

Education Select Committee Call for Evidence: Teacher recruitment, training and retention

Submission from the Association of School and College Leaders

A. Introduction

1. ASCL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this call for evidence. Our response is based on the views of our members, obtained through discussions at ASCL Council, with relevant advisory groups, and prompted and unprompted emails and messages.

B. Answers to specific questions

The current situation regarding teacher recruitment and retention

2. Recruitment and retention of teachers and school leaders is extremely challenging, as is that of the wider school workforce. Pay and conditions of service are unattractive and uncompetitive, and the profession is not seen by many graduates as offering a compelling career structure. It is increasingly less family friendly than other professions for maternity returners and offers little to encourage more experienced teachers to stay in the profession longer.

Pay

3. The significant erosion of teachers' and leaders' pay since 2010 means that school leaders would need an immediate 33% uplift to their pay (based on Q3 RPI) to maintain the real value of pay at August 2010 levels. This is before inflation for 2023 is taken into account.
4. We believe RPI remains the most valid measure of inflation for pay as it includes mortgage interest payments (the biggest outlay for most wage earners), but we have also analysed a number of other measures which evidence the erosion of pay in our evidence¹ to the STRB in response to its 33rd Remit. We commend this response to the Committee.
5. Future pay awards need to not only match inflation but also include restorative elements. There needs to be a comprehensive plan and timeframe for how the pay framework is going to be restored/reframed to appropriately competitive levels that ensure a sufficient quality and quantity of teachers and school leaders.

Current pay as a determinant factor in retention

6. We have seen pay awards become an increasingly determinant factor in teachers' and leaders' decision to stay in the profession and/or to consider industrial action. In the government's own Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Research Report (WLTL)²,

¹ [ASCL - STRB 33rd remit](#)

² [Working lives of teachers and leaders - wave 1: core report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

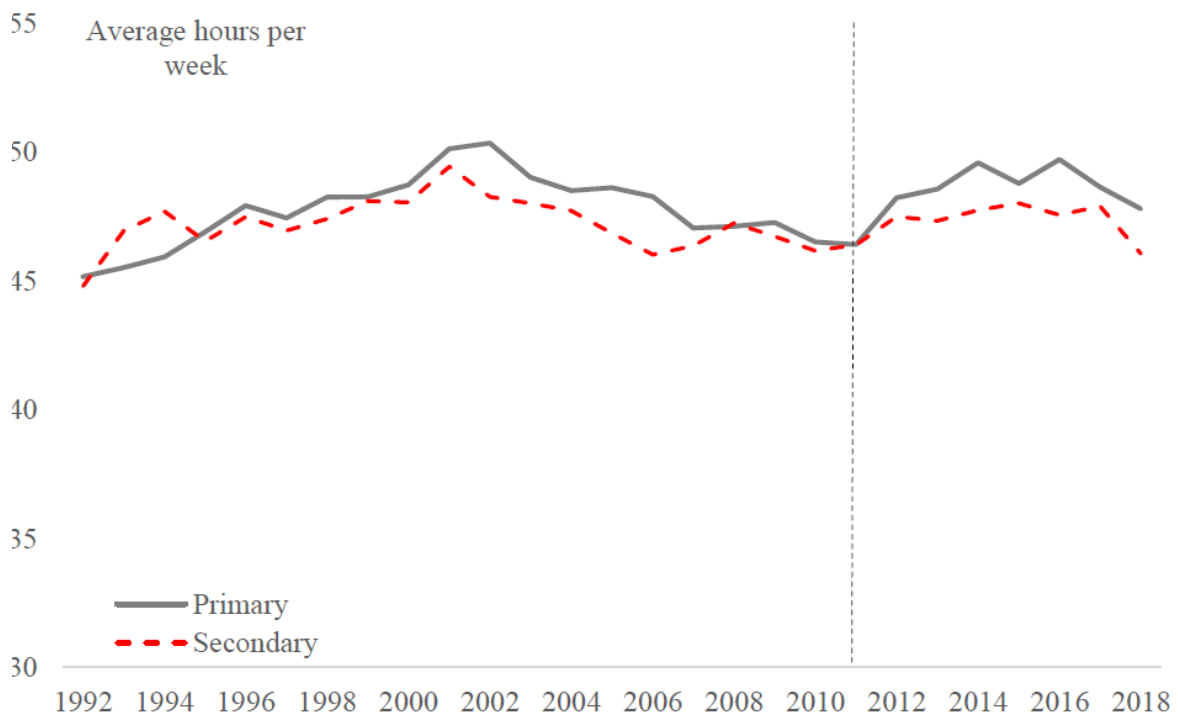
pay was the fourth most commonly cited reason (other than retirement) that teachers and leaders gave for considering leaving the state sector in the next 12 months. This chimes with the data from ASCL’s own survey of members in June 2022³. It is clear that serving teachers need to feel rewarded for the work they do if they are going to stay, and we believe the current system needs to be reviewed to not only ensure that pay awards are appropriate (and funded), but that there are mechanisms for other recognition elements to the framework.

