

Agenda – Children, Young People and Education Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Hybrid – Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel and video conference via Zoom	Naomi Stocks Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 5 June 2025	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 09.30	SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

09.15 – 09.30

Public meeting

09.30 – 12.45

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

09.30

2 Teacher recruitment and retention – evidence session 1

09.30 – 10.30 (Pages 1 – 27)

Hayden Llewellyn, Chief Executive, Education Workforce Council [Via Zoom]

Eithne Hughes, Chair of Council, Education Workforce Council [Via Zoom]

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Paper 1 – Education Workforce Council

Break

10.30 – 10.40

3 Teacher recruitment and retention – evidence session 2

10.40 – 11.40 (Pages 28 – 71)



Professor David Egan, Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Jack Worth, Lead on School Workforce Research for the National Foundation for Education and Research

James Zuccollo, Director of School Workforce, Education Policy Institute

Attached Documents:

Paper 2 – Cardiff Metropolitan University

Paper 3 – Education Policy Institute

4 Teacher recruitment and retention – evidence session 3

11.45 – 12.45

(Pages 72 – 79)

Neil Butler, National Office for Wales, NASUWT

Ioan Rhys Jones, General Secretary, Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

Claire Rickard, Wales Executive Member, National Education Union (NEU)

Stuart Williams, Policy Officer, National Education Union (NEU)

Attached Documents:

Paper 4 – Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)

5 Papers to note

12.45

5.1 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 80 – 86)

Attached Documents:

Response from University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

5.2 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 87 – 90)

Attached Documents:

Response from Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

5.3 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 91 – 93)

Attached Documents:

Response from Swansea Council

5.4 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 94 – 95)

Attached Documents:

Response from Isle of Anglesey County Council

5.5 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 96 – 97)

Attached Documents:

Response from Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

5.6 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 98 – 104)

Attached Documents:

Response from the Welsh Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Education in Wales

5.7 School improvement and learner attainment

(Pages 105 – 106)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education from the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee

5.8 P-06-1501 Put rugby in the curriculum for Wales from primary schools through to secondary Schools

(Page 107)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee from the Chair of the Petitions Committee

5.9 Welsh Government Draft Budget 2026-27

(Pages 108 – 109)

Attached Documents:

Letter to the Chair of the Finance Committee from the Chair of the Children,
Young People and Education Committee

5.10 Legislative Consent: Children's Wellbeing and Schools

(Page 110)

Attached Documents:

Information from individual

**6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to resolve to exclude the
public from the remainder of this meeting**

12.45

Private meeting

12.45 – 13.00

7 Teacher recruitment and retention – consideration of the evidence

12.45 – 13.00

Document is Restricted

Education Workforce Council (EWC) submission on school teacher recruitment and retention, ahead of oral evidence to the CYPE Committee on 5 June 2025.

Introduction

The [EWC](#) is the independent, professional regulator for the education workforce in Wales. Our aims and functions are set out within the [Education \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). Our response to the CYPE Committee's inquiry focuses on matters specific to our remit, notably the workforce. Our evidence base in responding to this inquiry includes information and intelligence from:

- The EWC's Register of Education Practitioners (the Register) which provides unique intelligence on the composition of the teaching workforce in Wales over the past 25 years¹.
- Accrediting programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Wales and, based on national ITE intake allocations provided by Welsh Government and our work to distribute those numbers to accredited programmes and pathways and thereafter monitor recruitment monthly.
- Administering the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) and publishing annual data in this regard.
- Engagement with registrants, employers, agencies and other stakeholders from across Wales and leading a number of national surveys and policy events.
- Our work to promote careers in the education professions, for example, by attending general or targeted careers/recruitment meetings and events and directly engaging with individuals, community groups, providers and employers.

Teacher recruitment

Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge faced globally. As context, UNESCO's [2024 Global Report on Teachers](#) highlights a worldwide shortage of teachers, suggesting an additional 44 million primary and secondary teachers will be required by 2030.

Our ITE data on NQTs registering with the EWC, shows that, for a number of years, we have not trained or recruited the necessary number of teachers in Wales. The NQT workforce has been supplemented by individuals who trained to teach in England and returned or moved to Wales following their ITE programme. However, there are two issues to note about this specific part of the workforce: first, these individuals would not have been prepared during their programme of ITE to develop and deliver the Curriculum for Wales; and second, over the past two years the numbers in this category have begun to fall.

Primary

Data from our Register and our QTS data shows a stable supply of primary teachers. Recruitment into ITE for the primary phase has continued to meet (or exceed) Welsh Government intake allocations. ITE passes have increased from 570 in 2019-20 to 636 in 2023-24 (with a further 87 passes through the Open University (OU) postgraduate route). While the overall pipeline of primary teachers remains robust, we note there are some specific areas of concern outlined below.

¹ Dating back to the founding of our predecessor organisation, the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW), in 2000.

Secondary

Since the early 2010's, there has been a steady decline in recruitment to secondary ITE programmes. Although the COVID-19 pandemic promoted a temporary increase in recruitment, it has since reverted to the previous downward trend. The number of secondary trainees in teacher education has fallen, and ITE passes are down from 405 in 2019-20 to 369 in 2023-24 (with an additional 34 passing through the OU secondary postgraduate route). To put this into context, Welsh Government's desired intake for secondary ITE in 2023-24 was 1,056.

Specific areas of concern in teacher recruitment

Priority subject teachers (secondary)

Our QTS data highlights the recruitment challenges in priority subject areas with only very small numbers of individuals being recruited to programmes of ITE and thereafter being awarded QTS. For example, in 2024, across Wales, QTS awards were made to 27 Mathematics, 20 Welsh, seven Physics, seven Chemistry, and 11 Modern Foreign Languages students only. Some of these numbers are the lowest that EWC has seen in our 20 years of administering the award of QTS.

Welsh medium teachers

Despite a range of initiatives aimed at increasing Welsh medium recruitment, our data shows that the number of Welsh-speaking teachers and those able to teach through the medium of Welsh has remained largely static for many years. Welsh Government's aspiration for 30% of ITE recruits being trained through the medium of Welsh is not being realised.

In 2024, EWC data on newly qualified teachers shows that 19.7% of those qualifying through primary routes undertook their training through the medium of Welsh and 17.9% at secondary level. There are particular challenges in attracting new Welsh-speaking teachers in shortage subject areas (notably STEM). Last year, just three (of 27) new mathematics teachers and two (of seven) new physics teachers were trained through the medium of Welsh.

Ethnic diversity

While over 15% of pupils in schools across Wales are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds, only 1.9% of registered teachers identify as such. Welsh Government's aspiration for 5% of ITE recruits to be from these ethnic minority groups is not being realised. This is despite all ITE partnerships being required to publish a recruitment plan addressing ethnic diversity and targeted initiatives such as the Ethnic Minority ITE Incentive Scheme. However, data for 2024 indicates that 4.6% of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) registered with the EWC are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds.

School leaders

From our data and through engagement with employers, trade unions and directly with leaders the following challenges have been highlighted:

- low volumes of applicants for some leadership vacancies resulting in a proportion of those vacancies being unfilled and advertised multiple times, this is exacerbated further
 - in Welsh medium settings
 - in certain Local Authorities particularly rural or disadvantaged areas
- issues over the adequacy and quality of support available to headteachers, aspiring headteachers, leaders and aspiring leaders, both in terms of formal programmes (including NPQH) and other professional learning opportunities and programmes

- addressing the diversity of those in leadership roles, particularly with respect to gender and ethnicity

Retention

The EWC is able to monitor teacher retention through the Register. Our most recent retention data shows that 76% of teachers in 2019, were still registered as school teachers in 2024, while 57.5% of those registered as school teachers in 2014 remained registered as teachers in 2024. This indicates that retention within the school teacher workforce in Wales is better than in England and many other countries.

However, through our engagement with stakeholders, employers, trade unions and registrants including headteachers, pressures relating to workload, wellbeing, and job satisfaction are seemingly impacting negatively on retention in some areas. Our data is also beginning to show early signs of these negative impacts. We will therefore be closely monitoring trends in this area in the years ahead.

Inevitably, the specific concerns outlined above in relation to recruitment (shortage of STEM teachers / ethnic diversity / school leaders) directly impacts retention. However, it should be noted that, amongst the cohort of teachers registered with the EWC in 2019, 79% of Welsh speaking school teachers remained registered as teachers in 2024, compared to 74.5% of non-Welsh speaking teachers, indicating a marginally higher level of retention amongst Welsh speaking teachers.

School learning support workers

The school workforce does not only include teachers, in fact, since 2018 our data confirms that registered school learning support workers outnumber registered school teachers. It is for this reason and for the significant contribution that this workforce makes to learners, that we believe the scope of the inquiry should be broadened to include school learning support workers.

School learning support workers account for 56.7% of the registered school workforce in Wales (2024). However, this workforce is characterised by high turnover, with only 53.1% of those registered in 2019 remaining registered within the same category in 2024². The transience of this workforce directly impacts schools and its teachers.

Promoting greater professionalism among school learning support workers, including through improving access to professional learning and progression, the introduction of minimum qualifications, better job security and improved pay and conditions would help schools to develop a more resilient and skilled support staff workforce.

Post-16 education workforce

Again, while this section of the workforce does not fall within the formal scope of this inquiry, it's significance to the education of young people in Wales must be acknowledged. Many of the challenges faced in teacher recruitment and retention are also relevant here.

Key issues needing to be addressed

The EWC welcomes the significant reform of ITE undertaken by Welsh Government over recent years and it is important to note that the issues within the scope of this inquiry cannot be resolved through ITE alone. It requires a more holistic approach to ensure a sufficient quantity of quality school teachers to safeguard the future workforce.

² 7.6% were registered in another category, while 39.3% were no longer registered with the EWC.

Another welcome initiative related to this subject matter, is the work that EWC undertakes on behalf of Welsh Government, funded by grant, to promote careers in the education workforce. This work includes two strands:

- The development, maintenance and growth of a national brand and website, including an integrated all-Wales jobs portal, a careers portal, and a training portal
- A national advocacy and support service

Efforts to improve teacher recruitment and retention in Wales must focus on the underlying systemic issues that impact negatively upon the working lives and wellbeing of teachers and leaders. Frequently these are the same issues deterring new entrants from joining, as they contribute to negative perceptions of the profession. These include:

- **Workload and bureaucracy:** Excessive workload - often driven by administrative demands and accountability requirements, remains the most frequently cited reason for low morale and early exits from the profession.
- **Declining autonomy and professional trust:** A lack of professional agency and autonomy, compounded by the pressures of frequent policy changes and rigid accountability measures (including inspections).
- **Behaviour and discipline:** Challenges in managing pupil behaviour, with frequent disruptions undermining teaching and learning.
- **Expanding role of teachers:** Schools are frequently being called-upon to help address a growing range of societal challenges – including a rapidly growing number of learners with mental health issues.
- **Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision:** There are major challenges in effectively supporting students with ALN, hampered by a lack of resources, specialised personnel, and funding.
- **Access to professional learning:** The quality of the professional learning entitlement provision across Wales remains inconsistent and uptake can be constrained by time pressures and staffing capacity.
- **Competition from other sectors:** The wider employment market, especially for STEM graduates and Welsh speakers, is highly competitive. Starting salaries for teachers are lower than those on offer in many private sector careers, with limited opportunities for salary progression.

Key issues specific to leadership

- **Intense workload and accountability pressures:** Headteachers are experiencing a significant increase in workload and responsibilities, while also being held to high levels of accountability for school performance. The requirement to implement a growing range of new initiatives, while simultaneously embedding the Curriculum for Wales often allows little time for strategic thinking or pedagogic leadership.
- **Ensuring appropriate leadership pathways:** Many teachers and middle leaders are deterred from progressing, having witnessed the significant pressures faced by those in more senior roles. In addition, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has widely been seen as unfit for purpose and requiring reform.

Conclusion

The EWC welcomes the Committee's focus on teacher recruitment and retention and is pleased to support this important work. We will continue to contribute data, analysis and professional expertise on these matters to inform the development of policy, as well as

providing advice to Welsh Government and other stakeholders. We would also be pleased to provide additional data and intelligence to support this inquiry, upon the Committee's request.



Cardiff
Metropolitan
University

Prifysgol
Metropolitan
Caerdydd

A future teaching profession for Wales: Recruitment, retention and professional progression

Initial Report of the Secondary Recruitment
and Retention Research Project (SRRP).

Professor David Egan
Dr Kate Attfield
Dr Laura Rees Davies
Katharine Young
Dr Ellen Bristow
Christian Farrell

December 2024

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SECTION A

Introduction

1. Preface

- Pack Page 34
- 1.1. This research was commissioned by Cardiff Metropolitan University and undertaken by a research team drawn from the Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy and the Cardiff School of Sports and Health Sciences. We believe that the data collected represents the strongest empirical evidence base extant on teacher development in Wales. We are also grateful to various colleagues within the Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy for their encouragement, support and views and to the Cardiff Metropolitan University Partnership Office for support with administering participant surveys.
 - 1.2. Externally we have benefitted from funding from the Welsh Government to support the work of our research assistants and from the help of the Association of Directors of Education in Wales who circulated a survey that enabled us to collect rich data from nineteen of the twenty-two local authorities in Wales. All the participants in our research that we list in the introductory section of this report, including several case study schools, gave willingly and positively of their time and whilst, in accordance with our ethical processes, we cannot identify them, we are extremely grateful for their cooperation.
 - 1.3. As is set out more fully in the next section, the empirical data we have collected is drawn from both all-Wales sources and the Cardiff Partnership for Initial Teacher Education at Cardiff Metropolitan University. It was not possible at this stage of the research to collect data from the other initial teacher education partnerships in Wales.
 - 1.4. The report is intended as an initial contribution to inform and stimulate debate on the future of the teaching profession in Wales. Bearing in mind that its intended target audience will include teachers, headteachers, organisations within the education system and policymakers in Wales, it is presented in an accessible style and

detailed references and footnotes are kept to a minimum. We have assembled a wide range of empirical data, and our intention is to present this elsewhere in traditional academic and scholarly formats.

- 1.5. Our findings are of course our own and whilst we are confident that they are supported by extensive primary and secondary evidence, we take full responsibility for the findings and recommendations we are presenting.

2. Background and Context

Background

- 2.1. It is generally accepted that in the interrelated fields of practice, policy and academic study, that education is far from being an exact science. This is why the maxim that in relation to educational practice ‘everything works somewhere, and nothing works everywhere’ has wide currency.
- 2.2. What does, however, meet with broad acceptance, as supported by a wide range of research and other evidence, is that the ‘quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers’¹.
- 2.3. This inevitably requires that education systems should recruit a sufficiency in the number of teachers and- even more importantly- that they should be of the highest possible quality.
- 2.4. As this report highlights, this is currently far from being the situation in the Welsh system, particularly in the secondary phase of education. Whilst this is also the case in the other education systems of the UK and, with some exceptions, internationally, it is particularly problematic in Wales.

¹Barber, M. and Mourshed, M. (2007). *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*. London: McKinsey and Company. [how_the_world_s_best-performing_school_systems_come_out_on_top.pdf](http://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Issues%20and%20Insights/Articles%20and%20Perspectives/How%20the%20world%20s%20best-performing%20school%20systems%20come%20out%20on%20top.pdf) (mckinsey.com)

Context

- 2.5. Because of the shortfalls being experienced in recruitment to secondary initial teacher education, the research team were asked to consider the reasons for this situation and what possible remedies might be considered to address it.
- 2.6. From the outset we believed that these recruitment challenges for ITE could not be considered in isolation. The recruitment of teachers to first teaching posts in schools, the retention of these teachers within the profession and the wider development of the teaching workforce in Wales would all need to be seen as an interrelated continuum.
- 2.7. It was, therefore, agreed that the research should encompass each of these areas- recruitment, retention and progression- so that the synergy which existed between them could be considered holistically.

- 2.8. Whilst our focus in the research has thus far been on the secondary education sector, it is inevitable that some of the options for change that we put forward are generic and will need to encompass the single profession of teaching – primary, secondary, special schools and indeed the post-16 sector in relation to PCET (Post Compulsory Education and Training).
- 2.9. In this respect, whilst the situation with primary ITE recruitment is much healthier, with both the PGCE course and undergraduate (3-year BA Education with Qualified Teacher Status) programmes recruiting at least to and usually above the numbers allocated by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) on behalf of the Welsh Government, headteachers and local authorities have also noted what they perceive to be a decline in the quality of entrants into this phase of education.

Research Questions

- 2.10. The following research questions have been considered:
- RQ1: What is the current situation in Wales in relation to secondary teacher recruitment, retention and progression?
 - RQ2: What options could be considered in relation to improving secondary teacher recruitment, retention and progression in Wales?
 - RQ3: What recommendations and next steps are suggested by the research?

Data Collected

- 2.11. The following data has been collected:

Literature Review

A systematic review has been undertaken of academic and grey literature.

Survey Data

- Survey of Local Authorities in Wales
- Survey of Current (2023-24) Cardiff Met Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) Secondary Students
- Survey of Former Cardiff Met PGCE Secondary Students
- Survey of Newly Qualified Secondary Teachers (2023-24) in Wales.
- Survey of a small sample of non-ITE undergraduates in Cardiff Met, Swansea University, Bangor University, Aberystwyth University and the University of South Wales.
- Survey of PGCE Secondary Mentors in the Cardiff Met ITE Partnership
- Survey of Headteachers in the Cardiff Met PGCE Secondary Partnership

Focus Groups

- Focus Group with Cardiff Met PGCE Secondary Tutors.
- Focus Groups with current Cardiff Met PGCE Secondary students.
- Focus Group with Cardiff Met Strategic Partnership Board Secondary Headteachers
- Focus Group with Cardiff Met Recruitment and Retention Committee
- Focus Groups (3) with Local Authority Officers
- Focus Group with Regional Education Consortia/ School Improvement Partnership Newly Qualified Teacher/Induction Leads
- Focus Group with a Teaching Union National Council
- Focus Group with a University Career Service Officers
- Focus Group with Education Workforce Council Officers
- Focus Group with Education Workforce Council Teacher Accreditation Board

- Focus Groups with Senior Leaders, Teachers and Pupils in a sample of five case study schools (3 English-medium and 2 Welsh-medium) in urban, South Wales Valleys and rural locations.

Interviews

Interviews with a sample of 5 secondary headteachers (1 Welsh-medium) in a variety of locations/contexts across Wales. The sample was put forward by the Wales National Academy for Educational Leadership.

