Welsh Parliament
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Teacher recruitment and retention

January 2026

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About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddChildren

Current Committee membership:



Committee Chair:
Buffy Williams MS
Welsh Labour



Natasha Asghar MS
Welsh Conservatives



Cefin Campbell MS
Plaid Cymru



Russell George MS
Independent Member



Vaughan Gething MS
Welsh Labour



Carolyn Thomas MS
Welsh Labour

The following Members attended as substitutes during this inquiry.



Peter Fox MS
Welsh Conservatives



Siân Gwenllian MS
Plaid Cymru

The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry.



Joel James MS
Welsh Conservatives

EMBARGOED REPORT
UNTILL 00:01
29/01/2026

Contents

Chair's foreword **5**

Recommendations **6**

1. Introduction **9**

Our approach 11

2. Barriers to recruitment **13**

ITE intake 15

Factors affecting the attractiveness of ITE and teaching as a profession 16

Determining the number and allocation of ITE places 25

Application process 31

Perceptions of teaching as career 32

Alternative routes into teaching 37

Incentives 44

Impact of challenging financial context for providers 51

Particular challenges for Welsh medium education 54

Recruitment into post 61

Our view 67

3. Retention **73**

Early career support 74

Professional learning 81

Workload 84

Flexible working 97

Pay 100

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Challenging behaviour 103

Our view 109

4. School leaders 114

Progression routes into leadership roles 115

National Professional Qualification in Headship (NPQH) 117

Wellbeing and workload 118

Diversity in leadership roles 125

Our view 126

5. Workforce diversity 129

Ethnic diversity in teaching 132

Disability 135

Our view 136

6. Impact on learners 137

Our view 141

7. Impact on delivering educational reforms 143

Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025 145

Our view 149

8. The wider education workforce 150

Our view 152

Annex 1 : List of oral evidence sessions. 153

Annex 2 : List of written evidence 155

Additional Information 156

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

Chair's foreword

Before entering the Senedd, I spent a long time working in schools. I know that working in education can be fun, stimulating and challenging.

Teachers change lives, every day. The impact a teacher, and other education staff, can have lasts long after a child has left the classroom. One of the real highlights of this inquiry was hearing about this aspect of teaching, why people got into teaching, and why they stayed. But alongside this, we also heard of the growing pressures that are making it harder for teachers to do the job they love.

This report reflects what we heard clearly: recruitment and retention challenges are placing strain on schools. Secondary schools face persistent shortages, and too many schools are struggling to attract applicants. Workload remains one of the biggest factor driving teachers away. This is made worse by growing behavioural challenges, reform fatigue, and expectations on schools to shoulder responsibilities that sit far beyond teaching and learning.

Despite these pressures, what stood out during our inquiry was the extraordinary commitment of the workforce. Teachers and leaders continue to go above and beyond for their learners. We need to match this dedication with a supportive system that enables teachers to do what they do best: teach.

There are no easy answers to some of the issues faced. But there is an opportunity with the development of the Welsh Government's Strategic Education Workforce Plan, to start to change things. We hope that our report, conclusions and recommendations are helpful in the development of this Plan.

Getting this right matters because every child in Wales deserves the best possible education, delivered by professionals who feel valued, supported, and able to thrive. I hope that our report plays a small role in helping us get to that position.

Buffy Williams MS
Chair

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government provides more information on the effectiveness of the previously run Teach First and Graduate Teaching programmes in Wales, including how effective they were in supporting a broader range of people into the teaching profession, and why it was decided to discontinue support for the programmes. Page 69

Recommendation 2. As part of its Strategic Education Workforce Plan, the Welsh Government either undertake or commission work looking at whether the costs to a student of ITE acts as a barrier to entry and successful completion; whether these barriers are higher for particular groups of potential students; and what options there may be to remove these financial barriers. This work should be done within the context of the current financial climate to ensure any recommendations for change are feasible and affordable and will improve recruitment and retention. Page 69

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government in responding to this report provides a timeline for the work examining the 50 per cent degree relevance requirement for joining ITE. Page 70

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should identify the factors which stop teachers with Welsh language skills from using them professionally. Once these factors have been identified, the Welsh Government should review the current support provided to these teachers to ensure it is meeting their needs and is directed in the most effective ways. Page 71

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should ensure that all promotional work about teaching in Wales makes it clear that people who have done teacher training in England do not face barriers to moving to Wales to teach. Page 72

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government, as part of their Strategic Education Workforce Plan should include work on the current use of sabbaticals in Welsh schools, and how schools and school staff can be supported to take up sabbatical opportunities. Page 110

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should outline how it supports schools and local authorities to identify good practice and then how it supports dissemination of this good practice across the Welsh education sector. Page 111

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

Recommendation 8. The Welsh Government should outline the impacts of the Strategic Workload Co-ordination Group on workload reduction and in which areas of school operations these benefits have been realised and what the impacts have been on the workforce. ..... Page 111

Recommendation 9. The Welsh Government should make reducing workloads for classroom teachers a key priority in the Strategic Education Workforce Plan. The Workforce Plan should have clear and measurable actions that seek to reduce workloads in a meaningful and noticeable way for teachers as quickly as possible. It should also include ways in which workload can be measured. As part of this, the Welsh Government should ensure it engages directly with teachers. It should also look at best practice from the other countries, both within the UK and internationally and seek to apply any of this practice which would work within the Welsh context. ..... Page 111

Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government should set an expectation to schools and local authorities that activities that do not need to be done at school, such as planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) can be done off-site. In setting this expectation the Welsh Government should make it clear that timetabling should be done in such a way that would support off site working for PPA. As a minimum, where teachers do have to remain on site, PPA time must be protected so they cannot be disturbed and drawn into other school matters. ..... Page 112

Recommendation 11. The Welsh Government issues clear, coherent and universal guidance on behaviour management that is explicit and open to as little misinterpretation as possible for all different types of school settings in Wales, as a matter of urgency. This guidance should ensure that a consistent approach is being taken across Wales to behaviour, and in particular serious behavioural breaches. ..... Page 113

Recommendation 12. The Welsh Government should ensure that schools and local authorities are providing sufficient shadowing and mentoring opportunities for classroom teachers to better understand whether they wish to move into school leadership roles. ..... Page 127

Recommendation 13. The Welsh Government should outline how it will evaluate the changes to the NPQH. Any such evaluation should ensure it looks at whether the course supports learners to develop the skills and knowledge to be an effective headteacher; and whether the course provides good value. ..... Page 127

EMBARGOED REPORT
UNTIL 00:01
20/01/2026

Recommendation 14. The Welsh Government commissions research to identify the factors that are causing the gender disparity in school leadership roles and then draw up an action plan to address any factors within the Welsh Government's responsibilities. ..... Page 128

Recommendation 15. The Welsh Government ensures that the Strategic Education Workforce Plan has actions which will ensure the teaching profession more closely reflects the Welsh population, and the communities schools serve. ..... Page 136

Recommendation 16. The Welsh Government should establish a national body to set pay, terms and conditions for support staff. ..... Page 152

EMBARGOED REPORT
UNTILL 00:01
29/01/2026

1. Introduction

The issue of teacher recruitment and retention has been on our radar for a while. It has come up in a lot of our work so decided to look at in more detail. We took written, and oral evidence, as well as engaging directly with teachers, school leaders and ex-teachers.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00.01 29/01/2026

1. In 2024, we decided to look at teacher recruitment and retention in more detail. This was an issue that kept being raised in our other scrutiny.

2. Concerns were also raised by the scientific bodies such as the Institute of Physics, and the Royal Societies of Chemistry, and Biology. We heard some shocking statistics about the numbers of students qualifying to become science teachers. For example in 2022/23, Education Workforce Council ("EWC") data indicated that only three students qualified as physics teachers with a further person deferring, compared with a target of 58.[1]

3. In Estyn's 2023/24 annual report, the Chief Inspector said that recruitment, particularly in some areas such as science, maths and Welsh language had been "a significant challenge, impacting the quality of education". This was a particular issue in secondary schools. He said that the "failure to attract new entrants" into teaching was affecting the "quality of teaching and learning"[2].

4. Ahead of detailed scoping work , we wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education ("the Cabinet Secretary") outlining our concerns and seeking more information on a number of key issues.[3] The Cabinet Secretary responded in September 2024 with information that was helpful in shaping our thinking about the focus of this work.[4]

5. We then embarked on scrutiny of the then Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. The successful implementation of this now Act is absolutely dependent on having the education workforce to deliver it. We outlined this in

[1] EWC, Initial Teaching Education student results, 2022-23, table 5.
[2] Estyn, Annual Report 2023-2024, Foreword
[3] Letter from CYPE Chair to Cabinet Secretary for Education, Teacher recruitment and retention, 24 June 2024
[4] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to CYPE Chair, 6 September 2024

our report on the Bill's general principles. We committed to look at these issues in the broader context as part of a stand-alone inquiry.[5]

6. During our consideration of the Bill, many stakeholders made the case for a statutory workforce plan with targets. We felt that recruitment and retention issues went far wider than ensuring sufficient numbers of teachers who could either teach in Welsh or could teach Welsh. We recommended that the Welsh Government identify the "most appropriate legislative mechanism to place a duty on the Welsh Ministers to prepare a statutory education workforce plan which includes targets, and a timeframe, for recruitment and retention". We called for this plan to include "all aspects of the education workforce", as well as having a focus on shortage areas and future need.[6]

7. The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle, stating that the Cabinet Secretary was intending to "develop a strategic education workforce plan for the whole education sector to improve recruitment and retention, wellbeing and high quality teaching and learning". However, because it needed to be flexible and future-proofed, the workforce plan would be non-statutory.[7]

8. At the same time, the Cabinet Secretary issued a written statement announcing the development of a Strategic Education Workforce Plan ("the Workforce Plan") for schools and early year settings initially. This would take account of issues such as workload, cost of living crisis, changing needs of learners and "changes in society's expectations of what schools should do", all of which affect the attractiveness of teaching.[8]

9. Following this announcement, we asked for further information from the Cabinet Secretary on the development of the Workforce Plan.[9] The Cabinet Secretary said work was ongoing, with the intention of publishing the Workforce Plan in 2026.[10]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[5] CYPE Committee, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 report, Chapter 3, Workforce and capacity issues, 13 December 2024
[6] CYPE Committee, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 report, Chapter 3, Workforce and capacity issues, 13 December 2024
[7] Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, 13 January 2025
[8] Welsh Government, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Written Statement: Strategic education workforce plan, 13 January 2025
[9] Letter from CYPE Chair to Cabinet Secretary for Education, Strategic Education Workforce Plan, 18 February 2025
[10] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to CYPE Chair, 12 March 2025

Our approach

10. On 5 March 2025, we considered our scope and approach to this inquiry. We agreed the following terms of reference.

Terms of reference

Barriers to recruitment: Intake into ITE and factors impacting recruitment into post (including a focus on priority subjects, Welsh medium, secondary schools and the impact of Wales' educational reforms on teacher recruitment).

Factors affecting retention: (including a focus on priority subjects, Welsh medium, secondary schools and the effectiveness of early career support).

School Leaders: specific factors affecting recruitment and retention of school leaders.

Diversity of the workforce: whether the current and future workforce reflects the diversity of the Welsh population including gender, race and ethnicity and disability.

Impact on learners: of the current position on and the delivery of education and on wider support for learners.

Impact on delivering educational reforms: including the Curriculum for Wales. Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill.

Impact on teachers and wider workforce: including impact on use of teaching assistants and support staff, effect on use of supply teachers.

Addressing recruitment and retention: What actions should be taken, and by whom, to ensure the sustainability of the education workforce and how such actions should be prioritised.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

11. We launched a written consultation on 18 March 2025, which closed on 6 June 2025. We received 31 responses. More details are available in Annex 2.

12. Our Citizen Engagement team held a number of focus groups, one-to-one interviews with teachers, ex-teachers who had recently left the profession and

school leaders. They also ran an online survey. Participants came from across Wales and from primary, secondary and ALN settings.[11]

13. We took oral evidence from a range of stakeholders across 10 evidence panels, culminating in a session with the Cabinet Secretary. Details of these sessions are available in Annex 1.

14. We would like to thank all those who contributed in whatever way to our work, but in particular those teachers, ex-teachers, and school leaders who all found time to share their experiences, and how they think issues can be addressed.

15. The solutions to the issues highlighted in this report are not easy. There is no single answer that will fix the challenges of teacher recruitment and retention. This reflects that it is multi-factorial, some which directly relate to individual decisions by the Welsh Government, local authorities or schools. But others are much broader, in particular the changes to society, what people prioritise in their working life. Not all of these factors can be easily influenced or changed.

16. We have made 16 recommendations. This is a vital agenda to making the improvements to school standards and educational outcomes for children and young people that we all want to see.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[11] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, September 2024

2. Barriers to recruitment

There are significant concerns about recruitment to secondary teacher training and then into posts. Primary recruitment is more buoyant. Particular challenges are faced for some subjects and Welsh medium education. There are a number of factors affecting the attractiveness of teaching.

17. There are two main routes into teaching in Wales:

- Through the Initial Teacher Education ("ITE") Partnerships which are accredited by EWC. This can either be through an undergraduate teacher training course, or for those who already have a relevant degree, through a Postgraduate Certificate in Education ("PGCE"). The EWC sets the intake allocations. These allocations are set for each partnership as a total for primary, and broken down for secondary by subject. The ITE partnerships are:
  - CaBan (Bangor University);
  - Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (University of Wales, Trinity St David);
  - Cardiff (Cardiff Metropolitan University);
  - Swansea University Schools Partnership; and
  - University of South Wales ITE Partnership.
- Through the Open University in Wales, which offers either a part-time PGCE or a salaried PGCE. Both take two years, but the salaried PGCE is an employment based route. The Welsh Government sets intake allocations.

18. After successful completion of their ITE through either of these routes, students will achieve Qualified Teacher Status ("QTS") and will become a Newly

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Qualified Teacher ("NQT"), who must register with the EWC if they wish to work in a maintained school in Wales.

19. We heard from a range of stakeholders that recruitment issues are not unique to Wales, with other parts of the UK and the world facing challenges.[12] The EWC highlighted a recent UNESCO report which said that by 2030 an extra 40 million primary and secondary teachers would be needed across the world to meet demands.[13] The Cabinet Secretary said that these issues were part of recent conversations at the Atlantic Rim Collaboration.[14]

20. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted that the severity of the situation in England is reflected in "the new UK Labour Government that took power in July 2024" making "recruitment of additional secondary teachers one of its five defining missions"[15].

21. While there are challenges across the globe, the position is actually quite nuanced in Wales. As the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language told us during scrutiny of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill[16], total pupil numbers are projected to fall in future years[17] due to lower birth rates[18]. However, this will take some time before it significantly impacts secondary school numbers. There are also specific shortages in particular subjects and in particular sectors, not to mention regional and other demographic factors.

22. We heard that there were some Wales-specific factors including:

- The need to have a bilingual workforce[19];
- Less generous bursaries than in England[20];

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[12] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[13] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[14] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 10
[15] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.1
[16] CYPE Committee, 24 October 2024, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 46
[17] Welsh Government (StatsWales), Pupil projections
[18] Welsh Government (StatsWales), Antenatal records, live births and still births by health board providing the service
[19] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[20] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET); Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 6; Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 177 (Royal Society of Biology); CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 286 (Association of Language Learning); CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 255 (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol)

- A lack of competition between exam boards in Wales[21]; and
- In England, academy chains are able to offer "spot salaries" for shortage subjects[22].

23. The headteachers we spoke to as part of our engagement activity also highlighted concerns about potential teachers moving from Wales to England:

> *"We've got a very big, well-funded neighbour on our doorstep who are taking many of our best staff. Those people are going off to train in good universities, and they have really efficient systems to try and hold those staff, then keep them – including Welsh speaking staff. Then you've lost them essentially and they're never going to come back to Wales."*[23]

24. On the flipside, we heard that positive perceptions about the Welsh system were influencing some students to choose Welsh ITE.[24] Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David felt that this provided an opportunity to "look further afield and advertise the positives of the Welsh education system to draw people in to train to teach inside Wales"[25]. The University of South Wales also felt there was an opportunity to promote Wales as a "better pathway" for teachers.[26]

ITE intake

25. The latest figures available from the Welsh Government show that there was a total of 2,040 ITE enrolments in Welsh higher education providers in 2023/24. Of these, 895 were training to teach in a primary setting. This was 18 per cent higher than the allocations. 505 were training to teach in a secondary setting, this is 56 per cent lower than the allocations.[27]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[21] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology;
[22] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.14
[23] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 22, September 2025
[24] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[25] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 89
[26] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 155
[27] Welsh Government, Initial teacher education: August 2022 to July 2024 (headline results), 8 July 2025

26. 6 per cent of ITE entrants who were permanently addressed in the UK, and whose ethnicity was known were from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Group. This is an increase from 3 per cent in 2022/23.[28]

27. In terms of outcomes, the latest statistics show that in 2024/25, 80 per cent of students passed their training, 11 per cent deferred, 1.7 per cent failed and 7.3 per cent withdrew. 576 students passed their primary training and 332 passed their secondary training.[29]

28. In 2024/25 the outcomes from Open University routes were 75.8 per cent passed, 1.9 per cent deferred, 5.6 per cent failed, and 16.8 per cent withdrew. 79 students passed their primary training, and 43 passed their secondary training.[30]

29. In correspondence after we finished gathering evidence, the Welsh Government set out the "national desired student teacher intake" for full time ITE. This stock was set at 563 new primary teachers, and 1,009 new secondary teachers for the academic year 2025/26.[31]

Factors affecting the attractiveness of ITE and teaching as a profession

30. We explored the multi-faceted issues which are affecting the attractiveness of teaching as a profession and ITE itself.

Factor	Highlighted by:
High workload	ASCL Cymru[32] Cardiff Metropolitan University[33] Catholic Education Service[34] Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[35] NEU[36] UCAC[37]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[28] Welsh Government, Initial teacher education: August 2022 to July 2024 (headline results), 8 July 2025
[29] EWC, Initial teacher education (ITE) student results 2024-25 table 1.1
[30] EWC, Initial teacher education (ITE) student results 2024-25, The Open University part-time or salaried route, table 1.1
[31] Letter from Head of Initial Teacher Education, Welsh Government to Chief Executive, EWC, National Level Student teacher intake allocations for Initial Teacher Education with Qualifed Teacher Status: 2026/27 Academic Year, 20 November 2025
[32] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[33] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.14
[34] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[35] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[36] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 270
[37] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

Factor	Highlighted by:
Lack of flexible working	ASCL Cymru[38] Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David[39] Catholic Education Service[40] Cardiff Metropolitan University[41] Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[42] Estyn[43] Institute of Physics[44] NASUWT[45] NEU[46] School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University[47] Swansea University Schools Partnership[48] Teachers we spoke to during our engagement activity[49] UCAC[50] WLGA & ADEW[51]
Negative perception of teaching	ASCL Cymru[52] Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David[53] Catholic Education Service[54] Cardiff Metropolitan University[55]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[38] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[39] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[40] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[41] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.11
[42] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[43] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[44] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[45] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 239
[46] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 272
[47] Written evidence, TRR 27, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University
[48] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 11
[49] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 38, September 2025
[50] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[51] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[52] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[53] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[54] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[55] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.8

Factor	Highlighted by:
	EWC[56] Estyn[57] Royal Society of Chemistry[58] School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University[59] Swansea University Schools Partnership[60] UCAC[61] Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)[62] WLGA & ADEW[63]
Worsening pupil behaviour	ASCL Cymru[64] Cardiff Metropolitan University[65] Estyn[66] Institute of Physics[67] National Foundation for Educational Research[68] School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University[69] Teachers we spoke to during our engagement activity[70] UCAC[71] WLGA & ADEW[72]
Declining parental and societal support and attitudes	ASCL Cymru[73]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[56] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 56
[57] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[58] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 165
[59] Written evidence, TRR 27, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University
[60] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[61] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 243
[62] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[63] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[64] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[65] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.8
[66] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[67] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[68] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 134
[69] Written evidence, TRR 27, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University
[70] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraphs 66-67, September 2025
[71] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[72] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[73] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru

Factor	Highlighted by:
	UCAC[74]
Uncompetitive pay particularly for shortage subjects	ASCL Cymru[75] Institute of Physics[76] NEU Cymru[77] Royal Society of Chemistry[78] UCAC[79] Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)[80]
A competitive job market for graduates in certain sectors	Cardiff Metropolitan University[81] Education Policy Institute[82] Estyn[83] Institute of Physics[84] NAHT Cymru[85] NASUWT[86] National Foundation for Educational Research[87] Teachers we spoke to during our engagement activity[88] The Open University in Wales[89] WLGA & ADEW[90]
Declining numbers of students taking relevant	Association of Language Learning[91] Cardiff Metropolitan University[92]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[74] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[75] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[76] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[77] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[78] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 5
[79] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[80] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[81] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.12
[82] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 145
[83] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[84] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[85] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru
[86] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 237
[87] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 133
[88] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 44, September 2025
[89] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[90] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[91] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 288
[92] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.14

Factor	Highlighted by:
GCSE / A Levels / undergraduate courses	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[93] Institute of Physics[94] The Open University in Wales[95] Royal Society of Chemistry[96] Swansea University Schools Partnership[97] Teachers we spoke during our engagement activity[98] Welsh Language Commissioner[99]

31. We heard about the different ways in which careers in teaching are promoted. EWC said it was a collective effort, involving the Welsh Government, ITE partnerships, local authorities, themselves, and supply agencies. EWC developed the "Educators Wales" brand, funded by the Welsh Government. The website includes a national job portal. They also carry out promotional and advocacy work. In 2024/25 Educators Wales had a presence at "over 230 events … engaging with thousands of people".[100]

32. We heard of how promotion could be improved. Swansea University Schools Partnership shared the motivations of their students, which they felt could be a focus of targeted national campaigns. These included a "sense of being part of rewarding career 'something bigger than just yourself,' engagement with their disciplines and job opportunities". They also suggested that some of the myths around teaching could be the focus of a "'myth-busting' campaign"[101].

33. Cardiff Metropolitan University called for a national campaign which promoted teaching as a "high-status profession with an attractive career profile". It should promote teaching "realistically as a challenging profession but one that can be personally fulfilling … and financially rewarding". They cited successful international examples including Finland and Iceland.[102] Such a campaign should be "led by Welsh Government (politicians and officials) and include local

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[93] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[94] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[95] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[96] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 5
[97] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership SUSP)
[98] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraphs 49-50, September 2025
[99] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[100] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[101] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[102] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraphs 8.1-8.3

authorities, Estyn, the EWC, universities, the teaching associations, headteachers and their schools"[103].

34. Although EWC urged caution about calls for a "'flashy, shiny, really good promotional campaign'. … if what you're trying to promote isn't good, it won't work"[104].

35. Cardiff Metropolitan University suggested that schools should play a more active role in promoting teaching as a career choice. As part of this, they should offer opportunities for those interested in teaching to "gain realistic, practical insights and experiences" of teaching. They also called for schools to be "incentivised" for this participation.[105]

36. WLGA and ADEW called on the Welsh Government to "develop innovative strategies" to address the recruitment shortages.[106]

37. Estyn told us that ways to address recruitment challenges have been "too narrow and mainly focused on finding more recruits, rather than a more comprehensive evaluation of the system as a whole". They said recruitment and retention strategies needed to be holistic and "system wide" ensuring the best candidates enter into the profession and then stay.[107]

38. The Welsh Government shared the methods used to promote teaching. Teaching Wales which is the main promotional campaign "features real teachers in Wales". The campaign has "bursts of activity" throughout the year, including over the summer, followed by additional bursts "in October, and in the New Year running to the end of March 2026".

39. They highlighted that rather than having "mass media advertising" which is not an "effective way of connecting with our target audiences", they use "targeted digital channels". These methods have "better engagement and value" when trying to reach audiences who are "mainly under 40". The methods they employ include "targeted social media (Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, X), online advertising, radio, TV catchup, PR, outdoor advertising, UCAS mailers and attendance at key events".[108] See paragraph 195 for more information on Welsh language campaigns.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[103] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.6
[104] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 53
[105] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[106] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[107] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[108] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

40. The Welsh Government said that they "work closely" with EWC to ensure the national campaign integrates with EWC's advocacy service. As of January 2024, "over 27,000 individuals" had engaged with this advocacy service, which offers a range of support.

> *"The advocacy service offers a single point of information to individuals on all aspects of teaching as a career as well as a free recruitment and information service to individuals seeking progression opportunities as educators. This includes comprehensive support including application and CV writing, and interview skills workshops. As well as working closely with Teaching Wales the service seeks out opportunities and partnership working, such as supporting ITE Partnerships with innovative ideas to implement activity in their own recruitment strategies and plans, such as on campus promotion of ITE."*[109]

41. Alongside this centrally managed work, the Welsh Government said that as part of their accreditation guidelines, ITE partnerships must have recruitment strategies. In order to maximise value for money and ensure consistent messaging and synergy, there is close working between Welsh Government, EWC and ITE partnerships.[110]

42. We also heard about the Welsh Government's future plans, including recruitment of "Teach Tomorrow Today ambassadors". These "inspiring teachers … stories, faces and advocacy will be at the heart of our campaign storytelling across multiple touchpoints". They also accepted that schools have a role to play, and that they are currently developing "content for schools to share with their Alumni". Additionally, they are exploring working more closely with local authorities to "help with local labour market trends, engage them in our campaign work and tailor our campaign activity to work on a local basis"[111].

43. The Cabinet Secretary agreed with others, by saying that teachers were the "biggest advocates for becoming a teacher".[112]

44. In highlighting the factors affecting the attractiveness of teaching, everybody acknowledged that they are multi-factorial. The weighting of particular factors will also depend on the specific context of each potential new teacher, where they

[109] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[110] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[111] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[112] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 77

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

live, and what subject they wish to teach. While some organisations highlighted particular factors, such as workload, as being particularly prominent, no single factor emerged as the primary cause.

45. The Cabinet Secretary said it was a "combination of factors" that impact on the decision to enter teaching. She acknowledged many of the issues highlighted by stakeholders (as detailed above).[113] She accepted that the perception of teaching is a "key factor" to recruitment and retention.[114]

46. We also heard about some potential factors relating to the attractiveness of ITE itself, rather than the broader teaching profession.

47. The intensity of the one-year PGCE course can be an issue. The combination of a full programme, with lots of different skills to be developed, combined with limited time can make it challenging. This was raised by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[115]; Cardiff Metropolitan University[116] and the Royal Society of Chemistry[117].

48. Just the perception of the intensity of a PGCE course can stop people applying. As highlighted by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[118]; Royal Society of Chemistry[119]; and Swansea University Schools Partnership [120].

49. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol felt that it was timely to "look at the content, focus and structure of the PGCE course, and ensure that it lays solid foundations that include the main priority areas." They suggested that instead of "overloading" the PGCE year, there should be more development requirements in the early years of a career. However, this would need to be underpinned with sufficient time and support to undertake this professional development.[121]

50. The Institute of Physics called for improvements to ITE, including better support for students. They said this does not "just begin and end in a single year of ITE"[122].

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[113] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 11
[114] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 73
[115] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[116] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.26
[117] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 17
[118] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[119] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 17
[120] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[121] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[122] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics

51. Stakeholders, including Cardiff Metropolitan University[123]; Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[124]; Estyn[125]; and the Royal Society of Chemistry[126] highlighted the cost of postgraduate ITE. This can act as a disincentive for students who are already graduating with high debts[127] or those who wish to change careers.[128] It can also affect those who may be unsure as to whether they wish to teach, or those who cannot be certain of securing employment post qualification.[129] The intensity of the course also makes it difficult for students to have part-time work to help with costs. This combination of costs and a lack of income means that it "is an unrealistic option for some groups of potential candidates"[130].

52. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol called for an alternative funding system which would make PGCE courses "a more attractive and realistic option"[131]. Others who supported different approaches to ITE costs included:

- Cardiff Metropolitan University[132];
- Catholic Education Service[133];
- Estyn[134];
- Institute of Physics[135]; and
- Swansea University Schools Partnership[136].