7. Attracting sufficient new entrants to the profession remains a problem. Please see [paragraphs x-y](#) for our commentary on the starting salary commitment.

Workload

8. Almost without exception, workload is the biggest reason given by teachers and school leaders as to why they are leaving the profession. WLT⁴ reported that, of the teachers and leaders who were considering leaving the state sector in the next 12 months (for reasons other than retirement), 92% were doing so for workload reasons. These findings are backed up by the Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022⁵.
9. The lack of staff and high workload is exacerbating an excessive hours culture that has long existed in schools, as evidenced by Allen et al in their paper ‘*New evidence on teachers working hours in England*’⁶. This showed that teacher working hours have remained stubbornly high (and far higher than their international counterparts) for many years, despite numerous government interventions.

Figure 5. Trends in the average working hours of teachers between 1992 and 2018



³ [ASCL survey on teacher shortages](#)

⁴ Ibid

⁵ [Teacher Wellbeing Index: mental health & wellbeing research \(educationsupport.org.uk\)](#)

⁶ [2020 Allen Benhenda Jerrim Sims.pdf \(brighton.ac.uk\)](#)

10. WLTL⁷ on this issue makes stark reading:
 - Full-time leaders reported working on average 57.5 hours per week, and teachers 51.9
 - Part-time leaders reported working on average 48.8 hours per week, and teachers 37.3
 - Four in ten leaders (43%) reported working at least 60 hours per week
11. Apologists for these high hours often counter that the time off teachers and leaders get during school closure periods compensates for this. There are, however, a number of problems with this.
12. Firstly, these hours are usually in excess of the Working Time Regulations, even if one assumes no work is done in the school closure period. Secondly, they are far in excess of the standard contractual agreement, which assumes teachers and leaders will be 'off' during school closure periods. Thirdly, the assumption no work is done during school closure periods is a fallacy, particularly for school leaders. Allen et al⁸ reported that '*..ten percent of full-time teachers work at least 20 hours per week during the October half-term, 15 hours per week over Christmas, 18 hours per week over Easter and 30 hours per week over the summer half-term*'.
13. However, the biggest issue is that all of these excessive hours are unpaid (in either money or TOIL), in contrast with those done by other professions.
14. Indeed, the reason why workload has remained stubbornly high, and will remain so, is because there is no financial driver for government or employers to reduce it – there is no 'financial penalty' to recompense staff for the extra time. Quite the opposite, in fact.
15. The step-change needed to reduce workload and tackle excessive hours is to make employers accountable for them financially. We don't think this can be overlaid on to the existing system, but believe a revised framework should be developed where teaching is brought into line with every other sector.