Presentations and Feedback

- With the ITE Team in Estyn.
- With the Teacher Pay and Conditions Board
- With secondary headteacher groups in two local authorities

Limitations

- 2.12. The ITE partnership data is drawn solely from Cardiff Met, but as the largest partnership (with approximately 50% of the total secondary ITE capacity) in Wales, this can be seen to be broadly representative of the sector.
- 2.13. The response rates to the local authority survey were high (19 out of 22 LAs responded) but otherwise, response rates have been low. In most cases, however, taken alongside the evidence from focus groups and interviews, they can be seen to be reasonably representative of the participant groups that were targeted.
- 2.14. Whilst this is not a perfect data set and there is much more that could have been collected/can be collected in future, this represents the strongest empirical evidence base on teacher recruitment, retention and progression in Wales thus far assembled.

SECTION B

The Current Situation

3. Recruitment to Initial Teacher Education

Recruitment Data

- 3.1. Recruitment to secondary school teaching is currently a challenge being faced by many international education systems including all the nations of the UK. The situation is so serious in England that the new UK Labour Government that took power in July 2024, has made the recruitment of additional secondary teachers one of its five defining missions.
- 3.2. In Wales, the most recent recruitment data, for the 2023-24 academic year, show that there was approximately a 62% shortfall in recruitment to the 1-year PGCE Secondary ITE programme, with only 424 of the 1109 places allocated being filled.
- 3.3. In 2022/23 all secondary subject areas in Wales, except for Physical Education, under-recruited and the majority of these can now be regarded as 'shortage' subject areas. In the core curriculum subject areas, the number of newly qualified teachers was only 25% in English, 28% in Mathematics, 27% in the Sciences and 15% in Welsh of the numbers intended. Information Technology had the worst recruitment profile with only 10% of completions against desired intake.
- 3.4. As will be argued throughout this report, recruitment to teaching should be seen as much, if not more, as about the quality of applicants and not just quantity. It might be assumed that because year on year, so few graduates are applying for these subject areas, that this leads to the entry bar being lowered. PGCE Tutors who have been involved in 'shortage' subject recruitment for several years and secondary headteachers and local authorities recruiting to first teaching posts have confirmed this assumption.
- 3.5. This is reflected in recent innovative research on a single year cohort of school pupils in England which reveals that the highest achievers in the year group were far less likely to pursue teaching as a career and that those who did, were far more likely to leave within the first 4 years.

- 3.6. In this respect it was revealing to hear from PGCE Secondary Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) tutors in Wales when they met (for the first time ever as a group) as part of a discussion with the Welsh Government funded MFL Mentoring Programme that places undergraduate students in schools to promote the take up of languages at GCSE level, that increasingly they have concerns about the mismatch between the profile of language graduates and the nature of PGCE MFL courses. They believed that this resulted in existing courses not being fit for purpose and in their view 2-year courses should be available to enable these graduates to be ready for the demands of the MFL provision within schools, including the Curriculum for Wales.

Reasons

- 3.7. The data we have collected suggests that there has been a significant decline in the number of graduates who are interested in a career in teaching. Pull and push factors appear to be at play here.
- 3.8. Push factors include perceptions of teaching as a profession with a high workload, relatively low salaries, that is funding and resource poor, often located in poor quality buildings and where there are restricted opportunities for career progression. Some undergraduates also comment on the impact of poor pupil behaviour and what they perceive to be a growing lack of respect for teachers.
- 3.9. Undergraduates also referred to instances of their teachers discouraging them from entering teaching and of parents (some of whom were teachers) also expressing similar views. It is salutary to remember that teaching is the only job that all graduates have had direct experience of and that for most, this took place recently.
- 3.10. 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.

- 3.11. The pull factors are the perceived attractiveness of other graduate careers with higher starting salaries, better opportunities for career progression and more flexible working requirements. The latter aspect has become more prominent in recent years through the growth of home and hybrid working. Recent research has identified that Generation Z students value potential work flexibility as much as job security and good salaries.
- 3.12. It is apparent that whilst some subject areas (such as Mathematics, Physics and Welsh) have faced recruitment challenges for the last quarter of a decade and more, the growth in the number of graduate professions has led to increased competition in these and a much wider range of subject areas. University careers services noted, for example, the promotional pull of a wide range of service areas including supermarkets and the finance sector.
- 3.13. In relation to recruitment to the subject area of Welsh and Welsh-medium courses in general, the growth of opportunities for Welsh-speaking graduates appears, along with the push factors set out above, to have more than counteracted the growth in the Welsh-medium school sector, leading to Welsh subject and Welsh-medium provision being more of a shortage subject area than previously.
- 3.14. In other subject areas, the decline in the number of pupils following traditional subject areas through to A Level and university entry is also a factor in graduate teacher recruitment, with Welsh, Modern Foreign Languages, Physics, Music and Geography all being affected by this trend.
- 3.15. It is also clear, that for some graduates who might be curious about the possibility of a teaching career, that incurring further considerable debt during the PGCE year is a major disincentive. PGCE Tutors and

students note that this is the case and point out that undergraduates often assume that there will not be course fees because they are looking to enter a public service where there are known shortages.

Attraction to Teaching

- 3.16. This generally pessimistic picture should, however, be set beside the fact that many undergraduates and graduates still find teaching a career which appeals to their intrinsic desires to make a difference for young people and to society as a whole and thereby through public service and intellectual engagement, to foster their own personal development. They perceive the graduate starting salary and the wider benefits of teaching, including holiday entitlements, to be an attractive enough reward. The PGCE students and Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) we surveyed and interviewed confirmed this positivity, including their love for their specialist subject.
- 3.17. It is also clear from data reported by the Office for National Statistics and the Institute for Student Employers, that only 61% of 2022 graduates were in full-time posts fifteen months later and many of these had taken jobs (including working as teaching assistants) where graduate qualifications were not required. They also report that currently 86 applications are being received on average for every graduate vacancy. Teaching may not currently be an attractive proposition for graduates, but there is potentially a very large graduate labour market that might be encouraged into the profession.
- 3.18. It is also pertinent to consider why primary ITE courses and a small number of secondary subject areas (particularly Physical Education) have a strong recruitment profile.
- 3.19. PE students, from a relatively early age and certainly by GCSE and A Level, have a strong commitment to mentoring and coaching others and this is often included within their undergraduate programmes. Pupils interviewed as part of our school case studies, often perceived

the subject to be ‘interesting and ‘not boring’, with much stronger engagement of pupils in learning with a variety of classroom and non-classroom experience.

- 3.20. Many primary undergraduates will have undertaken work experience in primary schools or worked as a teaching assistant before beginning their degree programmes. Primary postgraduate students also often have had similar pre-course experiences and those who are slightly more mature on entry, might also be parents of young children. There appears, therefore, to be something about subject cultures and prior experience that with intrinsic motivation influences undergraduates and graduates to wish to enter teaching.
- 3.21. Attempts to incentivise entry into ITE, particularly in secondary shortage areas, are longstanding. Whilst evidence from England (similar research has not been done in Wales) shows that, although there is variation between subject areas, generally incentive bursaries attract more recruits to secondary programmes, and they subsequently remain in teaching slightly longer than non-recipients.
- 3.22. 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.

Summary Headlines

- **Secondary ITE programmes in Wales recruit well below overall target numbers and in nearly all subject areas**
- **There is a need to continually raise the quality of new entrants into teaching for all educational phases in Wales**
- **There are a range of reasons that explain this situation including the**

pull of other professions and the push against a career in teaching resulting from negative perceptions held by graduates and high levels of student debt

- **Nevertheless, many students hold strong motivations to enter teaching and the graduate labour market could offer considerable potential to build upon this**
- **There are some ITE phase and subject areas which have a strong recruitment profile**
- **The impact of bursaries as an incentive to enter ITE presents a mixed picture, but, overall, they appear to have had minimal impact.**

4. Recruitment to Schools

Overall Picture

- 4.1. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the situation outlined above in relation to ITE recruitment, schools face significant and growing problems in recruiting teachers. All Wales statistics for 2022/23 show that an average of 5.1 applications was received for advertised posts in secondary schools (compared to 13.3 applications for primary posts). Thirteen of the local authorities that completed our survey (c 60% of all local authorities in Wales) believed the recruitment situation they faced was ‘unsatisfactory’ and only one local authority reported that the situation was ‘good’.
- 4.2. Headteachers report that they might have to advertise on 2 or 3 occasions before they have a single application for some posts. Welsh medium secondary headteachers relate how (apart from Physical Education) they very rarely get more than one applicant for any advertised post and often these may not be appointable.
- 4.3. In general, they note that an increasing number of PGCE students (many of whom have undertaken placements with them) decide to teach outside of the UK, including in the expanding International

- School sector. Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) are very aware that they are in a 'buyer's market' and those based in South Wales are often not prepared to accept post away from the 'M4 corridor' with the inevitable implications this has for schools attempting to recruit in rural Wales or the South Wales valleys.
- 4.4. For these reasons, some schools do not advertise posts any longer. Others advertise Physical Education posts knowing that they will get a reasonable field of applications, when they are in fact looking to appoint someone for Maths or Science or other subject areas, hoping that the Curriculum Vitae's of the applicants will show some potential for teaching these areas as a first or second subject. This also happens in relation to advertisements for Drama posts when an English specialist is really being sought.
 - Local authorities noted that an increasing number of students who have completed primary ITE are now being appointed to secondary posts because of the shortage of applicants for these positions. Whilst this has always been a feature of the education system (some secondary headteachers were primary trained) labour market dynamics has increased this trend.
 - 4.6. Local authorities also report that whilst initially these entrants might focus on teaching basic skills such as literacy and numeracy and provide wellbeing support for pupils, schools then develop them to be able to undertake subject teaching with 11-16-year-olds. As many PGCE Primary students will have undertaken specialist subject degrees, this provides them with appropriate subject knowledge to draw upon.
 - 4.7. In some cases, and given the difficult situation they face, schools employ recruitment strategies that will impact negatively on the wider education system. Welsh-medium schools may look to employ all the Welsh-medium student 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.
 - 4.8. This overall picture of subject shortages led in 2022/23 to 16.8% of secondary posts being vacant in Wales. These rates are higher in some phases of education (24.4% in Welsh medium schools) and in some local authorities and generally are much higher in schools facing the most challenging socio-economic circumstances. That said, in a secondary school serving one of Wales's most socio-economically privileged communities, not a single application was received for a Chemistry post that was advertised recently. It is also clear from the evidence presented above, that these are vacancy rates for posts rather than a true picture of subject vacancies.

Reasons

- 4.9. Many of the same negative perceptions that deter potential entrants to ITE programmes are seen to also apply to applications for teaching posts. One teaching union described those as a 'holy trinity' of relatively low pay, excessive workload and increasing pupil behaviour issues.
- 4.10. For these reasons some PGCE students do not apply for teaching posts. This is an area where far more research is needed, but it is likely that both the negative perceptions of life as a teacher and the lack of support for future career development in schools, play a part in this, as was suggested by some of the current PGCE students interviewed as part of this research.
- 4.11. Another perspective on this issue was provided by the Local Authority staff who have responsibility for teachers in their first year as NQTs. They have noted that an increasing number of NQTs (primary as well as secondary) now opt to work as Supply Teachers, even though the terms and conditions of their employment will be far worse than having a full-time post.
- 4.12. The reasons they make this decision appear to be that at this early stage of their development they do not feel ready to teach, want to have a better work/life balance than would otherwise be the case and

are looking to avoid the workload, marking and accountability aspects of full-time employment.

- 4.13. Headteachers also are aware that teachers (NQTs and those in their early years of teaching) may be able to find better paid teaching employment in other graduate professions that are interested in both their subject and teaching background. These may offer employment packages including flexible working, retainer incentives and even access to personal trainers and free health care, that schools cannot match. They believe that it is these attractions, rather than, or solely, salary levels that are drawing people away.
- 4.14. They also indicate that the divergence between the education systems in Wales and England has also had implications for recruitment. Academy Chains in England can offer 'spot salaries' that enable them to pay shortage subject specialists at a much higher rate than would be possible in Wales. This leads to teachers who undertake ITE in England (including Welsh natives) not applying for posts in Wales and to the loss of teachers currently on their staff who are seeking career progression. They believe that changes to the curriculum associated with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales are also starting to impact negatively on cross-border recruitment.

Appropriateness of Current Initial Teacher Education

- 4.15. Schools are generally keen to be part of ITE partnerships, both because they believe this involves them in shaping the future of the profession and provides a much better chance of recruiting to vacancies.
- 4.16. Whilst many of the participants in our research (current and past student teachers, mentors, teachers and headteachers) held positive views about current ITE programmes, there were others who believed that the nature of these courses, particularly the PGCE programme, contributed to recruitment and retention problems.

- 4.17. The reasons they offered for their views included:
- A perception that there was an insufficient focus being given to practical teaching competences.
 - An impression that because of accountability requirements placed upon ITE partnerships, students were often 'drowning in paperwork'.
 - A feeling (90% of current PGCE Secondary students who replied to the survey) that the course was 'rushed' and 'paper-driven'.
- 4.18. It should be stressed that these participants are all positive about the need for teaching to be a research-informed profession. Their views do, however, raise the longstanding issue of whether in a hugely intensive year, student teachers should be asked to demonstrate both research competences and master the vocational requirements of being a qualified teacher.
- 4.19. These views are also reflected in some of the research literature on recruitment and retention which emphasise the importance of student teachers being given the opportunity to practice evidence-based techniques in realistic environments with the help of an expert coach as being key to preparation for the profession and retention within it.
- 4.20. This emphasis on the importance of coaching and mentoring is one shared by universities, Estyn, the EWC and local authorities. There is a strong body of research and inspection evidence on what constitutes high quality mentoring, including setting expectations, providing rich feedback, modelling effective learning and teaching strategies and guiding reflection on practice. This is being used currently by ITE partnerships to develop models of how student teachers learn.
- 4.21. It is also clear, however, that the quality of mentoring within ITE programmes is highly variable. This often is a consequence of inappropriate staff allocation to the role by senior teachers, the lack of time provided for it to be undertaken to a high standard and limited opportunities for mentors to undertake professional development including collaboration with other mentors.

Summary Headlines

- Secondary schools face growing problems in recruiting to classroom posts and must employ a range of strategies in attempting to overcome this situation
- Overall vacancy rates are high and in some subject areas, they are particularly high
- This situation has a range of causes including the negative perception of teaching that also impacts on ITE recruitment, the fact that many NQTs do not proceed to full-time employed posts, and the attractiveness of other employment opportunities
- Some professionals and current ITE students also have concerns about the nature of current ITE programmes as a preparation for entering teaching
- There is wide agreement that the quality of mentoring of ITE students needs to be improved.

5. Retention in Schools

Overall Picture

- 5.1. The ITE recruitment targets of the Welsh Government, the evidence on vacancy rates presented above and data collected from headteachers and the teaching associations, all suggest that the current challenges being faced in recruiting to secondary schools are fuelled by the fact that schools are facing increasing problems in retaining staff. Welsh Government data for 2021/22 shows that 71.8% of teachers leaving the profession did so before normal retirement age.
- 5.2. In one instance a school with 65 staff reported having 11 NQTs to support in a single year; in another case, a school with a staffing complement of 60 lost 13 teachers in a single year and was only able to replace them with 2 new full-time teachers. One local authority reported that one in six of its NQTs have left teaching in the last

3 years. Whilst universities/EWC do not track the progression of PGCE students following their course (something that should be addressed), tutors in shortage areas report that 5 years after undertaking the course, very few have remained in teaching.

- 5.3. EWC Workforce Data, however, indicates that 75% of NQTs are still registered as teachers five years later and 57% after ten years of service and that these percentages are higher than, for example, those in England. The Independent Pay Review Body (IPRB) for Wales has noted a consistency in the trend of the numbers leaving teaching since 2012, other than for retirement at sixty.
- 5.4. EWC Officers do recognise, however, that many of those who leave the profession do so in the early years of teaching and they are concerned that these numbers are currently on the rise. Similar data has been presented by the IPRB and this echoes recent research which suggests that one in three teachers intend to leave the profession in the next 5 years.
- 5.5. It does appear, however, that overall, the retention picture, whilst concerning, is not as serious as in, for example, 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. The survey we undertook with local authorities in Wales also reflects this, with thirteen of the 19 authorities that replied indicating that retention was either 'satisfactory' or 'good' and six describing it as 'unsatisfactory'.
- 5.6. Our data does, however, suggest that, as is the case in other countries, there is an increasing trend for NQTs in Wales to either not enter full-time teaching or to leave early in their careers. Approximately one-third of the NQTs surveyed for this research indicated that they were unsure if they would remain in teaching.
- 5.7. The data also suggests that retention is likely to be more problematic in schools/areas with the greatest socio-economic disadvantage, in more rural/isolated locations to which teachers find it difficult to travel to work and in Welsh-medium schools where teachers can access career opportunities outside of teaching.

5.8. Overall, we perceive there to be a significant and growing retention problem in the teaching profession in Wales, which in some school contexts is of serious proportions. There is, however, an urgent need for more robust empirical evidence to be collected on teacher retention in Wales.

Reasons

5.9. As with recruitment to ITE and to schools, retention is impacted by the day-to-day realities of teaching as a profession faced by significant workload issues that impact negatively on teacher wellbeing, family and social life. A survey undertaken by the Trade Union Congress in 2024 found that teachers undertake the most unpaid overtime of any profession.

5.10. Younger teachers often perceive teaching to be an 'old-fashioned' profession with little work/life balance that was no longer attractive to graduates. It was also apparent from the research data collected from current PGCE students that this was the perception that many of them had already developed, and which might explain why- as is reflected elsewhere in this report- many either decide not to enter teaching or to work as supply teachers.

5.11. Headteachers, teachers and local authorities point to the burden of excessive administrative, planning and assessment requirements, often driven by external accountability requirements and the need to introduce major educational reforms such as the Curriculum for Wales and the Additional Learning Needs Act.

5.12. Teachers point to larger class sizes including an increase in the number of pupils with specific learning needs that previously would have been met by specialist provision and an increase in mixed-attainment groupings without them having received professional learning on appropriate pedagogy.

5.13. They also highlight growing issues with pupil behaviour, which is believed to have worsened because lockdown during the Covid 19 pandemic has had a negative effect on pupil attention spans. They believe that some pupils and their parents are developing an 'entitlement culture' which mitigates against sanctions being used against pupils and leads to frequent complaints about teachers who challenge unacceptable pupil behaviour. In the view of one headteacher of a high performing school in an affluent area, schools and teachers are seen as 'the architects of much of what children see as wrong in society'.

