



Independent Welsh Pay Review Body: Remit for the 6th Report

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

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Section A: Introduction

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) is a trade union and professional association representing 25,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business leaders and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people across primary, secondary, post-16 and specialist education. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL Cymru welcomes the opportunity to make a written submission in response to the Independent Welsh Pay Review Body's (IWPRB) 6th remit.
3. 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.
4. When considering the impact of any proposals on different groups, it is ASCL's policy to consider not only the nine protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010, but also other groups which might be disproportionately affected, particularly those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. We have answered any equality impact questions on this basis.

Section B: IWPRB 5th Report

5. We provided our views on the 5th Report and its recommendations in our consultation response in October.¹

Timeliness of the process

6. We highlighted our concerns on the timing of the publication of the 5th Report and Cabinet Secretary's response to it in our consultation response.
7. We saw incredibly short timescales in the process for the 5th remit, with one deadline even being set on a bank holiday, shortening the timeframe further.
8. This hampered the ability of consultees to craft as full and meaningful an evidence submission as would be the case with a more appropriate timeline.
9. Whilst we expected the delays to cause the report and response to be published late in the summer term as has been the case in England, we did not expect that it would not be published until the second week of the new academic year.
10. Whilst we acknowledge the rationale offered by the Welsh Government in relation to this delay due to the intention to align with the announcement made in England², the resulting situation was totally unacceptable. The announcement in Wales was in fact made six weeks after England's.
11. Instead of responding to our recommendations that the process needs to be brought forward, it was pushed even further back.

¹ ASCL Cymru response to IWPRB 5th report and Cabinet Secretary's response

² Written ministerial statement on teacher pay, 29 July 2024

12. Teachers and leaders returned to their roles in September having no idea what pay award they would receive, and leaders had the challenge of not knowing how to update their budgets.
13. As we have pointed out before, this sends a message to teachers and school leaders that their pay is not of importance to the Welsh Government, and to the wider system that securing and retaining a sufficient supply of teachers in the profession is not a priority.
14. We note the concerns raised by the Review Body itself over the delays in the process and in sharing the strategic review, and the recommendations that '*the remit letter is received a minimum of six months in advance of the report submission deadline.*³'
15. It is therefore staggering that the first Teachers' Pay and Conditions Partnership Forum (PPF) meeting for this pay round did not take place until 13 December 2024.
16. A draft remit letter was not circulated until 24 January 2025, and the final letter submitted on 27 January, less than four months prior to the report submission deadline.
17. It was highlighted at the PPF meetings that the consultation on the 5th report and response closed on the same day as the consultation on the STRB's 35th report and response in England.
18. The Secretary of State for Education in England stood by her commitment to align the STRB process to work better for schools and issued her remit letter to the STRB on 30 September.
19. Both initial and supplementary evidence stages in England were completed before a remit letter in Wales was even drafted.
20. It is disappointing that despite ASCL making suggestions on what needed to happen to expediate the process in future, and the IWPRB's own recommendations on this, that the process this year is even further behind than last year.
21. We make no apology for repeating our concerns on this, as not only have we seen the late announcement on the pay award, but due to the delays, the IWPRB was unable to consider the remit item on leaders' conditions of service, impacting directly on school leaders, and ASCL Cymru members.
22. Although this item has been included in the 6th remit, it is only for consideration after the submission of the IWPRB's report on the 2025/2026 pay award, and at the time of writing no timescales indicated.

Lack of action on recommendations already made

23. We have seen a series of recommendations made by the IWPRB over the last year; 26 from the strategic review, twelve from the 5th report and eleven from the review of supply teachers. Sadly, very few have been implemented.
24. The Cabinet Secretary accepted, in principle, all of the recommendations from the strategic review, but with the following caveat: '*Many of the recommendations have financial implications, therefore an important aspect of considering their impact and delivery will be affordability in the difficult financial situation faced by Welsh Government, local authorities and schools. Given these financial pressures, the implementation of any of the recommendations in the short to medium term will only occur where they can be shown to be either cost neutral or are able to be met from existing budgets.*'

³ IWPRB 5th Report (pg 8)

25. If a recommendation can only be implemented where it is cost neutral or met from existing budgets, then it has not been accepted.
26. We must see improvements in both the PPF and pay review processes and associated timelines to ensure that the process works for school budgets, and so that no group of teachers or leaders are negatively impacted as a result of a truncated pay round.

Matter for recommendation

What adjustments should be made to the salary and allowance ranges for classroom teachers, unqualified teachers and school leaders, to ensure the teaching profession in Wales is promoted and rewarded to encourage recruitment and retention of high-quality practitioners.

Section C: Pay award

ASCL recommends that:

- ✓ **A fully funded⁴ pay increase that at least keeps pace with inflation (RPI) is awarded across all pay ranges for September 2025.**
- ✓ **There should also be a further element towards restoring the real-terms value of teacher and school leader pay.**
- ✓ **This must be accompanied by a longer-term commitment and funded strategic plan to fully restore the erosion of pay which has taken place since 2010 together with the re-establishment of previous differentials between pay ranges, particularly as classroom teachers move into leadership.**
- ✓ **Once the real-terms value of pay has been restored, annual uplifts must continue to be fully funded and must at least keep pace with RPI⁵ each year, to ensure that teachers and leaders do not experience any further real-terms pay cuts**
- ✓ **An additional increase should be included to compensate for the lack of flexible working opportunities compared with other sectors.**
- ✓ **Salaries must be competitive throughout the framework to ensure that high quality graduates are attracted to the profession, and to improve the retention of both classroom teachers and school leaders.**
- ✓ **Sufficient funding must be provided to ensure that schools can afford to implement these commitments without any negative impact on provision. This must also ensure that funding is passed from all local authorities to schools using a fair, proportionate and transparent methodology.**

Why are we saying this:

There has been a decline in teachers' real-terms pay for more than a decade, in excess of most other public sector workers. This gap is particularly stark for experienced teachers and for leaders, as their pay has grown more slowly than that of newly qualified teachers. The 5.5% pay increase for 2024/25 is welcome, and although begins to repair the erosion of pay since 2010, it goes nowhere near reversing this decline of over a decade.