Flexible Working

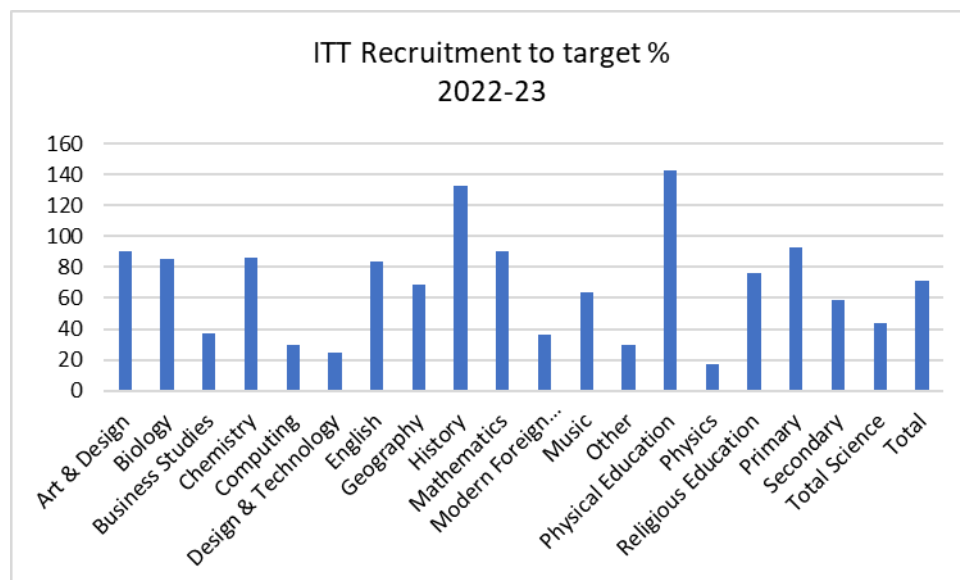
16. Flexible working is not without its challenges for some roles in education. However, it is not utilised as widely as it could or should be (a search on the teaching vacancies website for 'flexible' vacancies brought up only 41 matches out of 5,859). We acknowledge the work the DfE has done to make support materials available to schools, but a widespread cultural change is needed in order for more employers to adapt their employment practices. This includes the use of their Special Leave Policy (we would like to see the Department promoting and supporting the Special Leave Policy with to some provision being included within the Document).
17. However, schools will never be able to compete with other sectors when it comes to the full range of flexible working opportunities.
18. Therefore, the whole of the education sector will need to adjust as far as it can, but, ultimately, the pay and reward package is going to have to compensate in other areas in order to compete.

Impact on subjects and posts

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

19. The desperate situation in ITT recruitment worsened further still in 2022/23, and the indications are that 2023/24 will be no better.
20. The graph below shows the percentage achieved by each subject using data taken from the ITT Census 2022/23⁹.



21. Teacher and assessor shortages are a major issue in post-16 and further education, and are impacting on the recruitment and training of apprentices. Some colleges announced they were stopping enrolments of engineering apprentices; others find that just maintaining delivery to existing engineering apprentices, let alone managing any growth that they need, is difficult, as they cannot recruit teachers and assessors in subjects such as engineering, construction, IT and design. This means that some enrolments have had to be put on hold or declined in the couple of years
22. The numbers of applicants for headship has also declined, and we have seen a rise in the use of recruitment firms to try to ensure a strong and diverse field of candidates.

Regional and sector differences

23. The situation is bleak across all parts of the country, and our members now report difficulties recruiting even in traditionally 'easy' areas. Areas where it was historically difficult (coastal areas, high deprivation, etc), have seen their problems exacerbated.

Impact on pupils

24. According to an NFER survey '*Teacher supply and shortages: the implications of teacher supply challenges for schools and pupils*'¹⁰:

'Schools that reported finding teacher recruitment the most difficult were also considerably more likely than other schools to have school leaders doing more teaching than usual. This may reduce the school's leadership capacity and, in turn, limit the schools' ability to function well operationally and make improvements to teaching.'