53. Ideas suggested included covering PGCE costs in some way[137] or student debt reduction[138]. Although Estyn did note that there could be a "significant financial implications" of waiving fees.[139] Cardiff Metropolitan University said that the funding offer should recognise "the student debt they will have already

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[123] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.7
[124] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[125] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[126] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 6
[127] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[128] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 6
[129] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.7
[130] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[131] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[132] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.1
[133] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[134] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[135] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[136] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[137] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics; Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service; Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn; Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[138] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[139] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn

incurred and the potential value they can provide through public service as a teacher"[140].

54. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol called for a cost benefit analysis to consider whether removing or reducing ITE course fees would be sustainable and improve recruitment. This analysis could investigate whether such funding should be targeted at specific priority areas. Such an analysis should also look at the models used in healthcare where fee support has conditions about working in Wales for a period.[141] Cardiff Metropolitan University also called for a similar analysis to be done leading to "financial modelling options and recommendations"[142].

55. The Open University in Wales said that their students tell them that they could not have completed a traditional PGCE, because they would not have been able to cover the financial costs.[143]

56. The Catholic Education Service highlighted that a lack of specific ITE provision for Catholics was a "significant issue". They said that it means those who wish to study at a Catholic university have to study in England with a "significant number" then employed in English schools. For those who do undertake ITE in Wales, they are not always matched to Catholic schools. They said there should be an option in ITE provision to have "some if not all" of their practical experience in a Catholic school. Not having this option means Catholic students "are not gaining the knowledge and experience of teaching RE and that the NQTs are being lost to the system at source"[144].

57. The Cabinet Secretary said that it was the Welsh Government's understanding that the issues are not with the ITE courses but about the wider perception of the attractiveness of secondary teaching.[145]

Determining the number and allocation of ITE places

58. Closely related to the issue of attractiveness of ITE, is the geographical location of ITE provision. This links to the system of ITE allocation, and the availability of data to support the placement of ITE provision.

59. The Welsh Government sets the accreditation criteria for ITE courses. Individual ITE courses are then accredited by EWC if they meet the criteria.

[140] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.1
[141] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[142] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.11
[143] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 14
[144] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[145] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 10

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Courses are then allowed to run for a specific period as outlined in the accreditation.

60. The Welsh Government sets the overall teacher intake target for Wales. It tells the EWC of the desired numbers for primary and secondary sectors, based on the Teacher Planning Supply Model ("the TPSM"). The TPSM estimates the numbers of teachers that need to be trained to meet future demand. In doing so, the model considers historical data and future projections, including learner, and teacher demographics alongside pupil teacher ratios.

61. EWC provides allocations to each of the ITE partnerships, using the overall desired national intake for primary and secondary ITE programmes. As noted in paragraph 21, overall pupil numbers are projected to fall in future years although there is still a need to increase recruitment and improve retention, especially in certain subjects. For example, as noted in paragraphs 206-228, there are number of priority secondary subjects which have not met their targets for years.

62. Some suggested the accreditation criteria can be constraining to ITE providers, inhibiting the ability to be responsive to needs.[146] For example, USCET said the current staffing requirements both in terms of teacher: student ratios, and qualification requirements for staff can "fetter provider discretion" as well as impeding potential expansion or development of new programmes.[147]

63. Cardiff Metropolitan University said the current criteria mean that "many of the most socio-economically disadvantaged schools in Wales … are excluded from ITE partnerships"[148].

64. The Welsh Government said that the accreditation model enables schools and higher education institutions to play an "equal part" in ensuring a balance between theory and practical training. Schools play a role in the development and quality assurance of ITE. They said that the OECD's Flying Start report "highlighted our approach to recognise schools as an important partner in the design and delivery of initial teacher education programmes and the creation and use of research as a strength"[149].

65. We heard that the nature of the accreditation model is a factor in ITE "cold spots" across Wales. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that the current accreditation model which is "effectively led by universities" leads to course

[146] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[147] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[148] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[149] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

distribution across Wales which "can be arbitrary, unstrategic and inefficient from a funding and recruitment perspective". This has resulted in there being no PGCE courses available (apart from Open University courses) "in the huge geographical area between Bangor … in the north and Swansea … in the south"[150]. This, they believe, could particularly affect those who are not in a position to study away from home, such as career changers or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.[151]

66. The National Centre for Learning Welsh agreed on the need to be more strategic.[152] They cited that "we have 12 subjects in PGCE that are taught within the same city by two separate universities. So, we are duplicating courses unnecessarily"[153].

67. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol called for the commissioning of provision to be done after the workforce needs had been identified. This "could create a better fit between workforce requirements and the provision that brings teachers into the profession"[154]. They suggested that moving towards a commissioning system as exists, in the health sector, could "provide more stability in the universities too".[155]

68. EWC compared the current "open economy" model to the previous model with three regional partnerships and universities working together. They felt the current approach was "more robust". However, there is a need to ensure there are "no cold spots within delivery of subject areas"[156]. While the Open University in Wales said that:

> *"… given the strategic importance to our nation of the role of teacher recruitment, it would seem precarious to leave it to the vagaries of the market, in that sense. That's one point where I don't think the market model works particularly well for us."*[157]

69. The WLGA & ADEW called the lack of ITE in Mid-Wales a "concern".[158] The closure of ITE provision in Aberystwyth has also created additional challenges for Welsh-medium provision.[159] The National Centre for Learning Welsh also

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[150] Aberystwyth University ended its PGCE from 2024/25 onwards after losing its accreditation from the EWC. An Estyn report in 2023 had identified shortcomings in the university's provision.
[151] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[152] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 188
[153] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 243
[154] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 179
[155] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 185
[156] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraphs 61-62
[157] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 78
[158] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[159] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 168

highlighted the absence of provision in mid-Wales.[160] While UCAC said the closure had affected numbers of people choosing to do ITE.[161]

70. Some, such as UCAC,[162] called for ITE provision at every Welsh university. The University of South Wales said it should be "everywhere … because many, many students live at home"[163].

71. The Royal Society of Chemistry highlighted concerns about closures of undergraduate courses in some Welsh universities. They said the resulting "cold spot", with chemistry only available in Cardiff and Swansea, could reduce the number of trainee chemistry teachers in North Wales. They cited research from England which indicated that students who live at home during their undergraduate studies are more likely to become teachers than those who study away from home. They are also less likely to leave teaching within the first four years. They noted that Bangor University did not have any chemistry graduates on their PGCE programme this year, which they suggested could be the result of the closure of the undergraduate chemistry courses.[164] The Institute of Physics raised concerns that there are only three physics departments in Welsh universities.[165]

72. USCET shared concerns about breaking the "supply line" between undergraduate programmes and PGCE courses at the same institution and how this may impact on recruitment in the future.[166] The WLGA & ADEW said that the shortages of technology and maths teachers in North Wales could be related to a reduction of courses running at Bangor University.[167]

73. We heard that the current system for allocation of places is "unsuitable". Swansea University Schools Partnership said that "Allocation numbers, particularly for smaller programmes, mean that longer term strategic planning is difficult". They said that allocations should be "rationalised to allow for the growth of successful provision"[168]. Although Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David, said that it's not allocation that is causing

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[160] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 176
[161] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC);
[162] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC);
[163] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 87
[164] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraphs 10-12
[165] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 168
[166] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[167] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[168] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)

issues, but the recruitment systems that underpin entry to postgraduate ITE.[169] (See paragraphs 82-86.)

74. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said it was important to plan "for the needs of the system". They said if there is an identified need for more Welsh speaking physics teachers in a particular area "then let us ensure that we have courses available that provide that training to sufficient numbers of people, and recruit specifically and appropriately for those courses"[170]. They called TPSM "crude", and that a "much more detailed and strategic approach" was needed. TPSM does not currently "take into account local and regional differences, needs in relation to specific subjects, or linguistic needs in relation to the ability to teach in Welsh." They cited recommendation 49 of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities which called on the Welsh Government to "plan to meet the needs of the education workforce" in areas of higher Welsh language density. They said it was concerning that the current system would not be able to deliver on this recommendation. They called for the Welsh Government to establish a Strategic Unit to support bilingual workforce planning.[171]

75. The Cabinet Secretary said that the current model where allocations are based on the TPSM is "effectively … commissioning places … based on evidence and data"[172].

76. A common theme throughout all of our work in this Senedd has been a lack of timely data to help inform policy making or evaluation. This inquiry has been no different.

77. Data gaps that were identified included:

Data gap:	Raised by:
Application-level data	Royal Society of Biology[173]
Effectiveness of bursaries / long term impact	UCAC[174]
Leadership progression of science teachers	Royal Society of Biology[175]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[169] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 66
[170] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 238
[171] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[172] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 23
[173] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[174] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 371
[175] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology

Data gap:	Raised by:
Limited granularity on primary level science training	Royal Society of Biology[176]
Proportion of mid-career entry into teaching	Royal Society of Biology[177]
Reasons for teachers leaving the profession	Estyn[178]
Robust data on the secondary subject a teacher has trained in (specialism is currently self-reported)	Institute of Physics[179] Royal Society of Biology[180]
Systematic data on ITE graduate destinations	Open University in Wales[181]
Teacher mobility between Wales and England	Royal Society of Biology[182]
Tracking of progression of PGCE students	Cardiff Metropolitan University[183]

78. As well as insufficient data, there is also a lack of timely data. This was highlighted by the National Foundation for Educational Research[184]; Independent Welsh Pay Review Body[185]; and the Royal Society of Biology[186]. The most recent ITE data by subjects and phase is for 2021/22, which as the National Foundation for Educational Research said "isn't very recent".[187]

79. The National Foundation for Educational Research compared it with data from England. In June 2025, they could already see data on the number of trainees who had started in September 2024. The UK Government's Department for Education publishes monthly data on ITE applications. The National Foundation for Educational Research said the lack of timely data in Wales hampers research into recent trends in teaching training.[188]

80. The Welsh Government acknowledged that while national level data sets identify national subject shortages, there may be different issues at either local

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[176] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[177] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[178] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[179] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[180] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[181] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[182] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[183] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.2
[184] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 147
[185] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.5
[186] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[187] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 147
[188] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 147-148

authority or individual school level.[189] The Cabinet Secretary accepted that there is not enough "really good local information". She said that, as part of the development of the Workforce Plan, the Welsh Government intends to work with local authorities to get improved local data. This, in turn, would enable a more targeted approach to dealing with capacity gaps.[190]

81. The Cabinet Secretary described the school improvement partnership programme[191] as a "perfect vehicle" to get "that granular detail that we need" for the Workforce Plan.[192]

Application process

82. A seemingly quite technical issue can also create challenges both for prospective ITE students and ITE course providers. People wishing to apply for PGCE courses at a Welsh university, apply via UCAS. All the ITE providers raised concerns about this. We heard that using a system designed for undergraduate courses for PGCEs can create additional barriers.[193] It also risks losing potential ITE students because the information is hard to access.[194] UCSET said it was "not fit for purpose".[195] Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol called either for improvements to be made to the interface or a different system introduced.[196]

83. A particular challenge is not knowing how many offers have been accepted until late in the recruitment cycle. University of South Wales described it as a "massive issue".[197] Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David compared UCAS with the previous PGCE specific system where applicants were encouraged to make decisions more quickly, which enabled institutions to manage their intakes more effectively.[198] Swansea University Schools Partnership said that the UCAS system can negatively impact financial and

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[189] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[190] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 23
[191] The School Improvement Partnership Programme refers to the work the Welsh Government is undertaking with local authorities to design and implement new school improvement arrangements to replace the regional consortia, following Professor Dylan Jones' 'middle tier review'.
[192] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 55
[193] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol;
[194] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 174
[195] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[196] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol;
[197] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 73
[198] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 66

recruitment planning.[199] They called for a "much shorter time" between an offer being made and the deadline for a decision being made by an applicant.[200]

84. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol also said that institutions have different deadlines which can cause confusion for applicants.[201]

85. The Cabinet Secretary is aware of these issues . Although she emphasised the "limited levers" available to the Welsh Government. She highlighted that use of UCAS was optional and that some ITE partnerships do not use it.

86. The issues stem from England setting up their own application system, leading to UCAS closing down the bespoke teaching application process. She explained that the Welsh Government had explored developing a Welsh specific system, but it was not feasible due to the economies of scale. There has been work with UCAS and ITE partnerships to try and fix the issues. In light of the ongoing issues, she committed to "look again at potential solutions for our Welsh ITE system"[202].

Perceptions of teaching as career

87. As noted previously, one of the clear themes of the evidence emerging from the inquiry was the negative perception having a significant impact on the attractiveness of teaching. This was highlighted by almost everyone we spoke to, including teachers, school leaders and ex-teachers.[203]

88. One witness said school is one of the few environments where almost everybody has personal experience, but it's a role that looks very different from "the other side of the desk"[204]. Yet, do schools themselves promote teaching as a rewarding career choice for their pupils? We heard it can actually be the opposite. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that their undergraduate students report their teachers, or parents who are teachers, advising them against teaching.[205]

89. Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David said that negative advice from teachers to students "is absolutely killing the

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[199] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[200] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 68
[201] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[202] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025
[203] For example, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 14, September 2025; Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[204] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 163
[205] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 130

profession" and that it needed dealing with.[206] They described a headteacher in their cluster saying that sometimes teachers can be their own worst enemy. While they recognised the challenges faced, they said there was a need to share more widely the positive aspects of teaching.[207]

90. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that teaching was not promoted, not even in school career events. They also highlighted that "whilst schools celebrate the success of alumni in many occupational areas, they rarely, if ever, do so in relation to former pupils who enter teaching"[208]. They called for schools to be "encouraged, as part of their core school improvement activity" to promote teaching as a career.[209]

91. They also said:

> *"Pupils, of all ages, in the secondary schools where case-study research was undertaken, including schools in highly affluent areas, offered the same perceptions of why they were not thinking of pursuing a career in teaching. In some schools, none of the pupils were interested in teaching as a career and identified low job satisfaction, poor pupil behaviour, negative media depictions of teachers and salaries not commensurate with the responsibilities and workload involved, as being the reasons for their lack of interest."*[210]

92. Although Cardiff Metropolitan University also noted that research indicates that Welsh primary school pupils rank teaching as their "second highest career choice". They say that it is "probably the case that these aspirations" decline through secondary school, but that "many undergraduates/graduates retain intrinsically positive attitudes towards teaching"[211].

93. The teaching unions argued that the workforce are already promoting the benefits of a career in education. ASCL Cymru said that headteachers are "already responsible for marketing a career in education".[212] While NAHT Cymru said teachers and school leaders are the "best advocates for the profession", and that

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[206] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 151
[207] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 106
[208] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.16
[209] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[210] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.10
[211] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.14
[212] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 12

they already promote the joys of teaching daily. They said there was still a "huge amount of work for us all to be doing to make sure we promote the profession"[213].

94. EWC proposed seeing teaching through the eyes of a child in a lesson:

> *"... you can see the teacher struggling to get behaviour into check and trying to teach the subject, and you've got attendance issues, you're going to say, 'Why would I want to do that?' So, you're in the thick of it and you wouldn't necessarily see that as an option in terms of a career for yourself."*[214]

95. The lack of professional respect for teaching was highlighted by a range of stakeholders. We heard that it is not considered to be a profession in the same way as other professions.[215] This can then deter potential teachers.[216] The National Foundation for Educational Research said both status and image of the profession affects recruitment.[217] ASCL Cymru said that every teacher is a graduate with a higher qualification but that "it doesn't always feel like that"[218]. While the Association of Language Learning said it was about the value that society places on teaching.[219]

96. A number of organisations talked about the need for teaching to be marketed as a prestigious career. Swansea University Schools Partnership School Partnership said the profession should be promoted:

> *"... as a job that is for people who are special, people who've got a particular skill set, that it's something that's highly valued. Because that's where you see success in countries like Finland, where teaching is a highly regarded, high-status profession."*[220]

97. One of the issues was how teaching is portrayed in the media.[221] We regularly heard concerns that media coverage is often focused on the negatives. Teachers and ex-teachers were concerned that instances of teacher misconduct received

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[213] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 14-15
[214] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 45
[215] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 56
[216] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 60, September 2025
[217] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 126
[218] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 119
[219] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 287
[220] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 162
[221] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service; Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru; CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 244 [UCAC]; CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 9 [ASCL Cymru]

disproportionate press attention at the expense of stories about their positive impact. A secondary headteacher told us:

> *"People are seeing the negative media and that's a real problem … all you ever read is negativity around education and why would you be attracted to it as a youngster leaving university when all you see are the problems with behaviour, you see instances of staff being assaulted, you read the negative things that come from Estyn. You never see the positives of the job."*[222]

98. While another said:

> *"If we really want a positive appreciation of the role teaching is, and the good work that goes on, then stop these things appearing in the press. The media love them, but they have a drip, drip effect on the profession. What we're seeing today is the impact of that."*[223]

99. This impacts recruitment, but can also affect morale of existing staff, and potentially impact on staff retention.[224]

100. It is really important to highlight the very positive aspects of teaching, while acknowledging the very real pressures teachers face. This was something we particularly explored with oral witnesses, and it was fantastic to see faces light up as they talked about why they entered and then remained in teaching.

101. The National Foundation for Educational Research reminded us of the vocational nature of teaching. They said the research shows this as being a "really important factor" in people choosing to become teachers.[225] Positively, Swansea University Schools Partnership said that classroom experience often counters negative perceptions. They said students then see the "richness and value" of teaching, and its impact.[226]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[222] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 61, September 2025
[223] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 62, September 2025
[224] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[225] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 124
[226] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 12

102. UCAC reminded us of the powerful words of Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"[227]. While the Institute of Physics talked about how fundamental teaching is to society, calling it the career that:

> *"... underpins every we want to achieve ... because without teachers inspiring, encouraging and guiding the next generation, we don't have any teachers for the future, but we don't have anyone going into business, we don't have any doctors, nurses. We don't have anything if we don't have a teaching profession that's alive and passionate about what they do. So, that's the level of emotional, as well as financial, investment we need to be putting into a profession that really transforms lives for us."*[228]

103. EWC said that teaching is a "brilliant profession" which people enter to make a difference in children's lives.[229] ASCL described it as the "best job in the world". While the representative for NASUWT said:

> *"I was a classroom teacher for 30 years, a classroom teacher in terms of being a head of humanities, which was a classroom teacher role. That was the highest I ascended to in terms of school, because it was the highest I ever wanted to ascend to, because of the love of it. And I think you'll find this uniformly across teachers, by the way: the love of the job comes from the interaction with the children and the learners. I would have to say, in all those 30 years, I did not have one day that I would say was boring. You never have a dull moment. Every day is different. It can be a very exciting job. It can be a very rewarding job. And it is a fantastic feeling when you've got a group of children, or even individuals, small groups, in the palm of your hand, and they're following you through that educational journey. That's where the love of it comes in. But the trouble is—and you will have heard this many, many times before—there is so much around it that just makes it untenable, really, to continue in the way that it is. But the actual love of the job itself,*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[227] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[228] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 230
[229] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 42

that interaction with children, I think is the same, and always will be the same."[230]

104. The representative of the Association of Language Learning reflected on their own time in the classroom saying:

> *"You feel it; you don't necessarily see it. I was lucky enough to be an educator for over 30 years and, when you walk in, they give you energy, they give you life, they make you laugh. It is a joyous experience to be in a classroom with children. Even if they don't want to be there, you feel like you're doing something right, you feel like you're making a difference. And I completely agree with what you're saying—we need to show people what the reality is. Because the workload is enormous, if you don't love it, you can't do it. But, once they've experienced once, we've got them, they're hooked—the right people are hooked—and they stay."*[231]

Alternative routes into teaching

105. The Open University in Wales shared their experiences of running the part-time, and salaried PGCE courses. The part-time course enables students to combine studies with paid employment or other responsibilities. While the salaried route is aimed at "those already working in the education sector in roles such as teaching assistants, higher-level teaching assistants, and technicians". This route allows them "to combine their studies with practical training in their own schools alongside their current work"[232].

106. The Open University in Wales described their students as being "entirely new to the profession" who would not have entered teaching through any other route. They said their cohorts add "around 10 per cent to 15 per cent" to workforce figures annually.[233]

107. The development of the alternative routes was in direct response to the issues around teacher recruitment. The Open University in Wales said these routes

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[230] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 294
[231] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 13
[232] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[233] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 34

are opening up teaching to a wider range of people, and "is particularly effective in enabling people to study to become teachers in their own communities"[234].

108. The Welsh Government agreed with the Open University in Wales, saying that the cohorts on these courses are "unique … representing additional student teachers" who otherwise would not have been able to train. They highlighted that the subjects that can be taken via these routes have been "expanded several times" and include all priority subjects, English, English with Media studies and Primary.[235]

109. However, the Open University in Wales noted that school funding constraints can limit the uptake of the salaried PGCE. They said that schools, particularly primary, do not have either the money or the capacity to support staff taking this route. They are concerned this may increase recruitment challenges.[236] The Welsh Government said that they have extended the financial support for the Salaried PGCE for a further three academic years. This covers both the cost of the PGCE for the student and a salary contribution to the school.[237]

110. Estyn said the Open University programmes were "helpful" but did not go far enough to help with the recruitment challenges for secondary shortage subjects.[238]

111. Swansea University Schools Partnership reported that school leaders are frustrated at the "lack of available fast-track or flexible pathways for staff currently working as cover supervisors, laboratory technicians or teaching assistants, with degree level qualifications, in schools". They wanted more "flexible, financially sustainable routes". They called for further work to be done with providers and EWC to consider different routes and how they could be quality assured.[239] The Welsh Government highlighted that there is currently an ITE programme being piloted by Cardiff Metropolitan University for school based employees which offers a route for unqualified teachers who are already working in schools.[240]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[234] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[235] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[236] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[237] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[238] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[239] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[240] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

112. We heard about the discontinuation of previously run alternative routes, including Teach First. This scheme continues in England.[241] ASCL Cymru said Teach First:

> *"... particularly for schools in challenging situations, ... was a wonderful route into teaching; you got the best graduates coming in, with the right energy to do that job ..."*[242]

113. ASCL Cymru also raised the discontinuation of the Graduate Teaching Programme. A headteacher talked of the value it had added to their school:

> *"... we used the GTP programme, over several years, to develop our own teachers within the school. They still remain in Prestatyn High to this day. Removing that ability for a headteacher to select some members of staff and train them over two years to become QTS is something that we miss. I would like to see, for one, that scheme brought back. It helped me fulfil my curriculum with specialist teachers."*[243]

114. While Estyn[244] and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[245] noted that there is no undergraduate secondary ITE provision in Wales. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said consideration should be given to establishing such courses in priority subject areas.[246]

115. We heard of the need for a broader range of entry routes into teaching from a range of stakeholders including:

- ASCL Cymru[247];
- Cardiff Metropolitan University (who highlighted that this was the "unanimous" view of all local authorities and schools who contributed to their research, and was also "strongly supported" by undergraduate, past and present PGCE students)[248];

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[241] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[242] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 23
[243] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 26
[244] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[245] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 181
[246] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[247] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[248] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.24

- Estyn[249];
- Royal Society of Biology[250];
- Swansea University Schools Partnership [251]; and
- WLGA & ADEW[252].

116. EWC said there was a need to have a range of high quality routes but that they also involve:

> *"... reaching out in an access-type way to encourage people perhaps who don't see themselves as being teachers to actually think of the possibility that through baby steps initially they can, through access routes, progress into teaching."*[253]

117. Cardiff Metropolitan University called for the Welsh Government and EWC to work with universities, local authorities and schools to scope out new routes into teaching.[254] While the Royal Society of Chemistry felt degree apprenticeships should be considered, noting that this is starting in England.[255]

118. ACT called for changes to the apprenticeship frameworks for Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools and said creating higher level apprenticeship opportunities can help develop a sustainable workforce. They called for the Welsh Government, Medr and awarding organisations to work together to create these. This would also create "clearer pathways for individuals to progress into teaching roles". They also called for a "clear, structured career progression pathway that allows individuals to move from entry-level support roles into qualified teaching positions. This pathway should include defined steps that outline the skills and qualifications needed at each stage, providing an attractive route into the teaching profession for existing support staff". They felt that the education sector has not "fully utilised the potential of Apprenticeship funding" to date.[256]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[249] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[250] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[251] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[252] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[253] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 131
[254] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[255] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 265
[256] Written evidence, TRR 07 ACT Ltd

119. Although Swansea University Schools Partnership cautioned that having more flexible routes into teaching won't necessarily solve recruitment issues.

> *"... Over the border, there is a great deal of flexibility and, I think, considerable confusion and lots of different routes, and there still seems to be a recruitment and retention crisis. So, I don't think that flexibility in and of itself is necessarily going to solve this. ..."*

120. They called for alternative accreditation routes which would enable people with the right experience and skills, but without a degree meeting the subject knowledge criteria, to gain accreditation. They suggested you may have potential maths teachers without a maths degree, but have worked professionally "handling numbers". (See paragraphs 122-125).[257]

121. The Open University in Wales noted that some people who are interested in the courses are ineligible because they either do not have a degree, or do not have a relevant degree. While the accreditation criteria has been revised so that the degree relevance is 50 per cent, this remains a "challenge", particularly for prospective secondary teachers.[258]

122. The entry requirement of a minimum 50 percent of an undergraduate degree relevance was cited as a potential barrier by the USCET. They said that while it might aim to provide reassurances about a teacher's subject knowledge, degree content may "bear little relation to how that subject is taught in schools"[259]. Others who raised the challenges of this entry requirement included Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David[260]; and Swansea University Schools Partnership[261].

123. The Open University in Wales was concerned that the current ITE approach was not future-proofed to take account of alternative routes to an undergraduate degree, such as degree apprenticeships. This needed to be considered now so that future eligibility takes account of a potential wider range of qualifications.[262]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[257] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 23-24
[258] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales; Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[259] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[260] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[261] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 24
[262] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales

Other changes, such as the increase in portfolio careers, necessitates a need to have "more innovative and different types of qualifications"[263].

124. The potential of subject knowledge enhancement courses was highlighted by:

- Institute of Physics[264];
- Open University in Wales[265];
- Royal Society of Chemistry[266];
- USCET[267]; and
- Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David.[268]

These are already available in England. They are a pre-ITE course funded by the UK Government's Department of Education in five subjects: chemistry, computing, languages, mathematics and physics. Swansea University Schools Partnership said such an approach would broaden access to the profession.[269]

125. Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David[270]; the Open University in Wales[271]; and Swansea University Schools Partnership[272] all felt that such subject enhancement should be done before the PGCE. This was because of the current intensity of the PGCE year. Swansea University Schools Partnership said it would be helpful if any pre-course work was "nationally recognised".[273]

126. There are also concerns that GCSE entry requirements can act as a barrier. The University of South Wales said this may deter people who are already working

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00.01 29/01/2026

[263] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 131
[264] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[265] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[266] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 263
[267] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[268] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 117
[269] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 121
[270] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 117
[271] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 120
[272] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 129-130
[273] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)

in education such as teaching assistants.[274] UCSET said further consideration should be given to letting ITE providers set equivalency tests.[275]

127. There are also challenges for those who want to move from teaching in post-16 education to pre-16 education.[276] Swansea University Schools Partnership said colleagues felt there is a "gap" for people with a post-16 teaching qualification to gain QTS "by way of a flexible route through a university accredited programme". This, they said, could also be a potential route for those who have an international teaching qualification.[277] NAHT Cymru called it "ludicrous" that transition arrangements meant a qualified FE teacher can't teach when there are shortages in secondary schools.[278]

128. We heard that more could be done to support primary teachers to move into secondary settings, especially as the primary sector does not face the same recruitment and retention issues as secondary.[279]

129. There were differing views on assessment only routes. The WLGA and ADEW said some councils wanted to see assessment-only routes into teaching and cited an approach taken in England, where unqualified teachers can secure QTS through this route.[280] But the Open University in Wales cautioned against adopting routes into teaching which could undermine the work undertaken to ensure high quality ITE. They said there was a risk with assessment-only routes, that this could create a two-tier system.[281]

130. The Welsh Government said it remains committed to ensuring that whichever ITE route is taken, it is high quality, and ensures students are prepared to enter teaching. They said that this approach "protects against a two-tier workforce and ensures properly prepared, high-quality teachers in Wales' schools"[282].