⁴ This must be ringfenced funding which is not a calculated average.

⁵ [ASCL position on policy](#)

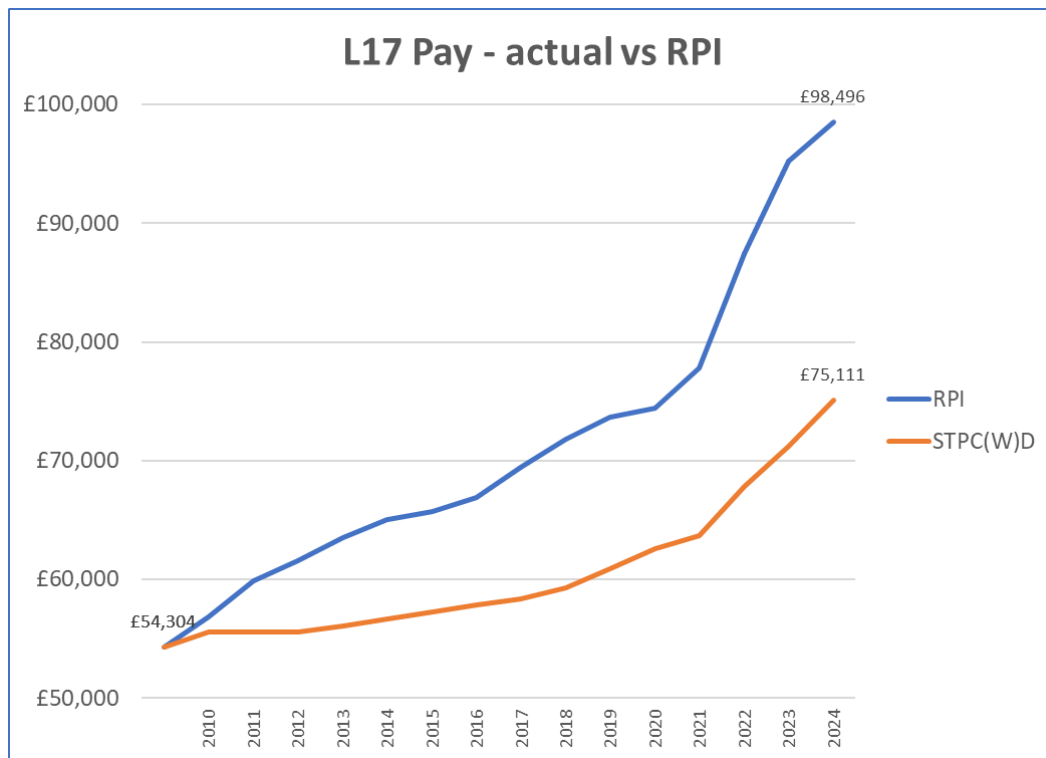
This has clearly impacted on both the recruitment and retention of teachers and school leaders.

27. **We believe that the IWPRB should consider a variety of factors when considering its recommendation for the 2025/26 teachers' and school leaders' pay award:**
 - a. **The real-terms pay gap that has emerged and widened since 2010**
 - b. **Worsening recruitment (see also section on Recruitment to the profession)**
 - c. **Significant retention pressures (see also section on Retention)**
 - d. **The need to reward high levels of commitment and professionalism across the school sector in Wales**
 - e. **Inflationary pressures and increased living costs**
 - f. **Vacancy rates**
 - g. **Impact of teacher shortages**
28. We believe that the pay award should be made up of three elements:
 - An uplift that at least keeps pace with RPI.
 - A proportion towards the restoration of real-terms cuts since 2010.
 - A proportion to compensate for the lack of flexible working opportunities available within the profession.
29. This will require an overall above inflation (RPI) pay award.
30. We will explain our rationale behind these throughout this section.

Real-terms impact on leadership pay

31. Teacher, and particularly leadership, pay has fallen significantly in real terms since 2010.
32. Significant increases are needed over a number of years to repair the erosion of pay and bring pay up to levels which are competitive and comparable to other graduate professions.
33. In addition to data provided in our submission for the 5th remit, we now provide further evidence of the extent of the real-terms cuts our members have experienced over the last decade and more.
34. Although the responsibility for pay awards and government policy on public sector pay pre-2019 sat with the Westminster government, there has been very little improvement on this since the devolution of pay for teachers and school leaders to the Welsh government.
35. The 6.5% pay award in 2022 made no positive impact on this due to the high levels of inflation at the time, and in fact, as another real-terms cut, it simply served to compound the issue.
36. The 5% pay award in 2023 was another below inflation increase.
37. The 5.5% pay increase for 2024/25 was welcome, and although begins to repair the erosion of pay since 2010, it goes nowhere near reversing this decline of over a decade.
38. Figures 1a and 1b establish the erosion of the value of school leaders' pay based on RPI and CPI. The charts show the differences after taking into account 2024 RPI and CPI and the 2024 pay award.
39. School leaders' real pay has fallen significantly since 2010:

Figure 1a – L17 Leadership pay in August 2010 indexed to RPI contrasted with actual pay⁶