5.14. They also feel that some pupils are addicted to the use of their smart phones and more generally point to the pernicious influence that social media can have on undermining teachers and their authority.

5.15. As was noted earlier, pupils in the case-study schools visited as part of the research, identified the same factors as those above as being the reasons why they are not attracted to teaching as a career and why teachers leave their schools.

5.16. Headteachers also reflect on the growing requirement upon them to work with parents and external service providers/community organisations. Whilst most recognise the value of this, they perceive themselves to have become what many term a 'fourth emergency service', without any increase in funding to perform this role.

5.17. The lack of funding and resources has also led to the loss of highly valued support staff, less opportunity for teachers to be released for professional learning and networking activities and, because there are so many staff vacancies resulting from non-recruitment reductions in non-teaching time.

5.18. Whilst these perceptions are widely held in a variety of school contexts, the evidence indicates that they impact most acutely on the retention of early career teachers and teachers working in the most socio-economically challenging contexts.

- 5.19. Perhaps surprisingly, salary levels were raised less frequently than the other concerns outlined above. Headteachers believe that most staff who leave early in their careers progress to less well-paid posts and are more motivated by work/life balance issues.
- 5.20. The evidence is, however, clear that the real value of teacher pay has declined consistently since 2010/11 and in recent years because of a highly competitive graduate labour market, much higher salaries are being offered in other professions. It also appears that compared to these professions, teaching does not offer attractive salary progression increments.
- 5.21. This may lead to young teachers after three years in a profession, where they face demanding workload pressures, finding that they still do not have sufficient resources to buy a first home. At this point if higher salaries are offered in other professions, this may act as a trigger-point for non- retention.
- 5.22. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), however, whilst recognising that these trends are typical of most countries over the last decade, point to evidence that other factors such as status and career progression are as important as salaries in influencing retention/non-retention.

Retention Factors/Strategies

- 5.23. Research on why teachers remain in teaching points to intrinsic (for example ‘making a difference for young people’), emotional (their ties to pupils, colleagues etc), supportive (professional learning etc) and experiential (recognition and appreciation etc) factors. In essence, teachers who remain in the profession despite all the pressures instanced above- the majority- have a deep sense of ‘calling’ and commitment and this appears to be true in all sorts of school contexts, including socio-economically disadvantaged and Welsh-medium schools.

- 5.24. Research also highlights the importance for staff retention of school leadership. In schools where teachers are empowered, trusted, respected, listened to, communicated with and provided with professional learning and career progression opportunities, retention rates are much higher.
- 5.25. Where this is not the school culture engendered by leaders, teachers only feel strong attachment to colleagues and pupils and not the school and this may not be enough to keep them in the profession. For these reasons, we have heard the view expressed that headteachers/school leaders should be held accountable for the health and wellbeing of their employees in a similar way to that which employers are in industry. This reflects evidence from wider research on labour market retention which has been summarised in the aphorism that ‘people do not quit jobs...they quit managers!’
- 5.26. At a fundamental level this might be about headteachers providing lifestyle support for their staff such as opportunities for private health care, gym access, washing and ironing services and personal equipment such as laptops. It might also be about providing non-contact time to attend medical appointments or children’s school sports days, or even Christmas shopping days!
- 5.27. These examples raise again the extent to which flexible working patterns can be introduced into teaching. Research suggests that moving in this direction can improve work/life balance, wellbeing, job satisfaction, recruitment, retention and even student outcomes.
- 5.28. It is apparent that this is happening to some extent by stealth in Wales, with some teachers deciding to move to supply contracts, rather than leaving the profession, so that they can improve their wellbeing and have more flexibility about when they work and when they take holidays. In subject areas such as Mathematics, Science and English, they might also supplement their income, or even leave teaching altogether, to work as private tutors where rates are now reported to be £50 an hour and where they can decide when and how long to work.

- 5.29. Wales has much higher percentage of part-time teaching staff than in England and headteachers through choice or necessity are having to explore more flexible staff working arrangements. In one of our case study schools twenty-four of the eighty staff are now on/or wish to be on, flexible contracts.
- 5.30. Many schools are exploring possibilities in this area through, for example, late starts and early finishes for staff (linked to childcare) as well as part-time contracts and job-shares. They feel, however, that there logistical and funding constraints to how far they can take these adaptations and that they lack the support of their local authorities in moving in these directions.
- 5.31. As has been indicated above, of significant importance to teacher job satisfaction and retention are opportunities for professional learning, networking, collaboration and career progression. This is most effective when it is tailored to specific school contexts (such as schools in socio-economically challenging circumstances) and individual needs.
- 5.32. Teachers seek dedicated time (another factor that teachers indicate as being so precious but increasingly difficult to find) for these forms of professional learning. Although it has not yet been independently evaluated and concerns exist about its impact on pupil attendance, the introduction of dedicated time for professional learning through truncating the school timetable on a Friday (known as ‘asymmetric weeks’) is an interesting innovation in this regard. From the perspective of those who have pioneered this experiment it has led to improvements in professional learning, the quality of learning and teaching, staff satisfaction, retention and recruitment.
- 5.33. The above is a relatively low-cost solution to providing time for professional learning and the same can also be the case in relation to using expert teachers within a school to act as coaches to NQTs and more experienced teachers. Coaching is an approach highly valued by teachers, but too little developed currently in schools.
- 5.34. Not all professional learning solutions can be low cost or cost neutral and quality experiences may require additional funding, which in the current straitened financial environment headteachers are finding it increasingly difficult to find.
- 5.35. An aspect of professional learning and development that can also potentially support retention is specialist educational psychology and counselling provision for teachers. Some experienced teachers that participated in the research, feel that young teachers sometimes lack resilience, are more likely to take sickness absence and perhaps ultimately leave the profession completely or move to supply or part-time contracts.
- 5.36. Research reveals that teacher wellbeing is impacted by multifactorial influences including a complex interplay of individual characteristics, job-related factors, organisational culture and societal norms. Specialist support for teachers that recognises these needs can be successful in strengthening wellbeing, resilience and retention, but far more provision and evaluation is required in this area if it is to play a significant role in teacher retention.
- 5.37. Given the evidence that retention is a particular problem with early career teachers, the quality of induction and early career development for new teachers is clearly of great importance. A review undertaken for Welsh Government in 2020 indicated that the quality of this provision was generally not strong and subsequently new requirements and guidance have been produced for the local authorities/regional school improvement services that have the responsibility for NQT induction.
- 5.38. It would appear, however, that whilst this guidance includes much of the effective practice for professional support and retention highlighted above, that the actual experience of NQTs is highly variable in relation to the extent and quality of time and support they receive.

- 5.39. For the reasons indicated above, schools have less time than they did in the past to formally and informally support NQTs. There appears to be a particular gap in relation to coaching by expert teachers. It is also not clear how the entitlement of NQTs to high quality support is evaluated and guaranteed.
- 5.40. It appears, therefore, that the nurturing of young teachers in the highly demanding context of their early years in the profession is something of a lottery and it is hardly surprising that attrition rates are so high in these years.

Summary Headlines

- **Although the nature and extent are not fully known, there are significant teacher retention issues in schools and in some school contexts these are of serious proportions**
- **A range of work-related pressures and reduced professional opportunities appear to cause the non-retention of teachers**
- **Whilst salary levels, particularly their incremental progression in the early years of teaching, play a part in teacher attrition, they appear to be no more important than issues to do with status, workload and professional development**
- **Successful retention strategies rely on effective school leadership, rich professional learning opportunities, flexible working arrangements, developing teacher personal resilience and a strong focus on supporting NQTs and early career teachers.**

6. Workforce Development and Progression

The Current Situation in Teaching

- 6.1. It could be argued that the development of the teaching profession in Wales is currently the sum of its parts, rather than a coherent and holistic process. Teachers undertake initial teacher education, have an entitlement to induction and can access various forms of professional learning. If they wish to move into leadership roles, they are provided with a range of discrete professional development programmes including a requirement to complete the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) if they aspire to become a headteacher.
- 6.2. This is not a seamless or integrated pathway. Once student teachers complete their ITE, universities may have no further formal contact with them and be aware only incidentally about their future destinations. There is no formal liaison or continuity between university tutors who have worked closely with them over the previous one (postgraduate) or three (undergraduate) years and those who have responsibility for their induction as newly qualified teachers in schools and local authorities.
- 6.3. Career-long professional learning, which as the previous section of this report has highlighted is a key factor in teacher retention, is something teachers may be offered, or can source for themselves. This may be provided within schools or by external providers.
- 6.4. Much of the professional learning available does not offer credit towards formal qualifications, unless teachers undertake postgraduate- level programmes, including the National MA in Education funded by the Welsh Government. Some teachers may undertake doctoral-level qualifications and a Welsh Government supported Doctorate in Education that has been developed with university partners will commence in January 2025.

- 6.5. Whilst improvements have been made and continue to be made in professional learning for teachers, it is not mandatory, and it is limited in extent compared to many Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations. Many high performing education systems require teachers to participate in a minimum of 100 hours a year of high-quality professional learning.
- 6.6. Leadership programmes, including the NPQH, are mainly focused on traditional leadership and management roles in schools: Assistant, Deputy and full Headships. Some are targeted at middle leaders (heads of department in secondary schools and subject leaders in primary schools). There are not opportunities – which exist in other education systems – to undertake formal leadership roles as excellent/expert teachers, specialist teachers, coaches, mentors, national leaders of education or system leaders.
- 6.7. Whilst, therefore, some aspects of teacher career development are an entitlement, others must be resourced by the teacher or their employer. Funding of professional learning might be provided by a school or by government, but often it must be self-funded. The quality of provision (outside of ITE) is only judged by self-evaluation or occasional independent evaluation, although Welsh Government are currently developing a quality kitemarking process. The advice that teachers receive on their career progression will be dependent on whatever processes are in place in their schools or, from university staff if they undertake formal qualifications.

Other Professions

- 6.8. What is outlined above is not comparable to the ‘talent management and development’ orientated approaches that are in place in many other graduate professions and school systems, which are intended to secure the best possible recruitment, retention and career progression outcomes.
- 6.9. Social Work as a profession in Wales faces the same recruitment and retention problems as teaching. Social workers receive their initial training through either a 3-year undergraduate programme or a 2-year postgraduate course that leads to an MSc. Employer-led continuing professional development is a requirement of all registered social workers and is provided through an ongoing Continuing Professional Education and Learning Framework (CPEL) which begins with a First Three Years in Practice Framework. This comprises an induction phase, an individual development plan for the first year in practice and a consolidation programme over the next two years leading to renewal of registration. The Consolidation Programme is led by two clusters of local authorities and accredited by two universities. Further non-mandatory, quality assured, professional learning can be accessed via the CPEL Framework.
- 6.10. Nursing has the same recruitment and retention challenges as teaching and social work. Welsh-domiciled students do not have to pay undergraduate nursing degree course fees and can also apply for bursaries. Following graduation and registration, career progression routes include clinical, advance nurse practitioner and consultant pathways. Working conditions allow for flexible working, childcare vouchers, work-life balance initiatives and on-site creche facilities. During their early career development, nurses undertake a preceptorship programme where they are coached by an experienced practitioner, who is responsible for teaching, mentoring, coaching, supervising and evaluating new entrants. Nurses are required to undertake career-long professional development to maintain their registration.
- 6.11. Nursing sits within the Welsh Government funded Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) which has replaced the former University Medical School Deaneries. This has strategic oversight of recruitment and workforce development for a wide range of medical, clinical and allied professions in Wales including the transition of medical students into practice, GP training, specialist training (over 60+ programmes), primary and community care, pharmacy, physician associates

and work-based learning and apprenticeship programmes. As its website reveals, it provides a wide range of opportunities for these professionals to develop their practice and maintain their registration. It thereby signals to potential entrants to these professions the wide range of career development opportunities that would be available to them.

Developments in Teaching

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- 6.12. Some international education systems faced by recruitment and retention issues have introduced workforce development plans as a way of addressing these challenges. Iceland, for example, brought together all stakeholders to develop a New Profession Strategy which has led to a threefold increase in recruitment to initial teacher education in its two universities.
- 6.13. Australia published its National Teacher Workforce Action Plan in 2023. It prioritises improving teacher supply, strengthening ITE and teacher retention, raising the reputation of the profession and a better understanding of workforce needs. Its action points in relation to teacher retention include stronger support for early career teachers, a wider range of career pathways including Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher routes and easier access to professional development.
- 6.14. England has introduced an Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework in 2024. This is a revised version of the framework first introduced in 2019 that was not well received by schools or ITT providers as it placed additional workload upon them. The framework sets out 8 standards that student teachers/ teachers are expected to meet during their ITT and early career development and provides a range of academic and other references to elucidate and support the achievement of the standards. The revised framework provides fully funded time of teaching for participants in their second year

of teaching and extended support from Mentors. It is currently being piloted in a limited number of schools and evaluated by the Education Endowment Foundation and the National Foundation for Education Research.

- 6.15. Faced by the specific challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers in the Welsh-medium sector, the Welsh Government in 2022 introduced a Welsh in Education Workforce Plan. This sets out a series of objectives and actions including widening ITE routes and improving the retention of teachers in the profession. In essence it is a recruitment strategy with some focus on retention, including the recent introduction of a retention bursary.
- 6.16. If Wales is to improve its recruitment and retention of teachers and to develop the quality of teaching in its schools, there is a case for establishing a workforce development plan that both maps seamless career progression and helps to make teaching far more attractive to potential entrants. Our research indicates that there is almost unanimous support for such a development across the education system.

Summary Headlines

- **A cohesive and systematic career development pathway for teachers in Wales does not currently exist**
- **Many other graduate professions provide such pathways**
- **Other nations are developing workforce development plans for teaching**
- **There is unanimous support for introducing such as plan in Wales.**

7. Implications

- 7.1. The implications of the current teacher recruitment and retention challenges in Wales are serious and manifold. They include impacts on educational funding, teacher workload, the quality of teaching, pupil outcomes, school improvement, educational equity, leadership succession and successful policy implementation.

Funding

- 7.2. Under-recruitment to secondary PGCE programmes in Wales in 2023-24 will have led to approximately £6.3 million not being transferred to university/school partnerships by the Welsh Government. The year-on-year loss of this funding is a major deficit of badly needed potential income for schools and universities. In addition, schools are having to spend scarce resources on frequent advertising and the high cost of supply teaching to cover vacancies.

Workload

- 7.3. Teacher workload is impacted through vacancies leading to increased class sizes and the loss of non-teaching time. Because of the churn in their staffing, middle and senior leaders are having to spend more time on supporting increased numbers of newly qualified and early career teachers. When some of these leave at an early point in their career, this represents a significant loss of time and investment in these staff.

Teacher Quality and Pupil Outcomes

- 7.4. It is inevitable that recruitment challenges and the loss of teachers will impact on teacher quality. Some university tutors report that they are recruiting applicants that would not have been accepted in the

past and headteachers (both primary and secondary) believe that the quality of any applicants they do receive has declined over the years. For example, one headteacher recalls how he decided to release three NQTs from their short-term contracts because, despite all the support they had been given they continued to struggle. They all managed to move to new posts locally within a short period. He provided honest appraisals of the teachers to his fellow headteachers, but they were all desperate to appoint to vacancies and prepared to take a risk.

- 7.5. Even in subjects where recruitment is relatively healthy, one school leader recalls that when she was appointed to her first post in successful school in an affluent area there were 78 applicants and now, in the same school, they would expect to receive 2 or 3. Estyn no longer grade the quality of secondary subject teaching. When they did so the subjects that had the strongest recruitment profiles (such as Physical Education and History) had the highest average quality grading: those with the greatest recruitment problems generally had the lowest.
- 7.6. Educational research and inspection evidence identifies the quality of teaching as the most important factor enabling pupils to achieve their potential. Because they are faced by high levels of teacher vacancies, senior leaders are increasingly having to deploy experienced, specialist subject teachers to teach GCSE and A level classes, rather than enabling them to work with younger pupils. This has inevitable impact on the quality of the teaching that younger pupils receive and is in contradiction to research evidence which suggests that this is the age when pupils are likely to become disengaged from education if their interest is not stimulated.
- 7.7. Whilst this report will suggest below that there is a case to be made for secondary teachers being developed to teach a second subject area, in some cases headteachers are forced to ask teachers to teach 3 or even 4 subjects when they have a limited background in these areas. This is likely to have an inevitable negative impact on teacher quality and retention and pupil outcomes.

School Improvement

7.8. As has been pointed out earlier if schools and education systems are to improve their outcomes, they require high quality teachers in sufficient numbers. Research and inspection evidence on school effectiveness could be summarised as establishing that good schools focus on ensuring consistently good classroom teaching and strong partnerships with parents and local communities. Recent research in Wales on schools which have had poor inspection outcomes or where their local authorities have serious concerns that this might happen, face challenges with the quality of teaching and much of this will have been impacted by recruitment and retention problems.

Educational Equity

Most of these schools will be in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and the challenges of teacher recruitment and retention have a major impact upon these schools. It could be argued that an unintended bias exists against these schools in relation to recruitment and retention. The criteria developed by Welsh Government for participation in ITE partnerships makes it far more difficult for these schools to participate and to have the opportunity to offer them posts (as other schools do) during their ITE programmes. It also denies students the chance to experience both the challenges and rewards of teaching in these schools.

7.10. Not only do these schools face the greatest challenge in recruiting teachers, they are also the schools with the most serious retention challenges, made worse because they have so many vacancies, resulting in increased teacher workload and less opportunities for professional learning and career development.

7.11. Research on teacher quality and school effectiveness identifies that high quality teachers make the greatest difference of all for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The current recruitment and retention situation in Wales works in complete contradiction to

this body of knowledge. Our most disadvantaged schools struggle to recruit any teachers and to retain many of those who can make the greatest difference for pupils. This is contributing, therefore, significantly to the wide attainment gap that exists in Wales between pupils from working class backgrounds and children from more affluent backgrounds.

7.12. Teach First is an ITE programme that aims to recruit high quality graduates to teach in the most socio-economically challenging environments. It is an established element of teacher education in England and operated in Wales from 2013-2020.

7.13. Extensive research has been undertaken on Teach First in England. This shows that whilst Teach First students have a higher course completion rate than other ITE students and are more likely to progress into teaching posts after their PGCE, they are also less likely to stay in teaching after their NQT year compared to teachers who have progressed through other routes. Changes to the Teach First programme in recent years have, however, led to much stronger retention rates which are now better than other ITE routes.

7.14. The research also reveals that Teach First has had a significant impact on recruitment and retention in the most disadvantaged schools and that it has, thereby, contributed to better student achievement, behaviour and overall school improvement in these schools.