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[274] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 19
[275] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[276] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 25 (NAHT); CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 123 (University of Wales, Trinity St David)
[277] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[278] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 90
[279] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 24 (NAHT Cymru)
[280] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[281] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 25
[282] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

131. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that the 50 per cent undergraduate degree relevance requirement could "exclude students who hold degrees in subjects such as engineering". She said this is currently being explored, and how it can be balanced with ensuring that students have the right subject knowledge and skills.[283]

132. She emphasised throughout her evidence the importance of ensuring ITE remains of a high quality. The Welsh Government is also "open to looking" at the options for career changers within this context. She highlighted that the part-time and salaried PGCEs were opening up opportunities. She said that as part of the Workforce Plan there is an opportunity to look at a wider range of access options such as apprenticeships.[284]

Incentives

133. There are currently a number of incentive schemes available in Wales.

Initial Teacher Education Priority Subject Incentive Scheme

In 2024/25 this gave a £15,000 grant for eligible students on postgraduate ITE in priority subjects:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Design and Technology
- Information Technology
- Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Physics
- Welsh

This grant is not available to those who are training through an employment-based route such as the Salaried PGCE route. It is available to part-time students. The payments are made in three instalments: £6,000 in January following

[283] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 34
[284] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 41

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

completion of the first PGCE term; £6,000 in July / August following successful completion of the PGCE and award of QTS; and £3,000 on successful completion of induction in Wales. These payments are staggered across four instalments for part-time students.

Iaith Athrawon Yfory Incentive Scheme

Running since 2018, it provides a £5,000 grant to students who are undertaking a secondary ITE postgraduate programme either through Welsh or to teach Welsh as a subject. This grant is not available to those who are training through an employment based route such as the Salaried PGCE route, but is available to those studying part-time. The payments are made in two instalments: £2,500 on successful completion of their PGCE and award of QTS, and £2,500 on successful completion of induction in Wales.

Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive Scheme

This scheme is open to a range of ethnicities and ethnic groups and provides a £5,000 grant for students who are studying a PGCE with QTS and meet the eligibility criteria. This grant is not available to those who are training through an employment based route such as the Salaried PGCE route, but is available to those studying part-time. Payments are made in two instalments: £2,500 in July/ August on completion of PGCE and award of QTS and £2,500 on successful completion of induction in Wales.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

134. Swansea University Schools Partnership said it was unclear how effective these incentives are. But, they highlighted that while numbers recruited to shortage subjects was low, it could be even lower without incentives.[285] Cardiff Metropolitan University said the impact of bursaries "presents a mixed picture, but, overall, they appear to have had minimal impact"[286]. While Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethnol said that research was "ambiguous" and more was needed.[287] They also suggested that reducing or eliminating PGCE course fees may be "more of an incentive and provide better value for money …".[288] (See paragraphs 51-55 for more evidence on this issue.)

[285] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[286] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, section 3, summary headlines
[287] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 260
[288] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 260

135. Some felt there was a need for more data to better understand the impact of incentives, including UCAC. They called for a national, long term and strategic view to better understand how effective incentives are.[289]

136. The Institute of Physics highlighted research from England which indicated that bursary increases are linked with increases in ITE recruitment. This research also found that these teachers stay in the profession for longer, and often work in schools in more disadvantaged areas. However, they noted that this research was England only, which has higher bursaries.[290]

137. Cardiff Metropolitan University also cited evidence from England which said that whilst there is variation between different subjects, it does show that "generally incentive bursaries attract more recruits to secondary programmes, and they subsequently remain in teaching slightly longer than non-recipients"[291]. But they also urged caution:

> *"In neither England nor Wales, however, has the impact of bursaries been transformative in relation to improved recruitment. Indeed, there is some evidence that many entrants would have joined the programmes without a bursary and that some, student-debt laden graduates (so called 'bursary tourists') chase the biggest incentives (they are generally higher and cover more subject areas in England than in Wales) and have no intention of continuing into teaching."*[292]

138. Cardiff Metropolitan University concluded that current bursary incentives for shortage subjects "do not have a positive and sustained impact upon either recruitment or medium to long term retention in the profession"[293]. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that the recent report on incentives concluded that incentives have a stronger impact on retention rather than recruitment.[294]

139. An individual described deciding to take a PGCE because they would receive a grant for a shortage subject meaning the course would not cost anything, and would "leave me with nothing to lose if I decided not to keep going". Although

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[289] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 371
[290] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[291] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.21
[292] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.22
[293] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 8.8
[294] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

they also noted that they were "passionate" about the importance of teaching, and had close family relations in the profession.[295]

140. While some of the evidence is mixed, a number of organisations think they make a difference, including the Association of Language Learning[296]; the Institute of Physics[297] and the Royal Society of Chemistry[298].

141. EWC highlighted the information they are compiling on incentives for the Welsh Government. At the time of giving oral evidence to us, they had provided this data to the Welsh Government.[299] The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body noted that the Welsh Government analysis into the effectiveness of incentives was not available at the time they submitted their written evidence.[300]

142. The Royal Society of Chemistry said the current incentives for chemistry were "probably not enough to be effective"[301]. While the Institute of Physics said that the incentive was not sufficient to live off, which may deter students from less well-off backgrounds.[302] They also said that while bursaries may seem expensive they are not actually available to a lot of people, and therefore "isn't a huge amount of money, in global terms"[303].

143. As flagged in paragraph 19, numerous stakeholders highlighted that some subject specific incentives in England are more generous or attractive than those in Wales. The Royal Society of Chemistry compared the incentives available to a Chemistry graduate undertaking ITE in Wales compared to someone doing it in England:

> *"... for UK students pursuing an English medium chemistry PGCE in Wales, once tuition fees have been deducted, the bursary is only £2,465 for a full-time course. ... shows that even with the Welsh language incentive, the take-home bursary after fees is less than half the equivalent amount that an ITE chemist in England receives."*[304]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[295] Written evidence, TRR 03 Individual
[296] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 351
[297] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[298] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 5
[299] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 106
[300] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.5
[301] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 6
[302] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 178
[303] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 277
[304] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 6

144. While the Institute of Physics made a similar comparison, saying that a prospective Physics teacher in Wales (who is not eligible for either the Iaith Athrawon Yfory Incentive Scheme or the Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive Scheme) will receive a £15,000 bursary in Wales compared to a £29,000 bursary in England. They also highlighted that the bursary in England has increased recently, but has remained static in Wales since 2022.[305]

145. A number of organisations called for bursaries and incentive schemes to match the value of those available in England. They included the Institute of Physics[306]; Royal Society of Chemistry[307]; and USCET[308].

146. The Association of Language Learning said:

> *"I interview quite a significant number of students who either decline, or accept and then decline, and when I go back to them—because I often follow up just to find out if it was something I could have done and we could have offered, or I didn't explain properly—and they often have told me that it's—. Well, the question is always around the bursary, and they go to Oxford, or they go to Bristol or they go to London and just choose to train there."*[309]

147. These discrepancies between incentives may have a bigger impact on the border areas of Wales. The Institute of Physics said it would be "interesting to understand any impact the bursary in England has on students in Wales doing their teacher training in England – particularly amongst border areas such as Newport and Wrexham where commuting to a university in England is relatively easy". They suggested that bringing the bursary in line with that of England's might "mitigate" the cross-border impacts.[310]

148. The Association of Language Learning highlighted that some students will do the PGCE in Bristol because of the larger bursaries, but do their placements in Wales, which they felt was a "little bit unfair" to those students who stay in Wales.[311]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[305] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[306] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[307] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 31
[308] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[309] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 301
[310] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[311] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 297

149. After we finished taking evidence, the UK Government announced changes to their incentive schemes, for example, incentives for Biology will reduce to £5,000, and Design and Technology and Modern Foreign Languages will reduce to £20,000.[312]

150. During our engagement work, we were told that while incentives may be effective at getting students into ITE, they may not then stay in teaching. A headteacher described having a student teacher who was "very honest with us from day one" telling them they were only doing ITE "to get some money". This person completed the course but did not go into teaching. A secondary headteacher suggested that a way of countering this could be in offering the incentives over a longer time period:

> *"So many people use it as a 'finish university, not really quite sure what to do, why don't I do this and get paid for a year' option. There could be a greater incentive for the longer term. If there's to be a financial benefit for doing those courses, that should be over the next five to ten years, rather than 'here's 15 grand to do a year."*[313]

An individual who was no longer in the teaching profession but was in receipt of a bursary said they felt that "... grants to get people to pursue teacher training courses attract ineligible applicants ..."[314].

151. The Institute of Physics called for financial incentives to be targeted at potential teachers "whose behaviour tends to be more responsive to financial incentives compared to experienced teachers". They also called for spending to be targeted at priority subjects which, they said, provides "better value for money compared to undifferentiated spending on all phases and subjects, such as across-the-board pay"[315].

152. The Catholic Education Service highlighted concerns about the numbers of RE teachers, calling it a "particular" concern for Catholic schools. They noted that while financial incentives are offered for "other core subjects ... there is no understanding that RE is a core subject in Catholic schools"[316].

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[312] UK Government, Funding: initial teacher training (ITT) academic year 2026 to 2027, Updated 7 October 2025
[313] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 77, September 2025
[314] Written evidence, TRR 03 Individual
[315] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[316] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service

153. The Welsh Government said that available incentive schemes are "targeted at those areas and subjects where recruitment is most challenging; priority subjects, the Welsh-medium sector and attracting more entrants from ethnic minorities". For those candidates who are eligible for all three schemes a total of £25,000 is available.[317]

154. The Welsh Government highlighted that the priority subjects and phases are chosen on an annual basis using both the School Workforce Census data and the Higher Education Statistical Authority data. This identification, they said, means the Welsh Government can target incentives. They emphasised that this "is not a statistical exercise alone and that contextual factors must be used in determining the final list of priority subjects"[318].

155. The Cabinet Secretary told us that incentives are reviewed annually. She highlighted the "wealth" of research from across the UK, including the Welsh Government's own research from 2019. She agreed with others that the evidence on their effectiveness is "mixed" but that after the current evaluation and research is completed in 2026, it will be easier to make a "robust judgment on their use".[319]

156. The 2019 research EWC did on behalf of the Welsh Government had "inconclusive" findings. The Cabinet Secretary said that it:

> *"... suggested that while incentives were one of the levers, there were stronger arguments around the attractiveness of the profession, continued support for early career development, and also opportunities for progression."*[320]

157. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged the evidence we had received about the "significant difference" between bursaries in England and Wales. She noted that even though England has more generous incentives they still experience similar challenges for STEM subjects.[321] She said she was "very keen to look at what more we can do in this space, mindful of the budget constraints that I face". She reiterated her commitment to look at incentives again, and that this work would be informed by the ongoing work.[322] She highlighted that it was complex and decisions could not just be linked to incentives.[323]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[317] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[318] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[319] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 15
[320] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 16
[321] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 19
[322] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 16
[323] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 19

158. In terms of retaining, rather than just recruiting teachers, the Welsh Government also highlighted the Welsh in Education Teacher Retention Bursary. This £5,000 bursary is open to teachers who have achieved QTS since August 2020 and have done three years of teaching Welsh or teaching through the medium of Welsh in secondary education. This will be available until Autumn 2028, and "will provide us with data on whether the introduction of a bursary encourages teachers to enter and stay in the profession"[324].

Impact of challenging financial context for providers

159. We are acutely aware of the challenging financial climate faced by higher education institutions, which run ITE provision. We have been looking at this issue in more detail separately.[325] However it was also raised in this inquiry in relation to delivery of ITE.

160. We were told that the viability of ITE programmes is very much dependent on fee income from students. Fees are the primary source for ITE funding. The Open University in Wales said that ITE faces specific challenges because a lot of cost reduction for other courses such as increasing staff: student ratios or centralising provision are not possible in ITE. As they understood it, ITE does not receive additional funding because it is not assessed as a high cost subject. Unlike, some health courses . This is despite there being a number of additional costs incurred such as placement costs, or supporting school partnerships.[326]

161. Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David described ITE as "expensive", but necessarily so because of the need to support schools to ensure the quality of provision. They also highlighted that other professions such as health have a different model to that of ITE.[327] These views were echoed by Swansea University Schools Partnership. They said that a market based system is "difficult" for ITE:

> *"... because we value, for example, the training of computer science teachers much more highly than we will the fact that there may only be three of them. We need to have these people, and it needs to be funded in a way that allows it to be*

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[324] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[325] CYPE Committee, Issues facing the Higher Education Sector inquiry page [accessed 21 October 2024]
[326] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 77
[327] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 81

> *sustainable, really, for universities to continue with high-quality ITE provision."*[328]

162. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that with the current financial "crisis" in the higher education sector, courses which do not pay their way will not be maintained even when they contribute to national priorities. ITE provision "may well fall into this category". They were concerned this could lead to provision that was "even more arbitrary and unstrategic from an all-Wales perspective." Additionally there were concerns about the impact on Welsh-medium provision which has lower student numbers.[329]

163. Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David said that accredited programmes had to be financially sustainable for ITE partnerships.[330] USCET called for the development of a financially sustainable model of ITE. They highlighted that fee income has not kept pace with inflation. They also suggested that the wider needs of ITE providers needed to be taken into account when allocating places, or that Wales should follow England and remove all recruitment controls.[331]

164. We heard that ITE providers have often used over recruitment to primary ITE provision to help subsidise less popular secondary ITE provision. Estyn said that their inspection evidence supports that over-recruitment to primary is being used to subsidise the rest of ITE provision.[332] The Open University in Wales highlighted that the decline in primary ITE poses a financial risk to all ITE provision.[333] In the future, this could potentially cause issues in the context of the anticipated falling pupil rolls highlighted in paragraph 21. This will impact the primary sector before the secondary sector.

165. Both USCET[334] and the Open University in Wales[335] said that ITE provision faces greater internal scrutiny within higher education, in particular because of the current financial climate.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[328] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 82- 83
[329] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[330] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[331] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[332] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[333] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[334] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[335] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales

166. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that under-recruitment to PGCE courses in 2023/24 resulted in a loss of funding of approximately £6.3 million to Welsh universities / school partnerships from the Welsh Government. "The year-on-year loss of this funding is a major deficit of badly needed potential income for schools and universities"[336].

167. The Open University in Wales reminded us that staffing in higher education is often a "synergistic staffing model" with PGCE staff also teaching on other courses and modules. This means any risk to ITE can also impact the wider provision within a faculty.[337]

168. The Institute of Physics raised concerns that Welsh ITE does not have the same level of funding or investment that counterparts in other parts of the UK have.[338]

169. The Cabinet Secretary accepted the current challenges facing higher education, and pointed to the work Medr are doing looking at subject demand provision and distribution in Wales of higher education provision. This work will also consider any possible interventions that may be needed to support "strategically important subject areas". This report was due in the autumn.[339]

170. The Cabinet Secretary said she was aware of ITE partnership concerns about delivery costs. She accepted that the additional costs associated with ITE. She said Medr's work would help, including on the issue of "cold spots". She acknowledged the importance of having coverage across the country for undergraduate subjects, "because that also has an impact on recruitment to ITE, because ITE partnerships are very active in promoting ITE to their students who they're educating anyway". She said she was, at that point, exploring options as to how ITE providers could be supported, and that a final decision would be made before the budget.[340]

171. After we had finished our evidence gathering, the Welsh Government published their 2026-27 Draft Budget. The Welsh Government provided an additional £2.5 million for Medr to be used to support universities with the costs of ITE.[341] The Cabinet Secretary told us this was the result of representations made by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, and her own visit to Swansea

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[336] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.2
[337] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 76
[338] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 174
[339] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 28
[340] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 27 and 30
[341] Welsh Government, Evidence Paper on Draft Budget 2026-27 – Education Main Expenditure Group (MEG), 27 November 2025

University's ITE provision.[342] The Minister for Further and Higher Education said a number of Vice-Chancellors raised concerns that universities were having to subsidise ITE provision. This is in contrast to healthcare courses which are commissioned through Health Education and Improvement Wales and are fully funded. In 2024-25, Cardiff Metropolitan University "spent just under £1 million … and Bangor University just over £400,000". She said this felt like it was "an area that just seemed as though it was absolutely right for review" and that she was pleased this additional money has gone to providers.[343]

Particular challenges for Welsh medium education

172. Our interest and concern about the issues facing recruitment and retention were brought to the fore through our scrutiny of the then Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. One of the key barriers to effective implementation of the now Act, and to realise the aim of Cymraeg 2050 is ensuring there are sufficient staff in schools who can either teach Welsh as a subject or teach subjects through Welsh.

173. Yet again, it was a key theme throughout the evidence, both in terms of recruitment to ITE and then into teaching posts. Although we did hear that retention rates were slightly higher for Welsh medium staff, at 79 per cent compared to 75 per cent in English medium settings. Although this higher retention rate was not considered to be a significant difference.[344] While many of the general issues we cover elsewhere in this report, obviously also apply to Welsh medium education, there are some specific issues which are important to highlight.

174. There are some concerns about the pipeline of Welsh speakers decreasing and thereby reducing the numbers of those who could teach Welsh or through the medium of Welsh. This is significantly affected by the decrease in students studying Welsh at higher levels, such as A level or degree. This was raised by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[345]; Open University in Wales[346]; and the Welsh Language Commissioner[347].

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[342] CYPE Committee, 27 November 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 14
[343] CYPE Committee, 27 November 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 89-90
[344] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 89
[345] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[346] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[347] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner

175. We heard it was important to maintain the Welsh language skills pipeline from primary, to secondary, to further or higher education and then into employment.[348]

176. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol were concerned about the "vicious cycle" of low numbers studying Welsh at A-level, and the impact on the potential candidate pool for teaching in and through Welsh. They called for all learners who want to take A level Welsh to be supported in doing so.[349] The Welsh Language Commissioner said they have been told that Welsh as a subject post-GCSE is "fragile" and getting worse. They said this was partly because there are fewer places offering Welsh, and there is a "growing tendency" for local authorities to offer online Welsh language provision rather than face to face . Online learning provision is less attractive to students, thereby deterring potential learners from Welsh in order to choose subjects that are available for face to face learning.[350]

177. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol highlighted that the most recent data shows a shortfall of 225 secondary, and 153 primary teachers coming through ITE which are needed to deliver Cymraeg 2050 targets. This shortfall, they say, leaves schools "at a critically low level. This in turn poses a threat to the breadth of provision it's possible to provide for pupils".

178. EWC said that out of 27 new maths teachers, only three trained through Welsh, and out of seven new physics teachers, only two did.[351] Overall they said that the Welsh Government is looking for 30 per cent of ITE provision to be through Welsh, but that it's around 20 per cent for primary and 18 per cent for secondary. They said ITE partnerships are "having a good go … they really are" to hit these targets.[352] Estyn noted that numbers of those doing ITE secondary subjects in Welsh are "exceptionally low" and that there has been a "notable decline" in these numbers over the last 10 years.[353]

179. The Institute of Physics noted that only two out of the four ITE partnerships which offer physics ITE have a Welsh language tutor.[354]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[348] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 263
[349] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[350] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[351] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[352] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 31
[353] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[354] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics

180. Cardiff Metropolitan University also highlighted that the "growth" in other opportunities for Welsh speaking graduates have "more than counteracted the growth in the Welsh-medium school sector".[355]

181. What these shortages look like in practice, is as a Head of Science reported to the Institute of Physics, "teacher Tetris" in Welsh medium schools "where movement in one school creates a gap in another"[356]. While Cardiff Metropolitan University said that sometimes schools will employ recruitment strategies "that will negatively impact on the wider education system". This can look like Welsh medium schools recruiting "all the Welsh-medium students from ITE that they possibly can and then deploy them to where they have subject gaps, thereby preventing schools, who teach through the medium of English, of Welsh subject specialists from recruiting"[357].

182. The Welsh Language Commissioner said that despite targets being set for increasing the number of teachers who can either teach Welsh or teach through Welsh, the lack of progress has been a concern "for years." This links to issues such as fewer applications for Welsh medium posts and general recruitment challenges for Welsh medium vacancies.[358]

183. The issues also affect numbers studying subjects through Welsh in higher education. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that around 7,000 students are studying part of their degree in Welsh.[359] The Royal Society of Biology said that Welsh medium STEM subjects face additional pressures because of the low numbers of ITE students choosing to teach science through Welsh.[360] WLGA & ADEW said that there was particular concerns about Welsh medium recruitment for Maths and Science teachers.[361]

184. Medr have a strategic duty to promote Welsh medium tertiary education, and as part of this duty, have to encourage demand and participation.[362] We considered as part of our scrutiny of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill when it was proceeding through the Senedd ahead of gaining Royal Assent.[363]

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[355] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 3.13
[356] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 16
[357] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.7
[358] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[359] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[360] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[361] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[362] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[363] CYPE Committee, Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill, March 2022, Chapter 4

185. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol also play a role, working with everybody in the education sector, and employers to promote studying and training through Welsh medium including:

- Dysgu'r Dyfodol. It promotes ITE by offering mentoring and work experience with under and post graduate students who speak Welsh.
- Cadw Cyswllt. While this scheme is broader than just teaching, it encourages Welsh speaking students to return to Wales, this can include for ITE courses.
- Creation and distribution of promotional materials about teaching as a career which are targeted at Welsh speakers.[364]

186. ACT highlighted the opportunity to expand apprenticeship frameworks to cover Welsh-medium education. This they felt would help create a "talent pipeline" as well as addressing the shortfall for both Welsh medium teachers and teaching assistants.[365]

187. Swansea University Schools Partnership suggested that nationally funded Welsh Language Enhancement programmes would help create pathways into Welsh medium teaching.[366]

188. The Welsh Government accepted that recruitment to secondary ITE is "challenging" and even smaller into the Welsh medium streams.[367] They agreed that this is made worse because of the low numbers of students taking Welsh A level which is then "further compounded" by the low numbers of undergraduates studying through Welsh.[368]

189. The Cabinet Secretary said she was "very worried" about Welsh medium recruitment. She said increasing the numbers of Welsh medium teachers needs to be "a top priority for all stakeholders and a key part of the workforce plan"[369]. She said they are providing "£0.145 million to increase the number of learners studying Welsh at A-level".[370]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[364] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[365] Written evidence, TRR 07 ACT Ltd
[366] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[367] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[368] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[369] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 50
[370] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 51

190. The Welsh Government published its Welsh in Education Workforce Plan in May 2022. This ten year plan sets out the steps the Welsh Government and other will take to develop the Welsh language workforce in schools.[371]

191. EWC said that the Welsh Government's target for the number of ITE entrants training through Welsh is not being met, despite the different initiatives, including the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan.[372]

192. UCAC queried the extent to which there is "real evaluation and monitoring" of the plan. They also called on the Welsh Government to consider international best practice on bilingual teaching and its benefits.[373] They said the Welsh Government needed to "seriously address" issues around Welsh medium recruitment and retention, suggesting "career-long strategies" were needed. They said that, at the moment, the Welsh Government is "failing, although they have thrown money at it for a quarter of a century".[374]

193. The Welsh Government highlighted some of the actions within the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan. This included an increase to the Salary Contribution Grant for Welsh medium Secondary schools and Welsh subject student teachers in English medium schools. This is now 100 per cent of Band 1 of the Unqualified Teachers pay scale. This grant has been further expanded to enable maintained primary schools to access it at 50 per cent, and secondary schools with a "transitional language category" at 100 per cent to support Welsh medium student teachers. English medium secondary schools can access this grant at 50 per cent.[375]

194. They also highlighted the additional funding for the Open University employment based ITE courses. The employment costs for Welsh-medium schools are fully funded by the Welsh Government. Other initiatives that they fund included Cadw Cyswllt and Dysgu'r Dyfodol (both of which are delivered by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol).[376] (See paragraph 185.)

195. The Welsh Government said their national teacher recruitment campaign, Teaching Wales, is particularly focused on priority secondary subjects, including "increasing the numbers who can teach in Welsh". The messaging is tailored with different ones for Welsh speakers. They said their research has shown that "a

[371] Welsh Government, Welsh in education workforce plan, 24 May 2022
[372] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[373] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[374] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 372
[375] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[376] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

significant number of Welsh speakers, have different motivations and barriers to consider teaching as a career. This has been reinforced in the creative testing". Their research has shown that Welsh speaking graduates "are more likely to consider teaching as a career". Previously there has been TV advertising on S4C in order to target Welsh speakers.[377] For more information on promotion of teaching more broadly see paragraphs 32-42.

196. The Welsh Government told us about their joint working with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. As well as the work of the Coleg highlighted in paragraph 185, they also have "specific Welsh language focused activities at several key Welsh language summer events".[378]

197. The National Centre for Learning Welsh told us about a pilot in June 2025, which offered a 10 day course for prospective ITE students. While they originally envisaged an intake of 15, 51 had signed up at the time they submitted their written evidence.[379] When they gave oral evidence they reflected on this pilot. 40 people attended the course.

> *"Before they attended the course, 47 per cent said that they did not feel confident in Welsh; after the course—and it was a two-week intensive course—79 per cent of them said that they were much more confident to study a course through the medium of Welsh, and 29 per cent of those who didn't intend to study a Welsh-medium course initially had changed their minds, and, from September, they will be following an ITE course through the medium of Welsh. There are interventions that are possible for us to make with not much investment that really will make a difference and really do make a difference."*[380]

This, they said, showed that "alternative models" should be considered.[381]

198. In response to the Estyn 2023 inspection of ITE, resources have been created to support ITE providers in delivering the 35 hours of language development that is part of the course.[382] Coleg Cymraeg Cendleathol said the 35 hours "were crucial" and making a difference. But they said "it's nowhere near enough". They called for more opportunities during teaching training to develop Welsh skills, and

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[377] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[378] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[379] Written evidence, TRR 29, The National Centre for Learning Welsh
[380] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 225
[381] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 188
[382] Written evidence, TRR 29, The National Centre for Learning Welsh

then follow through into the early years of a career. They said that the development of language skills through this period should be done "holistically"[383] that can help guide the teacher "along the continuum … over a period of years"[384].

199. The National Centre for Learning Welsh felt that changes to ITE could be "far-reaching" in developing and supporting teachers Welsh language skills. They called for the number of hours dedicated to developing a student's own Welsh language skills to be increased to 120. This would enable a student to complete "an entire progression level" before becoming a qualified teacher. They also called for more support for those who are "at the higher levels" of Welsh language skills, so they are confident enough to do some of their training in Welsh medium schools.[385]

200. The Welsh Language Commissioner said that Welsh language skill development should be compulsory for everyone training in Wales. They also called for the Welsh Government to establish a "a five-year Welsh language training framework which would be a mandatory part of training and qualifying as a teacher in Wales". While starting during ITE, it should continue as part of the induction and professional development in the first four years of a career, and would be tailored to different levels of pre-existing Welsh skills. This framework would "have the long-term aim of ensuring that all teachers are able to teach through the medium of Welsh"[386].