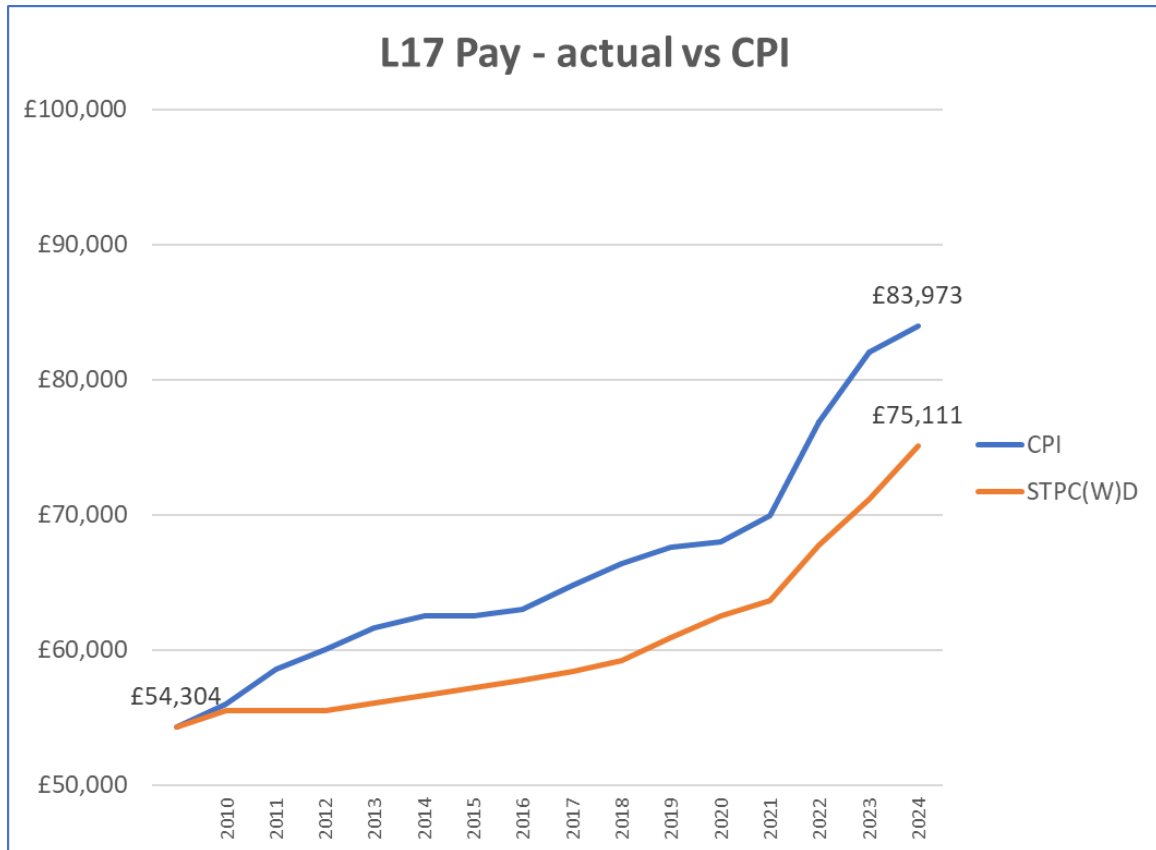


40. Figure 1a shows the gaps between actual pay and real pay which started to emerge in 2010 with a pay increase of 2.3% whilst RPI was 4.7%. This was followed by two years of absolute pay restraint. In subsequent years every pay increase bar two has failed to match RPI.
41. Even in these exceptional circumstances the increases were only marginally above RPI (2.75% compared to RPI of 2.61% in 2019 and 2.75% compared to 1.1% in 2020), and these marginal increases were immediately wiped out in 2021 with another below inflation increase of 1.75% (whilst RPI stood at 4.5%).

Figure 1b – L17 Leadership pay in August 2010 indexed to CPI contrasted with actual pay⁷

⁶ See Annex One for calculations and sources (separate document)

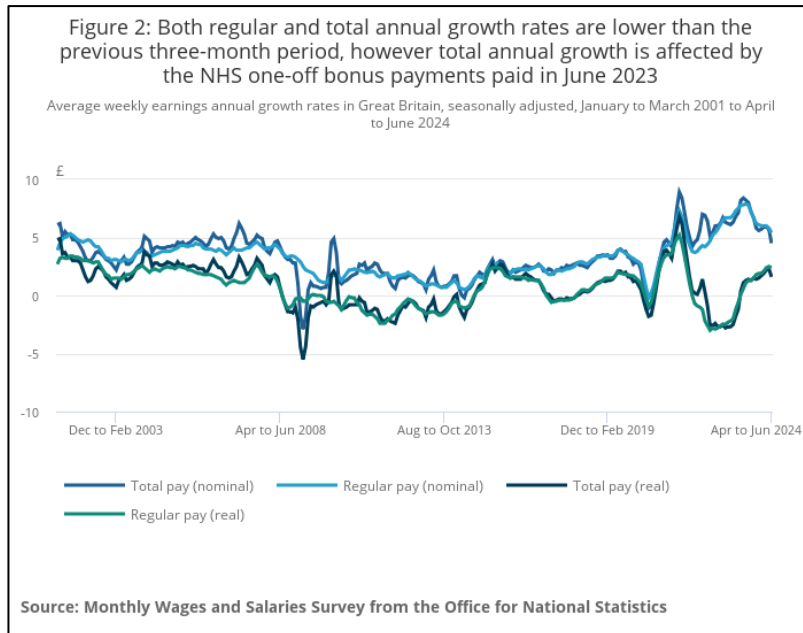
⁷ See Annex One for calculations and sources (separate document)



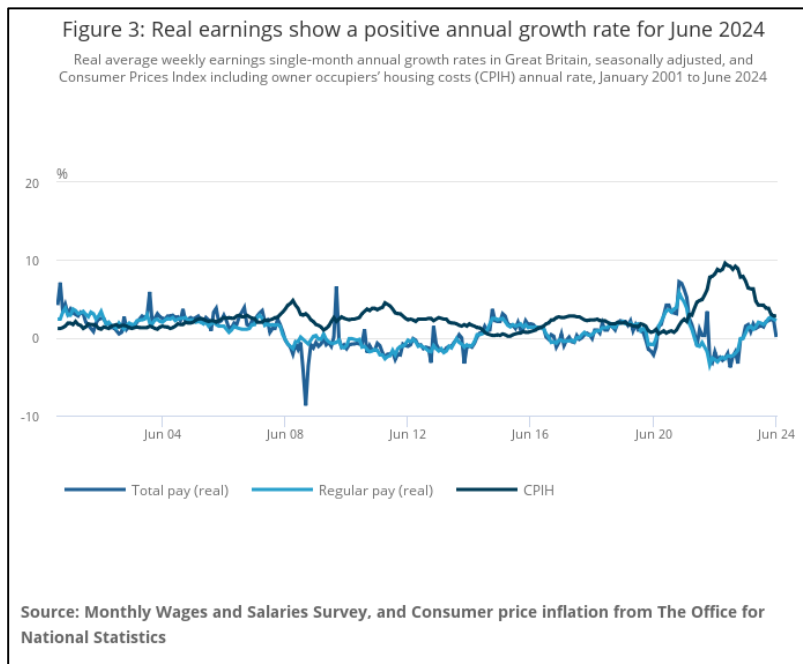
42. A similar picture emerges in figure 1b when carrying out the same analysis but using CPI as the measure of inflation. The 2.3% increase in 2010 was at a time when CPI was running at 3.1%, and the pay award only exceeded CPI in four out of twelve subsequent years.
43. It is our view that RPI remains the most valid measure of inflation for pay. As the IWPRB will be aware, RPI is currently used for annual uplifts to items such as several pension schemes, private sector rents and commercial contracts.
44. For school leaders' pay to have the same purchasing power as in August 2010 based on RPI, a pay increase of 29.8% would be required.
45. Even if the less appropriate CPI is used as a comparator, a pay increase of 10.6% would be required to restore school leaders' pay to the same purchasing power as August 2010.
46. To summarise, the above analysis shows how far behind school leaders' pay has fallen since 2010. The pay award necessary to right this wrong differs according to which method of calculating inflation is used as follows:
 - a. RPI – 29.8%
 - b. CPI – 10.6%