Leadership

- 7.15. The research on Teach First also reveals that those who remain in teaching are much more likely to move into middle and senior leadership roles: 12 times higher after 3 years in the profession compared to teachers from other ITE routes. This is revealing given the context in Wales where schools (primary and secondary) are finding it increasingly difficult to fill leadership roles including headteacher positions. It supports research undertaken for the National Leadership Academy in Wales which points to a limited pool of qualified candidates being available for these roles.
- 7.16. It is apparent therefore, that problems with recruiting and retaining the best quality candidates into teaching contribute to later problems with leadership appointments. Recruitment and retention in Wales are a whole system issues - stretching from initial teacher recruitment right through to head teacher appointments and a growing number of local authorities in Wales perceive the problem in this way and are, therefore, developing holistic strategies for recruitment and retention.

Policy Implementation

- 7.19. Finally, the ambitions of the Welsh Government for education as set out in its strategic mission² and which embrace the enactment of the Curriculum for Wales, the improvement of educational standards (including results in the Programme for International Student Assessment) and the narrowing of the educational attainment gap, will inevitably be made more difficult because of the recruitment and retention situation. The impact on improving equity in education has already been focused on above, as has the challenges faced in improving the quality of teaching to raise standards, which in relation to PISA with its focus on the literacy numeracy and scientific skills of 15 years olds is made immeasurably more difficult by the acute shortages of specialist teachers in these areas.

- 7.18. In relation to the Curriculum for Wales little consideration was given to the ITE implications of introducing the new curriculum, although these were highlighted by teachers involved in its development. This includes the potential difficulties, raised by some headteachers, that might result from ITE students in England feeling that they may no longer be able to teach in Wales. These factors and the lack of preparation of ITE students to teach more than one secondary subject and examples of where, faced by subject vacancies, schools are ceasing to offer subjects such as Music and Drama, all have consequences for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.
- 7.19. For these reasons, there is a strong view that the current recruitment and retention situation represents 'an existential crisis' for the education system in Wales.

Summary Headlines

- **The current challenging teacher recruitment and retention situation in Wales has serious implications for educational funding, teacher workload, the quality of teaching, pupil outcomes, school improvement, educational equity, leadership succession and successful policy implementation**
- **The most significant impacts are experienced by schools in areas of socio-economic disadvantage**
- **These challenges may represent an 'existential crisis' for the education system in Wales.**

² Welsh Government (2023). Our National Mission: High Standards and Aspirations for All. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
[Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/our-national-mission-high-standards-and-aspirations-for-all)

SECTION C

Options for Change

8. Recruitment to Initial Teacher Education

- 8.1. The evidence we have collected suggests that if ITE recruitment is to be improved and sustained the following options for change need to be considered:
- A national campaign should be developed to promote teaching as a high-status profession with an attractive career profile.
 - A funding offer for potential postgraduate ITE students should be developed which recognises the student debt they will already have incurred and the potential value they can provide through public service as a teacher.
 - An improvement in professional marketing and recruitment to ITE programmes and of teaching as a career.
 - The availability of a wider range of routes into teaching.

Promoting Teaching as a Profession

- A national campaign is needed to counteract negative perceptions of teaching and to encourage potential entrants to consider teaching as a career. This should promote teaching realistically as a challenging profession but one that can be personally fulfilling, makes a difference for young people and for society, particularly those who are most disadvantaged and which can be intellectually and financially rewarding.
- 8.3. Other countries (Finland is the country most instanced) have long benefited educationally and socially through promoting teaching in this way and some other countries (such as Iceland) have turned around the challenges they have faced in recruitment and retention through such a campaign.
- 8.4. Recent research has shown that graduates still generally have a positive inclination towards teaching as a career. This is because

of an intrinsic desire to make a difference to the lives of others and to society. They hold these views much more strongly than their counterparts who are considering other career routes. Rather than being in decline, these attitudes are more strongly held by Generation Z graduates (those born after 1997) than Millennials (those born in the 1980s and 1990s)

- 8.5. What deters the graduates with these positive inclinations to teaching from entering ITE are concerns about salary levels, workload and a lack of work flexibility. As has been considered earlier in this report, the impact that salary levels have on recruitment is unclear and is but one of several motivational factors. Nevertheless, recent (2023 and July 2024) salary settlements will go some way to restore teacher salaries compared to other graduate professions. Issues relating to workload and flexible working are considered further below in sections 9 and 10 of this report
- 8.6. The national campaign should be led by Welsh Government (politicians and officials) and include local authorities, Estyn, the Education Workforce Council, universities, the teaching associations, headteachers and their schools.

Postgraduate Funding

- 8.7. Graduates who may be intrinsically interested in a career in teaching but who may have the concerns about entering the profession, are also influenced by the fact that they will need to incur further student debt. This on average, is currently estimated to be £48,740 by the time an undergraduate degree has been completed and will be even larger if potential PGCE students have undertaken postgraduate study. Given that they are not certain that eventually teaching will be their career choice or if they will be successful in completing the course/obtaining a teaching post, this probably acts as a significant disincentive.

- 8.8. On balance the bursary incentives that are currently offered to graduates in shortage subject areas do not have a positive and sustained impact upon either recruitment or medium to long term retention in the profession.
- 8.9. Given the situation that is currently being faced in relation to both the number and quality of students currently applying for ITE courses, the possibility of introducing a no-cost or low-cost offer for potential ITE students might be considered.
- 8.10. This might be justified in cost-benefit terms by:
- The funding currently expended on bursaries.
 - The cost to schools of employing supply teachers to cover vacancies and teacher sickness stemming from increased workload.
 - The unseen costs of teacher shortages/lower teacher quality on pupil outcomes and the efficient functioning of schools.
 - Teaching as a public service that contributes major economic and social benefits to society.
- 8.11. It would seem sensible, therefore, for Welsh Government to commission a rigorous cost-benefit analysis on postgraduate ITE funding leading to financial modelling options and recommendations. This should consider the situation in relation to the PGCE Primary and PGCE Secondary subject areas.
- 8.12. It would also need to ensure that universities (and through them their partnership schools) would continue to be funded to at least current levels to offer course provision. As has been the case in the past in Wales and is common in other countries where funding incentives are in place, graduates may be required to remain in the profession for an agreed number of years, failing which they would be asked to make compensatory payments.
- 8.13. It is evident that the current funding situation for postgraduate ITE acts as a significant disincentive to recruitment and it possible that a no-cost or low-cost offer alongside the other interventions

recommended here, would help to significantly address current recruitment and retention problems.

Marketing and Recruitment

- 8.14. Research has shown that primary school pupils in Wales place teaching as their second highest career choice. Although similar research has not been undertaken with secondary pupils it is probably the case that these aspirations decline in this age group. Nevertheless, as has been indicated above, many undergraduates/graduates retain intrinsically positive attitudes towards teaching.
- 8.15. Tapping into this potential interest in teaching as a career seems to be undeveloped and uncoordinated in Wales. It is unclear to what extent teaching as a career is promoted with pupils and parents in secondary schools and by Careers Wales and the ending of work experience in Year 10 has removed the chance to experience the role at first hand.
- 8.16. Pupils in our case study schools reported that the possibility of a career in teaching had not been suggested to them as an option, even in school career events. It is also apparent 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.
- 8.17. Although the Education Workforce Council does undertake publicity work on teaching as a career, there is not the high-profile campaign that was once undertaken by the, now defunct, Teacher Training Agency on behalf of Welsh Government.
- 8.18. University Career Services do, however, provide information for undergraduates, organise career fairs, make links with ITE institutions and offer undergraduates the opportunity to gain 'taster' experiences in local schools. The involvement of ITE Tutors in these processes is variable and dependant on their workload and motivation. They accept that they do not have the knowledge, skills and experience to be successful graduate recruiters. Headteachers are rarely, if ever,

involved in these recruitment processes in contrast to the situation in other professions.

- 8.19. In two subject areas (Modern Foreign Languages and Physics) Welsh Government funded mentoring programmes enable undergraduates to work with pupils in local schools. These programmes are led from Cardiff University and involve other universities in Wales. The main purpose of the programmes is to encourage greater numbers of pupils to pursue these subjects at GCSE and A Level, but they do provide ‘taster’ opportunities for undergraduates in teaching. Some of these undergraduates do later apply for ITE. A similar scheme for Welsh has been developed by Coleg Cymraeg Genedlaethol, again with support from Welsh Government.
- 8.20. Whilst these programmes are worthwhile, there is limited liaison with ITE institutions, and it is unclear why they have not been extended to other curriculum areas.
- 8.21. This picture of disparate and uncoordinated careers activity compares very unfavourably with graduate recruitment for careers in other public service sectors and the private sector. In these cases, recruitment processes are highly professional, utilising professional recruiters and senior professionals to promote attractive career progression opportunities within the highly competitive graduate labour market.
- 8.22. It is evident that there is, therefore, a need in Wales for a coordinated national recruitment programme for teaching in Wales that works with schools, local authorities, Welsh Government, EWC, universities and other organisations.
- 8.23. Alongside a national campaign for teaching, an improved funding offer for postgraduates and a stronger career progression profile of the type set out below in section 10 of this report, professional recruiters should be working with schools and universities to promote teaching as a career and to recruit undergraduates and postgraduates to the profession. Final entry to university programmes will, of course, need to remain the prerogative of HEIs.

Wider Range of Routes Into ITE

- 8.24. Whilst fully recognising that teaching is and should continue to be perceived as an intellectual and not a technical activity, there is broad agreement that a much wider range of routes into teaching should be provided in Wales. This was the almost unanimous view of the local authorities and schools who participated in the research, and it was also strongly supported by the undergraduate, past and present PGCE students surveyed.
- 8.25. Existing ITE programmes in Wales are relatively new and considerable time and energy have been expended on developing them. They are continuously evolving and improving and will have an important contribution to make to future recruitment and retention.
- 8.26. As has been indicated earlier in this report, however, many of our respondents feel that because of its intensive nature the 1-year PGCE may not be an attractive option for all graduates who are considering teaching as a career and it may also contribute to non-completion of the programme. Having completed it, many NQTs either do not enter teaching or choose to work as supply teachers. It is also likely that the low retention rates of teachers in the first 5 years of their career is partly caused by being insufficiently prepared for teaching by the PGCE and their early career development.
- 8.27. For these reasons, our data strongly indicates that if recruitment and retention to teaching in Wales is to be significantly improved, current routes into ITE should be supplemented by additional programmes that aim to:
 - Provide an alternative model to the current PGCE.
 - Add to the overall quality of entrants into teaching.
 - Address the acute shortages of secondary teachers in the most socio-economically disadvantaged schools.
 - Address the needs of those who wish to undertake work-based routes (additional to current provision offered by the Open

University) and under-represented groups, including those from the ethnic minority community.

- Better meet the needs of schools (for example, in preparing teachers for second subject teaching) and the Welsh education system (for example, preparing teachers to specialize in Areas of Learning and Experience within the Curriculum for Wales).

8.28. This might lead to the following additional routes into teaching being offered, subject to validation by universities and to accreditation:

- An alternative PGCE which is part of a 'long/thin process' of teacher development more suited to the needs of the modern profession. This is further elaborated in Section 10 of this report below.
- 3-year secondary undergraduate programmes, which would enable students to specialize in more than one subject area.
- 3-year generic undergraduate programmes (similar to the 3 /4-year Certificate of Education/BEd courses provided in the past) for primary/secondary teaching, including the development of specialism in one of the Areas of Learning and Experience of the Curriculum for Wales.
- A 2-year PGCE that would provide students with generic modules supplemented by specialist pathways in primary, secondary and post-16 education, enabling them to teach in one or more of these sectors. Approximately two-thirds of current PGCE Secondary students surveyed said that such a route would have been attractive to them.
- A 2-year Teach for Wales, work-based programme that would seek to recruit highly able and motivated graduates to work in schools where there are the most significant recruitment and retention challenges, including Welsh-medium contexts and schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

- Degree-level apprenticeships and school-based postgraduate apprenticeships. Approximately three-quarters of current PGCE Secondary students surveyed believed that such routes would be attractive to potential entrants, allowing more time for gradual progression and development and being financially attractive. Universities involved in these programmes in England believe they provide high quality academic learning and rigorous skills development that particularly appeal to mature students and those from more working-class backgrounds, thereby being transformative for individuals and social mobility.

- Bridging programmes that would enable both Welsh speaking pupils who have undertaken undergraduate studies in Wales and other countries through the medium of English, to have more time to develop their Welsh Language skills to a level where they could teach in Welsh-medium schools in Wales.

8.29. Exploring these possibilities would require Welsh Government and EWC to invite universities, local authorities and schools to work with them in undertaking scoping and preparatory work. Based on the evidence we have collected, innovative and creative thinking of this type is urgently needed to address recruitment and retention problems in the teaching profession in Wales.

Summary Headlines

- **Improvements to recruitment could be achieved through a combination of a national campaign to promote teaching, a more attractive funding offer to graduates, more professional recruitment and marketing and additional routes into teaching**
- **A national campaign to promote teaching should be led by Welsh Government and should portray teaching as a high-status profession which offers an attractive and fulfilling career profile**
- **A cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken to consider the potential for offering graduates a no-cost or low-cost opportunity to undertake ITE**

- A professional recruitment strategy for teaching should be developed that exploits the intrinsic motivation that many young people have for a career in teaching
- Additional routes into teaching should be introduced which offer innovative, high quality, opportunities to improve the numbers entering teaching in Wales and the quality of new entrants.

9. Recruitment and Retention in Schools

- 9.1. It is of crucial importance that schools are centrally involved in work to promote teaching as a profession, to recruit students to ITE and thereafter to their schools and in ensuring the highest possible rates of teacher retention.
- 9.2. All schools should be encouraged, as part of their core school improvement activity, to participate in promoting the teaching profession as a career and encouraging young people to undertake ITE. This could include participating in promotional activity of the type proposed in section 8 of this report, providing opportunities for practical work experience for students, active involvement in ITE partnerships and in developing new, innovative, additional routes into teaching.
- 9.3. Some schools encourage secondary pupils to think about a career in teaching, providing them with practical classroom experiences in their own and other schools. In one Academy chain in England the schools offer a 'Teachers for Tomorrow' programme where older secondary students who are interested in teaching can gain experience of working with other young people as Scout leaders,

sports coaches, instrumental music tutors and as teaching assistants in primary schools.

- 9.4. Schools should also be centrally involved in promotional activity undertaken by government and other agencies, providing opportunities for those interested in teaching to gain realistic, practical insights and experiences of the opportunities and challenges involved in schools. Schools should be incentivised to participate in these promotional activities.
- 9.5. Many schools are already involved in ITE partnerships and should be more strongly encouraged to be actively involved in their leadership and governance and receive recognition for this by Estyn and others.
- 9.6. Central to this involvement should be the high quality of mentoring and coaching support for student teachers. The importance of mentors and coaches in recruitment and retention and the need to raise their status within the teaching profession has been highlighted earlier in this report and will be considered more fully in section 10 below.
- 9.7. If schools are to be more centrally involved in ITE then as many schools as possible should be involved in ITE partnerships. Whilst this decision will ultimately rest with schools and might not be thought to be appropriate for schools facing school improvement challenges, otherwise it might be sensible for there to be a presumption that all schools would seek to be involved in ITE partnerships as part of their school improvement activity.
- 9.8. This might require Welsh Government and universities to revisit the current criteria for the involvement of schools in ITE. As has been pointed out earlier in this report, the current criteria have led to a situation where many of the most socio-economically disadvantaged schools in Wales, who face the most severe teacher recruitment challenges, are excluded from ITE partnerships. Given that a very high percentage of student teachers obtain their first posts in the

schools in which they have undertaken ITE, this results in a lack of inclusive practice and hampers the work of these schools in raising the attainment of pupils from working class backgrounds.

- 9.9. In the current situation where recruitment to secondary posts is highly competitive, schools need to ensure that they promote the posts they advertise as attractively as possible. The evidence from the graduate recruitment market suggests this should not only be focused on the salary on offer and the nature of the post, but also what the first ten years of a career in the school might offer, what support will be provided in their early years of teaching and how they can contribute to the wider vision of the school and its improvement strategy.
- 9.10. Research evidence suggests that this is particularly important for schools serving the most disadvantaged communities. They often promote their schools as providing supportive working environments, high-quality facilities, opportunities for career development, support for staff welfare and wellbeing including attention to work/life balance and various financial incentives such as healthcare benefits and discounted services.

Retention

- 9.11. Given that it is estimated that around 40% of those who undertake ITE no longer are working in publicly funded schools in the UK five years later, the importance of teacher retention is self-evident.
- 9.12. As has been pointed out in section 5 above, the factors which contribute to better retention rates in teaching include flexible working conditions, career development opportunities and a school culture where senior leaders ensure these are in place.
- 9.13. The detrimental impact which excessive workload can have on teacher wellbeing are well established and have been reflected earlier in this report. Managing this is one of the factors that contributes to serving and prospective teachers seeking greater flexibility of

employment, which has been heightened by the trend to hybrid working in other areas of employment. Increasingly teachers are interested in flexible working hours, job sharing, career breaks and other variations to their terms and conditions of employment.

- 9.14. Whilst examples of these practices have been growing in teaching pre- and post-pandemic, they are inevitably a challenge for the school system. It is a challenge which will need to be met, however, through innovative thinking and practice if the attractiveness of teaching as a profession is not to be further eroded. As has been pointed out earlier in this report, many NQTs and later career teachers are already opting to take supply contracts rather than full-time teaching posts, so that they can control their working hours and enjoy holidays and other family-related activities at a time of their own choice.
- 9.15. In England several developments are taking place to introduce greater flexibility in teaching. For example, some Academy Chain schools are currently introducing a 9- day working fortnight for their teachers and the Secretary of State for Education in England has recently announced that teachers can spend all their allocated PPA (preparation, planning and assessment) time working from home if they so wish. As has been pointed out elsewhere in this report, this may result in existing and potential teaching staff being attracted away from Wales to teach in England, particularly in border areas.
- 9.16. Attractive and supportive career development pathways are of critical importance in teacher retention. The crucial first phase of this is the induction process for NQTs and early career development. Research has shown that if they are given the right support, early career teachers make the most rapid development in the first two years of teaching following ITE. This reflects the situation in other professions whereby this stage is when the learning curve is at its steepest and when new recruits need the most enrichment and nurturing.