201. Coleg Cymraeg Cendleathol accepted the intensity of the PGCE course but suggested that if the course length was extended to "over 10 or 11 months" it would reduce the intensity, as well as also enable the development of language skills.[387] They also suggested that language skills should developed throughout a teacher's career.[388]

202. The Welsh Language Commissioner cited the School Workforce Census data which indicates "very little positive change" in the Welsh language skills of teachers over the last three years. This survey also showed "a high number of teachers in some local authorities" with either no or entry level Welsh skills.[389]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[383] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 192
[384] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 222
[385] Written evidence, TRR 29, The National Centre for Learning Welsh
[386] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[387] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 180
[388] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 194
[389] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner

203. The National Centre for Learning Welsh has a national programme to help develop Welsh language skills within the "statutory education workforce". This provides opportunities for those on ITE. It also includes refresher professional Welsh courses for prospective teachers who want to increase their confidence in using Welsh.[390]

204. The Welsh Government highlighted the Welsh-medium workforce capacity development grant, which is around £800k per academic year. This grant helps support schools "to develop innovative ways to solve some of their recruitment challenges".[391]

205. The Cabinet Secretary highlighted initiatives including Cynllun Pontio, which supports primary school teachers to become teachers in Welsh medium secondary schools. This is a "further £1.5 million investment".[392] But she said more work was needed to upskill the "1,590 teachers who are currently able to teach in Welsh" but aren't currently. As a result, they are funding the National Centre for Learning Welsh "with over £2 million" to increase this capacity.[393]

Recruitment into post

206. We heard about the high number of vacancies across Wales, although the challenges are harder for: shortage subjects, including STEM, and Welsh medium; some types of schools; or in some particular geographic areas. As with ITE the challenges are predominately faced by the secondary sector.

207. The Open University in Wales reminded us that ITE recruitment does not equal teacher recruitment. They said not all PGCE students want to teach in maintained schools, and "may be looking for careers in any number of education-adjacent roles"[394]. While Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that a number of ITE students will decide "to abandon teaching as a career and apply for jobs in other fields" at the end of their ITE studies. They cited EWC statistics which indicated there is a "difference of 15.5%" between those who are awarded QTS and those who register with the EWC.[395]

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[390] Written evidence, TRR 29, The National Centre for Learning Welsh
[391] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[392] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 51
[393] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 52
[394] Written evidence, TRR 08 The Open University in Wales
[395] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

208. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that "an increasing number of NQTS" choose to work as supply teachers rather than taking a substantive role, despite this leading to worse employment terms and conditions.[396]

209. There was a consistent theme that recruitment was one of the biggest challenges faced by headteachers, including the Catholic Education Service.[397] ASCL Cymru shared their findings from their survey where 95 per cent of respondents were having challenges recruiting. 42.8 per cent said they were "experiencing severe difficulty", and 69.4 per cent had received no applicants for some posts.[398]

210. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that headteachers report having to advertise a post two or three times before they will get even a single application.[399] They also highlighted that some schools will advertise for other subjects such as PE or Drama, when they have other vacancies, such as Maths, Science or English with the hope that the applicants will "show some potential for teaching [other areas] as a first or second subject"[400].

211. During engagement with teachers, and headteachers we heard directly of the challenges. One said:

> *"The truth is really, in the last 12 years, we've seen a situation where recruitment was ok going to bad, and going from bad, to catastrophic."*[401]

212. We heard that there has been a significant and noticeable decrease in the number of applicants applying for vacancies. Estyn said that "schools across Wales" have reported this with secondary schools particularly struggling. "The average number of applicants per vacancy has more than halved since 2011". In contrast, primary school recruitment "has remained relatively buoyant".[402] The Institute of Physics noted that the average number of applicants for science subjects has declined from 12.5 in 2011 to 3.9 in 2023. They said that physics was "one of the worst hit subjects". They highlighted that in 2024, there were "fewer physics-trained teachers (174) than secondary schools (205)". They said that 58 per

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[396] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.11
[397] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[398] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[399] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.2
[400] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.4
[401] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 17, September 2025
[402] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn

cent of secondary schools felt they were understaffed for physics which is "much higher" than other UK nations.[403]

213. ASCL Cymru said there are "significant" shortages in a number of subjects including maths, science, Welsh, music, modern foreign language and IT.[404] While the Royal Society of Chemistry reported that schools often receive "few or no applications" for science posts.[405] Swansea University Schools Partnership said that for subjects such as Maths, Physics and Welsh schools are "reporting extremely shallow pools of applicants from which to draw"[406].

214. WLGA & ADEW said that local authorities are reporting "critical shortages in the following areas: Welsh language, Mathematics, Science (especially Chemistry and Physics), ICT, Technology, Geography, Modern foreign languages"[407].

215. Estyn also highlighted music as a subject which can struggle.[408] The EWC as well as detailing the subjects already listed in 213-214 (except Music) said that English was also struggling.[409] Cardiff Metropolitan University said that subjects that traditionally had healthy recruitment such as English, Geography and Art and Design are now facing challenges.[410]

216. As can be seen by the subjects cited, challenges are now extending beyond the "traditional" shortage subjects. Here are the views of two secondary headteachers who spoke to us as part of our engagement activity:

> *"Beyond P.E perhaps and maybe History, the challenges are huge and it's not getting any better. It's getting worse and worse every single year."*
>
> *"I think we'll get to a point where we'll just run out of teachers I'm afraid. We'll have to stop teaching certain subjects."*[411]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[403] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[404] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[405] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 16
[406] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[407] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[408] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[409] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 12
[410] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 129
[411] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 19, September 2025

217. As with the issues around recruitment to Welsh medium ITE, these issues continue into recruitment to Welsh medium posts or schools. This was highlighted by:

- Cardiff Metropolitan University[412];
- Estyn[413];
- the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body[414];
- Swansea University Schools Partnership[415]; and
- WLGA & ADEW[416].

218. EWC said that any challenges seen in secondary schools are "magnified" when it comes to Welsh medium settings. They said secondary heads report it as "really, really tough to get any new teacher in priority subjects when it's Welsh medium"[417].

219. Teacher shortages are also more pronounced in schools serving more socio-economically deprived areas.[418]

220. We heard that certain geographical areas can struggle to fill vacancies, for example rural or remote areas.[419] For example, schools along the English border can draw from a wider pool of candidates, compared to those in North or West Wales.[420] The Royal Society of Chemistry reported that they were told that rural and Welsh medium schools particularly struggle to fill chemistry vacancies.[421]

221. An additional challenge in some rural areas can be a lack of affordable housing. According to WLGA & ADEW this is a particular challenge in areas that "have been hit by the increases in second-home ownership and holiday homes".

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[412] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.2
[413] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[414] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.7
[415] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 10
[416] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[417] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 32
[418] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 4.8
[419] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.7; Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP); Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[420] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 21, September 2025
[421] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 16

They also said that these are often areas with higher numbers of Welsh speaking graduates, thereby making it more difficult to recruit to Welsh language posts.[422]

222. Positively, we heard that schools who are involved in ITE report that they see this is as a "key factor in their successful recruitment to posts"[423].

223. The Welsh Government were very clear that while national issues are a matter for them, recruitment to specific posts were the responsibility of individual schools, and that issues faced by particular areas are the responsibility of local authorities.

> *"Staffing challenges faced by schools are highly contextual and national level concerns (such as the level of ITE recruitment into primary, STEM subjects and Welsh-medium) may not be applicable at a local level. The responsibility for the employment of teachers in schools lies with local authorities and governing bodies as the employing bodies. They are responsible for ensuring that sufficient, suitable staff are employed or engaged to work at their school/s in order to provide education appropriate for the ages, aptitudes, abilities and needs of their learners."*[424]

224. The Welsh Government indicated that the data shows that the average number of applicants per post has declined since 2020/21. Although teaching Welsh as a subject has seen an increase.

> *"The average number of applications for priority subject posts, ..., are consistently below the average number of applications for all secondary posts (5.2). Chemistry (1.8 applications per post), Information Technology (2.0), Biology (2.9), Design and Technology (3.0) and Welsh (3.2) received the lowest number of applications per post in AY2023/24. This compares to Physical Education (8.3), History (8.0) and English (5.0) which consistently receive a greater number of applications per post on average."*[425]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[422] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[423] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[424] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[425] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

225. More broadly, the average number of applications per post in 2023/24 was 10, an increase from 7.8 in 2022/23, but still lower than the 12.0 in 2020/21. There is quite a contrast between settings, with primaries receiving on average 15.2 applications per post, compared to 5.2 applications per post in secondary.[426]

226. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that the recruitment challenges vary according to location. She highlighted data that showed the highest average number of applications per post in 2023/24 were in urban areas such as Cardiff, Newport, Vale of Glamorgan and Swansea. The lower average number of applications per post were in Ceredigion, Powys, Denbighshire, Pembrokeshire and Anglesey. She said that work was underway with the ITE partnerships to try and address the challenges faced by rural schools. One action includes Ceredigion and Powys forming a mid-Wales partnership, and working with Cardiff Metropolitan University "to explore the possibility of a blended programme" which would look to train qualified teachers within the geographical area.[427]

227. The Cabinet Secretary talked about planned work with local authorities to ensure there is data at a local authority level:

> *"... where we work closely with them to really drill down into what the challenge is, is really important, because we don't have that data at a really detailed local level at the moment, so we haven't got live data on the number of vacancies, we haven't got an understanding of local-level trends in terms of retention, reasons for leaving the profession, the age profile of the workforce. So, we need to do that work with local authorities."*[428]

228. The Welsh Government have commissioned the Education Policy Institute to consider how teachers can be encouraged to work in areas of socioeconomic deprivation. The Cabinet Secretary said she was "considering the report's findings" and that she was "keen" to work with schools and local authorities to incentivise teachers to work in these schools. This was complex, but could include support for travel costs or bursaries.[429]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[426] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[427] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 45
[428] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 45
[429] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 46

Our view

229. Since we decided to do this work, the Welsh Government announced plans to develop the Workforce Plan (see paragraph 8). We welcome this. We hope that the evidence we have gathered and our conclusions will help shape the Plan so that Wales can develop a sustainable, high-quality, healthy and happy teaching workforce.

230. Teaching has a perception issue. The joys and benefits of a teaching career are often lost in highlighting the very real challenges that the education system faces. While there need to be significant changes which will help address the root causes of these challenges, there also needs to be a greater emphasis on the positive elements of choosing a career in education.

231. Some of the issues that drive negative perceptions of teaching, such as workload, challenging pupil behaviour and the impact of social media are covered in our next Chapter. But we note that these are all issues that impact on the perception, as well as the reality of teaching on a daily basis. In turn, this can have a significant impact on recruitment into ITE, and then into actual teaching posts.

232. We do not wish to underplay the challenges the education system faces, many of which we will go on to highlight throughout the report. Teaching can be challenging, but there are many positive elements of the career which need to be spotlighted and spoken of publicly.

233. Teaching is a profession that changes lives on a daily basis. A teacher's impact lives long after students have left a classroom or school. Almost everybody has a story of that one teacher who made a difference, or who ignited a love of a particular subject which then developed into either a life-long passion or career. But teachers don't just change one student's life, they positively impact on tens, or even hundreds of students every single year. These impacts can ripple out from the student into the family or wider community. Few other careers have this life changing impact on this type of scale. Do we take this element of teaching for granted? Should it be celebrated and commented on more? Some of the best moments of this inquiry were when witnesses started talking about why they went into teaching, and what they loved about this very special and unique job. It is essential that these aspects of teaching are at the forefront of any discussions or promotion of teaching as a career choice.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

234. There is a clear need to strengthen the perception of teaching as a high-quality, rewarding profession that attracts both young people and career changers. Those currently in the classroom play a vital role in shaping this perception, as their experiences can play an significant role in influencing choices of potential teachers. However, we have heard that the challenges of the role can sometimes overshadow its many positives, which may affect the attractiveness of the profession. Supporting teachers to share a balanced picture of their work could help address this.

235. We believe that those groups and organisations that work in education or represent those in education have a social and professional responsibility to share the positive nature of teaching. We understand that for some this needs to be balanced with their duty to highlight the issues faced by the profession. But care needs to be taken to ensure that in doing this, the positive elements of teaching are not consistently overshadowed.

236. We know that schools often invite alumni to return and talk about their careers. We suspect that few schools invite alumni who have gone into teaching. Yet, this is a great opportunity to promote teaching as an aspiration and rewarding career choice.

237. The world of work has changed dramatically in recent years. People have far more options available to them. Also, people demand different things from their working lives, and prioritise different aspects such as flexible working. The way we view our working lives have changed, instead of a "job for life" people actively want to pursue different opportunities at different points in their lives. This "portfolio" approach to careers whilst creating challenges to the teaching profession, also opens doors to people joining the teaching profession later in their career. It is not all doom and gloom for the prospects of the teaching profession, but this means promoting teaching in different ways and to different groups and opening up access.

238. This change in the way we work has not yet been reflected in widening the routes into teaching. While some work has been done with the introduction of salaried or part time PGCEs, these routes still demand an appropriate undergraduate subject degree.

239. Clearly, any alternative route into teaching needs to maintain the highest standards. Just as teaching is one of the most rewarding jobs, it is also one of the most important. Quality cannot be lost in the drive to increase the numbers of teachers. But we think it's important to explore alternative routes into teaching,

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

especially looking at schemes such as Teach First, or routes that enable people already working in education to progress into teaching.

240. We want the Welsh Government to outline to us what they feel are the opportunities and challenges for harnessing the opportunities for career changers to enter into the profession while maintaining standards. In doing this we think they should explore the alternative routes with a view to implementing those which the evidence suggests could support more high quality teachers into the profession.

241. We would welcome more information from the Welsh Government on the effectiveness of previously run programmes such as Teach First and the Graduate Teaching Programme. In particular: how effective they were in improving the diversity of the teaching profession, and how effective they supported career changers entering the profession. Why was the decision made to discontinue these programmes, and what was the evidence that lead to these decisions?

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government provides more information on the effectiveness of the previously run Teach First and Graduate Teaching programmes in Wales, including how effective they were in supporting a broader range of people into the teaching profession, and why it was decided to discontinue support for the programmes.

242. Simple barriers such as an unwieldy or difficult application process for ITE need to be removed. We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to revisit the challenges faced by those ITE providers who use the UCAS application system. (See paragraphs 82-86).

243. The cost of ITE can be off-putting to potential students. We think there is a need for further work exploring the extent to which the costs of ITE are a barrier, whether the costs disproportionately affect specific groups of potential students and the options for supporting students with ITE costs. We heard a number of ideas which we feel deserve further consideration. We think this work would fit well as part of the Workforce Plan and encourage the Welsh Government to include it as a strand in the Plan.

Recommendation 2. As part of its Strategic Education Workforce Plan, the Welsh Government either undertake or commission work looking at whether the costs to a student of ITE acts as a barrier to entry and successful completion; whether these barriers are higher for particular groups of potential students; and what options there may be to remove these financial barriers. This work should be done

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

within the context of the current financial climate to ensure any recommendations for change are feasible and affordable and will improve recruitment and retention.

244. On the specific issue of whether a 50 per cent relevant subject specific undergraduate degree is needed for entry to postgraduate ITE, we welcome the Welsh Government's work in this space. We agree with those stakeholders who highlighted that relevant subject knowledge can come from a wider base than just an undergraduate degree. In some cases, people may have an undergraduate degree, but it is not classed as relevant enough. Any work on this needs to be balanced with the need to maintain high standards.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government in responding to this report provides a timeline for the work examining the 50 per cent degree relevance requirement for joining ITE.

245. The evidence on the impact of incentives is mixed. We believe the Welsh Government's work looking at this is important. Will the review give us the answers we need as to whether incentives work effectively? We understand this work will not be published before either report or the Workforce Plan is published. We, therefore, do not feel it would be appropriate for us to make firm recommendations in this space without sight of the work. We expect this review to be comprehensive and to provide the Welsh Government with robust information which will support them in making policy decisions rooted in evidence. We acknowledge that this could result in the next Welsh Government having some important decisions to make on incentives.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

246. As we note, one of the recurring themes in this Senedd has been a lack of timely, publicly available data to inform policy decisions and evaluation. This inquiry has been no different. This relates to a number of different elements of this inquiry, including determining the number and allocation of ITE places, and recruitment into teaching posts.

247. In relation to concerns about "cold spots" for ITE, we believe it's important that we have the right data to better understand the impacts of such cold spots, rather than making recommendations for ITE provision in every Welsh university. Data must be used so that the Welsh Government and providers can make informed decisions about ITE provision. Understanding what the data says will mean that policy interventions can be better tailored to answer the challenges.

248. We welcome the additional money that has been provided as part of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget (see paragraph 171171) to recognise the additional costs of running high quality ITE provision for providers. The extent to which this covers the additional costs and the impact the funding has, is something we will flag as an area of interest for our successor Committee.

249. While all aspects of secondary education struggle with teacher recruitment, the Welsh medium sector faces particular challenges. This was our route into this work. In our Stage 1 report on the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, we recommended that the Welsh Government identifies the most appropriate legislative mechanism to place a duty on Welsh Ministers to prepare a statutory education workforce plan, which covered all aspects of the education workforce.[430] The Welsh Government accepted the recommendation in principle, citing the forthcoming development of the Workforce Plan but not placing it on a statutory basis.[431]

250. There are clearly some untapped Welsh skills within the education workforce, with over 1,500 teachers who have Welsh language skills not currently using them in their current role. We are aware that some of this can be down to a lack of confidence about an individual's own Welsh language skills. Giving these people the support to be able to move into the Welsh medium sector would be one way of filling the current gap. It is not clear to us if there is sufficient understanding of the wider reasons why these teachers are not currently using their Welsh medium skills. We think there needs to be further exploration of this issue, with a view to addressing any particular factors.

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should identify the factors which stop teachers with Welsh language skills from using them professionally. Once these factors have been identified, the Welsh Government should review the current support provided to these teachers to ensure it is meeting their needs and is directed in the most effective ways.

251. People leave Wales for England for higher education, and for ITE. The higher bursaries can play a part in this (see paragraphs 146 - 148), but it is not the only factor. But, this does not mean they are lost to the Welsh education workforce forever. Moving between the two systems should be as easy as possible. Also important, is that the public narrative makes this clear. We don't want

[430] CYPE Committee, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 Report, December 2024, Recommendation 3
[431] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language to CYPE Committee Chair, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, 13 January 2025

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

misconceptions about moving to Wales because of the different curriculum, or concerns about Welsh language skills putting people off. Any such myths must be busted.

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should ensure that all promotional work about teaching in Wales makes it clear that people who have done teacher training in England do not face barriers to moving to Wales to teach.

252. Some subjects, and some schools face particular challenges in recruiting teachers into post. Subject wise this might be the result of small numbers entering into teacher training. School wise this may be down to geography or because they work in a more challenging context. There are no easy answers to solving these challenges. We hope that the Workforce Plan will have the space to explore some of these issues in more detail.

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29/01/2026

3. Retention

Retention rates are less challenging than recruitment, but there is enough attrition to cause issues when combined with low recruitment. Workload is a key factor, along with the need for improved professional learning and flexible working opportunities.

253. Teacher retention is not as bad as recruitment.[432] However, this does not mean that there aren't some challenges. Swansea University Schools Partnership said their school colleagues report retention as stable for a number of secondary subjects.[433]

254. Cardiff Metropolitan University said retention in Wales "whilst concerning" compared more favourably to the picture in England "where one in five NQTs leave teaching in their first 2 years and 4 in ten after 5 years, with these proportions continuing to rise year on year"[434]. The National Foundation for Educational Research suggested leaving rates are calculated differently in England. They said when they tried to measure them similarly "we actually found less difference between Wales and similar areas of England". Although they noted this was done during the pandemic which affected retention rates.[435]

255. The EWC data indicates retention rates are relatively stable, with 75.9 per cent of teachers registered in 2020, still registered in 2025. (This rate was slightly higher for Welsh speaking teachers at 79.9 per cent.) While 57.7 per cent of teachers registered in 2015, were still registered in 2025. They said the numbers of teachers deregistering "has remained fairly stable at around an average of 2,400 deregistered each over the past five years"[436].

256. While retention is not considered as perilous as recruitment, it cannot be ignored. Education Support said it was important that an "equal emphasis" is placed on retention in the forthcoming Workforce Plan saying "there is no

[432] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[433] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[434] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.5
[435] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 162
[436] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

sustainable recruitment without effective retention"[437]. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that retention was a more complex issue than recruitment, and that there was a need for a "better understanding".[438] They also called urgently for more "robust empirical evidence" on teacher retention.[439]

257. NEU Cymru highlighted both the financial and human cost of teachers leaving the profession. As well as losing the expertise of teachers, there is also the "time and finance cost" of training new teachers to fill the shortfall caused.[440] Swansea University Schools Partnership also noted the impact of experienced staff leaving the profession.[441]

258. ASCL Cymru said retention challenges are "systemic, urgent, and worsening"[442]. As with some of the recruitment issues, Cardiff Metropolitan University said retention "is likely to be more problematic" in rural areas or in areas with higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage.[443] The National Foundation for Educational Research said that schools with higher free school meal rates tend to have higher rates of teachers leaving.[444]

259. The Education Policy Institute said that some turnover is "often healthy" as it brings new ideas and opens up progression opportunities for other staff. They said consideration needs to be given to ensure this happens.[445]

Early career support

260. The first five years of a teacher's career are critical in terms of building the foundations for a long term career. There are concerns that a lot of teachers are leaving during this period:

- Cardiff Metropolitan University[446];
- Estyn[447];

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[437] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[438] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 160
[439] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.8
[440] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[441] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[442] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[443] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.7
[444] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 161
[445] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 157
[446] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 176
[447] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn

- Independent Welsh Pay Review Body[448];
- NEU Cymru[449]; and
- WLGA & ADEW[450].

261. NEU Cymru said that the number of teachers leaving in the first five years "has increased significantly". They said "a quarter of teachers" leave in this time, referring to "particularly high wastage rates".[451] While Estyn said that "worryingly" in terms of secondary teachers leaving, the highest numbers are those teaching "English, mathematics, science and Welsh second language"[452]. Cardiff Metropolitan University said a local authority reported that "one in six of its NQTs have left teaching in the last 3 years"[453].

262. One of the factors identified is a lack of professional support in these early years of a career.[454] Cardiff Metropolitan University said there was a need for a "strong focus" on supporting NQTs and early career teachers.[455] The WLGA & ADEW called for support to be spread throughout the first three years of a teacher's career, pointing to successful mentoring programmes in England.[456] ASCL Cymru said that the NQT programme could be extended to a two year programme meaning "they could not only survive year 1, they could start to develop and thrive in year 2, before they lost that additional support"[457].

263. EWC reminded us that teaching is a big job and that "teaching and learning is messy". They said "nobody can get the job … under their belt within a couple of years"[458]. ADEW said the first five years are critical, and that after this period there is a "real turning point and a shift" with teachers gaining confidence and autonomy. Therefore "support structures" need to be in place during the first five

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[448] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.11
[449] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[450] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[451] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[452] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[453] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.2
[454] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[455] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, section 5, summary headlines
[456] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[457] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 43
[458] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 83

years, as they create the building blocks to a successful, long term teaching career.[459]

264. Swansea University Schools Partnership highlighted that support for newly qualified teachers "is radically reduced" from the ITE, which "some found hard to adjust to"[460]. Estyn said that currently there is not a sufficiently robust programme for NQTs.[461] Cardiff Metropolitan University said schools have less time to provide both formal and informal support for NQTs, with a particular gap in coaching from "expert teachers".[462]

265. Cardiff Metropolitan University raised concerns about a lack of continuity between ITE and induction for NQTs. Once students graduate, there is "no formal liaison or continuity between university tutors who have worked closely with them" and those who will be leading their NQT induction.[463] They said there was the potential for universities to have a "greater role" in early career development, as they do in supporting other professions.[464]

266. Both University of South Wales[465] and Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David[466] reported that their graduates would value having ongoing relationships with the university. University of South Wales said it was an area that could merit further research into whether it would improve retention rates.[467]

267. The Association of Language Learning also this. They cited their own experience of delivering ITE, they receive a lot of emails / messages from past students asking for support. While the support may be on quite basic things, it will be on things they didn't encounter in their training. This can be compounded if they are the only language teacher in a school so can't access support through immediate colleagues. This can lead to feeling overwhelmed, potentially contributing to them leaving the profession.[468]

268. ADEW also talked about the level of overwhelm that early career teachers can feel, and the need to have clear support they can access.[469] This was borne out

[459] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 286-287
[460] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[461] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[462] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.39
[463] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 6.2
[464] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 190
[465] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 95
[466] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 112
[467] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 95
[468] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 306
[469] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 301

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

in discussions with teachers, with many NQTs reported feeling overwhelmed by the expectations that were placed on them at the start of their careers. One reported frustration at the lack of "grace" for teachers teaching classes on their own for the first time.[470]

269. Comparisons were made with other careers and the type of induction and support they receive. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted the more structured approach taken in both nursing and social work. Both have specific support programmes in the early years.[471] They said that early career support should resemble an apprenticeship model including:

> *"... reduced timetables, structured coaching and planned, personalised, professional learning in a way that is commonplace in medicine and other professions."*[472]

270. Wrexham University[473] supported calls for new teachers to have reduced timetables. While ADEW suggested early career teachers having more "protected time" during which they could access coaching and mentoring support.[474]

271. There were repeated calls for early career support to be strengthened.[475] Swansea University Schools Partnership called for a systematic review of support and expectations of newly qualified teachers and early career teachers.[476] While Cardiff Metropolitan University said it was unclear how NQTs' support entitlement is "evaluated and guaranteed"[477].

272. Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David said it was important to ensure that schools who are taking on NQTs have both the time and resources to provide effective support and mentoring.[478]

273. UCAC said the level of support varies between schools. They called for "more robust national leadership on this, and more collaboration, in order to ensure that every individual receives the support that they deserve"[479]. The Institute of Physics

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[470] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 81, September 2025
[471] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraphs 6.9-6.10
[472] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[473] Written evidence, TRR 30 Wrexham University
[474] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 302
[475] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales; Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[476] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[477] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.39
[478] Written evidence, TRR 28, Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David
[479] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 318

also highlighted the inconsistencies in support. It is too reliant on what individual schools can offer.[480] The Royal Society of Biology also suggested that location can affect the level of support, suggesting that those in rural areas may not have the same access to support as those in urban areas.[481]

274. Yet the impact of getting the right support in the early years pays off, with Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighting research which shows that if they get the right support, NQTs will make the "most rapid development in the first two years of teaching following ITE"[482].

275. Some suggested ITE does not equip teachers sufficiently for what teaching is like in practice, in particular challenging behaviour.[483] The Catholic Education Service said there was a "general feeling" that NQTs "are less prepared for the rigours of teaching than previous generations"[484].

276. The WLGA & ADEW said that the nature of ITE can be "fragmented and overly focused on irrelevant paperwork or academic studies leaving less experienced teachers with limited practical exposure"[485]. ADEW said that some teachers come into the profession feeling "underprepared", and asked if there should be more investment in ITE.[486]

277. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that the "flaw in the system" was expecting a one-year postgraduate course plus an often variable induction programme to be the mechanism to produce the teachers we want. They called for a "long, thin development process". Again, they pointed at the more structured approach taken in nursing, social work and other professions.[487]

278. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that high quality induction and early career development is of "great importance". They highlighted the 2020 Welsh Government review which found this to be insufficient, and that as a result new guidance and requirements were drawn up for local authorities. While they said the guidance included effective practice, NQTs were still reporting that the support they were receiving was "highly variable" in both time and support

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[480] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 191
[481] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 193
[482] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[483] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[484] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[485] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[486] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 303
[487] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 187

received.[488] They described getting support in the early career stages as "something of a lottery" and therefore it was "hardly surprising" the numbers leaving at this point in their careers.[489] They called induction "crucial".[490]

279. The EWC said that induction needed improving "in terms of mentoring, coaching and working through that business of academic rigour and practical application"[491].

280. The University of Southampton said induction needs to be more personalised to the individual teacher, and less compliance focused. They said that depersonalised inductions can result in "disillusionment and exit". They suggest that a "developmental approach to retention focuses on mentoring that builds confidence, identity, and professional practice"[492].

> *"This means treating ECTs as long-term assets whose needs evolve over time—not just as trainees to be 'ticked off' a statutory checklist. When teachers are meaningfully developed, not merely assessed, they are far more likely to stay, thrive, and contribute as future mentors and leaders."*[493]

281. A number of stakeholders highlighted the importance of effective mentoring for NQTs, including Wrexham University[494]; and Yr Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales, Trinity St David[495].