Pay growth and pay intentions

47. Pay growth may have slowed slightly in 2024, but it remains high.
48. In 2023, we saw record growth⁸ in average weekly earnings across the economy with earnings growing by 7.8% in the twelve months to June 2023.
49. In 2024, although this slowed to 5.4%⁹, growth was last lower than this in July 2022 (see figure 2 below).



50. However, when comparing average weekly earnings against CPIH, the picture is very different, as can be seen in the chart below (figure 3).

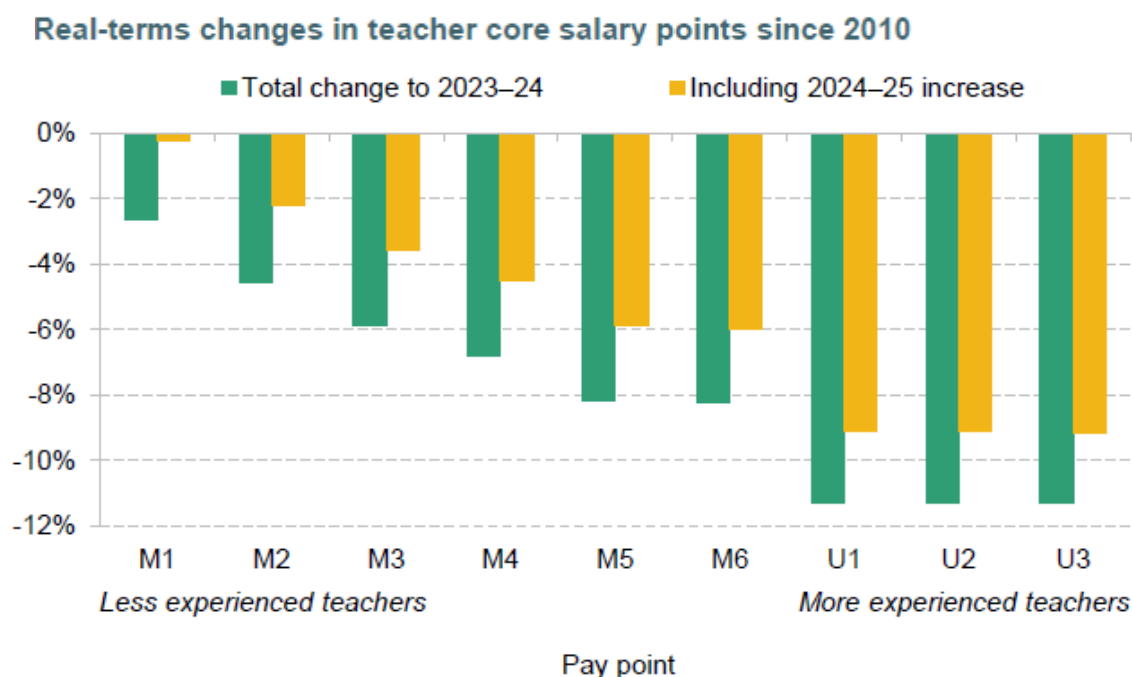


⁸ [Average weekly earnings in Great Britain: August 2023, ONS](#)

⁹ [Average weekly earnings in Great Britain: August 2024, ONS](#)

51. Insights from WTW's December 2024 global Salary Budget Planning Report¹⁰ suggest that salary growth peaked in 2023, with 2024 projections for 2025 indicating stabilisation. After sharp increases post-Great Resignation, companies are now shifting toward more sustainable yet still elevated salary growth rates.
52. Although this varies by region, the data shows that the UK is one of the areas indicating stabilisation. The US, UK and Germany seem to have settled at a 4% increase, suggesting a potential 'new normal' that balances inflation, cost control, and competitive pay needs.
53. One of the key findings in a recent IFS report '*Pressures on public sector pay*'¹¹ was that, whilst public sector pay held up much better than private sector pay between 2009 and 2014, the situation has been reversed since then, and in real terms public sector pay is still below where it was in 2010.
54. The teaching profession has been particularly affected by this, '*Average teacher pay has also fallen, from the 87th percentile in 2007 to the 81st percentile by 2023, continuing the trend of falling relative teacher pay during the 2000s.*'¹²
55. The report¹³ also highlights that more experienced teachers have seen some of the largest real-terms falls in pay since 2010 (figure 4).