- 9.17. The research evidence also points to the critical importance of this early career development being classroom based with support from mentors and coaching provided by experienced and highly competent teachers. This should be a two-way relationship with the needs and roles of both mentors/coaches and early career teachers being given voice so that a shared understanding can be developed.
- 9.18. In essence this represents a form of apprenticeship and includes reduced timetables, structured coaching and planned, personalised, professional learning in a way that is commonplace in medicine and other professions. The research evidence identifies that this is a key retention approach for all teachers, but particularly so for early career teachers and those teaching in the most challenging socio-economic circumstances.
- 9.19. There is a lack of robust empirical research or inspection evidence on the extent to which these approaches are in place currently in the Welsh education system, but the research undertaken for this report suggests that such practice is limited and variable in quality.
- 9.20. Welsh Government have introduced revised guidance for schools and local authorities on supporting NQTs through the induction period and this reflects much of the practice pointed to above. Our evidence suggests, however, that this is generally not well represented in the experience of these novice teachers.
- 9.21. It is critical that these practices are a central part of the culture and school improvement vision of a school as developed by its senior leaders. Recent research has emphasised that having this support and development in place is often more important for teacher retention than salaries and working conditions.
- 9.22. In successful schools, senior leaders develop what is often described as a ‘talent management strategy’ that reflects innovative practice in other professions. This focuses on identifying the talents of all staff, deploying them to achieve the greatest impact and providing them with personalised professional learning designed to develop their potential.
- 9.23. In school federations this might involve moving staff across schools providing them with opportunities for personal growth and for where they can make the greatest impact. This is seen as a ‘win-win’ approach that both enhances teacher development and retention and supports school improvement. It involves senior leaders viewing their workforce as a single cohesive team, or as one headteacher expresses it as a ‘Faculty of Education’.
- 9.24. In England, the Chief Executive Officers of Multi Academy Chains have recently developed a ‘Retention Promise’ for all their current and prospective teaching staff based on the following commitments:
- Access to learning and development
 - Participating in shaping the work culture within the school
 - A safe working environment
 - Help with workload management
 - Support for improved work/life balance
 - Accountability being used as a force for good.
- 9.25. As in this case, promoting teacher recruitment and retention and supporting school improvement at scale, may require schools to work together in various forms of alliances, involving local authorities and higher education institutions. Whilst this might be structured within a national framework, it could be localised to reflect the range of contexts that exist in Wales. Further consideration of these issues is provided in the next section of this report.

Summary Headlines

- **Schools should be encouraged to promote teaching as a career and entry into ITE as part of their core school improvement activity**
- **Welsh Government criteria for ITE should be revised to facilitate the involvement of as many schools as possible in ITE, including participating fully in the leadership and governance of partnerships**

- Schools should ensure that the mentoring and coaching that they provide for student teachers is of the highest possible quality
- Schools and local authorities will need to provide greater flexibility of employment for teachers if the attractiveness of teaching is not to be further eroded
- Supportive professional development opportunities are important in retaining teachers throughout their careers, but particularly for early career teachers and those teaching in the most challenging circumstances
- Classroom-based mentoring and coaching can enable early career teachers to make rapid progress in the first two years of their employment
- The above approaches are not currently well established in the education system in Wales
- Leadership to provide these opportunities at local level and at scale in Wales is likely to require collaborative work between schools, local authorities and universities.

10. A Teacher Workforce Development Plan for Wales

Introduction

- 10.1. As was proposed in section 6 of this report and has been a central theme in the primary evidence collected by this research, if the challenges associated with teacher recruitment and retention in Wales are to be overcome, a strategic Teacher Workforce Development Plan for Wales is required.
- 10.2. This should integrate ITE, early career development and career-long professional learning (including a range of leadership pathways) into an integrated system that would aim to improve recruitment and retention and teacher quality.

- 10.3. This would reflect similar developments in other professions in the UK and some international education systems. We have found almost unanimous support for such a development from all the individuals and organisations that have participated in this research, including headteachers, local authorities, universities, undergraduate and ITE students and NQTs.

Repositioning Teacher Education and Early Career Development

- 10.4. Research evidence suggests that rather than ‘front-loading’ initial teacher education as is currently the case, it should be structured as a ‘long and thin’ process that embraces initial and early career development. This would reflect practice in some other education systems and many other professions, such as medicine.
- 10.5. This would reflect the research evidence presented earlier in this report on the learning curve experienced by professionals, including teachers, whereby the trajectory of their development can be rapid in their early years in the profession, following their initial education and training. It also reflects the central importance that work-based mentoring and expert coaching can play in this process.
- 10.6. As has been suggested above, this is best seen as an ‘apprenticeship’ type progression where novice teachers have reduced timetables, structured opportunities for undertaking research, enquiry and reflection and receive the support of mentors and expert coaching of experienced and highly competent teachers. This should also facilitate much greater use to be made, than has been reported to currently be the case, of the Welsh Government’s Professional Standards for Teachers.
- 10.7. This would not represent a departure from the philosophy and pedagogy that underpins current teacher education programmes in Wales. It would, however, reposition this approach so that it took place over a longer time-period, consistent with what we know about the way in which professionals develop their competence and in a way that reduces the current workload and related wellbeing issues

- reported by many ITE and early career teachers. It would be justified by the prospect that it could make teaching a more attractive profession to enter, improved retention rates and significant improvements in the quality of teaching.
- 10.8. Adopting this approach would require existing partnership arrangements for ITE and those in place for the induction of NQTs to be combined into one single process involving partnership working between (potentially all) schools, local authorities and universities. Whilst this should take place within a national framework, it should also allow for local and regional arrangements that reflect the variety of contexts which exist in Wales.
- 10.9. There will of course be technical issues to be considered in moving in this direction, such as the stages of progression of undergraduate and postgraduate ITE students, the profile of early career teachers who undertook ITE outside of Wales, the need to encompass this in new types of ITE provision and the timing of the award for Qualified Teacher Status. These should not, however, prove insurmountable.
- 10.10. These developments could also provide an opportunity for closer integration of school-focused teacher education programmes and post-16 education and training provided through PCET (Professional Certificate of Education and Training) programmes.
- 10.11. Teaching/Lecturing is unique amongst professions in requiring students to decide pre-entry if they wish to be prepared for primary, secondary or post-16 education sectors. Other professions provide generic preparation, a range of experiences and allow emerging professionals to choose their own progression into specialist areas and further professional development.
- 10.12. In addition, a perverse situation exists whereby those who obtain Qualified Teacher Status can teach in post-16 education institutions but PCET qualified staff, many of whom have vocational skills and experience that would enable schools to offer additional qualifications to young people, are not able to teach in schools.
- 10.13. Welsh Government and the Education Workforce Council have already undertaken work in this area and the repositioning of teacher education and early career development would enable these anomalies to be addressed for the benefit of all (including young people) and for further education institutions and other post-16 providers to be involved in partnership provision alongside schools, local authorities and universities in a way that would improve inclusivity in Welsh education.

Career Long Professional Development

- 10.14. It is essential that this nurturing and enrichment of early career teachers is continued into career-long professional development opportunities which support teacher retention and improved teacher quality.
- 10.15. To this end, the current professional learning provision and framing provided by the Welsh Government and other organisations including the National Entitlement to Professional Learning, the National MA Education, the National Professional Enquiry Programme, the emerging national EdD programme and the various leadership pathways that are available should be integrated into the national workforce development plan.
- 10.16. The plan should also provide additional opportunities and pathways designed to make teaching more attractive as a career and to improve teacher quality. In recognition of the importance that high-quality teaching should play in school standards and improvement, this should include leadership programmes for:
- Excellent (Chartered) Teacher Status
 - National and Subject Leaders of Education.

- 10.17. There might also be other professional learning opportunities within the development plan such as secondments, research sabbaticals, and international visits and placements. These have been available in the past in the Welsh education system and are a feature of many other professions and graduate career contexts. Their current absence is something that many headteachers feel has made teaching far less attractive as a career.
- 10.18. Of critical importance should be provision for teachers to develop as mentors and coaches. Mentors have a crucial role to play in initial and early career teacher education. The mentors who have participated in this research have generally reported, however, that they feel that their role is undervalued as they do not receive any enhanced status or financial incentives for undertaking this work and rarely receive any reduction in teaching time to enable them to perform their role. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that concerns about the quality of mentoring have been a constant theme of Estyn reports on ITE over the last 30 years since it became a formal part of ITE programmes.
- 10.19. As has been highlighted earlier in this report, the role of expert teachers acting as coaches with their fellow professionals is of profound importance in teacher development and quality. Research evidence shows that high quality coaching can improve teaching quality, pupil outcomes, staff workload management and wellbeing and overall school improvement.
- 10.20. The evidence is also clear on what contributes to successful coaching including collaborative problem solving, dialogue and reflection and the establishing of strong relationships between coaches and those they are coaching. It should embrace both the general and subject specific requirements of teachers, aligned to their needs and the contexts and specific challenges they are facing.
- 10.21. It is also clear that if teachers are provided with the right support, time allocation and other incentives, that acting as mentors and coaches can itself be highly motivating and fulfilling to these professionals as well as to the teachers they support.
- 10.22. Whilst many schools in Wales have sought to develop mentoring and coaching provision and have been supported by Welsh Government funded provision in this area, there is not currently any national programme or career structure that enables teachers to develop their leadership skills as mentors and coaches. Given the importance of these roles, this should, therefore, be a major component of a national workforce development plan.
- 10.23. An example of how one headteacher of a large school federation in England has put in place a framework designed to improve teacher retention, progression and quality, suggests the type of approach to school-based professional development that might be included in a national plan:
- Phase 1 (Years 1 and 2 of teaching): Developing from being an NQT to a novice teacher
 - Phase 2 (Years 3-5): Developing Teaching Mastery and becoming a novice teacher developer
 - Phase 3 (Years 6-7): Expert Teacher, Mentor and Novice Leader
 - Phase 4 (Years 8-9): Expert Teacher and Middle Leader
 - Phase 5 (Years 10>): Senior Leader.
- Funding**
- 10.24. Providing these opportunities as part of a national plan will require considerable additional investment in the education system in Wales. The justification for this would be to address the current crisis in teacher recruitment and retention and the detrimental impact this is having on educational standards in Wales. It could be suggested that if the quality of an education system is indeed only as good as the quality of its teachers, that this requires appropriate public investment in teaching as a career.

Summary Headlines

- A Teacher Workforce Development Plan for Wales should be introduced
- Within this plan the initial development of teachers should be re-positioned as a single integrated process incorporating ITE and early career development
- PCET should be incorporated into this revised process
- Enriched opportunities for professional learning, including a wide range of leadership pathways, should be incorporated into the plan
- The role and development of Mentors and Coaches should be a major element of the plan.

11. Implications

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- Based on the extensive empirical evidence that has been collected, this report has argued that the current challenges associated with teacher recruitment and retention can be seen to represent a crisis for the Welsh education system, including the realisation of the national mission for education set out by the Welsh Government.
- 11.2. If these challenges are to be overcome, significant changes may need to be made to current policy and practice, designed to improve the attractiveness of teaching as a career and to realise the key contribution that high quality teacher preparation and development can make to educational improvement.
- 11.3. These changes should build upon existing policies in this area and include:
- Actions, led by the Welsh Government, to improve recruitment to initial teacher education as set out in section 8 of the report.
 - Actions led by schools and local authorities, designed to improve recruitment and retention of teachers in schools, as set out in section 9 of the report.
- Actions, led by Welsh Government, to introduce a Teacher Workforce Development Plan for Wales as set out in section 10 of the report.
- 11.4. To reflect the variety of contexts which exist in Wales, including those in urban and rural communities, the Welsh-medium sector and in areas where there are high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, these actions should be part of a national strategy but allow for local and regional variation and initiative.
- 11.5. These actions will need to be supported by high levels of public investment designed to both make teaching a well-remunerated profession and to allow teachers to experience the professional development opportunities commonplace in other graduate professions, both of which are key factors in recruitment and retention. To do otherwise, is endanger the future of teaching as a profession in Wales and the life-chances of our children and young people.
- 11.6. We believe that universities in Wales have a critical role to play in these developments. This would include offering a wider range of high-quality routes into teaching, supporting early career and ongoing professional development of teachers and applied education research.
- 11.7. Universities should also seek to build upon partnerships with schools in Wales a key part of their Civic Mission activity. This could include further developing subject mentoring, tutoring and experiential programmes that involve undergraduates and providing greater access to schools for university expertise and facilities. Extended partnership working of this type is likely to be beneficial to pupils, schools, university students and to the role and reputation of universities within their communities.

- 11.8. If the system is to move in these directions consideration might also be given to the current architecture of teacher education and development in Wales, which includes:
- **Welsh Government** as the key funder and overall regulator.
 - **Local Authorities** as the lead employer of teachers and provider of early career development and areas of professional learning.
 - **Schools** with their role in ITE partnerships, as the providers of practical experience for student teachers and with responsibility for the induction of NQTs.
 - **Universities** with their participation in ITE partnerships, in various forms of professional learning provision for teachers and in undertaking research on teacher education and development.
 - **Further Education Institutions** and the **National Training Federation for Wales** as the main employers/representative organisations for the post-16 workforce.
 - **Education Workforce Council** as the workforce regulator and accreditation body for ITE.
 - **Estyn** as the education and training inspectorate with responsibility for inspection and monitoring of ITE and post-16 provision.
 - **The National Academy for Educational Leadership** with its endorsement role for leadership pathways and other forms of professional learning.
 - **Medr** (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) and its oversight of post-16 education and training in Wales.
- 11.9. This is an extremely complex ecology and infrastructure for a country the size of Wales and the potential for rationalisation of this system to provide a more strategic, holistic and efficient process for ITE, early career and ongoing teacher development is worthy of consideration.
- 11.10. These complexities also lead to the ITE system being subject to various levels of accountability from:
- EWC in relation to programme accreditation and monitoring
 - Estyn in relation to the quality of provision
 - Welsh Government in providing allocations of numbers based on the judgements of EWC and Estyn
 - Internal quality assurance systems within universities.
- 11.11. This could be seen to be an excessive amount of accountability, unmatched in any other part of the education system in Wales. It reflects neither the Welsh Government's commitment to a 'self-improving' school system based on self-evaluation, or research evidence on the value of 'intelligent' and 'proportionate' forms of accountability. In the view of the ITE sector in Wales this is a burdensome level of accountability that deters innovation and creativity.



SECTION D

Main Findings

12. Main Findings

Current Situation

- 12.1. Recruitment to ITE and to teaching posts is problematic in nearly all secondary subject areas; this is caused by a combination of negative perceptions of the teaching profession, the attractiveness of other professional careers and the financial situation faced by graduates.
- 12.2. The quality of entrants being recruited to primary and secondary teaching should be constantly improved.
- 12.3. Staff retention is a growing problem in schools and results from a combination of workload pressures, a lack of opportunities for professional growth and salary levels.
- 12.4. Successful retention strategies include rich support for early career teachers and professional development, flexible working arrangements, developing teacher resilience and a strong focus on these areas by school leaders.
- 12.5. The current recruitment and retention situation has serious implications for education policy and education standards in Wales, particularly in relation to overcoming the impact of poverty on educational attainment.
- 12.6. There is unanimous support in the education sector for a holistic workforce development plan for teaching in Wales, reflecting practice in other professions and in teaching in other countries.

Options for Change

- 12.7. Improvements to recruitment to ITE should be sought through a national campaign to promote teaching, a more attractive funding offer for graduates, improved recruitment and marketing approaches and the development of additional routes into teaching.
- 12.8. To improve recruitment to and retention in teaching posts, schools should play a full part in ITE (including the approaches set out in 12.7), provide high quality mentoring and coaching for student and early career teachers, offer greater flexibility of employment and provide rich professional development opportunities for staff.
- 12.9. A Teacher Workforce Development Plan for Wales should be introduced, encompassing a single process for ITE and early career development, the incorporation of PCET into such arrangements and rich opportunities for professional learning, including a strong focus on mentoring and coaching.

APPENDICES

Authors

David Egan is Emeritus Professor of Education at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Following a thirteen-year career as a schoolteacher and school leader in two South Wales Valleys comprehensive schools, he joined Cardiff Metropolitan University (then Cardiff Institute of Higher Education) in 1989. He progressed to become the inaugural Head of the Cardiff School of Education, one of the founders (and eventually Chair) of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers Cymru and chair of the Graduate Teacher Training Registry which oversaw postgraduate recruitment to initial teacher education in England and Wales. Since 2000 his career has focused on educational research and policy advice within the devolved education system in Wales. Amongst his academic honours he is an elected fellow of The Learned Society of Wales and the Academy of Social Sciences; he was a founding fellow of the Chartered College of Teachers.

Kate Attfield is a senior lecturer at the Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy, Cardiff Metropolitan University. Kate has a PhD from Cardiff University in Deaf studies. Prior to being a university academic, Kate held positions including statutory social worker, British Sign Language interpreter, and collective advocate with the British Deaf Association. Kate holds the position of University representative for sustainability and inclusion on the Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement Committee. Kate's sociological research interest is inclusive citizenship, which has led her to under-researched, minority communities: Kate has published on the Triple X experience, Steiner Waldorf pedagogy, and the Deaf community. Kate is an experienced school governor and holds roles in upper school educational governance, safeguarding and child protection, human resources, and equality, diversity and inclusion. Kate has contributed to other Welsh Government education research projects relating to inclusion in state education.

Laura Rees Davies is a highly experienced professional in psychology, education, and coaching, with a diverse career spanning academia, research, and consultancy. She currently serves as a Senior Lecturer at Cardiff Metropolitan University and has held similar roles at the University of Worcester and the University of South Wales. Her expertise includes coaching psychology, mental health mentoring, and applied psychology practice supervision. She is a Chartered Coaching Psychologist and an active researcher with numerous publications on topics such as eating disorders, play behaviour, and peer mentoring. Her current international and national research projects include coaching in education, evidence-based practice, boundaries in coaching practice, teacher recruitment and retention, and teacher professional development. Her career is further distinguished by leadership roles, such as chairing the Division of Coaching Psychology, developing and leading a university peer mentoring service, and serving as an external examiner for several universities.

APPENDICES

Authors

Katharine Young is a Bilingual Lecturer in Research Methods at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Her research is largely focussed on Welsh in Education; she has undertaken research into effective teaching strategies in late immersion settings, explored how language policy models are appropriated in Welsh-medium schools, and compared how schools in Wales and Quebec integrate learners who are newcomers to immersion schools in both areas. Katharine trained through Teach First as a secondary school teacher and taught Welsh as a second language and modern foreign languages in two schools in south-east Wales for several years. She sits on the advisory board for Routes into Languages, and regularly contributes to the National Late Immersion Network by presenting research on language acquisition and language policy to immersion teachers.