282. The University of Southampton pointed to findings from their own research conducted in England on the importance of mentorship for early career teachers calling it a "critical but underexploited factor" in recruitment and retention. The piloting of a mentoring toolkit has indicated "improvements to the visibility and value of mentoring … a renewed commitment to subject-specific CPD and greater alignment between ECT progression and school development planning". They said their research shows a close link between retention and the "quality and context sensitivity" of mentorship.[496]

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[488] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraphs 5.37-5.38
[489] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.40
[490] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[491] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 83
[492] Written evidence, TRR 14 University of Southampton
[493] Written evidence, TRR 14 University of Southampton
[494] Written evidence, TRR 30 Wrexham University
[495] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 111
[496] Written evidence, TRR 14 University of Southampton

283. They also said that the current requirement for secondary school teachers to have subject specific mentors was not necessarily what is needed by early career teachers. They suggested that what was more important was development of "classroom confidence and pedagogical identity in subject areas". They said that their research shows that effective mentorship leads to both the early career teacher and the mentor "feeling valued, retained, and professionally ambitious". It also shows that mentoring is "not a peripheral add-on to teacher development but a pivotal determinant of workforce sustainability in secondary education"[497].

284. Swansea University Schools Partnership reported that some newly qualified teachers felt there was "inconsistent mentoring".[498] NEU Cymru said that before the middle tier reform there was an "external verifier" from the regional consortia, but they were concerned that there may not now be support for the induction mentor or the NQT.[499]

285. The Welsh Government said that support for NQTs was reviewed in 2022, and as a result, all NQTs have a funded mentor and a professional learning programme in their first year. Dysgu is also being asked to review the professional learning support for NQTs:

> *"... to ensure that it aligns with my priorities and provides a clear continuation of support from ITE as they progress through their first few years of teaching as part of an early career programme."*[500]

286. The Cabinet Secretary said that while retention rates were better than in England "we definitely have more to do". She acknowledged the importance of early career support. Currently the Welsh Government funds a package of around £5 million of support, including a funded mentor for every NQT and a 10 per cent timetable reduction to support their accessing professional development.[501]

287. However, she said more still needed to be done. Work is ongoing to develop an early career pathway for teachers in their first five years. This work is being done with teachers, Dysgu and other stakeholders.

> *"My expectation is this career pathway will commence in ITE, which would be year 1, and incorporate the statutory induction*

[497] Written evidence, TRR 14 University of Southampton
[498] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[499] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 327
[500] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[501] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 88

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

> *period, year 2, but then, vitally, go over, then, into the following three years of the first five years of their career. We're currently scoping the development of a three-year early career professional learning programme. That would include a common curriculum for early career PL, a focus on the key issues facing early career teachers, including things like child development, neurodiversity, well-being, behaviour and subject knowledge, and a consistent and coherent model of support for professional learning and inquiry across ITE providers."*

This will also include "ongoing participation in school-led inquiry, both within and beyond the early career teachers' own school"[502].

Professional learning

288. Professional learning extends far beyond the early years of a teacher's career. We heard a range of evidence emphasising how good, timely and effective professional learning can help support retention. However, currently it is not always easily accessible, and there is variability across Wales. EWC said that the access to professional learning is "inconsistent" across Wales.[503]

289. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted that while professional learning has improved it remains non-mandatory and does not compare as favourably to other OECD countries. They said that "many high performing education systems require teachers to participate in a minimum of 100 hours a year of high-quality professional learning"[504].

290. Estyn said that structured and meaningful plans for professional learning are "essential" for recruitment and retention. They said the "most effective schools have a strong culture of professional learning that provides for teachers' needs at all career stages and creates pathways for progression"[505]. While Cardiff Metropolitan University said that professional learning which is tailored to individual school contexts is "of significant importance" to both retention and job satisfaction.[506]

291. The University of Southampton said retention was about more than incentives or working conditions, and teachers need to "feel they are learning,

[502] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 88-89
[503] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[504] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 6.5
[505] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[506] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.31

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supported, and growing in their roles"[507]. The Institute of Physics said that CPD can help improve retention rates as teachers feel more supported.[508]

292. The Scottish Schools Education Research Centre said that there was a "significant cohort" of newly qualified teachers who were at university during the pandemic when laboratory and practical training access was "severely restricted". They said there is a need for "high quality" CPD to fill these gaps.[509]

293. The Royal Society of Biology called for "structured subject-specific CPD as an entitlement for all teachers, ensuring that at least 50% of professional development focuses on subject knowledge and pedagogy"[510]. The Institute of Physics also called for a "greater emphasis" on CPD, ensuring teachers have capacity and time to access it.[511]

294. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted that the quality of professional learning is not currently assessed externally, but noted that the Welsh Government is currently working on a "quality kitemarking process"[512].

295. We heard that workload challenges can impact on teachers' ability to access professional learning.[513] Swansea University Schools Partnership said this needed to be addressed so that teachers have enough time to access "impactful professional learning"[514]. Additionally, funding and resourcing issues can effect access to professional learning.[515]

296. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that often teachers will self-fund professional learning. While some professional learning is available as an entitlement, others have to be paid for by either the school or individual teacher.[516] The Institute of Physics said that any professional development should be done within working hours and should be funded.[517]

297. The Welsh Government said there was "growing recognition" about the importance of ongoing professional development throughout the duration of a

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[507] Written evidence, TRR 14 University of Southampton
[508] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[509] Written evidence, TRR 11 Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC)
[510] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[511] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[512] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 6.7
[513] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[514] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[515] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.17
[516] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 6.7
[517] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics

career. They said that ensuring all practitioners have access to this "is integral to our vision for education".[518]

298. The Welsh Government outlined some of the activities they are funding to support professional development. This includes:

- £163,000 to the Institute of Physics for the Stimulating Physics and Whole School Inclusion and Equity networks.
- Global Futures Programme for international languages. This has been extended to 2026 and helps practitioners to plan and deliver effective language provision.
- £1.8 million to a "collaborative Learned Societies bid" which is led by the Institute of Physics. This aims to enhance science teaching and learning outcomes in both primary and secondary schools.
- Up to 200 individuals a year being funded to take a National Masters in Education.
- Funding the National Doctorate in Education.
- £13.5 million to support 6 INSET days a year and professional learning grant.[519]

299. They also highlighted other work to specifically develop language learning skills such as the E-sgol languages programme; the Literature Fires the Imagination project and the Cardiff University mentoring programme.[520]

300. The Welsh Government emphasised the role of the newly established national professional learning and leadership support body, Dysgu:

> *"This approach aims to create a unified system delivering consistent support that improves learning outcomes."*

They said this new approach will create a more consistent and streamlined approach to professional development.[521]

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[518] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[519] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[520] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[521] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

Workload

301. As we touched on in the previous Chapter, workload is a critical factor in the negative perception of teaching. In some ways, the impact of workload is even more prevalent when it comes to teacher retention. It was a key theme throughout all the evidence we heard. ASCL described it as a "workload crisis" and that without addressing this, "no incentives, no enticement and no routes into the profession will attract and keep the best teachers and leaders within our education system"[522].

302. Almost everyone talked about the impact of workload on recruitment and retention. NEU Cymru said that workload is "consistently reported as one of the key reasons" for teachers and school leaders leaving. They said that in an average week teachers in Wales work more than 50 hours, which compares unfavourably with the OECD average of 39 hours. The only country where teachers work longer hours is Japan.[523] Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted a Trade Unions Congress 2024 survey which indicated that teachers "undertake the most unpaid overtime of any profession"[524].

303. ASCL said that school leaders work more than 48 hours a week, which is the maximum the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service says people should work. They said when they were a headteacher they never worked fewer than 60 hours per week, and neither did their colleagues.

> *"... It's almost toxic how we— Because we know we're impacting on children's lives, we feel that we've got to do more and more and more, and that's a normal way that school leaders and teachers work. They're working hours that just can't be maintained, and then they burn out."*[525]

304. Estyn said that from their conversations with schools and staff, workload and stress are two of the most common factors affecting retention.[526] Cardiff Metropolitan University said that workload and wellbeing were common factors across both primary and secondary schools.[527] While the National Foundation for

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[522] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[523] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[524] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.9
[525] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 38
[526] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[527] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 158

Educational Research said that workload and wellbeing "always come out top" of why teachers are thinking about leaving and what can be done for them to stay.[528]

305. Excessive workload and its impact was a recurring theme in the discussions with teachers and school leaders. It often causes fatigue and staff sickness.[529] The WLGA & ADEW said that for those who leave teaching early in their career, they often cite "unmanageable workloads" which impact their health and wellbeing.[530] The teachers we spoke to said that increased workloads were having a profound detrimental impact on the overall wellbeing of staff.

> *"One member of the department left because she was so unhappy in the profession. She said it sucked the life out of her" – Head of Languages*[531]

306. ASCL Cymru were not alone in highlighting the impact workload has on physical and mental health, as well as impacting family life and relationships.[532] NASUWT said they've been calling on Estyn to look at teacher well-being when doing inspections. They believed this would be "transformational".[533]

307. While we look at pay later, NEU Cymru said that teachers would accept a lower pay rise if workload decreased. But without such workload reduction they wanted a higher pay increase.[534]

308. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted the role headteachers can play in terms of supporting staff, workload and their well-being. As a result, retention will vary dependent on the individual school.[535]

309. We heard of a number of different surveys which provided further insight into the issues of workload and its impact.

310. NEU Cymru said that 20 per cent of their members who responded to their State of Education Survey felt their workload was manageable all or most of the time, with over 40 per cent finding it unmanageable all or most of the time. They

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[528] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 163
[529] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, paragraph 23, September 2024
[530] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[531] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, paragraph 27, September 2024
[532] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[533] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 332
[534] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 271
[535] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 160

also cited their 2023 Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey follow up which found that 92 per cent of respondents worked over their contracted hours regularly with "most feeling pressured to do so". While in the 12 months before the survey, 25 per cent of respondents had been off work, with the main reasons being related to stress, anxiety or depression.[536]

311. Education Support highlighted their 2022 Wellbeing survey which found that 53 per cent of Welsh education staff "had actively sought to change or leave their jobs in the past academic year, with workload cited as a main driver"[537]. While NEU Cymru's survey found similar figures with 56 per cent of respondents planning or thinking of leaving teaching.[538]

312. ASCL Cymru said that 90 per cent of teachers thinking of leaving the profession in 2023/24 said workload was a factor.[539] Cardiff Metropolitan University cited recent research which suggested "one in three teachers" were planning on leaving within five years.[540] NASUWT said that their surveys have shown teachers in Wales going from the least likely across the UK to leave the profession to the most likely to seriously considering leaving, with 77 per cent of respondents.[541]

313. The Royal Society of Chemistry cited EWC's 2021 National Education Workforce Survey which reported that 70 per cent of teachers found their workload unmanageable.[542] They also highlighted their own Annual Science Teaching Survey which in both 2023 and 2025 identified workload as the most common reason for leaving.[543]

314. The level of bureaucracy and administrative work adds to workload pressures. This was raised by Cardiff Metropolitan University[544]; EWC[545]; and Swansea University Schools Partnership[546]. An individual said the "excessive workload—from endless data tracking and marking policies to unrealistic lesson-planning expectations—leaves little time for actual teaching and meaningful student engagement"[547].

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[536] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[537] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[538] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[539] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[540] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.4
[541] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 306
[542] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 19
[543] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 195
[544] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.11
[545] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[546] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[547] Written evidence, TRR 02 Individual

315. UCAC called for a need to ensure there is "real value to any administrative task". They said that working long hours is a factor in people leaving teaching. They called for "definitive boundaries" to be set for hours worked.[548] Education Support said that as a teacher's time is squeezed "relationships can quickly become transactional" with staff feeling like they are "fire-fighting". They said the intensity of the workloads needed to be reduced so teachers can focus on teaching and learning.[549]

316. ASCL Cymru said the perception of teachers working 8-3 term time and having lengthy holidays was not correct, and that "just to stand still, not to develop or reform, educators work extended hours".[550]

317. UCAC highlighted a news article where a former teacher said "The nature of a teacher's job leads to overwhelming weariness and exhaustion. Working three jobs to pay the rent, after leaving the teaching profession, was much easier for me than being a teacher"[551].

318. Obviously staff leaving, combined with recruitment challenges to replace leaving staff, then places further pressure on staff who remain, creating a vicious workload circle. NEU Cymru highlighted this.[552] ADEW said that financial pressures and underfunding have resulted in redundancies or not backfilling roles, which then increases workload on remaining staff.[553]

319. We were told about the impact of "reform fatigue"[554]. Teachers told us that the complexity and regularity of changes around the Curriculum for Wales creates challenges in teachers staying updated. The ongoing need to keep up to date is adding to workload pressures, and contributing to staff burnout.

> *"Everyone's buried under and then new interventions come in and it tips you over" – Secondary Teacher (recently left the profession)*[555]

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[548] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[549] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[550] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[551] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[552] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[553] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 298-299
[554] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[555] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, paragraph 33 September 2024

320. We were told that the lack of clear guidelines on the curriculum is adding to the stress.

> *"You're being pulled into different areas. Schools are being asked to be curriculum designers – which we're not. To be assessment designers at Key Stage 3 – which we're not. There's positives to the Curriculum for Wales, but the whole system has not been thought through because as a consequence we haven't really been able to focus on teaching and learning, which is our main job" – Headteacher*[556]

321. UCAC highlighted the combination of the new curriculum being introduced at the same time as ALN and qualifications reform. Additionally, there are other challenges such as financial pressures, staff redundancies and wider societal changes. They said there is a "risk that teachers are being taken for granted"[557]. NEU Cymru said work was just being "piled on top but nothing's taken away".[558] ADEW also highlighted other areas of change such as Education other than at school guidance, all adding to workload.[559]

322. Some highlighted the increase of work as a result of the ALN reforms. NEU Cymru said that their members were telling them that drawing up an individual development plan takes "at least seven or eight hours". This has considerable workload implications with up to 200 plans being drawn up in large schools. They said people were leaving because of this.[560]

323. EWC said that there is not always policy coherence, and sometimes policies are pulling in different directions.[561]

324. The National Foundation for Educational Research said that the pace of change impacts on workload. Change that is implemented slowly, or combined with fewer other new policies gives teachers more time to adapt. They cited experiences in England when there was curriculum reform alongside other policy change, and there was then a "big spike in leaving rates" alongside increased workload.

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[556] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, paragraph 34 September 2024
[557] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[558] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 297
[559] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 304
[560] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 302
[561] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 44

> *"So, any change that happens quickly and demands a lot of teachers is likely to butt up against capacity, and then find it difficult to be implemented and affects the workforce."*[562]

325. The need to work outside of subject specialism can affect workload. This was highlighted by Estyn[563]; the Institute of Physics[564]; and the Royal Society of Chemistry[565].

326. EWC said that their 2025 Register data showed:

> *"19.2% of maths teachers, 22.1% of English teachers and 56.1% of IT teachers were trained in a different subject. There are particularly high numbers of teachers working outside their specific subject areas in the science subjects, however, in considering this data it is important to remember that, within the sciences, many teachers are delivering broad, general curriculum rather than teaching a single discipline in isolation. 56% of teachers employed to teach physics had not trained as physics teachers. Similarly, 50.8% of chemistry teachers and 41.4% of biology teachers had not trained in these subjects."*[566]

327. Estyn said that "around half of chemistry and physics teachers and around one fifth of English and mathematics teachers trained in another subject. Amongst teachers of Welsh, the proportion is more than one quarter". They also said having to teach outside of specialism can be a particular issue for small schools.[567] The Royal Society of Biology said that "national statistics" suggest that "over 40%" of science teachers are teaching outside their specialism.[568] The Institute of Physics said that only 43.8 per cent of physics teachers were trained in the subject. They said that physics has "one of the lowest rates of specialist teachers.[569]

328. The Royal Society of Chemistry said the impact of teaching outside specialism may be felt more acutely by new science teachers who are less experienced and will need more time to prepare for lessons.[570] The Institute of

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[562] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 184
[563] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[564] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[565] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 22
[566] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[567] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[568] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[569] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[570] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 22

Physics agreed. They said that it "reduces their sense of self-efficacy, adds to their stress, and contributes to the general sense that the profession might not be for them"[571].

329. The Association of Language Learning said it can be particularly challenging if a language teacher is asked to teach a language outside of their expertise. Sometimes language teachers may only have the additional language up to GCSE, adding to workload pressures, as they are also trying to learn another language.[572]

330. The Institute of Physics called for physics teachers to be able to teach within their area of specialism and not be expected to teach other science disciplines, "two of which they may have no specific expertise in". Currently, they said, that physics teachers are recruited as "science teachers" with an expectation that they teach across the three science disciplines. They believed ensuring physics teachers only teach within their area of specialism would help with retention.[573]

331. NEU Cymru said that teachers have long been required to teach outside of their own specialism. This would not change unless it was specifically addressed.[574] EWC called this a "stable and longstanding feature" of teaching in Wales, because QTS in Wales is "non-age and non-subject specific"[575].

332. EWC said that teaching outside of a specialism can impact on standards, as well as workload. "And it causes a huge amount of pressure for that individual teacher, trying to keep one or two steps ahead of the class. That isn't a way, really, to keep standards high within the area"[576]. The Royal Society of Biology also raised concerns about the impact on student outcomes. They highlighted that the level of impact will depend on how closely related the teacher's subject specialism links to the subject they are covering. They said that while teachers from STEM subjects are often asked to cover science subjects, sometimes it will be teachers from unrelated disciplines.[577]

333. EWC said that teaching outside of an individual teacher's specialism is not allowed in Scotland, where teachers are registered to a specific subject and cannot teach outside of this specialism.[578] The Royal Society of Chemistry said that

[571] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[572] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 307
[573] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[574] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 339
[575] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[576] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 22
[577] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[578] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

such a change would require a major overhaul of the Welsh education system.[579] The Institute of Physics agreed saying that Wales does not have the workforce to move to this type of model.[580]

334. The increasing expectations on teachers and schools to pick up issues outside of education is another factor. We heard concerns about this from a range of stakeholders including:

- Education Support[581];
- EWC[582];
- Estyn[583];
- Royal Society of Biology[584]; and
- UCAC[585].

335. Some of these issues can be particularly challenging, which further exacerbates burn out.

> *"We're not just teachers anymore. We're social workers, we're speech therapists, we're physiotherapists, we're occupational therapists, we're dieticians, we're counsellors. We're everything. I don't know how to prepare a teacher to come into all of that" – ALN school leader"*[586]

336. Education Support said that when staff have to deal with a challenging situation, there is "not enough time to properly debrief staff … In this way, education staff can experience vicarious trauma without adequate support for their own mental health"[587].

337. Teachers told us that the increasing societal and governmental demands, which result in additional responsibilities such as overseeing additional activities

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[579] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 202
[580] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 208
[581] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[582] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[583] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[584] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[585] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[586] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, paragraph 24, September 2024
[587] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support

and programmes, has reduced the space for teachers to rest, plan and recover.[588] An individual told us that "unrealistic and unsustainable" expectations placed on teachers are causing "exhaustion, stress, and ultimately, an exodus of talented professions from the field"[589].

338. Education Support said that retention rates are "likely to improve if public services also improve. We cannot expect school staff to keep picking up what other public services cannot address". They cited their 2024 Teacher Wellbeing Index which found that 47 per cent of education staff in Wales said they did not get enough support from other public services, such as the NHS or social services to support their learners. The majority of staff said this negatively impacts on their own mental health and wellbeing.[590] The Royal Society of Biology also said that without the wider "systemic pressures" being addressed, retention will continue to be "vulnerable".[591]

339. Education Support called on the Welsh Government to either provide more resources to support the needs of communities or set limits on education staff responsibilities and the expectation for them to "limitlessly go beyond their expertise in teaching and learning". They wanted to see greater clarity from the Welsh Government as to what areas are within a school's responsibility. They also said only the Government can "help to rectify the wider structural picture"[592].

340. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that these issues cannot be looked at in isolation. They suggested looking to international best practice, as well as building on community focused schools. They felt that should be more "systematic … rather than a kind of funded grant programme". They felt this would be a distinctive Welsh approach which would address issues around workload but also address wider issues.[593]

341. The Catholic Education Service called for a joined up approach "using schools as a hub for other services to build capacity and make better use of budgets and relieve pressures on schools"[594].

342. In terms of potential actions that could help with workload issues, we repeatedly heard calls for planning, preparation and assessment ("PPA") time to

[588] Senedd Cymru, Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention Engagement Findings, paragraph 25, September 2024
[589] Written evidence, TRR 02 Individual
[590] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[591] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[592] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[593] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 172 and 178
[594] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

be increased.[595] It is currently set at 10 per cent of timetabled teaching time, which the NEU Cymru said was "nowhere near enough" time to do all the detailed planning teachers are required to do.[596] ASCL Cymru called it "insulting".[597] NEU Cymru called for it to be doubled to 20 per cent "at least". They said that "teaching is one of the only professions where you can't do your paperwork because you're in front of a class".[598] ASCL Cymru said that doubling PPA would make a difference but would cost.[599]

343. ASCL Cymru said that PPA can be scheduled in such a way that means teachers won't have a free period for a number of days. They believed that PPA was very important. They highlighted that a number of staff leave to teach abroad, partly to have more PPA. In some places there will be as much as 50 per cent PPA, and report "... I can't believe I ever managed to do it when I worked in the UK"[600].

344. The Royal Society of Biology said that Artificial Intelligence has "significant potential to reduce workload" but accepted that in the short term it could act as a "stressor". They cited a recent pilot of ChatGPT to help with Key Stage 3 science lesson planning; with "appropriate guidance, teachers were able to cut lesson planning time by over 30%, while maintaining quality and relevance"[601].

345. We note that since we finished gathering evidence, Estyn published a thematic report on how AI is supporting teaching and learning. The teachers involved in the review "consistently reported substantial workload reductions resulting from AI use, notably in areas such as lesson planning, resource creation, differentiation of learning materials, and report writing". It called for a "coherent national approach ... to ensure the security of data and maximise the potential of AI ... and to mitigate the challenges and risks"[602].

346. NEU Cymru acknowledged that the Welsh Government accepted that current workload demands were unsustainable and impact on learning.[603] UCAC said that while this was the case "there has been very little action to improve the

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[595] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[596] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[597] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[598] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 298
[599] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 81
[600] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 39- 40
[601] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[602] Estyn, A New Era: How Artificial Intelligence (AI) is Supporting Teaching and Learning, Executive Summary, 9 October 2025
[603] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru

situation in recent years"[604]. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that while work has started, more is needed.[605]

347. NASUWT were frustrated that despite acknowledgment by the Welsh Government on workload, it has not yet reduced.

> *"... heavy feeling of déjà vu. I think that, for certainly every year that I've been in this job, we have met with politicians and employers and talked about the issues with workload. We thought we had something going with the previous education Secretary, when he said, 'We're going to get a grip of this. We're going to get a grip of workload, set up workload committees, set up workload sub-committees.' They have been very pleasant, and we've done a lot of talking for a very long period of time, and there has been not one discernible slight difference with regard to workload at the classroom level. Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. No change whatsoever, and yet we've been talking now for around two years on this."*[606]

348. They said that most of the work done by the Workload Coordination Group (see paragraph 351) was focused on school leadership and not classrooms. They called for greater co-ordination and control. They said local authorities had to play a role to ensure greater consistency.[607] NEU Cymru said that the recent "middle-tier reorganisation" has had no reduction on workload, and instead there has continued to be increases.[608]

349. NAHT Cymru said that workload improvements in some areas have been offset by increases in other areas. They said that new legislation and guidance has been introduced without workload impact assessments. They said a workload impact assessment tool has been promised for the last two years, but had not, at the time of giving oral evidence, been published.[609]

350. The Welsh Government acknowledged that workload is a "key factor ... one of the reasons cited for leaving the profession". They pointed to the Programme for Government "commitment to reduce bureaucracy for school leaders". This is being done in social partnership with key education partners and will "identify key

[604] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[605] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 203
[606] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 276
[607] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 282-284
[608] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 285
[609] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 36

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

areas of workload that can be changed or removed from schools to reduce workload, eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, reduce burden and create space for teachers to teach"[610]. The Cabinet Secretary said she was not surprised by the strength of the evidence we heard on workload.[611]

351. The Welsh Government also pointed to the Strategic Workload Coordination Group. This Group was independently chaired, with three working groups focused on finance, reporting and engagement, and policy development and implementation. It completed its work in June 2025, and identified areas for future work. The Welsh Government said actions on workload will be part of the Workforce Plan.[612]

352. The Cabinet Secretary said that the Chair of the Strategic Workload Coordination Group highlighted a "notable shift in the culture of our education directorate" and that she had recommended the workload impact assessment should be used across all Government departments to ensure "no unintended workload impacts"[613]. Any new or revised Welsh Government policy will have a workload impact assessment, which will consider the impact of changes or new policies on workload of education staff.[614]

353. The Chair had also noted "a very significant reduction in reporting requirements in relation to Welsh Government grants, down from 50 to eight". She recommended that the Welsh Government continues its work on school business managers. This pilot is looking at how they can help with workload issues.[615]

354. The Cabinet Secretary said that this work had focused on school leaders workload, and that it will be "harder to discern at a classroom level". As part of the Workforce Plan they:

> *"... want to look at how we can have a similarly structured process to improve workload for classroom teachers. It's a very, very high priority for us as a Government, because it's absolutely critical to ensuring the attractiveness of teaching as a profession."*[616]

[610] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[611] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 67
[612] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[613] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 68
[614] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[615] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 70
[616] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 70

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

355. The Cabinet Secretary said that in many places teachers teaching outside of their specialism is "well planned" with support in place. But there will be instances where this won't happen, or staff won't have enough time to plan. She said that work was ongoing, in particular through the capacity building grant, to support schools to work collaboratively and share resources. This has been focused on Welsh medium secondary schools where this issue can be particularly acute.[617]

356. She also said that longer term, the Welsh Government are planning to work with Adnodd and Dysgu to develop a "national suite of subject-specific professional learning and teaching resources to support teachers"[618].

357. The Welsh Government said they recognised the "inextricable link between workload and well-being". They pointed to the funding for Education Support who offer extra well-being support:

> *"... free advice and support for schools across Wales and bespoke mental health and wellbeing support via their well-received School Wellbeing Service, with continued support as needed. Alongside this Education Support provides webinars and masterclasses for all education workforce staff in Wales, which is supported by resources and information on the Education Support website, many of which are available in Welsh."*[619]

358. They also pointed to the "Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being". The statutory plan was published in 2021, and "aimed at the needs of school-age learners and the workforce which supports their learning. ... supported by teachers who operate in a culture that equally values their own well-being"[620].

359. The Cabinet Secretary said she was were really open to the opportunities AI may provide to help with workloads and "free up time for teachers to do what only a teacher can do, stood in front of children and young people". She acknowledged this came with risk though, and would need to be carefully managed.[621]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[617] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 122- 123
[618] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 124
[619] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[620] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[621] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 81

Flexible working

360. As we highlighted in the previous Chapter, the increase in flexible working options in other careers and professions is a factor in making teaching less attractive to new entrants. We also heard it is a significant factor in retention.

361. Changes since the pandemic mean people want more flexibility in their working lives. Cardiff Metropolitan University said teachers are "increasingly … interested in flexible working hours, job sharing, career breaks and other variations to their terms and conditions of employment"[622].

362. Of the teachers who we spoke to who had left the profession, many told us that having more flexibility was a major factor in their decision to leave.

> *"There's absolutely no flexibility. Even if you had a day of no lessons, you had to be there [in school]. Even though we had been through the pandemic and proven that we could work from home." – Secondary teacher (recently left)*[623]

363. We heard of the particular challenges trying to balance work with family life, and in particular childcare. Teachers shared their frustrations at inflexible leave policies, which made it hard to manage childcare:

> *"I wanted a family friendly career so I opted for teaching knowing I would have holidays and weekends off to spend with my family. I was so wrong indeed. I'm replaceable in work. I'm not replaceable in my family." - Primary teacher (recently left the profession)*

> *"If [my son] is ill… where do we find our childcare? We're not able to just book days off." – Primary teacher*[624]

364. NEU Cymru said there is a "massive amount of female teachers leaving in their 30s, and that's because there's just a complete lack of flexibility with regard to being a working mother"[625].