Figure 4 (source IFS)



56. This was also reported by NFER¹⁴ who said: '*Since 2010/11, teacher pay has fallen significantly in real terms and lagged behind earnings growth in the wider labour market.*'

¹⁰ 2025 Employee pay trends, WTW, December 2024 edition

¹¹ Pressures on public sector pay, IFS, September 2024

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

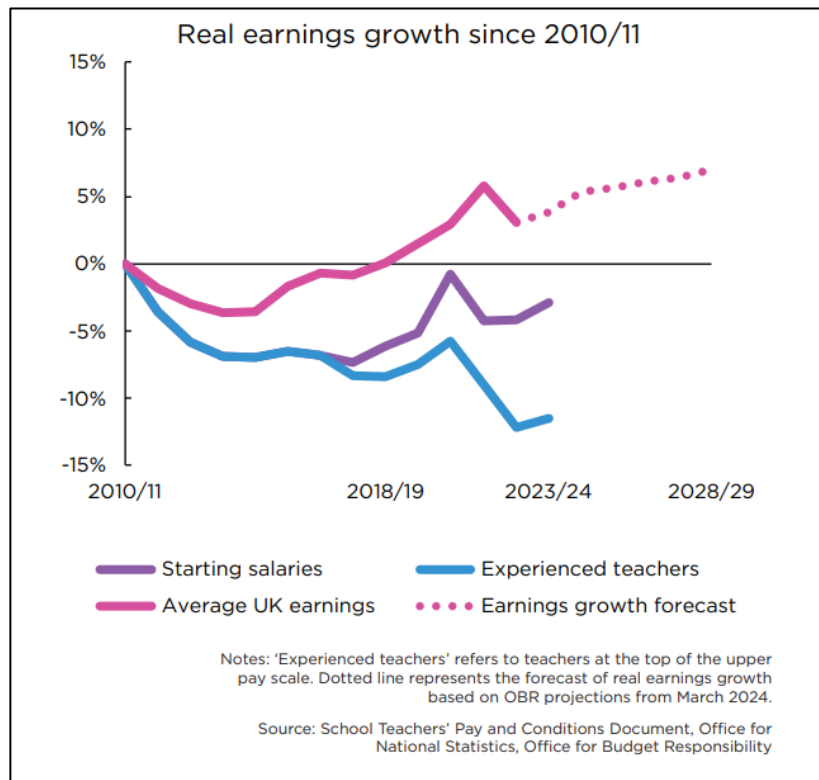
¹⁴ Teacher Labour Market in England, 2024, NFER

57. The NFER report¹⁵ also said: ‘Last year’s pay award helped to stall the real-terms fall in teacher pay since 2010/11. However, teacher pay growth has been outstripped by strong earnings growth since the pandemic in the wider labour market outside teaching.’

58. The report¹⁶ goes on to say: ‘Public sector pay caps throughout the 2010s, the 2021/22 pay freeze and the cost-of-living crisis have meant that teachers’ pay has failed to keep up with inflation since 2010/11. This has been most pronounced for more experienced teachers and school leaders. In 2023/24, despite the 6.5 per cent increase, pay for experienced teachers was 12 per cent lower in real terms than in 2010/11. Even though it was the highest rise in decades, the 2023/24 pay award has not substantially reversed the considerable pay deterioration experienced teachers have faced since 2010/11.’

59. The chart below (figure 5) is taken from the report and shows the extent of the real-terms cuts to experienced teacher and leader pay since 2010/11.

Figure 5



60. Although the data presented in some of these reports specifically relates to England, much of that remains relevant to Wales. The broader trends of public sector pay erosion, the impact on teacher recruitment and retention, and the lag in pay growth compared to the wider labour market are challenges also faced by the Welsh education system.

61. While there are some differences in pay structures and policy decisions between the two nations, the underlying pressures - such as inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, and long-term real-terms pay cuts - are shared concerns.

¹⁵ [ibid](#)

¹⁶ [ibid](#)

Inflation and UK living standards

62. A UK government consultation¹⁷ on proposed increases in employee contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) ran between 14 November 2024 and 23 January 2025. The proposed increase is 0.3 percentage points from April 2025.
63. This increase would mean that those working in school leadership roles would be paying between 10.5% and 12% of their salaries, reducing the household disposable income for our members.
64. This means that it is not only their pay which has eroded since 2010, but their whole package.
65. Although rates of inflation have fallen from the record highs experienced in recent years, we cannot overlook the fact that, because inflationary increases are always cumulative, those high rates are now baked into prices.
66. Lower inflation rates simply mean that prices are rising more slowly, but still from a higher base.
67. This was referenced in a BBC news article¹⁸ which said: '*Inflation has fallen from its peak in October 2022, but when the rate falls, it does not mean that prices are coming down, but that they are rising less quickly.*'
68. In its Economic and Fiscal Outlook published in October 2024¹⁹, Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) places RPI at 3.5% for 2025.
69. Short-term forecasts for the UK economy published in the HMT comparison of independent forecasts (February 2025)²⁰, place RPI at 3.7% for 2025.
70. Additionally, the OBR suggested that inflation (CPI) will now not reach the Bank of England's 2% target until 2029. OBR forecasts suggest that CPI is projected to be 2.3% in two years' time, and 2.1% in three years.
71. Latest data shows that CPI jumped from 2.5% to 3% in January 2025 - its highest level in ten months. Following this announcement, Treasury minister, James Murray, said that the road to the 2% inflation target will be 'bumpy'²¹.
72. The Bank of England now expects inflation to peak at 3.7% later this year, before falling back to its 2% target by Q4 in 2027²².
73. Again, we cannot ignore the significant impact of high inflation on living standards. This has been cited as '*the largest reduction in living standards since Office for National Statistics records began in the 1950s*'.²³
74. Rising energy and food prices remain key inflationary factors. Food price inflation rose from 1.9% to 3.1%, and the energy cap will increase again in April. A House of Commons research briefing²⁴ published on 25 February said: '*Despite the earlier falls in prices the average bill*

¹⁷ [Teachers' Pension Scheme regulations: 2024 proposed amendments](#)

¹⁸ [Higher energy bills push UK inflation to 2.3%, BBC](#)

¹⁹ [OBR Economic and Fiscal Outlook, October 2024](#)

²⁰ [Forecasts for the UK economy: a comparison of independent forecasts, February 2025, HMT](#)

²¹ [Road back to lower inflation will be 'bumpy' - Treasury, BBC News, 19 February 2025](#)

²² [Inflation in the UK: Economic indicators, February 2025](#)

²³ [OBR Economic and fiscal outlook, November 2023](#)

²⁴ [Gas and electricity prices during the 'energy crisis' and beyond](#)

under the Q2 2025 cap will be 52% higher than in winter 2021/22. In July 2025 the cap is forecast to fall by 5%, taking prices back to levels seen at the end of 2024.'