⁹ [Ibid](#)

¹⁰ [Teacher supply and shortages: the implications of teacher supply challenges for schools and pupils](#)

25. One of the ways schools reported that they were mitigating recruitment challenges was by using non-specialist teachers, particularly in Maths, Physics and MFL¹¹ The report's findings are reflective of what we hear from our members, and the situation is always exacerbated in the most deprived areas.

SEND

26. Schools have difficulty recruiting and retaining SENCOs as there is currently little incentive to take on the exponential workload that comes with this role. The current SEND allowance is not sufficient to act as an incentive. The recruitment and retention of support staff is also adding to the pressure on SENCOs. This means there is less appropriate provision available for pupils with SEND.

Bursaries and scholarships

27. We highlighted concerns to the STRB last year¹² about the Department's decision to reduce or remove some bursaries due to the spike in applications during the pandemic.

28. The table below shows the postgraduate bursary amounts from 2018/19 to 2023/24, along with the recruitment to target for each year that data is available.

Secondary PG	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24	
Subject	Bursary	% ITT target met	Bursary	% ITT target met	Bursary	% ITT target met	Bursary	% ITT target met	Bursary	% ITT target met	Bursary	Difference Jan 22 - Jan 23
Physics	£ 26,000	47%	£ 26,000	43%	£ 26,000	45%	£ 24,000	22%	£ 24,000	17%	£ 27,000	11%
D&T	£ 12,000	26%	£ 12,000	41%	£ 15,000	75%	£ -	23%	£ 15,000	25%	£ 20,000	43%
Computing	£ 26,000	75%	£ 26,000	79%	£ 26,000	105%	£ 24,000	69%	£ 24,000	30%	£ 27,000	-8%
Languages	£ 26,000	88%	£ 26,000	62%	£ 26,000	72%	£ 10,000	71%	£ 15,000	34%	£ 25,000	88%
Geography	£ 26,000	85%	£ 26,000	119%	£ 15,000	130%	£ -	86%	£ 15,000	69%	£ 25,000	78%
English	£ 15,000	111%	£ 15,000	110%	£ 12,000	127%	£ -	118%	£ -	84%	£ 15,000	25%
Biology	£ 26,000	153%	£ 26,000	166%	£ 26,000	189%	£ 7,000	117%	£ 10,000	85%	£ 20,000	41%
Chemistry	£ 26,000	80%	£ 26,000	70%	£ 26,000	80%	£ 24,000	105%	£ 24,000	86%	£ 27,000	30%
Maths	£ 20,000	70%	£ 20,000	64%	£ 26,000	84%	£ 24,000	95%	£ 24,000	90%	£ 27,000	33%
Classics	£ 26,000	(Incl in MFL)	£ 26,000	(Incl in MFL)	£ 26,000	256%	£ 10,000	143%	£ -	193%	£ -	-6%
Secondary Overall		83%		85%		103%		82%		59%		18%

29. We have highlighted some areas where changes were made (or not) that do not appear to be in line with the recruitment against target in those subjects – either reduced when targets were far from being met, or not adjusted where targets were consistently well exceeded.

30. A coherent and strategic approach to bursaries must be taken. This needs to be over the medium to long term and not the piecemeal changes that we have seen in recent years, as evidenced in the table above.

31. It is too early to tell if the FE teacher bursaries have helped colleges to recruit more teachers in the shortage subjects.

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

¹¹ [Ibid](#)

¹² [ASCL evidence to STRB 32nd remit](#)

32. The evidence base shows that teacher training is currently of a good standard. This is why we expressed concerns about the DfE's market review and re-accreditation of providers. We have concerns that the current direction of travel is one where the lack of flexibility will see students and early career teachers left struggling, and providers and schools less willing to engage.
33. As the current system, rightly, depends on classroom practice, we are concerned that schools are under too much pressure to be able to support this at present.