Ellen Bristow is Policy and Public Affairs Manager for the National Literacy Trust and was previously Research Assistant at the Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy working on the SRRP and the Welsh Government funded evaluation of the Curriculum for Wales. She undertook her doctoral studies as an ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership at Cardiff University where she completed a dissertation on aspects of language development within the Curriculum for Wales. She has also worked as an intern at the Welsh Government supporting the development of the National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry.

Christian Farrell is a PhD student in the School of Sports and Health Sciences at Cardiff Metropolitan University and worked as a Research Assistant on the SRRP project. His PhD thesis focuses on the Open Campus initiative at Cardiff Met and its place in the civic mission and community focused schools work of the university. His other research interests and experience include intergenerational approaches to martial arts and well-being, Welsh language provision at the University and the health and wellbeing area of the Curriculum for Wales.



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Inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention: Reports published by the Education Policy Institute

[Incentives to recruit and retain teachers in Wales](#)

[Recruitment and Retention of Senior School Leaders in Wales](#)

Agenda Item 4

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC)



TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION – A FEW COMMENTS FROM UCAC

We welcome the fact that the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee is investigating 'Teacher Recruitment and Retention'. Our comments follow the subheadings suggested on the Senedd Cymru website.

BACKGROUND

The challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers in Wales is not a new one; indeed, it is a challenge facing other countries in the United Kingdom as well. However, we have to face the fact that Wales faces an additional challenge, as it also has to consider the need for a bilingual workforce, especially considering the vision and goal of achieving one million Welsh speakers and the aspirations of the Welsh Language and Education Bill.

There have been a number of initiatives to increase the numbers starting a teaching career, and the Government claims, according to the words of Lynne Neagle in Senedd Plenary on 22 January 2025, that they are doing 'lots and lots and lots of work'¹ in terms of recruiting and retaining teachers. However, despite the work, the problem still remains, so it must be questioned whether the efforts and action have been channeled in the right direction.

BARRIERS TO RECRUITMENT

Teachers' working conditions - one of the main obstacles to attracting more teachers to the profession is working conditions. Issues such as workload, pupils' behaviour, working hours, class sizes, and parents' attitudes all contribute to the problem. The clear evidence from our members is that these issues have worsened in recent years, which therefore have a negative impact on teacher recruitment. It is very disappointing that the Government has not in this regard addressed the recommendations of the IWPRB Strategic Review, which was commissioned in December 2021 and published in April 2024. Similarly, the Government is very slow

¹ Transcript of Senedd Plenary (paragraph 135) 22 January 2025

in addressing the working conditions recommendations in recent IWPRB annual reports.

School funding (cuts) - There is a very close link between an increase in workload and school funding. With funding cuts in schools, classes are increasing in size, and there are fewer resources, including fewer human resources. The increased burden is borne by fewer individuals. Not only are larger classes more challenging to teach, but the marking work is increasingly demanding too, so teachers' workload becomes more burdensome both within and outside the class. In recent years, we have seen schools having to cut staff – indeed, very few schools haven't faced financial challenges, and therefore the pressure is greater on the remaining teachers.

Lack of job flexibility - Young people today are faced with a job market that generally offers quite a bit of flexibility in terms of work arrangements – issues such as remote working, flexible hours etc. In surveys, 'flexibility' appears very high in what young people are seeking when looking for a job. 'Working from home' has now become very common. Indeed, lack of flexibility in the education profession has been increasingly highlighted as other jobs have become more flexible, due to Covid. Teaching does not offer the flexibility to be able to attend important family events, and it limits the ability to attend leisure activities of choice. As a result, many consider that the profession restricts too much upon their freedom to do what they want to do at times of their choice and choose to follow a profession that will offer better flexibility and a better balance in terms of leisure/family life and work. Again, the Government is aware of the situation, and discussions have been held with IWPRB, but nothing has changed.

More appealing jobs – Degrees/studies in certain fields open doors to jobs that pay extremely well and where the working conditions are favourable. A teacher's job needs to be appealing – offering good working conditions and paying well. Another issue that makes a job appealing is a specific pathway, with steps and milestones that lead to definitive development. This is not true in education. Not only should support and opportunities for promotion/development be offered on the job, but support is also needed for prospective teachers throughout their training pathway.

It would be a good idea to target school pupils and students early on and encourage them to pursue a career in education, identifying the benefits of pursuing a career in this field and giving opportunities for older pupils in schools to gain teaching and training skills. Bearing in mind that there is a shortage of teachers in some subjects, how about trying to encourage pupils to consider specific A Level subjects, if they have ability and interest in those subjects, drawing their attention to the value of those subjects for pursuing a career in the future. It is key that a teacher sees their work in a positive way in order to be able to share a positive message with pupils. Unfortunately, due to workload and working conditions they are often not in a position to do so.

Location – It is important that postgraduate teacher training courses are in settings attached to institutions that offer first degrees. The fact that there is now no teacher training course in Aberystwyth can affect the numbers that will choose to follow teacher training courses. Every university in Wales should have a postgraduate course for teacher training.

FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER RETENTION IN THE PROFESSION

Pupil behaviour – Increasing problems in terms of keeping pupils and parents in order show a general lack of respect for teachers. The result of this is that teachers lose heart. Spending hours preparing appears to be a 'waste' if pupils do not show respect and if a large percentage of a lesson is spent getting children in order.

Violent, serious incidents in schools - A number of teachers are now talking about feeling threatened when going to school and we are all horrified when we think about what happened at Ysgol Dyffryn Aman. Unfortunately, examples of violent incidents are on the rise, and these problems are no longer limited to big cities, in specific areas. Recent events have shown that serious incidents can happen anywhere.

Parents' attitudes – Not only have pupils' attitudes changed in recent years (especially worsening since Covid), but teachers also note that parents' attitudes have deteriorated significantly. Parents challenge schools' decisions in relation to disciplining children, questioning rules, and refusing to work with schools. Their behaviour can be challenging and threatening at times, appearing in schools without warning and showing a lack of respect for school staff.

Workload - Having to work for long hours every day – preparing, marking, and doing administrative work, is causing individuals to leave the profession. Definitive boundaries need to be set for teachers' working hours, ensuring that there is real value to any administrative task etc. Excessive workload has a serious impact on teachers. It places unacceptable stress on them and affects their perception of teaching as a career, and also affects the perception of prospective teachers as to the nature of the job. According to a former teacher in an article in Y Cymro, '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.'²

Again, there is government recognition that there are challenges in the field - but there has been very little action to improve the situation in recent years.

Constant reforms in education, meaning extra pressure on teachers – Over the past few years, teachers have had to cope with a new curriculum, new qualifications (GCSE), and a new ALN Act, let alone other changes within schools. These changes have meant a load of work for teachers and there is a risk that teachers are being taken for granted. They are expected to find time to undertake online training

² Y Cymro, July 7 2024 page 4

for new courses, read new specifications, and prepare materials for new courses. All this is happening within a context of fiscal cuts, redundancies and huge social challenges.

Lack of support for teachers – The profession feels at times that there is no support for them and that learners, parents and society are very negative and critical. Qualifications Wales' comments in delaying the introduction of the new GCSEs did not paint a positive picture of the profession. It was a disappointment for teachers to read Qualifications Wales' comments at the time, namely that the reason for the delay was teachers' 'lack of confidence' to deliver the course. Teachers felt that the impression was given that teachers were to blame for the delay and that there was a fault on their part. There can also be considerable pressure on teachers from Estyn, the consortia and local authorities. It must also be acknowledged that these people can support teachers and there are some good examples of this.

Demands are constantly changing – teachers have now developed into being social workers, parents, health and safety experts, counsellors etc etc. Teachers feel unable to focus on teaching. One example of this is the increasing demand on primary school teachers to change children's nappies. Parents feel that it is the role of teachers to teach their children everything – including the basic skills that parents should introduce and teach.

SCHOOL LEADERS

Some specific factors that affect the recruitment and retention of school leaders

Workload/Demands – Unfortunately, there is no limit to the hours that leaders are expected to work. Teachers, parents, social services and the police expect school leaders to be available at all hours of the day, all year round.

Again, discussions and consultation in this regard have dragged on for several years, without any change to the situation.

Various job responsibilities/Expectations – Headteachers are expected to be experts on all kinds of aspects of school life – such as health and safety, and social work. As problems increase in society, schools are under increasing pressure. UCAC welcomes any steps taken to make schools safer places, but regrets the additional pressure and increased accountability placed on school leaders. Due to the decline in behaviour and the risk of violent incidents, all schools in some counties are required to develop their own safeguarding plans and schedule training drills. The effectiveness of the documents and guidance will need to be tested. As a result of this, documents may need to be amended. Schools are asked to review their plan every year or more often if there are important changes, e.g. key staff. Schools will need to keep a central register of the arrangements, note the date of serious incident training drills and the date on which the action plan was reviewed. The intention is commendable but it is an additional strain on individuals that are already under great

pressure. There is clear need for the Government to offer clear guidance in this regard.

Liability – There is profound pressure on leaders, as they are accountable to learners, parents, staff, local authorities, consortia, and Estyn. These pressures have led to mental illness for many leaders or have discouraged them to such an extent that they leave the profession, in order to achieve better work/life balance.

Financial cuts – Heads usually have to lead the process of deciding on ways of saving money. This puts a lot of pressure on their shoulders, especially when there have to be cuts to staff etc. Having to face difficult decisions, such as making redundancies amongst staff (who are colleagues) in order to balance the budget puts enormous stress on individuals. It is a decision that people do not want to face and as a result they settle for lower salaries, staying in an ordinary teacher's job.

WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

The majority of the education workforce, like the majority of the population of Wales, is white. It is important that any individual from an ethnic minority is welcomed into the profession and that they do not face any racial prejudice.

80% of Welsh teachers belong to the 'white' category, with 13% not specifying their nationality, so only 7% of teachers are from an ethnic background.³ It must be remembered that 93.8% of the population of Wales is 'white'⁴, but we welcome any initiative to encourage more individuals from ethnic minorities to join the profession, in order to have a diverse and inclusive workforce.

75.6% of the workforce are women and only 24.4% are men⁵. This is not a fair reflection of society and having diversity in terms of female/male teachers is beneficial for learners of all ages.

It is crucial that as many teachers as possible in Wales speak Welsh and are able to teach through the medium of both Welsh and English. Currently 33% of teachers in Wales state that they can speak Welsh, and 26.5% state that they can teach through the medium of Welsh. Bearing in mind the aspirations of the Welsh Language and Education Bill, it is important that more and more teachers are trained that can speak Welsh and teach through the medium of the language.

In order to have more Welsh speakers, more Welsh education is needed, and in order to have more Welsh education, more teachers are needed that who can work through the medium of Welsh. Ensuring this means tackling it seriously. The Welsh in education workforce plan was produced in 2022, which includes some ideas to tackle the problem. However, I wonder how much proactive work is being done to

³ As above

⁴ <https://www.gov.wales/ethnic-group-national-identity-language-and-religion-wales-census-2021-html>

⁵ Annual Statistics for the Education Workforce in Wales 2024 (EWC)

attract Welsh-medium teachers, and I wonder how much real evaluation and monitoring is there regarding the 2022 plan? There are great examples of people who have tackled the challenge of learning Welsh and teaching through the medium of Welsh. More use needs to be made of these excellent examples in order to encourage more to follow their example. It is key that the Government fully considers the practice in other countries, where there is clear recognition that being able to teach in two languages is a valuable additional skill, e.g. New Zealand and Ireland, in this regard as well.

SO WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE ISSUES OUTLINED ABOVE?

THE IMPACT ON LEARNERS

Lack of continuity and consistency – The shortage of teachers in our schools and high numbers of teachers leaving the profession mean that there is no continuity and consistency for pupils in certain subjects or at certain stages of their education. A lack of consistency can have a negative effect on pupils' standards of achievement.

Reduced subject expertise – 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.

Fewer teachers – Fewer teachers mean larger classes, and in such classes, individuals receive less attention and there is a risk of a drop in standards as a result.

IMPACT ON DELIVERING EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

The latest reforms to 14-16 courses offer a wider range of subjects, but without the teachers to deliver these subjects, the choice will shrink.

Fewer teachers will mean an increased workload and therefore less time to prepare for the introduction of new educational reforms

IMPACT ON TEACHERS AND THE WIDER WORKFORCE

As has already been mentioned, the situation is critical, as more and more pressure is placed on the teachers that remain in the profession. The current critical situation is likely to worsen the situation further.

ADDRESSING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

It appears that some of the plans that have been presented in recent years are ad hoc responses, rather than being carefully planned. There are examples of people

following training courses to become teachers in order to obtain a grant/bursary and then follow a career in another area. It must be ensured that there is coherent thinking in this regard, with a link between training, recruitment and retention. The profession must be marketed and promoted, giving careful attention and consideration to when students decide on their career path, in order to be able to positively influence their choice. There must be collaboration with careers officers, taking into account the importance of different times e.g. Year 9 (choosing subjects), Year 11 (choosing A level subjects), the time when students are considering options after graduation etc.

There must be collaboration with those that are offering teacher training courses and ensure that there are opportunities on those courses to immerse students in the Welsh language. Some Welsh training should be included on all ITT courses in Wales, so that everyone trained in Wales has some grasp of the language.

Why not enable students to follow an academic route and a route in education, and start teaching part time, while they follow further academic courses?

If money is given to attract people to join the profession, the career of those teachers that have benefited from these recruitment schemes must be tracked, ensuring that the money is spent on people that stay in the profession and show enthusiasm and commitment. The risk is that people receive the money but do not stay in the profession or certainly do not stay in the profession long enough.

New teachers need the security of firm support and high-quality mentoring. There has been a tendency for mentoring schemes to be a box-ticking exercise, rather than schemes that offer firm, sustaining support.

We again note how important it is to address workload effectively in order to ensure that there is a positive attitude amongst the current workforce.

It must be seen that the Government is listening to teachers and addressing the existing problems. Providing a toolkit is not the answer to everything. Jeremy Miles noted in the Welsh in Education Workforce Plan in 2022 that 'radical and innovative' action is needed.⁶

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that the situation is critical and that the problem needs to be tackled. This is not an easy issue, but somehow something needs to be done about workload, well-being, flexible working and career portfolio. The well-being of pupils and teachers is at stake. We are in danger of losing good, conscientious teachers, who would have a positive influence on pupils. More teachers need to be attracted and ensure that they have enough time to prepare and mark/assess within a certain time, and that they get the due respect from learners and parents.

⁶ Welsh in education workforce plan (Welsh Government - 2022)

Bearing in mind Nelson Mandela's words that education is the 'most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world', we need to ensure that we have the necessary workforce to ensure a prosperous future for the children and young people of Wales.

Agenda Item 5.1

April 17, 2025

Dear Buffy,

Thank you for the invitation to contribute to your work on school improvement and learner attainment.

I have outlined in brief some initial thoughts below. I would be happy to discuss these further with the committee in due course, should the opportunity arise.

Best wishes

Dr Gareth Evans
Director of Education Policy
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

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- With regards to school improvement arrangements, there needs to be a clearer articulation of what school improvement (SI) is and for. There is general consensus within the academic community that SI should be school-led and involve the rigorous use of data to evaluate progress (Potter et al. 2002; Schildkamp, 2019). Furthermore, SI should be seen as a continuous and long-term process, rather than a specific one-off or carefully orchestrated ‘event’ (Koh et al. 2023). In this respect, it is useful to consider SI as a journey; and one that *all* schools are on, regardless of context or strength relative to others. Currently, there is congruence between the Welsh Government’s (2024a) and Estyn’s (2023) view of SI, which they describe as being focussed on helping schools to give learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes. This is helpful, as it provides clarity to schools that learners sit at the heart of the SI agenda. However, it is not immediately clear what constitutes SI at a practical level, and indeed, how SI itself can be independently verified and/or assessed. SI is often interpreted as something of an abstract idea, particularly when its parameters or expectations are not clearly defined. This gives rise to confusion and misinterpretation; we must avoid a situation in which schools feel they are engaging in purposeful SI activity, when in reality, they are doing little more than treading water. This implies that strong, independent advice will be required and made available to all schools as a matter of course (this happens now, through designated school improvement advisors, but consistency of messaging and quality of support is considered variable).
- It is also important to reflect on Wales’ recent history in relation to SI, and the somewhat negative connotations deriving from a more openly punitive policy environment (Evans, 2022). For example, in the early to mid-2010s SI was part of a broad suite of policy levers designed to ‘raise standards’, boost attainment and elevate Wales’ standing in international comparators. There has been a considerable shift in the policy, and by extension, political narrative in the intervening decade, which has

to some extent repositioned SI as being more collaborative and less threatening. The temperature of accountability has been reduced, and there is promise of more ‘carrot’ than ‘stick’ (as evidenced by a softening of approach to inspection). It is important that this shift in approach is properly communicated to the school system, and that schools understand SI as something developmental (and, ultimately, helpful) and not so obviously associated with accountability and the threat of repercussion. Similarly, it should be acknowledged that a good number of schools are already making positive strides forward, both in terms of their curriculum development and more generic pedagogical innovations, and are not therefore starting from a position of weakness. Seeing every school as being on their own improvement journey is important in this regard.

- The new School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) has been announced (Neagle, 2025) and will replace the national model for regional working (Welsh Government, 2015), as you are no doubt aware. The new approach will see a reallocation of funding across the ‘middle-tier’, and to schools, and put more emphasis on local authorities to work together in partnership with schools to drive SI. On the one hand, this is good news, in that it should negate unnecessary duplication in the middle-tier (most notably between regional consortia and local authorities) and reposition schools – and teachers – as being central to the school SI process. However, on the other hand, this could lead to further inconsistencies in messaging and delivery, with the net result being many more variations on a theme (Wales effectively moving from four consortia to an as yet unknown number of ‘partnerships’). As with schools, there are distinctions between local authority areas that prevent the adoption of one, universal approach to support in the middle-tier. Nevertheless, it is essential that partners in the new SIPP agree on aspects of delivery, operations and funding that are consistent across all to ensure an acceptable level of provision and mutual access to services. In other words, no school, teacher or learner should be disadvantaged by geography. It is a point seemingly acknowledged by Kirsty Williams (2024), chair of the National Coherence Group (NCG), established to support the delivery of SI arrangements:

‘Recognising that responsibility for school improvement lies with each local authority, we acknowledge the need for flexibility in how the proposals are implemented in local areas. However, there should be a focus on ensuring clarity about the outcomes that are expected from this process.’