75. The briefing also highlights that, although the price cap between January and March 2025 is well below the peak level under the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) from October 2022 to June 2023, it is still 43% higher than in Winter 2021/22. Furthermore, it will increase again by 6.5% in April 2025.
76. Concerns also remain over the long-term impact on mortgage holders. We know that some mortgagors were protected with fixed rates, but potentially this is a 'ticking time bomb'²⁵ as they come to an end.
77. Bank of England analysis shows that around two-thirds of fixed rate mortgages have been repriced since the start of this hiking cycle, and they expect the remainder to expire by the end of 2026.²⁶
78. In its October 2024 Economic and Fiscal Outlook report (latest available), the OBR says it *expects* interest rates on outstanding mortgages *'to rise from around 3.7% in 2024 to a peak of 4.5% in 2027 and then remain around that level until the end of the forecast'*.
79. Interest rates were increased fourteen times between December 2021 and March 2024, when they reached 5.25% - a fifteen-year high.
80. There were two cuts following that, in November the interest rate came down to 4.75%²⁷, with warnings that further falls would be gradual. Inflation figures at that time showed an unexpected increase²⁸, suggesting that there would be no further cuts in interest rates in 2024 and that these were likely to be put off until at least February 2025.
81. This proved to be accurate when the Bank of England made no further cuts to interest rates until 6 February 2025, when it reduced the rate to 4.5%²⁹.
82. It goes on to say that mortgage rates are around 0.3 percentage points higher than its March forecast (Figure 6)³⁰, driven by the higher forecast for Bank Rate.

Figure 6

²⁵ ['Sleepless nights': UK homeowners fear 2024 mortgage timebomb, Guardian, January 2024](#)

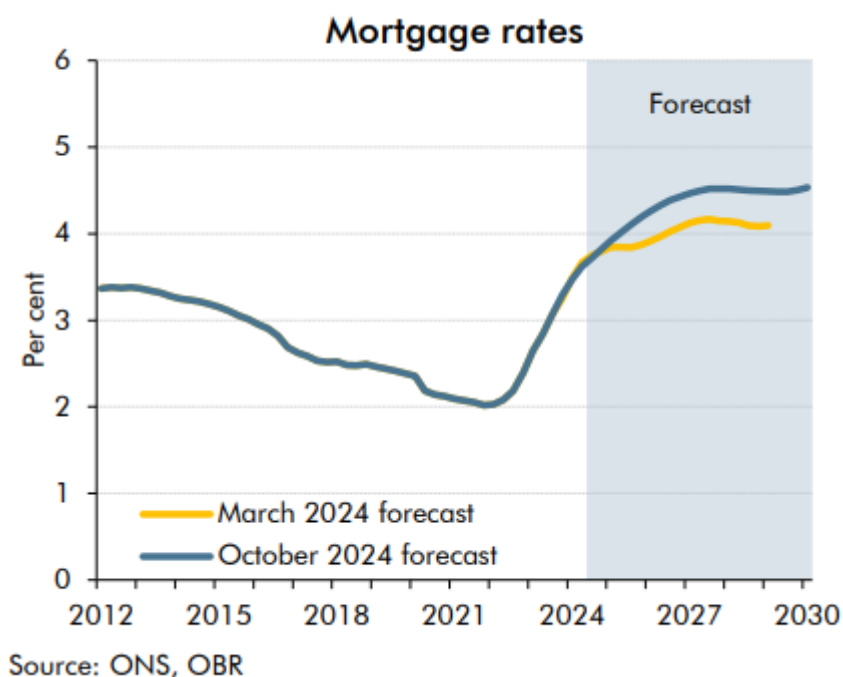
²⁶ [Ibid](#)

²⁷ [Monetary policy report, November 2024](#)

²⁸ [Ibid](#)

²⁹ [Monetary policy report, February 2025](#)

³⁰ [Ibid](#)



83. What all the above shows is that the cost-of-living crisis is far from over. The reality is that energy costs continue to increase, food and housing costs remain high, and teacher pension contributions are set to rise.

Recruitment and retention

Introduction

84. Teacher recruitment and retention remain a dire concern for school leaders in Wales. This affects curriculum delivery and classroom delivery. Schools are having to resort to employing record numbers of unqualified teachers and supply staff to cover gaps³¹.
85. Erosion of pay over the last 14 years along with excessive workload and poor working conditions are leading to record numbers of teachers and school leaders leaving the profession alongside an inadequate supply of new teachers and aspiring school leaders.
86. More specifically, the most recent Teacher Labour Market in Wales report³² states: *‘there continues to be evidence of particular recruitment and retention challenges in some areas, including shortage subjects (such as Welsh, maths, science and modern foreign languages), Welsh-medium schools and schools in areas with high levels of disadvantage. These challenges are likely to intensify again as the wider labour market recovers from the pandemic and affects the relative attractiveness of teaching as a profession.’*
87. Moreover, Welsh Schools are underfunded largely due to excessive ‘top-slicing’ by Local Authorities. For example, ASCL Cymru members tell us that Welsh Government funding for the 5.5% cost-of-living pay award in September along with the additional money to cover ALNCo assimilation costs has not be fully passported into their school accounts, resulting in them having to use their reserves and contingencies with the vast majority of Welsh Schools are already in deficit.

³¹ [Wales Online, December 2024](#)

³² [Teacher Labour Market in Wales 2022, NFER](#)

Teacher population

88. The number of qualified teachers and pupil characteristics in Welsh schools is changing, causing further resource pressures on an already strained and inchoate education system.
89. In November 2023, there were 25,740 teachers in local authority maintained schools in Wales, a decrease of 2.7% on November 2022. The full-time equivalence of all teachers was 23,995, down 2.6% from 2022²⁸.
90. Over the last decade there has been a significant reduction in the number of registered qualified teachers (over 1800 fewer teachers) – see Figure 7.

