teachers to progress and stay in the profession. We do, however, urge the Government to analyse impact on retention rates of both

¹⁸ The Sutton Trust, [The Recruitment Gap](#), 2019

¹⁹ The Institute for Fiscal Studies, [The IFS Deaton Review: Education inequalities](#), 2022

²⁰ The Education Policy Institute, [Covid-19 and disadvantage gaps in England 2021](#), 2022

²¹ Teach First, [A fighting chance for every child: A manifesto for ending educational inequality](#), 2021

²² Teach First, [Rethinking pupil premium: a costed proposal for levelling up](#), 2022

²³ Teach First, [What we've learned from the Early Career Framework](#), 2022

²⁴ Ibid.

the ECF and NPQs to help us understand if we are heading in the right direction and inform any future changes, particularly concerning ECF mentor workload.

The Government should continue to develop high-quality teacher training and development programmes and adapt existing initiatives in line with sector feedback and analysis of impact on workload and retention rates.

A profession that works for everyone

Research from 2022 commissioned by Teach First and The Ambition Institute showed that ethnic minority applicants were less likely to be accepted onto initial teacher training (ITT) programmes, and once in teaching positions, they were less likely to progress into leadership positions.²⁵

The teaching workforce should be as diverse as our population, and that's not currently the case. However, there is evidence that focused efforts can help overcome this inequality. Teach First has become one of the ITT routes with the most equal acceptance rates across ethnic groups, after we changed our selection procedures to overcome unfair disadvantages.²⁶ And schools that are led by more diverse teams show more equitable distributions of promotions and are more likely to have middle and senior leaders from ethnic minority backgrounds.²⁷

There is also inequality in leadership roles when it comes to gender. Female teachers make up 63% of the teaching workforce in secondary schools, but only 41% of headteachers.²⁸ And they are 20% less likely to be promoted to headship than their male counterparts.²⁹ This may in part due to the lack of flexible working in teaching, as addressed above, but it could also be down to biases in the system and a lack of encouragement. This is why we believe decision-makers in the education sector need support to implement more inclusive recruitment and retention practices.

One of the ways we are looking to put the power of networks to use is through an initiative called Elevate, which seeks to support women into school leadership positions with the support of Teach First corporate partners. Through mentorship, coaching, access to professional qualifications, the Women's Elevate Leadership Network and a range of other opportunities, we hope this will contribute to more opportunities for women leaders, with a particular focus on supporting women who are underrepresented in the profession, including those from ethnic minority groups.

If we want to have a world class education system, we must make it one where people from all walks of life are encouraged to develop as teacher, and one that shows children that no one is excluded due to their race, gender or other personal characteristics.

We believe resources should be dedicated to open up the profession to people from all backgrounds, with a specific focus on progression to leadership positions. Leaders and

²⁵ NFER, [Racial Equality in the Teacher Workforce](#), 2022

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Department for Education, [School Workforce in England](#), 2022

²⁹ Department for Education, [School leadership in England 2010 to 2020: characteristics and trends](#), 2022

decision-makers at ITT providers, schools and trusts need support and guidance to equip them to make equitable workforce decisions and implement fair hiring practices The Government should also work with businesses to set up mentorship schemes for teachers from underrepresented groups with leadership ambitions, and resources should be provided for network groups to enable peer-to-peer support across the country.

Conclusion

All the indicators speak in favour of efforts to make the teaching profession more sustainable and enable teachers to thrive, especially those who are still new to the job. Teachers improve with experience and retaining them will be hugely beneficial to children, while helping us break free from a cycle where we need to recruit high numbers of teachers every year to replace the huge proportion who leave early on.

Teach First believes the recommendations set out in this response would help attract new teachers to the profession, encourage them to go where they're most needed, and help them thrive such that they wish to stay in teaching and thereby positively influence the lives of hundreds of children. We would be delighted to engage with the Committee further to expand on any of these recommendations.

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