This commitment to ensuring clarity should not be understated, and must form the basis of ongoing discussions related to the SIPP.

- ‘Collective responsibility’ is a central tenet of the SIPP, and requires that school leaders and their governing bodies ‘should feel collectively responsible for improving learning in other schools/settings’ (Welsh Government, 2024b). This is a noble ambition, and plays into the underlying motivation of educators to do the best by all children, regardless of who they are or where they come from. However, it is important to bear in mind that not all schools will be in a position to support other

schools; and in some cases, schools' attention will be rightly focussed on their own improvement journeys. For example, schools causing concern and/or in more intensive monitoring will require additional support and, potentially, external intervention that could preclude them from collaborating in a more formal way with others (at least for a given period of time). As such, the capacity of schools to collaborate meaningfully should be properly considered and the new SIPP model should allow scope for adaptation based on individual school circumstance.

- The perceived misalignment between qualifications (GCSEs and A-levels, specifically) and curriculum remains problematic, and can be considered an ongoing hindrance to curriculum development. A new suite of national qualifications for 14 to 16-year-olds will be introduced from September 2025, with first award in summer 2027. However, there is some concern within the teaching profession that the qualifications, whilst 'made-in-Wales' and more in tune with the developing curriculum (Qualifications Wales, 2025), remain too content-heavy and prescriptive, and thus restricting rather than empowering teacher agency. Particularly relevant in this context is the experience of Scotland, whose curriculum (similar to Curriculum for Wales in design and conceptualisation) has been severely hampered by the 'backwash' from the secondary stage into primary schools, where 'concerns about readiness for subject choice and examination success' have shaped parents' and teachers' perception of what learners should be doing earlier in their education (OECD, 2021). That is not to say that clearly-defined and specified qualifications are a bad thing, necessarily, more that they are not in keeping with more teacher-led curriculum design and development; in fact, it could be argued that they are diametrically opposed.
- The Welsh Government appears confident that the new Curriculum for Wales will contribute to a narrowing of the long-held and stubbornly fixed attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent peers (Welsh Government, 2021). 'Closing the gap' remains a key educational priority for the Welsh Government and its education secretary (Neagle, 2024). However, there remains considerable concern that adoption of a new prescription-lite curriculum that encourages the development of more localised curricula could in fact contribute to a *widening* of the attainment gap, by limiting the opportunities some children have to learn new knowledge and skills (BBC Wales, 2019; Taylor et al. 2020; Evans, 2021). At its most basic level, it cannot be assumed that pupils from more deprived backgrounds will have access to and benefit from the same resources, technologies or parental support as their more affluent peers, and so ensuring schools provide access to 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2009) – knowledge that, in simple terms, is empowering and enriching and not typically accessible at home – is considered one way of levelling the playing field. The reluctance of Welsh policymakers to promote a canonical knowledge base, as an extension of the high-level conceptual model that exists currently, has exacerbated unease amongst those for whom subsidiarity is a pathway to further imbalance (Evans, 2023). That is not to suggest that the reintroduction of prescriptive content is guaranteed to resolve the situation; one is acutely mindful that decisions regarding what to include in a core canon will be

heavily influenced by the lens through which those chosen to decide see the world (and so some perspectives will be accommodated, others not). And therein lies the curriculum's foremost tension; how to respect the nuance of school context, whilst at the same time guaranteeing a level of consistency from one setting to the next. With this in mind, the Welsh Government needs to make clear how it intends to mitigate against the potential for increased subsidiarity to impact negatively on particular cohorts; as yet, it has not made a persuasive enough case in this regard.

- Related to this, the potential for variation and/or contradiction in what children and young people learn, dependent on where they live and study in Wales, should be fully explored – and with it, the notion of a ‘core curriculum’ involving so-called ‘powerful knowledge’ to which all pupils should be given introduction as a matter of course. The balance between prescription and teacher agency is finely trodden, and the flexibility afforded by broad expectations for learning both a gift and a burden (Sinnema et al. 2020). At very least, practitioners require clearer direction as to what leeway they will be afforded when selecting preferred curriculum content and schemes of working. At the moment, these significant decisions are very much open to individual interpretation – and discussion should be had regarding the extent to which pupils will be allowed to learn different things, and to what end. In short, teachers need to know what tolerance is available; this in turn will give teachers greater confidence to innovate and develop their curricula in a way that has fidelity to the original vision (Donaldson, 2015).
- A review of school spending in Wales, published in 2020, revealed a 6% real-terms fall in education spending per learner over the preceding decade, with extra funding for schools serving deprived communities significantly lower in Wales than in neighbouring England (Sibieta, 2020). Audit Wales, the body responsible for overseeing public finances, has since warned that direct spending on the curriculum may be at the high end, or more than, the Welsh Government's 2021 estimates and that there will be ‘significant opportunity costs to schools until at least March 2026’ (Audit Wales, 2022). It laid bare in its own review of Curriculum for Wales expenditure that the Welsh Government had not assessed the likely costs when it first set out on its journey of curriculum reform. Both reports warned of the ongoing influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on school funding. More recently, in October 2023, Welsh ministers announced a £74m reduction in education spending for 2023–2024 as part of a wider efficiency review triggered by high inflation and increased public sector pay (Welsh Government, 2023). Wales' challenging budgetary context feels all the more significant, given the well-documented detrimental impact of the global financial crisis on Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence roll-out from 2010 (Donaldson, 2014; Livingston, 2012). Whilst no doubt hamstrung by events, the Scottish experience serves as a salutary reminder that reform of this nature and on this scale cannot be done on the cheap. And so in Wales, the issue is not so much the cultural or discursive environment in which teachers work, as the day-to-day functionality of the environment itself, with schools having to manage curriculum design, and protect the time and space needed to undertake such activity, against the backdrop of a challenging fiscal climate. An uplift of £114m in year education funding for 2024-25 and a further £111.5m for 2025-26, announced in December 2024 (Welsh Government, 2024c), is to be welcomed and recognises the financial burden facing schools, but unions have warned that the additional funding does not go

far enough (Doel, 2025; Fitzpatrick, 2024). In my experience of working with schools, the successful roll-out of Curriculum for Wales is being directly impeded by a scarcity of resource that endangers not only curriculum realisation in a more practical sense but also the motivation and goodwill of teachers to make it work. It is not that they do not *want* to engage in curriculum reform, more that they feel they cannot do it justice.

- Finally, the role of the inspectorate in maintaining standards of education in Wales should not be overlooked. In his paper on the future of inspection in England post-Covid, Richards (2020) likens the role of the inspector to that of the theatre critic; while critics judge how far the performance reflects the content and intentions of the play text, inspectors comment on the rationale and implementation of the ‘text’ of the curriculum. The difficulty in Wales, of course, is that the so-called ‘text’ is much more open to interpretation under the new Curriculum for Wales. Like theatre criticism, inspection is a value-laden exercise that involves observation and discussion at a particular moment in time. This raises two important questions; firstly, with fewer benchmarks of performance (owing largely to a less-descriptive curriculum framework) and more high-level assessment criteria, how can one be sure that inspectors make comparable judgements? And second, to what extent is the professional learning available to inspectors analogous with that being given to teachers? It is well-documented that practice in schools is driven, to varying degrees, by Estyn’s common inspection framework and what it considers to be something akin to best or acceptable practice (Evans, 2025). It is important, therefore, that the inspectorate and those responsible for curriculum development – most obviously in government, but at all levels ideally – work in lockstep and have a shared understanding of what Curriculum for Wales means for schools.

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Agenda Item 5.2

Dewiswch iaith a diwyg eich dogfen | Available in alternative formats and languages

Croesawn ohebu yn Gymraeg a fydd gohebu yn y Gymraeg ddim yn arwain at oedi.

Rhowch wybod inni beth yw'ch dewis iaith e.e Cymraeg neu'n ddwyieithog.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and corresponding with us in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

Let us know your language choice if Welsh or bilingual.



Ms B Williams MS

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Ein Cyf/Our Ref:
PJM/RG

Eich Cyf/ Your Ref:
250399

Dyddiad/Date:
14th April 2025

Annwyl/Dear Ms Williams

In response to your request dated 19th March 2025 – **School Improvement and Learner Attainment**, please see responses below to your three areas of interest.

1. The future of school improvement arrangements and how the Welsh Government, local authorities and relevant partners work together to deliver the highest possible standards of education. (For example, the School Improvement Partnership programme, which is developing a new approach in place of the regional consortia, as referred to by the Cabinet Secretary for Education's statements of 17 October 2024, 5 November.2024 and 29 January 2025.

The new school improvement arrangements in RCT have been discussed and considered in detail for the last two terms, autumn 24 and spring 25. These discussions have been a collaborative venture with colleagues from Cardiff, Merthyr and Bridgend with support to these discussions being provided by a commissioned consultant that was brokered by all the Directors of the LAs involved.

The main aim of the meetings over this time was to determine what a localised school improvement service would look like and how each LA could work together and support each other to avoid these new services becoming insular and inward looking.

RCT has developed its own documents for its new school improvement service and these are evolving over time.

In spring term 2025, senior officers from the local authority were involved in a joint meeting with colleagues from Welsh Government, Professor Dylan Jones, Simon Day (ISOS) and Alun Jones (Education Improvement Team) and a representative sample of headteachers as part of the School Improvement Partnership Programme to discuss

Paul Mee

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Pack Page 87

the proposed school improvement approach and how schools across the LA were currently addressing weaknesses in literacy.

The meeting was very productive and Welsh Government were pleased with the on-going work of the local authority on its proposed school improvement model.

2. Educational outcomes of learners and gaps in attainment between groups of pupils.

Current assessment procedures for all schools aligned to curriculum for Wales enables all schools to devise and develop their own approaches to track educational outcomes and identify gaps in learning for the 3-14 year olds. At KS4, educational outcomes are assessed and analysed via GCSE or equivalent qualifications achieved by all learners.

In both the above cases it is challenging for the local authority to have an accurate overview of all pupils' achievement due to the lack of standardised information available. This can impact on improvement planning and the effective prioritisation of resources.

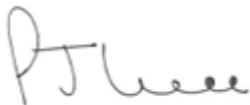
3. Factors impacting on educational progress such as pupil absence, deprivation, funding and workforce capacity.

Obtaining accurate and verified data on learner progress is essential if we are to effectively evaluate the quality of educational provision in our schools across the local authority. The following are potential barriers to achieving positive educational outcomes:

- The absence of national attendance targets across the system
- Stronger national stance, policies and campaigns are needed to support the importance and value of being in school
- The level and complexity of need within our communities and schools is increasing and this presents with funding challenges in schools and at local authority level due to the extensive investment that is required to support ALN provision growth.

- Behavioural and mental health challenges post pandemic continues to persist, and significant and further investment in early intervention and prevention is required to reduce reliance on statutory services and support
- Restricted access to specialist services is a significant barrier (e.g. CAMHS, early years services, health etc). Community focused school developments require increased funding to support the co-location of services on school sites and greater access to specialist services in local communities
- Policies on EHE require strengthening, particularly where there are significant concerns in relation to the quality of education provided in the home context and the reasons for opting to home educate
- Families living in poverty not applying for FSM eligibility has an adverse impact on families and school funding
- Grant funding terms and conditions can still be overly bureaucratic, restrictive and may not reflect local needs and priorities
- The workforce capacity is stretched, particularly in the Welsh sector and key areas in secondary schools. Initial teacher education needs an urgent review to ensure it is meeting current and future needs
- There needs to be a national approach to succession planning to ensure that we have the numbers of staff required coming through the system.
- The number of staff leaving education is concerning and there needs to be a thorough analysis of why this is happening resulting in a clear strategy to stem this flow.

Yn gywir/Yours sincerely,



Paul Mee,
Chief Executive, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Chair of Children, Young People and
Education Committee, Senedd Cymru.

Please ask for: Martin Nicholls
Direct Line: 01792 636000
E-Mail: Martin.nicholls@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: MN/ajw.CYP3004
Your Ref:
Date: 30th April 2025

Dear Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee, Senedd Cymru.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to important educational matters affecting Wales and Swansea currently.

The future of school improvement arrangements

The national School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) is steadily developing an innovative approach to school improvement. However, the replacement of education consortia is not mandatory or consistent across Wales. Swansea Council's stance is that school improvement is best delivered locally and should include a peer-to-peer support model. The Council continues to commission key workstreams from its delivery partner, Partneriaeth, where reduced costs and bureaucracy have been achieved. The Council is also committed to a new collaboration agreement from 1 April 2025 commissioning 15 FTE regional staff to supplement the local authority's work in improving schools.

The Council welcomes future national coherence on mandatory School Improvement Guidance and Schools Causing Concern Guidance that focusses on learner attainment and achievement as well as specifics about the local authority's statutory role in evaluating school performance. In addition, Swansea welcomes better guidance on how schools, including governors, evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to improve outcomes for learners within appropriate guidance, as a key output of SIPP or the new national body for school improvement.

The diversion of funding to local authorities via the local authority education grant (LAEG) to support school improvement is welcome. However, local authorities are tackling national concerns such as literacy and numeracy, individually. The risks associated with SIPP include lack of clear communication on current policy objectives across Wales, the iterative introduction of a new national body for school improvement and job insecurity for those currently working in consortia as well as instability of LAEG from year to year. For example, a commitment was made to commissioning regional resource but national functions and their funding were then determined at a later date meaning that an ongoing consideration of affordability is now required.

The national School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) is about a way of working (promotion of a collaboration model within each local authority) as opposed to developing policy on key areas of focus, namely, reading, writing, mathematics, attendance and behaviour. Swansea is clear that there are four parts to our collaboration model:

- an enhanced and effective local authority offer to support schools to improve learner outcomes in key areas of focus;
- a commissioned offer to support schools to improve learners' outcomes in key focus areas, predominantly within the secondary sector;
- school to school collaboration focussed on learner outcomes (examples and expectations); and
- an anticipation and curiosity on how the new national body will work with and for above.

Swansea's School Improvement Partnership (SIP), made up of representative headteachers across school sectors and local authority officers, aims to raise standards of achievement with the goal of making Swansea an excellent place to be educated. SIP identifies and shares effective practice, commissions, supports, monitors, and evaluates strategies for school improvement, develops structures and networks to facilitate school improvement, monitor standards, identifies barriers to achievement, and develops professional learning for all involved in schools. Swansea's SIP is not replicated in all local authorities, but it is this partnership that will make a key contribution to the learners in our schools and ultimately elevate school improvement in our Council. Swansea remains unconvinced on how a new national body will add value because it is in incredibly initial stages of development.

Educational outcomes of learners and gaps in attainment between groups of learners

Swansea Council is perpetually concerned about the educational outcomes of our learners, both in terms of absolute attainment figures, the gaps in attainment between distinct groups of learners and the progress made by individual learners. The Council has identified several factors affecting attainment, including term-time holidays, mental health issues, ineffective pedagogy and lower attendance rates among pupils. The Council is committed to addressing these barriers through ongoing grant funding for counselling services, the promotion of effective teaching and learning strategies and a wider strategy around learner inclusion. The Council has not waited for national solutions to emerge and has revised support to schools for literacy, numeracy, attendance and behaviour, while awaiting national clarity.

A true picture of end of compulsory schooling attainment has not been available during the last five academic years due to the nature of how attainment was assessed or how adjustments were made to account for a loss of education during the pandemic, from 2020 onwards. Reporting on whether we are improving, doing as well as we should be doing and whether there is a trend of improvement or not in Swansea has been rightly paused. The Welsh Government has recently consulted on changes to end of Key Stage 4 measures, so it has been difficult to make useful comparisons between years, over time and between similarly benchmarked schools. Overall, attainment at the end of key stage 4 in Swansea exceeds national averages where interim measures are concerned. Our concern is about how well children can read and write before then and whether they are equipped sufficiently to access the new curriculum and new qualifications. Our secondary schools tell us that reading attainment is not as high as previous years for the

year 7 intake. It may help to have better national expectations on reading and writing. We know that outcomes for reading in Wales, by international comparison, show Wales in decline. In Swansea, outcomes for literacy at Key Stage 4 are better than the national scores, including narrower gaps within groups of learners, than seen nationally. However, the gap for eFSM vs non-FSM remains too wide. As far as numeracy is concerned a similar pattern exists.

Education resources

From both a funding and workforce perspective, better targeted resource is required at local authority level whether from a stable revenue support grant (RSG) or LAEG to ensure that there is sufficient education workforce to support vulnerabilities in learners that have emerged during last three years and that local authorities are equipped sufficiently to identify and support schools proportionately. Swansea Council has a strong history of collaboration between schools and acknowledges that there is always room for improvement, but the time, money and energy needs to be learner outcome focussed rather than focussed on structures and ways of working.

Summary

- The future of school improvement arrangements at a national level remains uncertain. Although the functions of a new national body have been stated, the intended aims, reach and desirable outcomes remain opaque.
- Despite the economic and global health crises playing a part in the context of attainment in Swansea and Wales, more needs to be done nationally to set out clear expectations on reading, writing and mathematical standards to ensure no learner is left behind.
- The gap for eFSM learners for their average points score in literacy and numeracy subjects at the end of compulsory schooling stands out as an issue for Swansea and Wales with mitigations compromised by insufficient school attendance and coherent national plan for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Resources should be prioritised towards school workforce, where possible.

Yours faithfully,



Martin Nicholls
Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive

Agenda Item 5.4

Response to the Senedd's Children, Young People and Education Committee

Future of School Improvement Arrangements

Our school improvement strategy has been significantly shaped by the Welsh Government's review of the middle-tier of education. We already collaborate closely with headteachers to ensure alignment but have a forward work plan in terms of professional learning for our school leaders over the next 12-18 months. The new School Improvement Partnership programme is further enhancing our efforts by fostering closer collaboration between schools and the local authority, developing system leadership as we seek to create a self-improving school system.

Challenges remain, particularly in addressing outcomes for groups of learners. There is a need for targeted interventions to support disadvantaged individuals and pupils with additional learning needs. Whilst our focus on integrated support for vulnerable learners and trauma-informed practices has been beneficial, there is much work left to do to close attainment gaps whilst schools face increasingly difficult financial challenges.