Figure 7 - The number of registered schoolteachers in Wales since 2014 (Annual Workforce Survey 2023)

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
37,673	37,355	36,951	36,426	35,929	35,545	35,171	34,171	35,256	35,837

Pupil Population

91. The School Census report (January 2024) indicates that pressures continue to mount in terms of average class size, levels of deprivation and Additional Learning Needs:
 - There were 1,460 local authority maintained schools, down 3 compared with January 2023.
 - There were 465,840 pupils in local authority maintained schools, down 4,032 compared with January 2023. Comparing this to the reduction in the number of full-time equivalent teachers (24,297fte down from 24,884), the average class size rose from 1:18.9 to 1:19.2.
 - Deprivation continues to affect pupil outcomes in Wales. There has been a significant spike in the percentage of FSM pupils during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (see figure 11). This trend continues with 29.3% of pupils aged 5 to 15 were known to be eligible for free school meals in January 2024, up from 28.7% at January 2023. This compares with 23.8% in England.
 - There were 21,319 pupils with Individual Development Plans (IDP) under the new ALN system in Welsh Maintained schools (40.9% of pupils with ALN), up from 10,499 (16.6%) at January 2023³³.
 - The recent upturn in the number of pupils in maintained schools since returns levels to the previous peaks in 2020 (see figure 9). However, the school census report (Jan 2024) shows forecast school population falling from 463,173 in 2024 to 415,257 by 2040 (see figure 10 below)

Figure 8. The total number of pupils in LA maintained schools in Wales since 2008³⁵

³³ The transition to the new ALN Bill makes comparison to previous years challenging

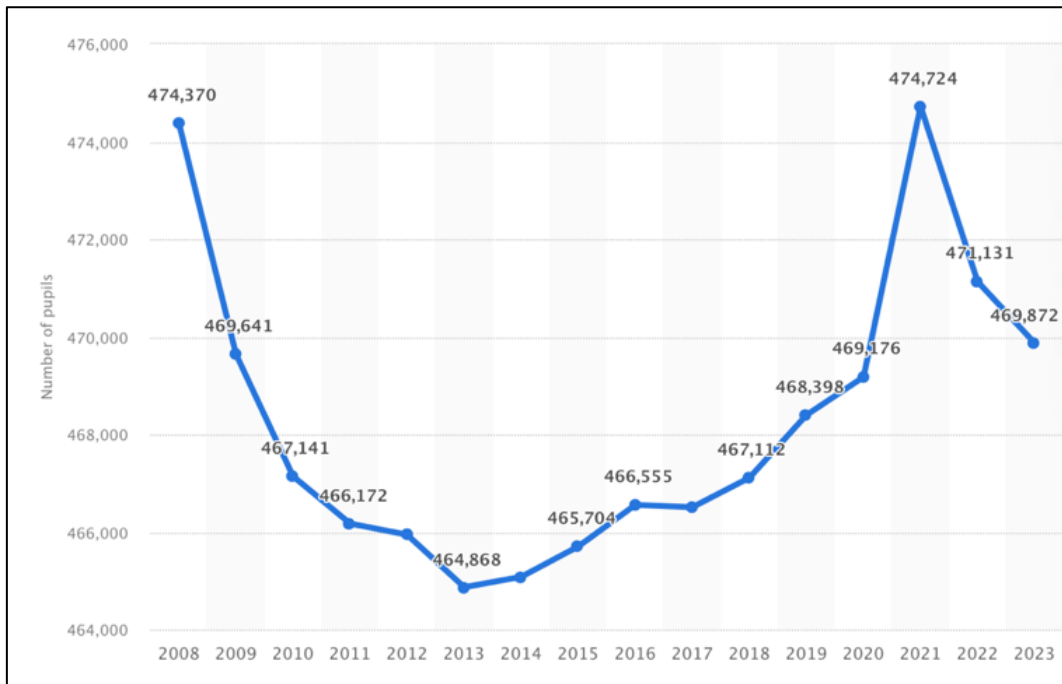


Figure 9: School Pupil Forecasts 2024-2040²⁸

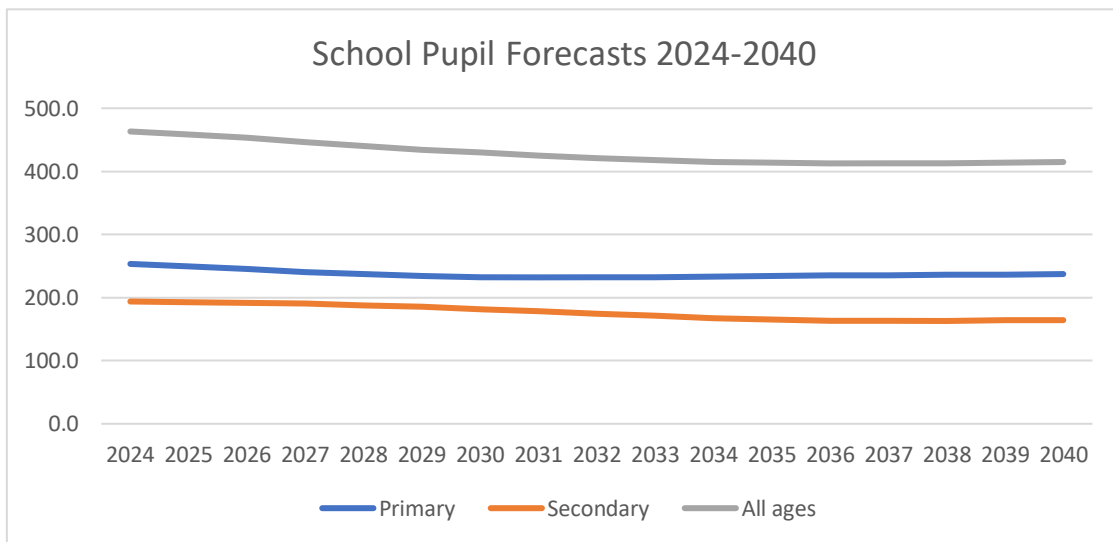
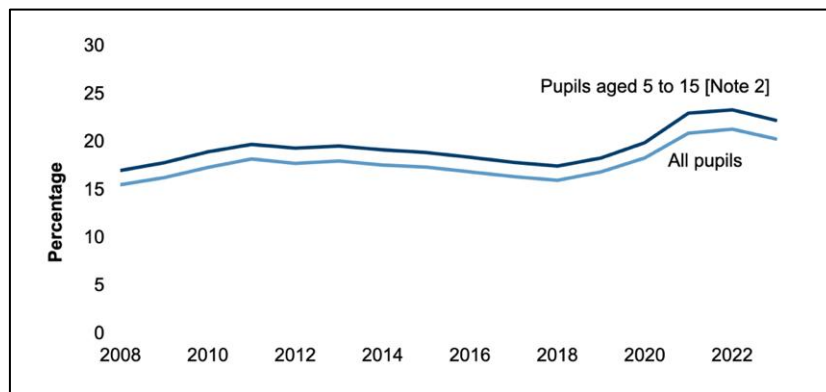