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00.01 29/01/2026

[622] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[623] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 38, September 2025
[624] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 39, September 2025
[625] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 296

365. Everyone we spoke to during our engagement activity agreed that providing greater flexibility would have a significant impact on retention. They made a number of suggestions such as offering flexible or homeworking arrangements where possible, and rethinking timetables to allow greater autonomy over schedules.[626]

366. We heard that the opportunity to work more flexibly can depend on the individual school. A NEU Cymru representative said:

> *"... So, I work in an excellent school, and I've got an excellent headteacher, and we are free to leave and come and go when we're not teaching. Our head will do everything within their power to enable flexible working practices to take place for people returning from maternity leave, but we know we're not the majority."*[627]

367. UCAC said there was a need to ensure that "everyone leads effectively". They called for there to be a requirement for social partnership at a school level.[628]

368. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that both new entrants and established teachers are actively taking supply contracts rather than substantive posts "so that they can control their working hours and enjoy holidays and other family-related activities at a time of their own choice"[629].

369. More teachers are looking to work part-time. However we heard from school leaders of the challenges this can present in terms of budget and timetabling, when constrained by a relatively restrictive school day structure. We were told these challenges are more difficult in secondary schools, and is further affected by increasing levels of sickness and the broader recruitment and retention issues.

> *"With fewer teachers in school, this means the number of people needing to wear several different hats is getting bigger and bigger. So we are at the point of not being able to give people those flexibilities they want because we're just trying to operate in the first place." – Secondary School Leader*[630]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[626] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 94, September 2025
[627] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 321
[628] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 323
[629] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[630] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 40 September 2025

370. Estyn highlighted that the number of teachers working part-time has increased in the last 10 years. They said that they "add much to the profession and support the widening of the workforce". But, they acknowledged there are challenges, including ensuring continuity for learners, and supporting "a whole-school culture of professional learning"[631].

371. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that Wales has a higher proportion of part-time teachers than in England. They said that in one of their case-study schools "twenty-four of the eighty staff are now on/or wish to be on, flexible contracts"[632].

372. The school leaders we spoke to during our engagement activity acknowledged that improving flexibility would improve recruitment and retention. But they felt that flexibility could not be offered without significant budget increases.[633] ASCL Cymru said there were "limited opportunities" for flexible working.[634] As did the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body.[635]

373. NAHT Cymru said they didn't think any school leader wouldn't want to offer flexibility, but that it is very challenging.

> *"... if you were in a small primary school, for example, you need boots on the ground, you need people in the building. That is one of the challenges that you have. In a secondary school, ... but, of course, when you are trying to schedule a curriculum of multiple subjects, and again you have those challenges around scheduling, it'll be those practicalities that will be more of the challenge, not the willingness of headteachers to make it work, because we know of some headteachers who do that already, who already offer that level of flexibility, and I'm sure they would continue to do so. But when you have schools that are having to make cuts on staffing because of the financial pressures, and it is staffing that they're having to cut, because that's the only thing left to cut, then that makes that flexibility much more challenging."*[636]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[631] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[632] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.29
[633] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 41, September 2025
[634] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[635] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.17
[636] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 80

374. Estyn said that school leaders are "increasingly … trying to be creative" to support more flexibility and an improved work-life balance for staff.[637] While Cardiff Metropolitan University said schools are exploring different ways to support flexible working but that they face financial and logistical challenges, and also "local authority support.[638]

375. We heard that a more organised approach to PPA may support teachers being able to work from home more often. Estyn said that in some secondary schools "headteachers have been creative with PPA time to enable staff to have one afternoon a fortnight where they can work from home or come in to school slightly later in the morning". However, they noted that such approaches are becoming more challenging in the current financial climate.[639] NEU Cymru called for PPA to be scheduled in a "weekly unit" which can be done away from school.[640]

376. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that in England the Secretary of State for Education "recently announced that teachers can spend all their allocated PPA … time working from home if they so wish"[641].

377. The Cabinet Secretary said work was ongoing around improving flexibility.. She said there is work that does not need to be in school, highlighting PPA as a "prime example". She highlighted that a lot of staff are already working part-time, but that it was important to ensure fairness.

> *"If we are allowing school leaders and teachers flexibility, then we need to think about support staff and pastoral staff. So, that's something that we do need to have that discussion with trade unions and local authorities about."*[642]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Pay

378. While the views on issues such as workload, flexible working, and professional learning were generally consistent. They were less so regarding pay. The extent to which pay was a critical factor in retention was more contested.

379. An individual said that pay had neither kept up with inflation or the increasing levels of responsibility teachers have. They said that pay does not reflect

[637] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[638] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.30
[639] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[640] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[641] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.19
[642] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 80

teachers' hard work or "the critical role they play in shaping future generations"[643]. The EWC said that pay was a "constant issue".[644]

380. The unions all called for improvements in pay. NEU Cymru said that teacher pay had "huge real-term cuts" with inflation, affecting the competitiveness of teacher pay but also hitting teachers' living standards. They said that there is a urgent need for "pay correction". Even with the latest pay rise "experienced teacher and school leader pay is over 21% lower against Retail Prices Index (RPI) inflation than it was in 2010". They said teacher pay has lagged behind inflation for most years since 2010, and argued that it is at its least competitive since 1945. They felt there is a "clear and direct link between pay cuts against inflation" and recruitment and retention issues.[645]

381. The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body noted a decline in real-terms pay since 2010. They said that at September 2023, teacher and leaders' average earnings were 9 per cent below April 2010 after adjustment for CPI inflation.[646] Others who noted that real terms pay has decreased since 2010 included Cardiff Metropolitan University.[647]

382. All those we spoke to as part of our engagement activity said that wages need to be more competitive with other jobs and sectors.[648]

383. We heard about the impact salary levels may have on teachers' lives, such as affecting their ability to buy a home. This can then act as a trigger to leave the profession to move into higher paying careers.[649]

384. The issue of pay comparability with other professions was raised including by the EWC[650] and NAHT Cymru[651]. The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body said:

> *"While teachers' median total salaries (including Teaching and Learning Responsibility allowances – TLRs) are comparable to other professions in Wales, data shows less salary progression*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[643] Written evidence, TRR 02 Individual
[644] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 44
[645] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[646] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.13
[647] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.20
[648] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 95, September 2025
[649] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.21
[650] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 44
[651] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 37

> *for more experienced teachers, compared with other professions and teachers in some other jurisdictions."*

This, they said, was because teachers in Wales have a "relatively compressed salary scale, leading to a salary 'plateau'". When this is reached, additional duties have to be taken in order to increase salaries.[652] The EWC also noted the "limited opportunities for salary progression"[653]. As did Cardiff Metropolitan University[654].

385. Education Support said "competitive pay is a hugely important part" of retention but that other aspects are also important, including working conditions, professional development, and appreciation.[655]

386. NASUWT said that conditions are better in Wales than England, which they attributed to social partnerships with both Welsh Government and local authorities.[656]

387. Others suggested that pay was less of a factor. Cardiff Metropolitan University said pay was less frequently identified as a concern. They said that headteachers believed that many who leave teaching early in their careers "progress to less well-paid posts and are more motivated by work/life balance issues"[657]. They also cited OECD findings that in most countries status and progression are as significant as salary levels in retention.[658]

388. The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body outlined the recommendations it has made on pay and conditions, which have been implemented:

> *"... the restoration of a national pay scale, with articulated pay points; the shortening of the main pay range, meaning that teacher in Wales can reach the top of the scale within 5 years; the removal of performance related pay, with the exception of progression to the upper pay range; the restoration of pay portability; amendments to Teaching and Learning Responsibility allowances, to reward classroom teaching and pastoral care; recommendations regarding the role of*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[652] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.15
[653] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[654] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.20
[655] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[656] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 366
[657] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.19
[658] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.22

> *Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators, currently under discussion."*[659]

389. The Welsh Government outlined the "agreed annual process" on pay and conditions, which involves "social partners" and the recommendations from the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body. They said the Pay Review Body's remit always asks them to "have particular regard to supporting recruitment and retention of sufficient quality and quantity of teachers and leaders, whilst reflecting the challenges of sustainable public sector finances"[660].

390. This process has:

> *"... allowed us to introduce some key changes requested by the profession to further improve the teachers' pay system over the last 5 years. Positive changes have included the reintroduction of pay portability and removal of performance-based pay progression. In 2024, we also removed the strict pro-rata principle for TLR allowances making these allowances more accessible and much fairer for part-time teachers. This year, I have removed the application process to move from the main to upper pay scale whilst we work with partners to develop a single pay scale for classroom teachers. I have also committed to moving ALN co-ordinators to the leadership group pay scale and we are working with partners to achieve this as quickly as possible."*[661]

391. They emphasised the social partnership approach taken in Wales, which they said, has meant that there are higher salaries and allowances than in England "for both new and more experienced teachers".[662]

Challenging behaviour

392. We heard about the challenging context in which schools are operating, in particular increasingly difficult behaviour from learners, but also from families, and wider society. This impacts on both the perception of teaching and recruitment, but also the longer term attractiveness for staff already in the profession. It can also have a significant impact on teacher wellbeing.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[659] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 5.2
[660] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[661] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[662] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

393. Learner behaviour appears to have deteriorated over recent years. NEU Cymru said it had got worse since the pandemic. They cited their recent Behaviour Survey of NEU members in Wales, which found that 87 per cent of respondents felt that both behaviour and the way it was dealt with in their own setting had got worse.[663] Others who cited increases in challenging behaviour included ASCL Cymru[664]; Cardiff Metropolitan University[665]; EWC[666]; and the teachers and leaders we spoke to as part of our engagement work.[667] EWC said that the impact of managing challenging behaviour is "undermining teaching and learning"[668].

394. ASCL Cymru said the pandemic was "a 10-year jolt overnight" changing the context of every school.[669]

395. The increase in challenging behaviour was attributed to a number of factors including:

- Decrease in support staff and reduced individual support for students[670];
- Increase in unmet ALN needs[671];
- Impacts of child poverty, in particular impact of hunger[672];
- High numbers of children with adverse childhood experiences[673];
- Lack of access to specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services[674];

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[663] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[664] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 124
[665] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.13
[666] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[667] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 67, September 2025
[668] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[669] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 124
[670] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru; CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 129 [ASCL Cymru]; Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 68 September 2025
[671] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru; Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 68, September 2025
[672] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[673] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[674] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru; Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 68, September 2025

- Inconsistent implementation of schools policies / lack of support from school senior leadership teams[675];
- Use of mobile phones and social media[676];
- Vaping[677];
- Recruitment and retention challenges which result in more staff inconsistencies and reliance on supply teachers[678]; and
- No pastoral care[679].

396. We heard that in some instances teachers can feel "threatened" when in school.[680] UCAC cited the increase in violent incidents in schools.[681] Education Support also said they have "many examples" where teachers felt unsafe at work.[682]

397. The Royal Society of Chemistry highlighted the particular challenges new teachers can face in behaviour management. They said it was important that schools have "strong" policies so that new teachers who will "always get the worst behaviour" are supported.[683]

398. NEU Cymru said that a "holistic approach utilising a range of practice is key to developing a whole school approach to behaviour management if settings are to genuinely tackle challenging behaviour and create inclusive safe learning environments for all learners and staff"[684]. Estyn said that schools with good retention had school leaders who "ensured that there are effective behaviour strategies, they planned carefully so that teachers have manageable class sizes".[685]

399. ASCL Cymru said that an increase in school funding was needed to ensure that schools have enough staff to support children, in particular non-statutory staff

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[675] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[676] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru; Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.14; CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 256
[677] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[678] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 71, September 2025
[679] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[680] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[681] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[682] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[683] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 196
[684] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[685] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn

such as behaviour intervention workers or other pastoral support.[686] WLGA called for a:

> *"... behaviour strategy that local authorities could embrace and deliver across our schools to ensure there's a consistency and continuity so that teachers know that they're going to a school with a consistent approach to behaviour and how it's dealt with to minimise some of that low-level poor behaviour in classrooms before behaviour actually gets out of hand."*[687]

400. Teachers, ex-teachers and school leaders that we spoke to highlighted the need for more specialist support and more training for staff in managing diverse needs.[688] They said that the impact of trauma that learners experience at home is better recognised than it used to be. As a result, schools are investing in trauma informed practices, but they felt the support that is available is insufficient to address the more severe social and emotional needs of students.[689]

401. Those who highlighted the impact of challenging behaviour on teacher wellbeing included ASCL Cymru[690]; Education Support[691]; NEU Cymru[692]; and WLGA and ADEW[693].

402. Education Support cited the findings from their Teacher Wellbeing Survey 2024 which found that 58 per cent of staff in Wales had experienced more incidents of challenging behaviour in comparison to last year. Of these staff 80 per cent said it had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. They said poor behaviour (both from learners and their families) makes it more difficult for staff to "switch off from work, their self-efficacy, and job satisfaction", which then impacts on retention rates.[694] While the Royal Society of Chemistry cited evidence from TeacherTapp which indicates that student behaviour is now the main factor contributing to stress.[695]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

[686] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 129
[687] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 348
[688] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 101, September 2025
[689] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 70, September 2025
[690] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 125
[691] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[692] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[693] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[694] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[695] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 19

403. NEU Cymru cited their own behaviour survey which found that 73 per cent of respondents said that behaviour "regularly or sometimes" has a negative impact on their wellbeing. 70 per cent said that this has made them think about leaving education.[696]

404. While one school leader we spoke to said the extreme behaviour of a particular student, combined with a lack of support from their Head meant she had no choice but "to walk away from the profession" or face serious detriment to her own health.

> *"'Three days a week, I was being kicked, bitten, having shoes, Chromebooks thrown at me. This is in a classroom where I was still trying to teach 16 other children I didn't go to work to be hurt.' – Primary Assistant Headteacher (recently left the profession)"*[697]

405. While behaviour has become more challenging within the classroom, we also heard that teachers, school leaders and schools don't always have the same support from families or the wider community they had previously. This then makes dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom more difficult, and also bleeds into staff's wider lives, especially with the use of social media.

406. UCAC described parents challenging school disciplinary decisions, querying rules and simply not working with schools. Sometimes this behaviour can be "challenging and threatening at times, appearing in schools without warning…"[698]. While EWC described "strained" relationships in some areas which results in higher learner absence and "parental disengagement" which can cause "conflict and stress".[699]

407. ASCL Cymru talked about a lack of support from homes when behaviour management policies are enacted. They said that family support is critical for effective behaviour management but is not always available.[700] The teachers, ex-teachers and school leaders we talked to also emphasised the importance of

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[696] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[697] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 69, September 2025
[698] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[699] Written evidence, TRR 23 EWC
[700] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 136

strong support from home to support teachers in managing behaviour in the classroom.[701]

408. Cardiff Metropolitan University cited teachers reporting an "entitlement culture" from both learners and their families which impacts on sanctions and leads to increased complaints against teachers who challenge behaviour.[702] ASCL said that before the pandemic education staff "were seen as having positive intent". Even if there was disagreement "our intent was never questioned, but now our intent is questioned, and publicly"[703].

409. NASUWT talked of the impact of social media, saying the "ease" of social media can amplify situations:

> *"The unhappiness, the mumblings that might have taken place on the school car park at the end of the day are now transformed to being out there with regard to social media."*[704]

They also highlighted the reputational impact this can have when school leaders and teachers are "splashed all over social media".[705] ASCL Cymru also talked about the impact of social media saying groups of people use it to "mock … attack you, and it's like hatred breeds hatred. So it gets bigger and bigger"[706].

410. Education Support cited an increase in "vexatious complaints" from parents and guardians, saying 43 per cent of staff said their school had seen an increase from the previous year.[707]

411. ASCL Cymru called for a "a conscious plan" to reverse attitudes toward education staff. They made a comparison with drink-driving adverts.

> *"It's almost those types of ads that you need, that constant replay again. But, rather than trying to make it about just education, it needs to be made about, 'We care. We love your kids like you love your kids', and get that trust in our positive intent back in. It has to start with the press, and we have to*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[701] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 72, September 2025
[702] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 5.13
[703] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 19
[704] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 255
[705] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 257
[706] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 17
[707] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support

challenge what the press are putting in, because they're fuelling the fire."[708]

412. The Cabinet Secretary accepted that behaviour was a "major challenge" but there was a focus on it within the Welsh Government. She said that while she didn't currently have "precise data about the impact of behaviour" she knew it was having an impact. She said it was not just about behaviour but also about the complexities that schools have to deal with. As a result there was a need for an improved "multi-agency approach to support schools". She said others cannot think of schools as the "fourth emergency service'", and called on all to "step up and wrap around those schools. That in itself will make a really big difference"[709].

413. The Cabinet Secretary agreed that more needed to be done to ensure teaching is respected and admired.

"We've also had challenges with the portrayal of teaching in the media. Now, since I've come into post, obviously, I'm in schools a lot, and I've got to say I've been absolutely blown away by what I've seen amongst our school leaders and our teachers. It's been really, really inspirational. I've had several school leaders say to me this is the best job in the world, and we definitely need to do more to sell that to the public and to people who are thinking about coming into the profession."[710]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Our view

414. Broadly speaking, improving some of the issues highlighted in this Chapter, would involve significant financial input. Tackling workload pressures, having more professional learning opportunities, and offering more flexible working patterns all require there to be more teachers. This is at a time when schools are having to face difficult financial pressures, and are often being forced to reduce staff numbers. But we believe it is important and should be a political priority for both the current and next Welsh Government. As we have said previously, children only get one chance at their school education. Education is critical and key. The cost of not getting this right is simply too high, not just for individual learners but also for wider society.

[708] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 30
[709] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 83-84
[710] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 73

415. We are concerned that the induction programmes for NQTs are not consistently strong enough across the country. A well-structured, clear and supportive induction programme with time and space for new teachers to develop their skills and confidence is an essential building block to a successful and happy teaching career.

416. Mentoring should be an important feature of both early career support and an ongoing professional learning offer. Aspirational mentoring can drive up standards. It can also play a role in disseminating good practice across the profession.

417. Professional learning continues to be important throughout a teacher's career, ensuring they are at the cutting edge of subject expertise and pedagogical practice. But, workload and financial pressures mean some teachers are not able to access professional learning. There are serious questions to be asked about how teachers can be supported to access professional learning opportunities. We are concerned that there is not sufficient funding in the school system to support teachers to access professional learning they would benefit from.

418. Sabbaticals can play an important role in developing skills and expertise, for the individual teacher and school; and their host school or institution. However, there can be challenges in accessing such opportunities, in particular schools being able to backfill teachers on sabbatical. We think there should be further investigation into how sabbaticals can be effectively used for professional learning, and how schools and teachers can be supported to take up these opportunities.

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government, as part of their Strategic Education Workforce Plan should include work on the current use of sabbaticals in Welsh schools, and how schools and school staff can be supported to take up sabbatical opportunities.

419. Having opportunities to share and learn good practice from others should be part of the professional learning programme for all teachers and schools. We know from experiences within our own constituencies and regions that this type of professional learning can be particularly beneficial. Schools need to be given the time and support to do this. We are concerned that some of the scaffolding for this has been lost with the disbanding of the regional consortia. Both Estyn and the Welsh Government play an important role is providing oversight to the new school improvement services. We have been looking at school improvement as a distinct issue, and will be writing to the Welsh Government on this separately. For this inquiry though, we seek assurances from the Welsh Government that

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

there are enough opportunities for good practice to be identified, and then shared across schools both locally and nationally.

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government should outline how it supports schools and local authorities to identify good practice and then how it supports dissemination of this good practice across the Welsh education sector.

420. Workload is a clear challenge for teachers. This is accepted by everybody, including the Welsh Government. It is a driving factor in teachers leaving the profession. We are aware that this is an issue that other countries also struggle with, and no-one seems to have found the silver bullet. But there may be learning we can take and apply in a Welsh context. We also acknowledge that it is easy to identify workload as a challenge, and much more difficult to identify meaningful solutions.

421. While the Welsh Government has been working on this, but from the evidence that we have heard it has not yet had an impact on the classroom. We would like more detail on the exact impact of the Strategic Workload Co-ordination Group and how this has reduced workload.

Recommendation 8. The Welsh Government should outline the impacts of the Strategic Workload Co-ordination Group on workload reduction and in which areas of school operations these benefits have been realised and what the impacts have been on the workforce.

422. We consider the impact of education reforms on workload in more detail in paragraphs 494-495.

423. We think it is important that tackling workload pressures should be prioritised in the Workforce Plan. In looking at this issues, we think the Welsh Government should ensure it speaks directly to teachers across Wales to better understand the challenges and potential solutions. Engagement and consultation should not be limited simply to representative bodies, but must extend to ensuring front line teachers get their voices heard. This work should consider how workload can be measured so that there can be evaluation of policy interventions.

Recommendation 9. The Welsh Government should make reducing workloads for classroom teachers a key priority in the Strategic Education Workforce Plan. The Workforce Plan should have clear and measurable actions that seek to reduce workloads in a meaningful and noticeable way for teachers as quickly as possible. It should also include ways in which workload can be measured. As part of this, the Welsh Government should ensure it engages directly with teachers. It should

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTILL 00:01 29/01/2026

also look at best practice from the other countries, both within the UK and internationally and seek to apply any of this practice which would work within the Welsh context.

424. Schools reflect wider society. Some of the issues they face are beyond the control of an individual school, local authority or even Government. But it is clear that we are asking too much of schools to solve all of society's current ills. Schools clearly do not operate in a vacuum but it is not their job to act as a fourth emergency service or plug the gaps of other public services. Expectations need to be realistic in terms of what schools can be asked to support outside of their core educational purpose.

425. Teachers who do need additional support may not always feel comfortable taking up opportunities that are available for support. This may be because they fear they will be looked upon differently.

426. Teaching is a less flexible job than some other careers but this does not mean that there cannot be some flexibility. We think there should be a broad ambition across the sector to offer more flexibility as standard. Most school leaders want to be able do this, although he practical challenges can seem insurmountable. But while, staff have to be on site to teach or run other activities, they do not have to be on site to do PPA. Some schools schedule PPA in a way that supports teachers being able to work off site and provides some flexibility. We also note the evidence from headteachers that having more staff would help support greater flexible working, such as offering part time hours as well as working from home opportunities. It is challenging to offer flexibility when you are already managing with a skeleton staff.

427. We think it should be incumbent on schools to support greater flexible working for those activities which do not have to be done in the classroom such as PPA. Where it can be supported, teachers should be able to work from home to undertake PPA, or at the very least if they must stay on-site should not be disturbed or asked to do other duties, including covering for other lessons. Providing more flexibility makes teaching a more attractive profession to join, and to stay long term.

Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government should set an expectation to schools and local authorities that activities that do not need to be done at school, such as planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) can be done off-site. In setting this expectation the Welsh Government should make it clear that timetabling should be done in such a way that would support off site working for

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

PPA. As a minimum, where teachers do have to remain on site, PPA time must be protected so they cannot be disturbed and drawn into other school matters.

428. On the issue of pay, we note that there was mixed evidence about the extent to which it is a key factor in either recruitment or retention. Additionally, there are financial constraints within the Welsh public sector at the moment, which make substantial pay increases unfeasible.

429. The Welsh Government has placed much emphasis in recent months on its National Behaviour Summit, which was held in May 2025. Following the Summit, the Welsh Government announced "five immediate actions, including the creation of structures to support multi-agency working, and a system for sharing best practice between schools locally and nationally.[711]

430. On pupil behaviour, we also note the importance of parental and carer responsibility to both ensure that children can attend school and engage meaningfully. This responsibility also extends to acting in partnership with schools when there are behavioural challenges.

431. We are slightly concerned that we have yet to see real, concrete action arising from this Summit, on a significant and urgent issue. We note the Cabinet Secretary talked about updating guidance for schools. But at the time of writing, the behaviour management guidance on the Welsh Government website is from 2012. A lot has changed since 2012. Approaches to tackle behaviour in 2012, will not necessarily be right for schools in 2026. We think it is imperative that the Welsh Government issue a suite of clear and comprehensive guidance on behaviour management for all different types of school settings in Wales as a matter of urgency. Such guidance would provide some assurances to teachers about a consistent approach being taken on behaviour across Wales.

Recommendation 11. The Welsh Government issues clear, coherent and universal guidance on behaviour management that is explicit and open to as little misinterpretation as possible for all different types of school settings in Wales, as a matter of urgency. This guidance should ensure that a consistent approach is being taken across Wales to behaviour, and in particular serious behavioural breaches.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[711] Welsh Government, Media Release: Five immediate actions to tackle behaviour, 22 May 2025

4. School leaders

The issues that relate to teacher recruitment and retention also impact on school leadership. Being an effective school leader is a tough job, and it is becoming less attractive. The school leader workforce does not reflect the wider teaching workforce or Wales more generally.

432. As the numbers entering or staying in the profession decline, this has an impact on the school leadership pipeline. All of the other issues highlighted previously in the report apply to school leaders, but there are also some specific issues which we detail below.

433. We heard that school leadership recruitment challenges can particularly affect some specific settings, including rural schools, Welsh medium schools, schools in disadvantaged areas and faith schools.[712] WLGA & ADEW said the challenges particularly affects "faith, Welsh medium and small rural primary schools" but some secondary schools are also facing challenges. More generally, they said there are fewer applicants for head and deputy head roles, and fewer experienced applicants. They also highlighted the age profile of heads and senior leaders.[713] Other who highlighted concerns about the low number of candidates for vacancies included ASCL Cymru[714] and the Catholic Education Service.[715]

434. The Catholic Education Service said that in places the existence of some Catholic schools is threatened because they are unable to recruit to leadership roles.[716]

435. Estyn described how when faced with these challenges, schools and local authorities have explored alternatives. These often start as temporary options but

[712] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales; Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru; Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service; Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[713] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[714] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[715] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[716] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

can morph into longer term choices, such as establishing a school federation with one head responsible for multiple schools. They said there is no research on the impact on learners. They also highlighted that these posts can often be overwhelming due to the demands of the role.[717]

436. The Welsh Government said there was a need to better understand why people with the National Professional Qualification in Headship ("NPQH") qualification are not taking the step into senior leadership roles. They are working with EWC to share data with local authorities of the 700 people who have the NPQH but are not currently working as school heads. They are also working with local authorities to develop succession planning models.[718] The Cabinet Secretary said more work was needed to understand why this group of qualified school leaders are not currently in leadership roles.[719] She later clarified that once individuals have been identified, that Dysgu will be working with local authorities to "develop support for them to take their next steps"[720].

Progression routes into leadership roles

437. We heard there is a need for increased support and clearer career progression pathways for school leaders. ASCL Cymru said that there can be a lack of confidence, or a lack of representation. They also said there was insufficient training to prepare people for school leadership roles.[721] The lack of adequate training or support to progress into leadership roles was flagged by EWC[722] and WLGA.[723]

438. Swansea University Schools Partnership called for a review of support for middle leaders which might help encourage more to progress.[724] While USCET called for tailored CPD to help prepare people for leadership roles. This should build on the leadership strands that already exist in ITE.[725] Cardiff Metropolitan University said that providing shadowing opportunities for potential school leaders can be "really helpful".[726]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[717] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[718] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[719] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 92
[720] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025
[721] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[722] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[723] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 325
[724] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[725] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[726] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 194

439. School leaders we spoke to described access to professional development for middle leaders as a "lottery", dependent on where they are based.[727] They called for a national, cohesive and structured development pathway for Welsh teachers:

> *"Some systems have very effective graduate courses and training... taking people from the beginning of their profession, training them for middle leadership, training for pastoral leadership, then training them towards senior leadership. There are courses out there but they're not coherent. There isn't a clear structure across Wales...and we're not that big a country so why aren't we able to put a system like that in place?" – Secondary Headteacher*[728]

440. The Royal Society of Biology called for stronger leadership pathways for STEM teachers. They said it was important to recognise subject leadership within school leader structures, and felt there was a need for "targeted leadership training" for STEM subject leaders and mentors.[729]

441. We also heard about other issues around professional development for school leaders. Cardiff Metropolitan University said that headteachers want peer networks, but that because of workload they struggle to develop or organise them. They called for others to organise these networks so it is not reliant on already over-stretched leaders.[730] Both the Education Policy Institute[731] and WLGA[732] supported peer networks.