Impact of the Early Career Framework

34. It is too soon to tell whether the Early Career Framework has impacted positively on early career retention, which was its original intention. However, we do know that the majority of mentors (61%) found it difficult to spend the time they needed on their mentor training¹³. This is really concerning given their importance to the success of the programme.

CPD

35. We are concerned that the DfE has centralised teacher CPD into one-size-fits-all NPQs and that this will not allow sufficient flexibility within the system for the professional development of teachers and leaders. We would like to see a change of approach that gives teachers professional agency and leaders the opportunity for professional supervision.

Comparisons with other professions / sectors of the economy

36. The current graduate market is fairly buoyant, and this is proving challenging for teacher recruitment. The government responded to this competitive market by announcing in September 2019 that starting salaries would rise to £30,000 by 2022/23 (subsequently delayed by a year).
37. Whilst we are supportive of the commitment to raising starting salaries for teachers, this must be accompanied by equivalent increases across all pay ranges. Not doing so has caused unhelpful differentials within and between pay ranges, which have been a contributory factor to the reluctance of teachers to progress into senior roles¹⁴.
38. Additionally, we have raised concerns about the competitiveness of £30,000. Its non-competitiveness is clearly demonstrated by the 2022/23 ITT recruitment figures and projected 2023/24 figures. We are also seeing a decline in the percentage of graduates entering the profession with a first-class degree. After slowly increasing since 2015/16, the percentage fell from 26% in 2021/22 to 24% in 2022/23.¹⁵ This also meant that the percentage of candidates with a first-class or 2:1 in their first degree fell, from 78% in 2021/22 to 75% in 2022/23¹⁶.

Recruitment, training and retention challenges for teachers from different demographic backgrounds

Ethnicity

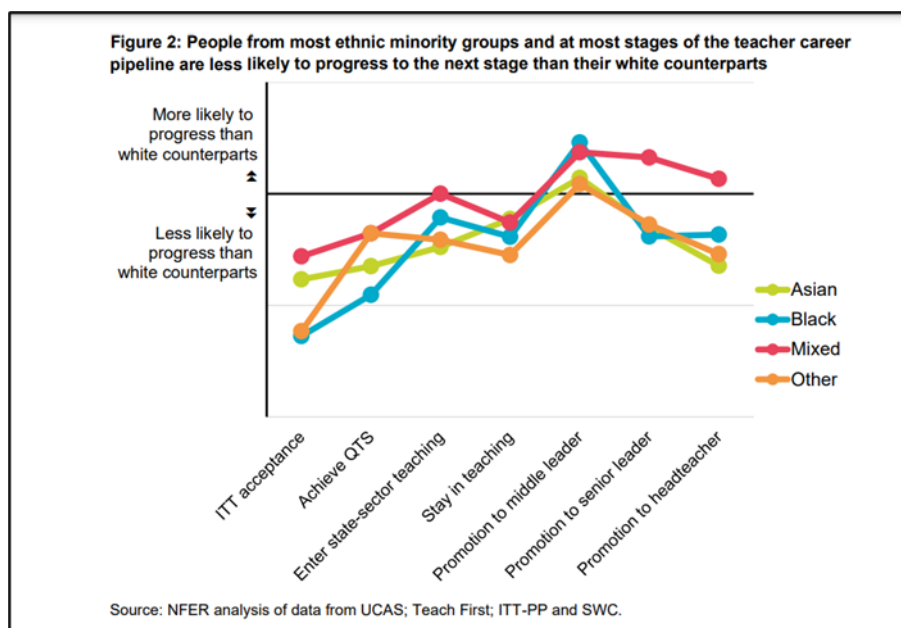
¹³ [Evaluation of the national roll-out of the early career framework induction programmes: annual summary \(year one\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ [STRB 29th Report, pg xi](#)

¹⁵ [ITT Census 2022/23](#)

¹⁶ [Ibid](#)

39. The NFER report '*Racial Equality in the Teacher Workforce*¹⁷' found that '*all ethnic groups except white are under-represented at all career stages of the teaching profession, except for initial teacher training (ITT)*'.
40. Progression analysis¹⁸ shows that '*people from most ethnic minority groups and at most stages of the teacher career pipeline are less likely to progress to the next stage compared to their white counterparts.*'
41. The diagram below taken from the report demonstrates the impact of this across all stages.