Several factors impact educational progress in Anglesey:

1. Pupil Absence: Attendance is a critical issue, with higher absenteeism rates among disadvantaged pupils (this is reflective of the national picture);
2. Deprivation: Socio-economic challenges persist, including low-income households and poor housing conditions in certain areas of the island;
3. Funding: Financial constraints still pose challenges, particularly in maintaining and improving school facilities. Furthermore, the number of school-age pupils is falling (and is projected to continue to do so) and our schools are facing an increasing number of learners with additional needs who require support. This contributes additional pressure to school budgets as well as uncertainties;
4. Workforce Capability, Capacity and Experience: Ensuring a sufficient number of qualified teachers and support staff is essential to support our learners. Recruiting and retaining bilingual teaching staff, particularly in core subjects, is a challenge if we are to maintain workforce capacity;
5. Role of the Local Authority: Effective collaboration, strong leadership, and robust governance arrangements between the Learning Service and school leaders

are vital to driving sustained school improvement across Anglesey, particularly in addressing key factors that impact educational progress such as learner well-being, socio-economic challenges, professional learning for staff, inclusion, additional learning needs, and curriculum innovation.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion and look forward to continued collaboration to achieve the highest standards of education for all learners in Anglesey.

Agenda Item 5.5

Children, Young People and Education Committee - School improvement and learner attainment

Blaenau Gwent LA will continue to commission a regional school improvement arm approach, and the local authority will work in partnership with this service and the schools, in order to ensure a continuous improvement system is in place through robust self-evaluation processes and identification of school priorities to drive continuous improvement. Via the self-evaluation and setting of priorities the school improvement service will broker appropriate support to assist schools on the improvement areas identified.

The sharing of relevant information and intelligence about settings between the improvement service and the LA, reinforces the professional partnerships, aimed towards collectively being responsible and accountable to improving learner outcomes. There is an expectation for the high-quality evidence gathered by settings and the authority to be used for improvement, accountability and transparency. There is a shared understanding of the enabling factors for learner attainment through consultation with settings and commissioned services, which uses local intelligence to shape plans that are bespoke to our children and young people and aligns with the delivery of CfW.

In conjunction with school improvement commissioned services, we target context specific outcomes, reducing inequalities for our disadvantaged learners and improving challenge for the more able and talented. There is a recognition of the need for inclusive practices, ensuring our teaching and learning guidance and strategic LA priorities take account of Inclusion additional factors i.e. additional learning needs, attendance (a national priority), and early years base levels, and the school improvement service must also now consider those areas when supporting schools in planning for improvement and to achieve the highest quality teaching, learning and engagement.

The LA will continue to access the PLOs that will be available from the school improvement regional service to enable a continuation of workforce development. A concern for LAs is ITE and PGCE programmes potentially not having a focus on the current issues facing education in terms of the rise in complexity of need, including behaviour and as a result the retention of staff and subsequently the recruitment of high-quality staff – across all disciplines and roles.

Funding is an issue that all schools will cite as an area of high concern, as there is a disparity between the increase in the needs of learners and the expectation for schools to enhance their curriculum to meet the needs of most learners in mainstream (ALNET) against a cut/cash flat position in budgets and loss of staff to deliver specific interventions which would effectively allow the enhanced curriculum

to be offered. This has resulted in schools citing that they are not able to meet need and an increase in pressure on the LA to increase capacity in resource base provision, in order to be able to offer the 'additional to and different from'.

Cofion/Regards,

Dr. Luisa Munro-Morris

Agenda Item 5.6



WLGA & ADEW Consultation response to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's Inquiry into School Improvement and Learner Attainment.

May 2025

INTRODUCTION

- The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
- The WLGA is a politically led cross-party organisation, with the leaders from all local authorities determining policy through the Executive Board and the wider WLGA Council. The WLGA also appoints senior members as Spokespersons and Deputy Spokespersons to provide a national lead on policy matters on behalf of local government.
- The WLGA works closely with and is often advised by professional advisors and professional associations from local government, however, the WLGA is the representative body for local government and provides the collective, political voice of local government in Wales.
- This response has been informed by the knowledge and expertise of the Association of the Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW). As such this is a joint consultation response on behalf of the WLGA and ADEW and represents the collective views of local authorities in Wales.

AREAS OF FOCUS

The future of school improvement arrangements and how the Welsh Government, local authorities and relevant partners work together to deliver the highest possible standards of education.

Overall, WLGA and ADEW have welcomed the engagement and consultation undertaken with officers and school-based colleagues over recent months. This activity has facilitated effective dialogue between the Welsh Government, local authorities and schools.

The new School Improvement Partnership approaches are still however in a transitional phase with the gradual shifts in responsibilities, winding down of previous provisions, and role changes underway. Many of the details are still under development within different regions. Councils should be able to provide further updates in the Autumn term. These significant changes are of course already taking place within a period of major education reform in Wales. This does in turn place additional pressures on councils and schools who are experiencing reform fatigue. The expected pace of change, within the context of delivering all the other major changes, is not practicable. It is felt that there is a lack of recognition of the pressures that local authority staff are under, particularly when resources are limited.

Understanding how the new Professional Learning body will provide consistent training opportunities across Wales alongside regional and local provisions will also be key to improving outcomes. It is expected that this Professional Learning body will start to become operational by Autumn 2025, with all schools expected to engage in collaborative improvement partnerships by April 2026. Without the central team in place yet, some of their programmes of work are unclear and this means schools, school leaders and local authorities must mitigate some of the gaps in the short and medium term. Understanding the strategic plan and approach to reducing inconsistencies across Wales is important in terms of ensuring there is equity in the school improvement and Professional Learning support offer. Furthermore, ADEW would welcome greater clarity on funding and how collaborations would be supported.

Councils agree that school improvement teams should work more closely to share resources that support schools to provide the best learning outcomes. Subsequently, there will need to be robust quality assurance processes in identifying the best practice. Identification of best practice is Estyn's role. It is important that regulators are brought into the review of the journey of change in this area as schools are working in a significant period of change with significantly reduced capacity for support around them. It is therefore also important that Estyn and other regulators are cognisant of this context for schools, local authorities and regions as the system undergoes this change.

Educational outcomes of learners and gaps in attainment between groups of pupils.

In March 2025, the WLGA and ADEW submitted a joint response to Welsh Government's consultation '*Data and information to support learning and improvement: for those working within the school system*'. Some of the key themes on attainment and learner outcomes within this response are relevant to the areas of focus within this inquiry. The key themes are summarised overleaf and our full response can be found [here](#).

Data and information proposals to support learning and improvement

- The removal of high-stakes indicators is welcome and should allow schools to focus on the progress and outcomes of individual learners. To ensure the principles remain effective, there must be a shared commitment across all levels of the system to use data transparently and constructively, rather than in a way that encourages defensive or performative practices. To this end, much will depend on how Estyn interpret and use school-level data when forming judgements.
- Councils overall are supportive of using contextualised data to inform school improvement, providing there is sufficient guidance and training on how schools should be applying this consistently.
- Councils however did report that there are gaps and uncertainties relating to the understanding of learner progress which risks undermining some of the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) aims and the new information ecosystem principles.
- Furthermore, councils and senior leaders within schools have also shared concerns over the complexity of the draft proposals on 'Data and information to support learning and improvement', noting that there is a risk of information overload for a number of different stakeholders. This could lead to confusion within the sector, particularly amongst parents. The vast quantity and complexity of the information being described will make it difficult for parents and carers to draw sensible conclusions from all the reported data.
- Council education officers would also welcome further clarification on the Learner Entitlement Indicator Framework to support school improvement and Learner Attainment. Specifically, calling for more information and further development in areas of accountability, intervention strategies, workload impact, post-16 support, equity, and parental engagement.
- Councils have also cited the lack of clear mechanisms for raising expectations and benchmarking against high performing systems as a challenge in supporting continuous improvement.
- The data functionality for schools and local authorities needs to be improved, developing user friendly and interactive data tools with advanced filtering capabilities would help. Aligning datasets with existing local authority tools



would avoid duplication and ensure that schools can easily analyse their own performance.

Gaps in attainment between groups of pupils

- The system in Wales must recognise the progress that each learner makes whilst having high expectations of their attainment targets. Schools must have a very clear view of individual learner strengths and areas for improvement for them to plan to support educational progress. This will ensure the provision supports improved progress of both groups and individuals which in turn reduces attainment gaps.
- Under the draft proposals on data and information, councils have also reported that excluding outcome data for pupil groups smaller than 50 could be problematic. This risks overlooking important patterns in subjects with a smaller uptake and smaller schools. It could also affect smaller groups of Welsh medium learners or smaller dual language groups of learners.

Factors impacting on educational progress such as pupil absence, deprivation, funding and workforce capacity.

Pupil absence

- Attendance, behaviour and educational reforms (including ALN and Curriculum reform) have been identified as the main challenges and areas in need of focus, and this is against the backdrop of financial deficits.
- Poorer attendance including high exclusion rates, have a detrimental impact on learner progress. Schools, settings and education officers invest a significant amount of time and resource into raising attendance rates, but it takes time for this to translate into improved learner outcomes and progress.
- Several societal and cultural changes have had a negative impact on attendance, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. This will need tackling at the community level as well as needing a school-focused approach to raise attendance rates and improve pupil outcomes.
- The education system alone cannot solve some of the new societal norms and unhelpful parental expectations, for example, transport thresholds that have existed for decades are now being used as a false 'barrier' to attendance, with some parents expecting pupils should be picked up from the door, or that pupils cannot walk to school in the rain.



- There is also a general concern over increasing Elective Home Educated (EHE) pupils and for pupils receiving Education other than at school (EOTAS).
- Councils would welcome a parent, carer and community campaign in partnership with schools and settings, to promote the importance of school attendance. There is also a new need to clarify parental roles and responsibilities in getting pupils to school and school ready.
- Likewise, a campaign on the safe and effective use of social media to minimise this distraction in and outside of school could support attendance and better engagement during school hours.
- Pupils who have higher levels of absence are more likely to exhibit poorer levels of engagement when in school. Investing in strategies to promote positive behaviours is therefore essential in improving attendance, learner outcomes and attainment.
- Generally, many report that behaviour has changed in our schools with greater levels of defiance and aggression at times. However, this shouldn't be conflated with rarer examples of 'violence' in schools. There is room for improvement in terms of learning best practice, be that more staff training on trauma informed approaches or training on adapting the curriculum to best meet pupil needs.

Deprivation

- Pupil deprivation undoubtedly still poses a significant barrier to learning and increases learner vulnerability. Learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have fewer experiences that prepare them for school, impacting their early developmental progress. It is therefore critical that additional resources are put in place at all stages, in addition to the curriculum offer, to help overcome these disadvantages.
- One of the unintended consequences of the successful roll out of Universal Free School Meals provision is the distortion of deprivation data and eFSM as a reliable proxy for measuring child poverty. Not all families in need support are registering for grants or benefits which makes it more difficult to accurately target support.

Funding and workforce capacity

- The funding challenges facing both councils and schools are having an impact on workforce capacity at all levels of the education sector which in turn will impact educational progress. Efficiency savings have been made over several years which impacts delivery and restricts a local authority and school's ability to plan long term investments. Local authorities are experiencing significantly diminishing resources when demand for services / interventions are higher than ever and this continues to be an increasing challenge.

- Increasing budget cuts are leading to a rise in deficit budgets and redundancies in schools. This creates increased pressures on local authority teams to manage these effectively and deliver on their statutory responsibilities.
- The following list isn't exhaustive, but it provides some additional context on the funding pressures that councils are currently experiencing:
 - salary uplifts/ school workforce pay and pension pressures,
 - breadth of statutory services, including an increase in the complexity and volume of safeguarding responsibilities,
 - home to school transport funding,
 - ALN funding pressures including out of county costs,
 - increase in complex health needs which should be dealt with by the Health sector as opposed to education and school teams,
 - small school funding pressures,
 - behaviour costs including the cost of permanent exclusions and alternative placement costs,
 - pressures associated with implementing new educational reforms including unfamiliar qualifications and increased non-examination assessment requirements on school staff,
 - inflationary costs for example on school catering and resources.
- The sustainability and timing of funding (revenue, capital and grant funding) is also a challenge, and councils would welcome three-year funding agreements to support longer term planning.
- WLGA and ADEW agree that there is insufficient funding to support all the new school improvement aims and that without additional funding it is difficult to build enough capacity in the system to plan and deliver new models for successful school improvement.
- Whilst the general outcomes of the Middle Tier Review are welcomed with funding coming to local authorities, there is an emerging risk that the salary ranges of School Improvement Advisers are far in excess of local authority salary ranges. As TUPE will apply in most cases, this will pose significant financial pressures for local authorities who would have to absorb some of these staff and would put their own pay structures under pressure with reducing budgets to cover.
- Furthermore, another financial challenge is that Headteacher salary ranges are far ahead of everyone else in the system (excluding consultants). This makes it difficult for local authorities to be able to afford to 'second' staff into the system from schools due to the disparity in terms and conditions as well as pay.
- Staff workload at all levels of the education system also needs protection. If we add work, then we need to carefully think about what we can remove. New

initiatives or additional responsibilities that staff are expected to deliver must be fully funded.

- The WLGA and ADEW are also aware of an unhelpful narrative emerging around local authorities not delegating as much funding as possible to schools. ADEW feels strongly that as much funding as possible is passed on to schools directly and local authorities are also currently having to work under capacity. It would be useful to develop clear and consistent messaging around this with key partners and to help all stakeholders understand the funding arrangements, for example the additional investment local authorities provide on top of Welsh Government education funding.

Strengthening school improvement and learner attainment will require more strategic direction from Welsh Government and cross-sector working and policy which does not contradict key priority areas. The education infrastructure needs to be maintained and strengthened so that lack of funding does not reduce the number of leaders, teachers and support staff in schools that can deliver high quality teaching and learning. Likewise capacity needs to be built to strengthen the support that councils can give in working towards these fundamental national priorities.

Lynne Neagle MS
Cabinet Secretary for Education

22 May 2025

School improvement and learner attainment and other work

Dear Lynne,

At our recent meeting on 14 May, we discussed your request to reschedule the planned evidence session on school improvement and learner attainment to the early autumn. After careful consideration, we have agreed to move this work to the start of the autumn term. This decision was made with the expectation that you will be in position to answer fully our questions.

As I have previously highlighted, this means that we will be calling you to Committee three times over the first half term of the autumn term. All of which are on important topics. In scheduling these sessions we have balanced the impact on your diary with the Committee's agreed work commitments.

To confirm, the dates are:

- Wednesday 17 September 09:30-11:00: Teacher recruitment and retention
- Wednesday 8 October 09:30-11:30: School improvement and learner attainment.
- Thursday 23 October 09:30-11:30: Implementation of education reforms.

We hope that you are able to confirm attendance for each of these sessions soon.

School improvement and learner attainment

Before starting this piece of work, we identified our particular areas of interest, which are:

- The future of school improvement arrangements and how the Welsh Government, local authorities and relevant partners work together to deliver the highest possible standards of education.
- Educational outcomes of learners and gaps in attainment between groups of pupils.
- Factors impacting on educational progress such as pupil absence, deprivation, funding and workforce capacity.

In advance of the session on this topic, we would appreciate if you could send a written brief on the work the Welsh Government is doing, in particular an update on the School Improvement Partnership Programme and the latest position in each of the previous four regions. We would also appreciate if this paper could indicate the areas where improvements in learner attainment are starting to be bear fruit, as well as the areas where more work is needed, and what further steps are being taken to improve learner attainment and school standards.

We would appreciate this response by 24 September. If you envisage any issues with this date, please let the Committee Clerk know as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 5.8

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Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **Petitions Committee**

Buffy Williams MS, Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

Delyth Jewell MS, Chair, Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee
21 May 2025

Dear Buffy and Delyth,

Petition P-06-1501 Put rugby in the curriculum for Wales from primary schools through to secondary Schools

The Petitions Committee met on 12 May and considered the above petition, submitted by Alex Linney.

Following the response from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, it was agreed that there was little more the Committee could do, other than to write to you as Chairs of the relevant subject Committees to highlight the petition. It was agreed we would then thank the petitioner and close the petition.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petition, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here: [P-06-1501.Put.rugby.in.the.curriculum.for.Wales.from.primary.schools.through.to.secondary.Schools](#)

I would be grateful if you could send any response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair, Finance Committee

29 May 2025

RE: Scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2025-26: Evidence provided by the Welsh Government

Dear Peredur,

Thank you for your letter dated 1 April 2025, which we considered during our meeting on 14 May 2025. Our responses to your questions are set out below.

1. What improvements would you like to see in the Welsh Government's Draft Budget documentation and subsequent ministerial written evidence? Please make reference to the timeliness, quality and usefulness of any documentation and/or evidence received in your response.

We had no concerns with the timeliness, quality or usefulness of the 2025-26 Draft Budget documentation and the ministerial written evidence that we received from either the Cabinet Secretary for Education and her Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and his Ministers. We received the evidence on time (or early), and it comprehensively answered the significant number of questions that we had submitted. It supported Members of the Committee and Senedd researchers during our scrutiny of the Draft Budget, and will feed into scrutiny work we undertake throughout the financial year.

We thank the Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers and their officials for their significant support for the scrutiny process at a particularly challenging time of the year.

2. Given the UK Spending Review, which is due to be published on 11 June 2025, will provide indicative funding for the Welsh Government future years, do you have any views on information you would require regarding a subsequent Welsh Spending Review, either along with budget documentation or as a separate exercise?



We welcome multi-year spending reviews, and urge the Welsh Government to provide the Senedd with multi-year projections of both its revenue and capital budgets following the spending review in June 2025. Alongside those projections (and alongside future Draft Budget allocations), the Welsh Government should clearly set out its funding priorities and the mechanisms by which it will use the funding at its disposal to achieve its policy objectives.

We believe that Wales deserves its fair share of funding from the UK Government. We are concerned that the current funding settlement may not fully recognise the significant levels of need across Wales. We would like information from the Welsh Government about whether, and to what extent, it has explored alternative funding mechanisms with the UK Government.

We have identified a need for additional capital and revenue investment in a range of areas, including education, local government, and health. We therefore urge both Finance Committee and the Welsh Government to advocate for a multi-year settlement that recognises that need.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 5.10

Email from individual regarding the Legislative Consent: Children's Wellbeing and Schools

I write to express my concern with the CWS bill in it's current format.

I have a great many issues with the proposed bill that range from the need for a compulsory register for home educated children, to names of others helping home educate children and the hours spent in education. The last two points show just how little the bill understands home education. This is scary given the lack of appeal process/oversight/complaints procedure/tribunal with this bill. Are officers of the local council always correct? No, they are not, they are human and fallable but there is no comeback on this bill for them

I believe it is in the interest of all involved to consult properly with home educators and children, I believe there needs to be an appeal process and I think that any register is unnecessary (kids that the system is aware of come to harm too, therefore the fact that the system is aware of them or not makes no difference).

I believe that this bill is not fit for purpose.