Addressing the Post-Pandemic Teacher Recruitment and Retention Challenges in England

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The teacher supply challenge in England has intensified after the pandemic

Postgraduate ITT recruitment and target numbers in England

Note: data labels show the percentage of target.
* indicates a forecast based on applications received so far

Improve retention
Improve recruitment

Retain 6 more teachers = Recruit 10 fewer teachers into ITT

Number of ITT enrolments
Target (TSM methodology)
Target (TWM methodology)
Almost all secondary subjects are highly likely to be below target this year

NFER forecast of 2023/24 ITT Census recruitment vs target (% based on applications up to May 2023)
Not recruiting enough teachers has implications for schools’ recruitment

Subjects that did not meet ITT recruitment targets were reported by school leaders as being more difficult to recruit for.
School leaders take actions to mitigate impact of recruitment difficulty on pupils

Recruitment challenges

- Budget challenges

Assembling field of quality applicants/ issues with the suitability of staff applying

- Recruit inexperienced, unqualified or low-quality teachers
- Deploy non-specialist teachers
- Reduce non-contact time for existing teachers
- School leaders teach more than usual

Mitigations
Deploying non-specialist teachers has negative implications for education quality

Proportion of secondary schools in which at least some lessons are taught by non-specialist teachers

- **Maths**: 28\% least difficult to recruit, 45\% overall, 62\% most difficult to recruit
- **Physics**: 29\% least difficult to recruit, 41\% overall, 55\% most difficult to recruit
- **MFL**: 14\% least difficult to recruit, 17\% overall, 26\% most difficult to recruit

Overall | Least difficult to recruit | Most difficult to recruit
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Disadvantaged schools struggle more with retaining teachers and experiencing shortages

- **Attrition**
  - Highest FSM
  - Middle-highest FSM
  - Middle FSM
  - Middle-lowest FSM
  - Lowest FSM

- **Turnover**
  - Highest FSM
  - Middle-highest FSM
  - Middle FSM
  - Middle-lowest FSM
  - Lowest FSM

- **Supply teachers (£)**
  - Highest FSM
  - Middle-highest FSM
  - Middle FSM
  - Middle-lowest FSM
  - Lowest FSM

- **Vacancies**
  - Highest FSM
  - Middle-highest FSM
  - Middle FSM
  - Middle-lowest FSM
  - Lowest FSM

- **Maths non-specialists**
  - Highest FSM
  - Middle-highest FSM
  - Middle FSM
  - Middle-lowest FSM
  - Lowest FSM

- **Science non-specialists**
  - Highest FSM
  - Middle-highest FSM
  - Middle FSM
  - Middle-lowest FSM
  - Lowest FSM
Leaving rates were substantially lower during the pandemic, but have risen again.
Teacher vacancies posted by schools are substantially higher than before the pandemic.

Cumulative number of classroom teacher vacancies in state-sector schools in England, 2018/19 - 2022/23

- 59 per cent higher than 2018/19
- 93 per cent higher than Feb 2018/19

Source: Teach Vac
Teacher supply challenges in England have intensified after two years of having eased somewhat due to the pandemic.

Tackling this challenge effectively requires action to improve the financial and non-financial attractiveness of teaching.

Actions for policymakers (and school leaders)

- Pay and financial incentives
- Teacher workload
- Flexible working
Teacher pay has lost competitiveness compared to average earnings and similar graduates

Real-terms earnings growth since 2010/11 (%)

- Teachers, 12% lower
- Similar graduates, 11 pp higher
- Average UK earnings, 17 pp higher
Teacher pay growth in England since 2010 has been the lowest in the OECD.
Financial incentives are a key policy tool

✓ Pay boosts recruitment
  (Worth, Tang and Galvis, 2022)
✓ Pay boosts retention
  (DfE, 2020 - review)
✓ Bursaries boost recruitment
  (NAO, 2016; Worth, Tang and Galvis, 2022)
✓ Early-career payments boost retention
  (Sims and Benhenda, 2022)

Government needs to develop a long-term pay & incentives strategy

Targeted by subject/ area
Non-financial attractiveness of teaching in England stands out internationally

Source: OECD TALIS 2018
Teacher working hours higher than similar graduates but lower than 2016

Hours worked during the work week

Proportion who

Flexible working is challenging for schools, but more prevalent in wider labour market since Covid

Proportion who mainly worked from home (%)

Conclusions

Low teacher recruitment + rising leaving rates and vacancies = significantly intensifying teacher recruitment and retention challenge in England

• Teacher pay has lost competitiveness with wider labour market since 2010
• Workload appears to have improved since 2016, but working hours remain high
• The lack of ability to work from home may be a competitive threat against teaching
Recommendations

• Long-term pay strategy to address competitiveness
• Remain focussed on reducing teacher workload
• Understand teachers’ flexible working preferences
• A workforce strategy that reflects post-pandemic realities of working life