42. The latest School Workforce Census shows an increase in the proportion of teachers identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority group. However the data is clear that the ethnic demographic make-up of the teaching workforce, and in particular those in leadership roles, is not representative of the pupils they teach. Furthermore, the headline data masks more significant issues within different sectors¹⁹.

Gender

43. As detailed in "*Closing the Gender Pay Gap in Education: A Leadership Imperative*"²⁰, there is a significant gender pay gap across education, and this is particularly so for school leaders. We commend this report to the Committee.

Additional Information: How school funding impacts on recruitment and retention

44. The current funding system is unsuitable and does not support strategic recruitment and retention planning at school level.

¹⁷ [Racial equality in the teacher workforce, NFER 2022](#)

¹⁸ [Ibid](#)

¹⁹ [Ibid](#)

²⁰ [Closing the gender pay gap in Education - a leadership imperative](#)

45. The budgets for all types of school are confirmed on an annual basis, usually in early Spring. This means that maintained schools have very little time to plan a detailed budget ahead of their funding year, which runs from April to March. For academies, the funding year aligns with the academic year. Despite having actual revenue allocations confirmed one year at a time, it is a regulatory requirement that schools submit three-year budget forecasts of both income and expenditure by June or July.
46. School expenditure has three main components, with teachers' pay being the largest of these, at around half of all planned expenditure. Planning is frustrated by the STRB process, which tends to deliver recommendations after budgets have been submitted. In addition, the support staff pay award, which can account for up to 25% of the budget, could be agreed at any point during the year, and in some cases may include a significant back-dated element, crossing funding years.
47. All of this means rebudgeting for material spend during or at the start of the year. This is ridiculous and presents a significant risk to financial sustainability and resilience. It works against the expectation that schools operate sustainable business models, as the reality is it is completely out of their control.

Action the Department should take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment and retention

48. We would welcome a wider discussion with the Committee on this, but our proposals fall under the following headings:
 - Review the current pay framework for schools, including ensuring it is fit for purpose for multi-academy trusts, the whole school workforce and the development of career pathways
 - Tackle the excessive workload culture by 'accounting' for additional hours
 - Review conditions of service – to include compensating for the lack of comparable flexible working opportunities and enhancing school leaders' working time protections
 - Reduce high-stakes accountability (see our discussion paper *The Future of Inspection*²¹)
 - Introduce a student loan forgiveness scheme. This could be tiered depending on phase/subject, but should not just be targeted at new entrants
49. In addition, whilst the Teachers' Pension Scheme remains one of the most attractive, and a key part of teachers' remuneration package, key challenges remain. The fall in real-terms pay cited earlier, adjunct to the cost-of-living crisis, has forced many young teachers to opt out of the scheme to pay their bills. At the opposite end, school leaders have been impacted by both annual allowance and lifetime allowance charges. The increase in the annual allowance to £60k from 2023-24 is welcome, but ASCL would prefer an inflation exemption, as recently accepted in the NHS.
50. There should also be a review the pay of teachers and lecturers in sixth-form and FE colleges. Our members say that they are unable to match the pay which skilled workers can achieve by working in industry. College funding must be improved so that they can pay their teachers more. The advent of T levels means this situation is likely to get progressively worse. The occupational specialisms which need to be taught as the key component of a T level demand highly qualified practitioners with recent industrial experience. This is unlikely to be achieved as these roles are far more highly paid than FE rates of pay. This seriously jeopardises the government's flagship qualification.

²¹ [The-future-of-inspection-an-ASCL-discussion-paper.pdf](#)

51. I hope that this response is of value to your call for evidence. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

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21 April 2023