442. The Welsh Government said Dysgu would now be taking the lead on reviewing leadership development programmes. Dysgu will work with local authorities to develop support which meets future needs.[733] In further correspondence, the Cabinet Secretary said this work will look at support for "middle, and senior leaders and experienced headteachers". She also accepted there was a need for support for leaders to "network to share experiences".[734]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[727] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 57, September 2025
[728] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraph 98, September 2025
[729] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[730] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 193
[731] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 203
[732] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 329
[733] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[734] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025

443. The Cabinet Secretary said the new school improvement partnership programme would help develop "more peer support". She said this was also an issue she wanted to explore more with her headteacher advisory group.[735]

National Professional Qualification in Headship (NPQH)

444. We heard a number of concerns around the NPQH. EWC said it was "widely seen as unfit for purpose and requiring reform"[736].

445. NAHT Cymru accepted that the recent reform of the qualification was needed but felt it could have been managed better. They said it is "disappointing" the reforms had prevented people applying for a year. They said the previous course should have been run in tandem with the reform. Not doing this, they said, has affected the leadership pipeline.[737]

446. WLGA & ADEW also felt that the recent issues had impacted on the pipeline. They said that the two-year cycle is affecting the numbers of future school leaders.[738]

447. Some of the issues highlighted included concerns about a lack of communication. WLGA & ADEW said that previously the Welsh Government "regularly sent lists of potential candidates to local authorities" which now does not happen.[739]

448. NAHT Cymru were unhappy with how successful candidates were selected. They wanted greater clarity on methodology. They were concerned of reports that local authorities which are struggling to recruit may have been prioritised.[740]

449. The cohort size of the NPQH was also highlighted.[741] The WLGA & ADEW said it "could have been doubled to meet demand"[742]. NAHT Cymru said a cohort of 35 seemed "completely inappropriate"[743].

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[735] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 92
[736] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[737] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru
[738] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[739] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[740] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru
[741] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[742] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[743] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru

450. There were also concerns about the accessibility of the NPQH for specific cohorts of candidates. WLGA & ADEW highlighted concerns that some "deserving candidates, such as Assistant Headteachers in Welsh-medium schools, have not been accepted". They called for local authorities to have a "stronger role in validating and supporting applications to ensure the right candidates are progressing"[744].

451. The Catholic Education Service felt that faith schools were under-represented in the cohort. They said that the number of church schools was not taken into account when deciding on the allocation of places. They highlighted that Catholic schools recruit from a smaller potential pool than other schools. This may negatively affect future recruitment in church schools.[745] WLGA & ADEW also highlighted the impact on faith schools, as well as on smaller rural schools.[746]

452. The Catholic Education Service said that the changes to the NPQH are not allowing the Catholic school system time to prepare a cohort "for the aspects of leadership that are peculiar to Catholic schools". They called for development of tailored NPQH modules which reflect the needs of Catholic schools.[747]

453. The Cabinet Secretary said she was "aware" of concerns about the number cap for the NPQH. She said the cap had been put in place because it was a new programme and that "we wanted to ensure that it was thoroughly piloted with a restricted number of participants". The first cohort was 48, with a further 48 starting in September 2025. Once the pilot phase is completed, the Cabinet Secretary said she will work with Dysgu to review how many people can be funded to take the qualification.[748]

Wellbeing and workload

454. Workload is a particularly significant issue for school leaders. This was regularly raised during our evidence gathering.[749] As we highlighted in the previous Chapter, the hours that teachers are working is high. This can be even

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[744] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[745] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[746] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[747] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[748] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025
[749] For example: Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru; Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru

higher for school leaders. UCAC said there was an expectation that school leaders are "available at all hours of the day, all year round"[750].

455. ASCL Cymru said that excessive working hours were the norm for school leaders, who are consistently working over 50 hours a week. In challenging weeks this can increase to over 60 hours.[751] EWC said that during the pandemic headteachers were "basically on duty 24/7 including weekends".[752]

456. ASCL Cymru highlighted their recent survey of headteachers which found that 72.4 per cent of respondents did not feel they have a good work / life balance. 47.7 per cent find their workload unmanageable. Over half of the respondents said they were considering leaving education.[753]

457. UCAC said that despite discussions about reducing workloads there has been no change.[754] As did NAHT Cymru. They said work that has reduced administrative burdens has been offset by other pressures facing school leaders.[755]

458. The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body highlighted that they have been remitted to consider what adjustments should be made to school leaders' conditions of service, particularly around working hours and protected time off. At the time of submitting written evidence they were due to consult on this shortly.[756]

459. NAHT Cymru called for school leaders to have protected leave. Unlike teachers, there is no requirement for non-contact time with school. They said this results in "high levels of burn-out" because they are always on call. They said that 92 per cent of their members support having protected leave, with only 1 per cent opposing such a move and 7 per cent not sure or don't know. They said such a change would need changes to funding, and cultural shifts from partners.[757] EWC also highlighted the need for changes to ensure school leaders have a work/life balance.[758]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[750] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[751] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[752] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 99
[753] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[754] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[755] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru
[756] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 2.6
[757] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru
[758] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 99

460. The Education Policy Institute said there was little clear data on leaders' responsibilities, which can make it difficult to identify what tasks could be removed.[759]

461. Swansea University Schools Partnership called for improved financial and administrative support for school leaders which would enable them to spend more time on "strategic work as opposed to 'spreadsheets and firefighting'"[760].

462. NAHT Cymru suggested that workload and its impact on caring responsibilities may help explain why there are relatively few female headteachers.[761] We look at this in more detail in the next section.

463. Significant system wide changes have added to the workload pressure of school leaders.[762] ASCL Cymru said that recent reforms have had an "extreme" impact on workload.[763] While Swansea University Schools Partnership highlighted that some schools have reported "reform fatigue" and feeling "overwhelmed and under supported". They also highlighted that the recent changes to regional and local support mechanisms have caused uncertainty around roles, responsibility and accountability.[764]

464. EWC said that the challenges in having to implement change while also embedding the Curriculum for Wales "often allows little time for strategic thinking or pedagogic leadership". They said stakeholders report a disconnect between policy and the reality of school life.[765]

465. ASCL Cymru highlighted that school leaders can't control their workload, because it is driven by reform and the accountability framework. They called for greater consideration of how decisions made by the Welsh Government or Estyn impact on workload. [766]

466. A particular area of concern were the accountability frameworks and additional pressures and workload that arise from this. This was raised by a

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[759] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 207
[760] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[761] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 63
[762] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[763] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[764] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[765] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[766] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 47

number of stakeholders including ASCL Cymru[767]; EWC[768]; Swansea University Schools Partnership[769]; and UCAC[770].

467. ASCL Cymru said school leaders "expect and want accountability" but it needs to be "proportionate" and reinforce "sustained school improvement activity". Current systems did not, they say, take account of school contexts, and that "those successfully leading in challenging contexts often have their impact and value added discounted". They called for "inspection and high stakes accountability activities" to be reviewed and reduced where there is no link with improved learner outcomes.[771]

468. EWC described the particular challenges around accountability for Key Stages 4 and 5. They highlighted that at Key Stage 4 this is compounded with the challenges around the introduction of new qualifications. They acknowledged the need for accountability but said it needed to "also allow for autonomy, creativity, and for people to do what they know is in the best interests of those children within the context of the school that you serve"[772].

469. Accountability extends beyond school inspections, and local authority input. We were told that there are "high levels of personal and public accountability", that can often play out in media and social media, adding to pressures.[773]

470. The impact of the financial challenges faced by schools was raised by a number of stakeholders. They included:

- ASCL Cymru[774];
- Catholic Education Service[775];
- Education Support[776];
- EWC[777]; and

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[767] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[768] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[769] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[770] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[771] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[772] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraphs 97 and 99
[773] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[774] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[775] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[776] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[777] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council

- UCAC[778].

471. One of the particular challenges is that heads have to take the lead on finding financial savings, which often involve redundancies. This can have a particular impact on stress and wellbeing.[779] In some instances, the NAHT said, heads are having to take on other roles like caretaking because they cannot afford to employ staff. Yet these are roles which are critical to running a school.[780]

472. The reality of schools having to do more beyond traditional education has an impact on school leader workload. This was highlighted by the Catholic Education Service[781]. NAHT described the "mission creep" facing school leaders, and called for school leaders to be able to focus on teaching and learning, and supporting teachers.[782]

473. Education Support said:

> *"Leaders tell us that they experience a 'burden of failure' from the emotional toll of leading an organisation where they know that children cannot thrive, but feel that there is nothing they can do about it due to systemic factors. This is exacerbated by a sense that there is positive, well-intentioned ambition and vision for education in Wales, but that this cannot always be delivered on the ground."*[783]

474. The impact of all these factors can be significant on the mental health and wellbeing of school leaders. UCAC said these pressures were causing some to leave the profession altogether.[784]

475. Education Support said that wellbeing of school leaders is a "real cause for concern".

> *"Our Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024 finds that rates of anxiety, depression, burnout and acute stress among leaders remain at high levels across the UK, including Wales. This has a meaningful impact on the health of individual leaders, their*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[778] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[779] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC); Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[780] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 45
[781] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[782] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 45
[783] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[784] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

> *teams; as well as staff retention and the quality of education that can be delivered for our children and young people."*[785]

476. Education Support said that the vocational nature of working in education can sometimes lead to a blurring between "personal and professional identity". They thought this might explain why there are higher levels of stress in education compared to other professions. They called for more research to "better understand the link between vocation, professional identity and stress". They said that professional supervision which is a "relatively low-cost intervention" can "have a big impact on personal wellbeing". They said there had been a 24 per cent reduction of school leaders wanting to leave their job after accessing it. They also said they saw an increase in wellbeing scores.[786]

477. ASCL Cymru highlighted the "sense of isolation in leadership roles".[787] WLGA also talked about the isolated nature of the role.[788] While EWC highlighted that there was a lack of time for reflection and self-evaluation because school leaders are "firefighting" making it more difficult for them to "get ahead of the game" and ensure they are driving the school forward.[789]

478. As a result of these various different pressures, we heard that a lot of teachers choose not to go into leadership.[790] The breadth of responsibility and accountability meant that middle leaders are becoming increasingly reluctant to progress to senior leadership roles. This was raised by:

- ASCL Cymru[791];
- Catholic Education Service[792];
- EWC[793];
- NAHT Cymru[794]; and

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[785] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[786] Written evidence, TRR 10 Education Support
[787] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[788] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 329
[789] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 100
[790] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC); Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[791] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[792] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[793] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[794] Written evidence, TRR 26 NAHT Cymru

- Teachers and school leaders[795].

479. ASCL Cymru said that the desirability of leadership roles is affected by the way teachers perceive school leaders in their own settings.[796] They said a lot of people decide not to progress past Deputy Head position because they see the challenges faced by their own heads.[797]

480. Swansea University Schools Partnership called for a review into career development opportunities, in particular how middle leaders can be better supported to "encourage" them to progress into senior leadership roles.[798] WLGA & ADEW said there was a need for a "clear and ambitious pathway for career development" in particular for headteachers to progress into different roles such as school improvement and system leaders.[799]

481. The school leaders we spoke to made a distinction between pastoral leadership roles and academic leadership roles. There was agreement that it is more difficult to recruit to the pastoral roles than the academic roles. This was attributed to the level of scrutiny pastoral leaders face from families, senior leaders and other support services.[800]

482. School leaders also highlighted that there can be challenges getting people to move from Assistant Head roles into Deputy Head and more senior roles. This was attributed to the increased responsibilities, stress and limited financial reward.[801]

> *"Those staff that are ready to progress into middle and senior leadership, they see the stress, they see the strain placed on the senior leadership team, and a lot of them make a lifestyle choice… they choose to stay on Upper Pay Scale 3. The next time I lose a senior leader, I'm going to really struggle."– Secondary headteacher.*[802]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[795] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraphs 54-55, September 2025
[796] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[797] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 72
[798] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[799] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[800] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraphs 55, September 2025
[801] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraphs 54, September 2025
[802] Citizen Engagement Team, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Engagement Findings, paragraphs 52, September 2025

483. The Cabinet Secretary said that improving flexibility is important:

> *"One of the things that we've done recently is emphasise to local authorities ahead of us changing the teachers' terms and conditions that headteachers cannot be on call 24/7. They have to have downtime on weekends, they have to have downtime in school holidays, and things like that I think make a big difference to women who might have caring responsibilities as well. So, I think it's about that whole package, really, of how we're supporting the workforce."*[803]

484. The Welsh Government highlighted Education Support's Professional Supervision Programme, which they said has positive impacts on wellbeing. They said this would be a "key part of the programme of work for this year"[804].

Diversity in leadership roles

485. EWC shared the data indicating a gender gap in school leadership roles.

> *"In 2025, 61.4% of registered Heads were female and 38.6% were male. This contrasts significantly with the gender split across the teaching workforce as a whole, which was 75.8% female and 24.2% male."*[805]

They said there was a need to increase gender and ethnic diversity in leadership roles.[806] ASCL Cymru said the lack of diversity was "emphasised" in leadership roles.[807]

486. Estyn said that while the numbers of female heads have increased, there is still a greater proportion of men in head teaching roles.[808] ASCL Cymru said the issue seems to become more pronounced in the step from deputy head to head. They said it wasn't clear whether it's because women are not applying or not being appointed. The solution would depend on understanding where the blockage was.[809] NAHT Cymru called for further work to identify the barriers and solutions to deal with them.[810] More broadly, Swansea University Schools

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[803] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 103
[804] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[805] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[806] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[807] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[808] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[809] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 62
[810] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 63

Partnership called for a "scoping exercise" to look at attitudes and barriers to teaching, which could identify routes into teaching which would open up the profession.[811]

487. WLGA said that one of the factors affecting women progressing was the impact of childcare, which "traditionally still falls upon women". They said women can start their careers ambitiously, but maternity leave "creates a gap" making it harder for them to develop their careers. They said this was particularly an issue in the primary sector, where women "seem to settle in that middle tier"[812].

488. The proportion of school leaders from ethnically diverse backgrounds is very low.[813] EWC shared statistics that show only 0.6 per cent of headteachers, 0.6 per cent of deputy heads and 0.5 per cent of assistant heads are from ethnically diverse backgrounds. They said this was both a pipeline issue (with not enough entrants joining) and because of "deeper, structural barriers to progression". They called for both issues to be addressed to ensure school leadership is more diverse.[814]

489. The Royal Society of Biology highlighted that "minority ethnic teachers often undertake unpaid leadership roles related to diversity and inclusion efforts. Addressing these structural issues requires improved pathways for progression and targeted recruitment initiatives to increase representation"[815].

490. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that the proportion of women in leadership does not reflect the wider gender representation in the workforce. But she noted that there has been an increase. She said the Welsh Government is currently working with leaders and local authorities to understand why there is a gender gap in leadership roles. She said Dysgu also have a role to support women in the workforce.[816]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Our view

491. Headteachers and other senior leaders need to be given the time and space to inspire and support teachers into these roles. And equally, teachers need to have the time to be able to explore in more detail whether they wish to make the move into school leadership. There need to be more opportunities for teachers to

[811] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[812] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 337
[813] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[814] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[815] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[816] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 102

shadow or mentor existing school leaders to better understand the role. These opportunities should not just be limited to shadowing or mentoring within their own school. This is particularly important as teachers may have to move schools to take up leadership posts.

Recommendation 12. The Welsh Government should ensure that schools and local authorities are providing sufficient shadowing and mentoring opportunities for classroom teachers to better understand whether they wish to move into school leadership roles.

492. The NPQH has recently been reformed. It is therefore too early to determine if these changes will address the concerns of stakeholders. We want to better understand how the Welsh Government will assess the effectiveness of the changes to the qualification. In particular, the numbers coming through the qualification, whether the course provides those studying it the skills and knowledge to be effective school leaders; and the overall value of the qualification.

Recommendation 13. The Welsh Government should outline how it will evaluate the changes to the NPQH. Any such evaluation should ensure it looks at whether the course supports learners to develop the skills and knowledge to be an effective headteacher; and whether the course provides good value.

493. School leaders face immense pressures and challenges. It is an incredibly important job, but not always an easy one. School leaders have had to help steer their schools through a high amount of reform, whilst also managing the impact of the pandemic and the wider societal challenges. Our comments from earlier in this report about the need for schools to do less in relation to the wider social challenges should be considered as part of the context for school leaders' workload.

494. Particularly, we are very mindful of the high level of reform within the education system. While this impacts on all school staff, it places significant additional burdens on school leaders. We note that the Welsh Government has committed to using Workload Impact Assessments for any new or revised Welsh Government policy that impact on education staff (see paragraph 352). It is important that the Welsh Government, both now and in the future, seriously considers how much reform can be delivered in a system that is also facing other challenges, including significant financial pressures. We need to be realistic about what reform can be successfully delivered whilst also ensuring schools are a positive environment for learners and all staff. There is a limit to what the system

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

can cope with, and the sector needs to be given time to consolidate and fully embed existing reforms.

495. The role of Estyn is critical in all this. While we acknowledge there has been a clear shift in the approach taken by Estyn towards being a more supportive participant in school improvement rather than merely an external judge, they need to ensure that this is delivered across all inspections and to all schools.

496. There is a stark gender divide in school leadership. The majority of classroom teachers are women, but the picture changes at leadership level. There is a much higher proportion of male head teachers than female. While we heard some ideas as to why this happens, we did not get a definitive picture. As we outline in paragraph 486 a number of stakeholders wanted to see further research into this issue.

497. We agree with those stakeholders and think more investigation is needed. We think that as part of the Workforce Plan, the Welsh Government should commit to looking at this issue in more detail. This work should then inform clear and concrete actions to improve the gender diversity of the school leadership workforce.

Recommendation 14. The Welsh Government commissions research to identify the factors that are causing the gender disparity in school leadership roles and then draw up an action plan to address any factors within the Welsh Government's responsibilities.

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5. Workforce diversity

The teaching workforce does not currently reflect the diversity of the Welsh population. Some work has been done to address this, but there remains a diversity gap. This is the case at all levels of the profession.

498. There was a consistent reflection from stakeholders that the education workforce does not reflect the diversity of the Welsh population.[817] We heard in detail about some specific groups who are more under-represented than others.

499. Teaching is an overwhelmingly female profession, with around 75 per cent of teachers women, and less than 25 per cent men.[818] NEU Cymru said this balance has been the same since 2015.[819] UCAC said this was "not a fair reflection of society". They said a greater gender balance would benefit all learners.[820] Cardiff Metropolitan University said work was needed to understand how to make the profession more attractive to men.[821] WLGA said there is a particular issue with male role models in primary schools. They wanted a greater focus on improving this.[822]

500. The Association of Language Learning highlighted language teaching as being predominantly female, which affects the pipeline for male language teachers. They said there are stereotypes of languages being seen as a "female" subject.[823]

501. The Institute of Physics highlighted that physics teachers are primarily male, with only 41 per cent women. They contrasted this with the much higher proportion of females teaching in the wider profession. They said that stereotypes and other barriers needed to be broken down to ensure that girls continue to

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[817] For example, Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[818] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC); Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[819] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[820] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[821] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 213
[822] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 338
[823] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 313

study physics after compulsory school.[824] They highlighted the Careers Wales webpage on physics opportunities:

> *"... a lovely picture of an elderly white dude in front of a blackboard full of equations as the example of what a physicist looks like, not to mention that the number of jobs—job openings for physicists—next year is 65, it says. Well, your target for teacher training recruitment is 74. So, there are things like that that are fundamental that need to change."*[825]

502. The Institute of Physics also called for greater class diversity in teaching. They said that poverty and the "inaccessibility of teaching .... to people who've come from less well-off backgrounds" is often forgotten. They said it wasn't helpful if the profession tends towards "middle-class white people". They called for EWC to collect more data on this to improve understanding on participation rates.[826]

503. The Royal Society of Biology highlighted the lack of ethnic diversity in the education workforce which can then effect the pipeline for a diverse range of entrants into the profession.[827] WLGA & ADEW concurred that there were a number of different groups that were under-represented in teaching.[828] Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said this can drive a "vicious cycle" where learners who don't see role models in the classroom don't then consider teaching.[829] EWC said a more diverse workforce would be more relatable to all learners.[830]

504. Swansea University Schools Partnership reported that their students wanted to see more diverse visible role models in teaching. This could be linked to mentoring programmes which supported a greater diversity joining teaching.[831] The lack of role models continues once people have joined the profession, and can affect progression into leadership roles.[832]

505. WLGA & ADEW said a stronger promotion of teaching for under-represented groups, could include "targeted outreach, mentorship, and support throughout

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[824] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics
[825] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 216
[826] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 219
[827] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[828] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[829] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[830] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[831] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[832] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology

teacher training and progression into leadership would also help increase workforce diversity"[833].

506. This lack of diversity is despite efforts by ITE providers and others, including incentives and targeted promotion activity. Swansea University Schools Partnership said their own local work which included targeted recruitment events have, to date, had minimal impact. They said they continue to review recruitment activity and their curriculum to ensure "we foster an inclusive educational environment that reflects Wales's diverse society"[834]. While the Open University in Wales talked about the various ways in which they are trying to open up the profession. This is in the context of the sector's wider diversity and anti-racism plans.[835]

507. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that campaigns to promote teaching often work in isolation.. They called for promotion of Welsh-medium teaching to be planned and done together with campaigns aimed at people from ethnic minority groups.[836] The National Centre for Learning Welsh agreed, saying it was important that the Welsh language is "seen as something for everyone".[837]

508. The Royal Society of Chemistry called for more data to better understand workforce diversity, particularly linked to subject specialism. The Independent Welsh Pay Review Body highlighted recommendations they have made over a number of years to improve data collection, monitoring and reporting on workforce diversity.[838]

509. EWC said they are doing some work to try and encourage diverse recruitment. Despite good engagement, there was still "an awful lot of work" to do. They said they would like to see increased funding to promote careers in education.[839] (We look at promotion of teaching as a career in more detail in Chapter 2.)

510. Swansea University Schools Partnership said that increasing diversity of the workforce:

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[833] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[834] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[835] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraphs 142-144
[836] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 229
[837] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 231
[838] Written evidence, TRR 20 Independent Welsh Pay Review Body, paragraph 3.6
[839] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 74

> *"... is a multifaceted endeavour requiring sustained commitment and collaboration across educational institutions, government bodies, and communities."*[840]

511. The Welsh Government highlighted their commitment to diversifying teaching. They wanted to see "learners to be taught by excellent teachers of all ages, career paths, backgrounds, and ethnicities". They pointed to the alternative ITE routes provided by the Open University, which they said are bringing teachers into the profession who would not have been able to join through other ways. "They are a unique cohort providing additional teachers to the profession with diverse backgrounds and life experiences"[841].

Ethnic diversity in teaching

512. We heard that ethnic minority teachers are under-represented in the teaching profession. NEU Cymru compared the recent census data with the current workforce data:

> *"According to the latest census data, 93.8% of the population were recorded as white, 1.6% were recorded as Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 2.9% were recorded as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.9% were recorded as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, and 0.9% were recorded as Other ethnic group.*
>
> *This is not reflected in the current teacher workforce when 0.7% are Mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 0.8% are Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.2% are Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African and 0.2% are other ethnic group."*[842]

513. EWC said that Welsh Government data shows that "that over 15% of pupils in schools across Wales are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds". They compared this with the 2025 data that shows 2.1 per cent of registered teachers identify in the same way.[843]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[840] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[841] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[842] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[843] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council

514. Estyn said that while the ethnic diversity of teachers has increased "slightly" recently, it is still "very low".[844] NEU Cymru highlighted that in 2021/22 5 per cent of ITE students were from an minority ethnic group.[845] EWC said the ITE partnerships are trying to increase participation rates, and said they are currently meeting "around that 5 per cent of students." 5 per cent is the target set by Welsh Government.[846]

515. The Royal Society of Biology said under-representation was particularly prevalent in STEM subjects. They called for "targeted recruitment initiatives" to improve diversity in STEM.[847]

516. The National Foundation for Educational Research welcomed the Ethnic Minority ITE incentive scheme, which they said wasn't available in other parts of the UK. Although they noted that they had not yet seen any data indicating the impact of this incentive. They called the scheme "an innovative step".[848]

517. The National Foundation for Educational Research highlighted their research in England:

> *"... and actually the number of applicants coming in has a good representation of ethnic diversity compared to the wider population. The issues are in terms of acceptance rates to ITT courses and support during ITT, on placements, and then retention in the profession and then progression. So, there's a whole host of issues that disproportionately affect teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds that need addressing all through the teacher pipeline, rather than just simply attraction into the profession."*[849]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

518. Cardiff Metropolitan University said there was learning to be taken from other parts of the UK on how to improve the racial diversity of teaching. They cited examples in Bristol, London and Scotland.[850]

519. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that more work was needed to ensure the teaching profession better represented communities. She said:

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[844] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[845] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[846] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 70
[847] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[848] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 211
[849] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 212
[850] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 214

> *"It is important that the workforce reflects the population that they are supporting. You can't be what you can't see. I think that's very, very important."*[851]

520. The Welsh Government highlighted the ITE Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Recruitment Plan which was published in 2021. This aims to "boost recruitment of ethnic minority candidates into ITE programmes, addressing the current under-representation". As part of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, they introduced the Ethnic Minority ITE incentive scheme. Additionally, each ITE partnership have published recruitment strategies to increase the ethnic diversity of ITE entrants.[852]

521. The Cabinet Secretary said there has been an increase in ITE entrants, going from 3 per cent in 2022/23 to 6 per cent in 2023/24. She said that as the incentive scheme has only been available since 2022/23 it was still too early to know how effective that scheme has been. However, she pointed to the broader work on incentives.[853] (See paragraph 155).

522. The Cabinet Secretary said that incentives are not the only action. She pointed to the salaried PGCE which enables schools to "train their own teachers". She also said that there were plans to update the ITE Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Recruitment Plan which would be published "later this term"[854].

523. The Cabinet Secretary emphasised the importance of the culture in schools. She said schools need to be:

> *"... places where everybody feels they belong, and that's why that anti-racist practice in schools is vital. We've got our anti-racist curriculum. We've undertaken lots of PL on anti-racist issues, so I think it's also about those things that we're doing. But I'm not complacent at all about the challenges. I met with the BAMEed group of teachers a few months ago, and they were pushing me to go much further on professional learning, also making sure that we are really robust in tackling racist incidents and the trauma that that causes in schools, not just to kids but to the teachers who are supporting kids or who are even on the receiving end of that. So, I think it's about a package of measures—incentives, encouraging people into*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[851] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 97
[852] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[853] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 98
[854] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 99

initial teacher education—but then supporting the workforce when they're in there, and I'm really committed to doing that work—we all are across Government."[855]

Disability

524. We heard that while the numbers of teachers declaring a disability had doubled since 2020, it was still only 1.2 per cent.[856] NEU Cymru compared this with census data which indicated that just over 21 per cent of the Welsh population was registered as disabled under the Equality Act 2010.[857]

525. EWC said that there may be some level of under-reporting of disability, as people can sometimes be concerned about declaring a disability. They felt the registration figures "are probably an under-representation"[858].

526. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said that making teaching more flexible would increase its attractiveness to disabled people.[859]

527. The WLGA highlighted that disability representation has increased in other parts of the education workforce such as teaching assistants. They said more was needed to support this cohort into teaching. Barriers can start when people are in school, when they don't think teaching is an option for them despite the fact that many would be "excellent … and outstanding teachers"[860]. We look at the issue of alternative routes into teaching in Chapter 2.

528. The Cabinet Secretary said that ITE partnerships have statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act, to "ensure that their admission policy promotes equality of opportunity and does not discriminate against any group of potential students". They are also assessed and monitored by the EWC on how they use their data to "improve the quality and diversity" of their intake "and ensure that their processes are equitable"[861].

529. The Cabinet Secretary shared data which shows that the most recent data, from 2021-22 shows that nearly 13 per cent recorded a known disability. She also shared data from the School Workforce Annual Census which indicated that in

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[855] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 100
[856] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology; Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru; Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[857] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[858] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings paragraph 71
[859] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 228
[860] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 340
[861] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025

2023/24 0.8 per cent of teachers reported having a physical or mental health condition which was expected to last longer than 12 months. This was in contrast to the 2021 Pupil Level Annual School Census Data that indicated 8.2 per cent of children between the ages of 5 to 15 had a disability. However, she noted caution with the data but accepted that it looked like there was "a significant under-representation of teachers with disabilities within the workforce". She said that this would form part of the development of the Workforce Plan.[862]

Our view

530. The Cabinet Secretary has acknowledged that more work is needed to ensure the teaching workforce reflects the communities it service more closely. We would like to see that the work that has already started, in particular through the ITE Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Recruitment Plan, is continued into the Workforce Plan. The Workforce Plan should ensure that there are clear actions to increase the diversity of the workforce across different demographics of Welsh population.

531. As part of this work, the Welsh Government should ensure that as well as attracting a greater diversity into teaching, there are actions to ensure that teachers from all backgrounds can stay, flourish and progress within the education sector. This will also ensure that children and young people will see that teaching can be a profession for everyone, and hopefully help with the future pipeline for teaching.

Recommendation 15. The Welsh Government ensures that the Strategic Education Workforce Plan has actions which will ensure the teaching profession more closely reflects the Welsh population, and the communities schools serve.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[862] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025

6. Impact on learners

A shortage of teachers has a clear impact on learners, and their outcomes. There are a range of factors that contribute, including a lack of continuity or subject specialists.

532. High quality teaching is essential to learners achieving positive outcomes.[863] But recruitment and retention issues are negatively affecting teaching quality.[864] The Royal Society of Chemistry's recent Science Teaching Survey revealed that 71 per cent of respondents believed teacher shortages in biology, chemistry and physics have had a significant negative impact on student learning.[865]

533. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted that the best teachers "make the greatest difference of all for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds". But suggested that in Wales these teachers are not being deployed where they could have the most impact. This is then "contributing ... significantly to the wide attainment gap in Wales". They suggested that the current ITE criteria means schools in disadvantaged areas are less likely to participate in ITE, therefore restricting their access to potential new teachers. It can also impact on the wider development of inclusive teaching practice.[866]

534. We heard that there is no clear measure of what good teaching is. The Education Policy Institute said a lack of data makes it difficult to have a clear understanding of how policy changes impact on teaching quality. They compared this to other countries, including America, where it is easier to quantify the impact changes are having on teaching quality.[867]

535. There are a range of ways in which teacher shortages can affect learners and their educational and wider outcomes.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[863] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.6 and Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[864] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[865] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 23
[866] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraphs 7.9, 7.11 and 7.19.
[867] CYPE Committee, 5 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 221

536. A lack of consistency and continuity in teachers and teaching can significantly impact learner's outcomes.[868]

> *"With fewer teachers in our schools, what often happens is that teachers have to teach subjects in which they are not experts. This can lead to inferior education in some subjects, leading in some cases to fewer studying certain subjects as their teachers have not shown the same expertise and enthusiasm towards those subjects."*[869]

537. Teacher shortages often result in larger class sizes, affecting learner attainment. This was highlighted by the Education Workforce Council[870]; Swansea University Schools Partnership[871]; UCAC[872]; and WLGA & ADEW[873]. These impacts can particularly affect either learners who are struggling with a specific subject or those who have ALN.[874]

538. As we noted in paragraphs 325-333, recruitment and retention challenges can result in teachers teaching outside of their specialism. This was raised by:

- Association of Language Learning[875];
- Cardiff Metropolitan University[876];
- Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[877];
- Education Workforce Council[878];
- Estyn[879];
- Institute of Physics[880];

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[868] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC) and Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[869] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[870] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[871] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[872] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[873] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[874] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[875] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 323
[876] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.7
[877] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[878] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[879] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[880] Written evidence, TRR 25 Institute of Physics

- Royal Society of Chemistry[881];
- Swansea University Schools Partnership[882];
- UCAC[883]; and
- WLGA & ADEW[884].

539. The Royal Society of Biology said that evidence has shown that:

> *"... students make greater progress and achieve higher outcomes when taught by teachers with strong subject knowledge. Subject specialists — ... — are more likely to use accurate terminology, provide deeper conceptual explanations, and respond confidently to student questions, all of which enhance learning."*

They said the "negative impact" of being taught by a non-subject specialist "compounds over time, particularly in cumulative subjects like science and maths, where foundational understanding is critical for later success"[885].

540. The science representative bodies all had concerns that a lack of specialist teachers can affect a learner's future subject and career choices.[886] The Institute of Physics highlighted that as well as losing a subject specialist's passion, other aspects such as practicals can be lost, which is "the bit that the students love"[887].

541. Estyn said that in the best instance teachers teaching outside of specialism are supported with "extensive professional learning, subject mentors and opportunities to observe experienced practitioners teach" and are monitored and supported by departmental leaders. This can lead to learners having "at least suitable provision". But they said that in the "minority of cases" support was not provided and as a result there were "poorly delivered, uninspiring lessons".[888]

542. ASCL said:

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[881] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 26
[882] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[883] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[884] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[885] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[886] Written evidence, TRR 18 Royal Society of Chemistry, paragraph 26 and Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[887] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 238
[888] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn

> *"... In my Welsh department, which gets good results, only one of the five members of staff is actually a trained Welsh teacher; the others are teachers who speak Welsh. There is a difference. But, over the years, they have retrained and delivered excellent results. So, quality is inevitably going to drop if you don't have specialists in."*[889]

543. Cardiff Metropolitan University highlighted that school leaders often ensure that specialist teachers are deployed for GCSE and A level, leaving younger learners with less experienced, or non-specialist teachers. However, this is contrary to evidence "which suggests that this is the age when pupils are likely to become disengaged from education if their interest is not stimulated"[890].

544. We also heard that not having subject specialists can then lead to a reduction of subject choices in schools, and limit learner's choices.[891] This can then lead to a vicious cycle for some shortage subjects.

545. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol highlighted some of the subjects that were once traditionally offered which some schools can't now offer, including "Music, Drama, Modern Foreign Languages, and individual Science subjects"[892]. While WLGA & ADEW said that narrowing choices and inconsistent teaching quality "risk widening inequalities and diminishing the overall educational experience"[893]. UCAC said that while the reforms to 14-16 courses should provide a wider range of options to learners, that the lack of teachers means "the choice will shrink"[894]. These shortages can particularly affect Welsh medium options for learners, including post 16 options.[895]

546. There may be a more significant impact on learners in some schools, for example rural schools or those in more socially disadvantaged areas.[896] WLGA &

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[889] CYPE Committee, 18 June 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 96
[890] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.6
[891] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol; Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP); Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[892] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[893] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[894] Written evidence, TRR 06 Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
[895] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[896] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales and Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council; and Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)

ADEW said that there is a higher turnover of staff in schools which serve "low-income communities which in turn widens the attainment gap"[897].

547. We heard that the recruitment shortage has resulted in some weaker candidates taking up ITE.[898] This can then impact on learners' outcomes. Estyn said that that school leaders have reported that the quality is "not up the required standard" leading to schools having to put in additional support "to secure an acceptable standard of teaching"[899].

548. The Welsh Government said that learners getting the best outcomes was "reliant on a high-quality workforce", and that learners are at the "heart of all the actions that we are already taking to support recruitment and retention". They cited a number of different actions, including £44 million of funding for National Support to schools; £9.5 million for Family Engagement Officers; and the Pupil Development Grant. The Pupil Development Grant has a budget of around £128 million to help mitigate against the impact of poverty on learner attainment. They also cited the recent publication of Multi Agency engagement guidance to help schools work with other services and sectors and develop "more effective partnership working"[900].

549. The Cabinet Secretary noted that class sizes have decreased for the average infant class, while increasing slightly for average junior classes. However, both are under 30.[901] In terms of secondary schools, the Cabinet Secretary said the more appropriate measure was the pupil teacher ratio. She said that as of January 2025, this was 17.5 in secondary schools.[902]

Our view

550. As we have already highlighted in this report, teaching as a profession provides the opportunity to have long-lasting impacts on children and young people. Some of the structural issues we have highlighted throughout the report can dilute the power of that impact, including not having subject specialists teaching particular subjects, high turnover of teaching staff, and large class sizes.

551. Each school faces different levels and types of challenges, and being a school leader can sometimes be a lonely job. There is no one simple answer to the

[897] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[898] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[899] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[900] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[901] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 106
[902] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

difficulties schools face. However, we hope that the Workforce Plan will provide an opportunity to bring together all the different education policy strands, to identify how these challenges can be met. All this work should be viewed through the lens of a learner, and how improvements can be made which will ensure learners are getting the best possible education.

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7. Impact on delivering educational reforms

Schools are in the midst of a lot of significant reform. Reform fatigue is a factor in retention, but also the new curriculum provides an opportunity to make teaching more attractive.

552. Previously in the report we have already highlighted the impact of the education reforms on recruitment and retention. In particular on workload and stress. In this chapter we want to focus on the impact of recruitment and retention issues on delivery of education reforms.

553. We have looked at implementation of the new curriculum and ALN reforms in detail during this Senedd as part of our Implementation of Education reforms inquiry. We also scrutinised the then Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill. However, there are also other changes within the education system including qualification reform; and changes to school improvement structures. Schools are also dealing with the significant impacts of the pandemic.

554. Swansea University Schools Partnership said that workforce "churn" means schools are destabilised, making reform harder to implement because "attention turns to coverage rather than reflection"[903]. WLGA & ADEW said recruitment and retention issues put strains on schools' ability to effectively implement reforms.[904] Cardiff Metropolitan University said the Welsh Government education ambitions will be undermined by recruitment and retention challenges.[905]

555. The School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University said there was "an established and growing mismatch between the rhetoric of policy aspirations, the reality in schools and the capacity schools and staff have to deliver these". They believe unreasonable expectations are placed upon teachers combined with a "lack of attention to the complexity" of implementing the reforms.[906] ASCL Cymru

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[903] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[904] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[905] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.17
[906] Written evidence, TRR 27, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University

said that not having sufficient staff will mean "pupil outcomes and life chances will continue to be negatively impacted"[907].

556. The School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University said that there are "real concerns" that learners are being disadvantaged by implementation of the new curriculum. They said there is "wide inconsistency and variation in practice".[908] Inconsistent implementation was also raised by the Royal Society of Biology[909].

557. Swansea University Schools Partnership highlighted Estyn's findings that "many schools struggle to align curriculum development with effective teaching and assessment strategies, partly due to staffing issues"[910]. Although Estyn did note that most schools are making "suitable progress" in implementing the curriculum.

558. We heard concerns, including from USCET[911], that teachers trained in England may not have expertise in the new curriculum. While Cardiff Metropolitan University said that some ITE students from England may feel they can't teach in Wales because of the new curriculum. They said that "little consideration" was given to the impact on ITE of the new curriculum, despite some issues being highlighted by teachers during development.[912]

559. The Welsh Government acknowledged the workload impacts of implementing the new education reforms, saying that they are continuing to look at how practitioners can be better supported. They pointed to the additional INSET day for the 2025/26 academic year.[913]

560. The Welsh Government highlighted the national support available to schools:

> *"... on the key issues of progression, assessment, and curriculum design, that includes intensive, targeted, and nationally available collaborative support along with practical tools and templates for professionals. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with 100% of participants finding the programme clear and relevant as well as benefiting from working collaboratively with other schools. This is giving all*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[907] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[908] Written evidence, TRR 27, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University
[909] Written evidence, TRR 19 Royal Society of Biology
[910] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[911] Written evidence, TRR 17 Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
[912] Written evidence, TRR 04 Cardiff Metropolitan University, paragraph 7.18
[913] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

teachers access to the tools to build an excellent curriculum with high expectations of their learners."[914]

561. The Cabinet Secretary said that there are "lots of teachers" who are "really enthusiastic" about the new curriculum because it "gives teachers a lot of agency". But she acknowledged that it was challenging, in particular designing a new curriculum alongside changes to progression and assessment. But this was why "we've invested millions of pounds in a national curriculum support programme".[915]

562. The Cabinet Secretary said she was pleased teachers who trained in England were moving to Wales. She said some may be choosing to teach in Wales because of the education reforms. She noted that all teachers have to complete a "statutory induction period" to teach in Wales. They will also have to undertake professional development on a number of issues including the new curriculum. She hoped that when teachers are appointed from outside Wales that schools would prioritise this professional learning.[916]

563. The Cabinet Secretary also accepted the challenges in delivering ALN reform, but said there is "really great inclusive practice in lots of schools". She said she knows how challenging it is for the profession but that "it's my role to do everything that I can to support them"[917].

564. She said that funding was critical to supporting schools:

"... We've got a complex range of reforms that we're trying to deliver, probably more, actually, than any other part of Government, between the Curriculum for Wales, ALN and now the Welsh language and education Bill. That needs to be underpinned with resources. But it's also about the complexity of what schools are dealing with. That's why prioritising funding for schools is really important."[918]

Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025

565. Our scrutiny of the then Bill now Act was one of the starting points for this inquiry, as outlined in the introduction. It was clear that having sufficient

[914] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[915] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 116
[916] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025
[917] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 117
[918] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 132

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

workforce with the right Welsh language skills in the right places was critical to the Act's effective implementation. We also acknowledged that Welsh language staff capacity could not be looked at in isolation, leading us to make this recommendation:

> *"The Welsh Government identifies the most appropriate legislative mechanism to place a duty on the Welsh Ministers to prepare a statutory education workforce plan which includes targets, and a timeframe, for recruitment and retention. This workforce plan should cover all aspects of the education workforce, and look in particular at shortage areas, as well as likely future need, and the ways in which this need will be addressed. It should take account of the variations across Wales."*[919]

566. The Welsh Government accepted this recommendation in principle. They said that workforce was of "critical importance" and that a strategic education workforce plan would be developed. However, it would not be a statutory plan because of the need to be flexible and future proofed.[920]

567. The concerns about not having sufficient workforce to deliver the Act's aims were reiterated during this inquiry by a range of stakeholders including:

- ADEW[921];
- ASCL Cymru[922];
- Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol[923];
- Estyn[924];
- National Centre for Learning Welsh[925];
- NEU Cymru[926];

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[919] CYPE Committee, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 report, Chapter 3, Workforce and capacity issues, 13 December 2024
[920] Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill, 13 January 2025
[921] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 323
[922] Written evidence, TRR 16 Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
[923] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[924] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[925] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 206
[926] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru

- Swansea University Schools Partnership[927]; and
- Welsh Language Commissioner[928].

568. Estyn highlighted that "over a quarter of all teachers who teach Welsh language have not been trained to teach the language". They said that recent ITE recruitment figures are "exceptionally low". While ITE partnerships support development of Welsh language skills, "there is little continuity for students to develop their Welsh skills between ITE and NQT programmes"[929].

569. The Welsh Language Commissioner said there was a risk of an:

> *"... endless cycle where a shortage of teachers with Welsh language skills will be a continuous obstacle to ensuring an increase in the number of individuals who leave school able to speak Welsh and use the language."*[930]

570. The Welsh Language Commissioner said that the current Welsh language workforce strategy did not reflect the needs of the Act. They called for a "national and comprehensive education workforce strategy that reflects the ambition of the Bill"[931].

571. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol said a range of actions were needed, including "systematic Welsh language upskilling for current members of the education workforce, and a fundamental change in the expectations in relation to the Welsh language in the context of ITE and early-career professional development"[932]. The importance of upskilling the current workforce was also emphasised by NEU Cymru[933]; and the Welsh Language Commissioner[934].

572. The National Centre for Learning Welsh said that the sabbatical scheme is "very successful" in upskilling staff. They called for a workforce strategy which would ensure development of the language skills needed by the Act.[935]

573. The Welsh Government accepted that the Cymraeg 2050 goals "demands far-reaching changes and actions to be take" and that a "strong and skilled

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[927] Written evidence, TRR 21 Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
[928] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[929] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[930] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[931] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[932] Written evidence, TRR 12 Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
[933] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[934] Written evidence, TRR 15 Welsh Language Commissioner
[935] CYPE Committee, 16 July 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 207

workforce" was critical.[936] They pointed to the National Framework which is a statutory requirement of the Act:

> *"... must set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take to ensure that training, professional development and support is available for education practitioners in Wales for the purposes of improving ability in Welsh. It must also: (a) include an assessment of the number of education practitioners needed in each local authority in order to meet any target, and (b) set out the steps the Welsh Ministers will take, based on that assessment, for the purposes of ensuring that the number of education practitioners working in Wales meets the need."*[937]

574. They also cited the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan, which was published in May 2022. The Plan looks to:

- Increase the number of Welsh and Welsh-medium teachers;
- Increase the number of Welsh medium teaching assistants;
- Develop all practitioners Welsh skills; and
- Increase leadership capacity in the Welsh medium sector, and develop Welsh leadership in all schools.[938]

575. Other actions they told us about included ones to support staff development of Welsh language skills; and guidance for local authorities to help them analyse workforce data on staff language capacity.[939]

576. They highlighted the work of the National Centre for Learning Welsh, who coordinate Welsh language professional development. The National Centre is currently developing a plan which will enable the piloting of "new delivery models" which will include a range of different options. The National Centre will also be managing the "intensive courses available through the Sabbatical Scheme", and working with ITE providers to develop resources which have been incorporated into ITE courses since September 2024.[940]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[936] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[937] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[938] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[939] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[940] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government

577. In light of the Act, and the broader Workforce Plan, the Welsh Government will be looking at what further actions may be needed. They accepted that they will need to review existing targets because of "changing demographics alongside the local authority plans for increasing Welsh-medium education in their areas"[941].

Our view

578. We have already set out that we think the education sector is very close to the maximum in terms of the level of reform it can successfully deliver (see paragraphs 494). There is very little space in the current system for further reform, and we would counsel any future Welsh Government that it reflects on this, before embarking on any further education reform.

579. Throughout this Senedd term we have looked in detail at the implementation of the new curriculum and ALN system. We trust that our work on this has helped inform the new Workforce Plan, where relevant. Shortly after publication of this report, we will be publishing our final views on the implementation of education reforms. In coming to these views, we have considered the relevant evidence from this inquiry.

580. On the implementation of the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act, our views remain the same as those we set out in our Stage 1 report on the then Bill. The Act is ambitious, and as we said, it will take "considerable effort by everyone in the education system" to deliver. While the Welsh Government acknowledged that workforce was critical to the delivery of the Act, we called on it to do more.[942] We will be interested to see how the Workforce Plan takes account of the demands the new Act places on the education system, and the workforce, in particular the issues we raised in our report on the Bill.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[941] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[942] CYPE Committee, Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 Report, December 2024

8. The wider education workforce

Recruitment and retention of teachers can impact on the rest of the education workforce. There is a need for Teaching Assistants pay and conditions to reflect the important role they play.

581. While the focus of our inquiry was on teacher recruitment and retention, we wanted to also understand what the impact was on the wider education workforce. We have covered throughout the report the impact shortages have on other teachers and school leaders, in particular on their workloads. In this chapter we are focused on other education staff.

582. Our inquiry's focus was on teachers in the statutory school sector. We are aware that there are issues for teachers in other parts of the education sector, and for other education professionals in schools. However, we think these issues deserve their own consideration, and we wanted to keep the scope of this inquiry manageable. These may be issues we highlight for possible future consideration in our legacy report.

583. Teaching Assistants are an invaluable part of the education workforce, but there have been longstanding concerns about their pay and conditions. This has been further highlighted in recent research commissioned by UNISON, a report of which was published in December.[943] Many of the issues, in particular the increasingly complex needs of learners, that impact teachers also have an significant impact on Teaching Assistants. But they are paid significantly less, making the role less attractive. This was raised by a number of people include the Catholic Education Service[944]; Estyn[945]; and WLGA & ADEW[946]. ACT also highlighted the impact of short term contracts and a lack of job security.[947]

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[943] UNISON Cymru & Labour Research Department, Time to value School Support Staff: The case for a Wales Negotiating Body, December 2025
[944] Written evidence, TRR 09, Catholic Education Service
[945] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[946] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[947] Written evidence, TRR 07 ACT Ltd

584. EWC noted the high level of turnover in support staff. This then affects schools "creating instability and ongoing recruitment issues"[948]. Estyn also said this was an issue that had come up during inspections.[949]

585. We heard concerns about Teaching Assistants and Higher Teaching Assistants covering for teachers. NEU Cymru said the practice is "widely used" across Wales.[950] WLGA & ADEW also said there was a "growing reliance" on Teaching Assistants to take on "duties beyond their remit, such as cover in some cases".[951]

586. The Welsh Government said that Teaching Assistants are a "vital and valued part of our education workforce, and we want to make sure they have the recognition and support they deserve". They said that work was ongoing with others to "agree how we will take forward my commitment to improve pay and conditions for our support staff"[952]. The Cabinet Secretary said she was "very concerned" about pay and conditions for Teaching Assistants, and that it would be "key priority" for the Workforce Plan.[953]

587. The Cabinet Secretary also said that it was important that schools did retain staff. She said getting rid of roles such as pastoral support "just creates a whole range of problems, then, that classroom teachers are having to deal with"[954].

588. We asked the Cabinet Secretary about Teaching Assistants and Higher Teaching Assistants covering lessons. She said that work has been undertaken to create common job descriptions for Teaching Assistants and Higher Teaching Assistants, but that she was "deeply frustrated that this approach has not been implemented at local authority level". This issue was being taken forward urgently. She also said that the statutory framework was very clear that only those with QTS "are permitted to be employed to teach". But that there are "certain circumstances" where "specified work" can be done by those without QTS.

> *"They are permitted to teach either as an 'unqualified teacher' (where the unqualified teacher is employed for a limited time as a school teacher and registered with EWC to undertake specified work) or in certain time limited circumstances where*

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[948] Written evidence, TRR 23 Education Workforce Council
[949] Written evidence, TRR 24 Estyn
[950] Written evidence, TRR 13, National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
[951] Written evidence, TRR 22 Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
[952] Written evidence, TRR 31 Welsh Government
[953] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025
[954] CYPE Committee, 17 September 2025, Record of Proceedings, paragraph 133

> *they are subject to the direction and supervision of qualified teachers as defined by the legislation. People employed in a school as teaching assistants or HLTAs cannot be a school teacher for the purpose of the legislation even if they hold QTS.*
>
> *The evidence we have on HLTAs and teaching assistants being asked to teach classes is anecdotal at present. It is not something which Welsh Government collects data on. However, we need to develop an understanding of this issue, and I will be asking local authorities to take this work forward as part of our proposals in the Strategic Education Workforce Plan.*
>
> *I agree that it is not acceptable for members of staff to be asked to undertake duties that are beyond their remit. It is right that a qualified teacher should be available and the statutory requirements here in Wales are clear, …"*[955]

Our view

589. While this inquiry has been focused on teachers, we know that the success of the Welsh education system is very much dependent on the wider education workforce. Children and schools are reliant on a huge number of other staff, who often provide the broader support for learner and wellbeing. We recognise the value of these staff, and that many of them do not benefit from pay or conditions that recognise the true value and importance of their roles.

590. We note the recent Unison Cymru report on school support staff (see paragraph 583583). We agree that there should be a national approach to pay, terms and conditions for support staff. This is in line with the social partnership approach taken in Wales. It would also hopefully see an improvement in their pay and conditions for such an important group of education professionals and officially working at a grade that reflects what they do.

Recommendation 16. The Welsh Government should establish a national body to set pay, terms and conditions for support staff.

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

[955] Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education to Chair, CYPE Committee, 19 November 2025

Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions.

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Date	Name and Organisation
5 June 2025	**Hayden Llewellyn, Chief Executive,** Education Workforce Wales **Eithne Hughes, Chair of Council,** Education Workforce Wales **Professor David Egan, Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy,** Cardiff Metropolitan University **Jack Worth, Lead on School workforce Research,** National Foundation for Education and Research **James Zuccollo, Director of School Workforce,** Education Policy Institute **Neil Butler, National Officer for Wales,** NASUWT **Ioan Rhys Jones, General Secretary,** Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC) **Claire Richard, Wales Executive Member,** National Education Union (NEU) **Stuart Wiliams, Policy Officer** National Education Union (NEU)
18 June 2025	**Claire Armitstead, Director,** Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru **Neil Foley Vice President,** Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and Headteacher of Prestatyn High School **Laura Doel, National Secretary,** National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) Cymru **Annette Farrell, Programme Manager, Education Policy,** Royal Society of Chemistry **Shabana Brightley, Senior Education Policy Officer,** Royal Society of Biology

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Date	Name and Organisation
	Eluned Parrott, Head, Institute of Physics Wales **Kerry Bevan,** Association for Learning Language
16 July 2025	**Christopher Williams, Course leader, Primary ITE** University of South Wales **Dave Stacey, Director of Initial Teacher Education,** University of Wales Trinity Saint David and representing the Athrofa's ITE partnership **Dr Sarah Stewart, Director of the PGCE programme in Wales,** The Open University in Wales **Dr Angella Cooze, PGCE English Senior Lecturer & PGCE Secondary Programme Director, Schools' Partnership,** Swansea University **Rebecca Williams, Senior Language Skills and Workforce Planning Manager,** Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol **Dona Lewis, Chief Executive,** National Centre for Learning Welsh **Councillor Deborah Davies, Welsh Local Government Association Deputy Spokesperson for Education and Deputy Leader of Newport City Council and the Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years,** Welsh Local Government Association **Dr Lowri Brown, Vice Chair of Association of Directors of Education in Wales and Chief Education Officer, Conwy Council,** Association of Directors of Education in Wales
17 September 2025	**Lynne Neagle MS, Cabinet Secretary for Education** Welsh Government **Christopher Warner, Deputy Director, School Practitioner Division,** Welsh Government **Awen Penri, Strategic Education Workforce Plan Lead,** Welsh Government

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the Committee's website.

Reference	Organisation
TRR 01	Dr Emily Marchant, Department of Education and Childhood Studies, Swansea University
TRR 02	Individual
TRR 03	Individual
TRR 04	Cardiff Metropolitan University
TRR 05	Education Policy Institute
TRR 06	Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)
TRR 07	ACT Ltd
TRR 08	The Open University Wales
TRR 09	Catholic Education Service
TRR 10	Education Support
TRR 11	Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC)
TRR 12	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
TRR 13	National Education Union (NEU) Cymru
TRR 14	University of Southampton
TRR 15	Welsh Language Commissioner
TRR 16	Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru
TRR 17	Universities and Schools Council for the Education of Teachers (USCET)
TRR 18	Royal Society of Chemistry
TRR 19	Royal Society of Biology
TRR 20	Independent Welsh Pay Review Body

EMBARGOED REPORT UNTIL 00:01 29/01/2026

Reference	Organisation
TRR 21	Swansea University Schools Partnership (SUSP)
TRR 22	Welsh Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education in Wales
TRR 23	Education Workforce Council
TRR 24	Estyn
TRR 25	Institute of Physics
TRR 26	National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) Cymru
TRR 27	School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University
TRR 28	Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership, University of Wales Trinity St David
TRR 29	The National Centre for Learning Welsh
TRR 30	Wrexham University
TRR 31	Welsh Government

Additional Information

Title	Date
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)	June 2025
National Education Union (NEU)	June 2025
The Open University in Wales	16 July 2025
Education Workforce Council	June 2025
Welsh Government	19 November 2025

EMBARGOED REPORT
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29/01/2026