Figure 10: Changes to the % of Free School Meal Pupils in Wales since 2008³⁴



³⁴ Ibid

92. In summary, pupils in maintained schools in Wales are taught in larger classes, have more significant learning needs and there is a higher percentage experiencing socio-economic deprivation.
93. Post-Covid catch-up remains a concern for many teachers, particularly with respect to FSM and ALN pupils, who suffered most during the periods of school closure.
94. According to the Welsh Government, education is the national mission²⁹ *‘together we will achieve high standards and aspirations for all, tackling the impact of poverty on attainment and ambition. All learners, whatever their background, are supported to be healthy, engaged, enterprising and ethical citizens, ready to play a full part in life and work’*. This aim is being fundamentally undermined by a lack of resources to address the ever more complex and demanding needs of children.

Recruitment

ASCL recommends that:

- ✓ **Early career salaries and whole career earning potential must be competitive with comparable graduate salaries to attract the very best graduates into the profession.**
- ✓ **Workload and wellbeing for all must be addressed.**
- ✓ **Limited flexible working opportunities in relation to other comparable professions must be compensated for in the rest of the compensation package.**
- ✓ **Closer alignment is needed between Welsh Government initiatives to improve recruitment to the profession and the work of the IWPRB.**
- ✓ **A holistic approach to bursaries and other incentive payments made by the Welsh Government must be taken so that they support the pay framework as set out in the STPC(W)D.**

Why are we saying this?

The number of people wanting to become teachers is falling at an alarming rate. It is essential that we have a sufficient supply of high-quality teachers joining the profession if we are to achieve the national mission of high standards and aspirations for all³⁵, and that and that ITE incentive payments do not become financial disincentives once teachers become subject to the STPC(W)D.

95. **We believe that the IWPRB should consider a variety of factors when considering its recommendations:**
 - a. **Recruitment to ITE**
 - b. **Early career salaries and recruitment incentives**
 - c. **Competitiveness of whole career salaries**
 - d. **Recruitment and vacancies beyond ITE (including Welsh-medium and school leaders)**
 - e. **Flexible working (see flexible working section)**

³⁵Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all, WG, 2023

Initial teacher education (ITE)

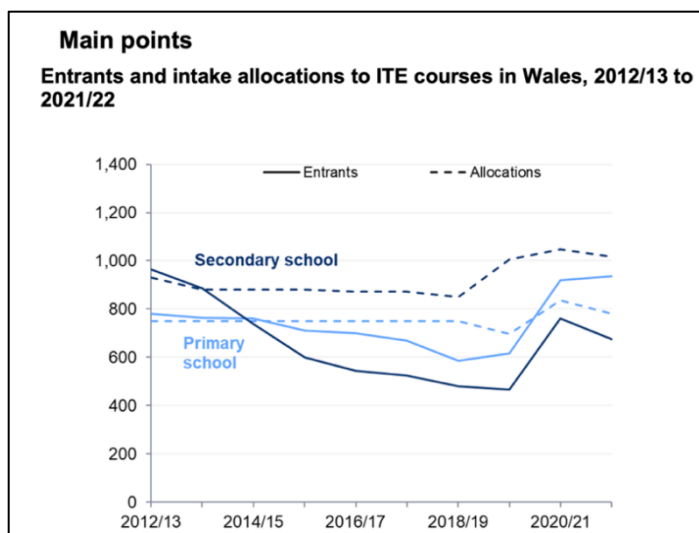
96. ASCL is concerned about ITE provision in Wales. There is urgent need for improvements for entrants into the profession. In particular, the completion of newly qualified teacher (NQT) induction in one year often leads to new teachers struggling in year two as they lose mentoring support and the additional 10% reduced timetable reduction.
97. ITE has been a challenge in both England and Wales. However, a comparison of initial teacher training (ITT) between England and Wales by Bryer and Sibieta (2019)³⁶ showed a number of distinct differences and divergent policies adversely affecting ITE more so in Wales:
 - a. Spend on financial bursaries to attract prospective teachers in Wales has reduced over the last three years.
 - b. Cross-border flows from Wales to England have been increasing over time.
 - c. The value of financial incentives available to trainees undertaking their ITT course in England is more generous than it is for Wales for most secondary subjects and for most levels of degree qualifications.
 - d. As a result, Welsh schools struggle to recruit teachers in high priority subjects although the most recent government publication on ITE Priority Subjects for 2025-26 is allocating £15,000 grant to study PGCE Biology, Chemistry, Design & Technology, Information Technology, Mathematics, MFL, Physics and Welsh. The impact of this will need to be tracked in future remits
98. From evidence gathered from its members, ASCL Cymru's position is that these issues have not been addressed post-Covid.
99. ASCL has voiced its concern over the fact that the annual targets for ITE are annually missed and this means that numbers missed in one year are not added on to the next year.
100. Over 75% of teachers in Wales are female – this pattern is set to repeat with current PGCE ratios in Higher Education (HE) mirroring this duplicating pattern.³⁷ In terms of recruiting potential teachers, therefore, more should be done to support a predominantly female workforce, including a more progressive flexible working policy across Wales. Research is also needed into how to make the profession more appealing to male undergraduates.
101. Although the table below (Figure 11) shows a pleasing increase in the number of ITE³⁸ allocations after 2019, these gains are now flatlining. The gap between entrants and targets for primary schools has closed (entrants and intakes are not the same cohorts) but continues to be significantly under target for secondary schools, where vacancies across the sector are at a record low, particularly with a number of key subject specialisms.

Figure 11: ITE entrants and allocations since 2012 for the primary and secondary sectors³⁷

³⁶ [A comparison of teacher training incentives in Wales and England, Bryer and Sibieta, May 2019](#)

³⁷ [Higher Education Statistics: Wales](#)

³⁸ [ITE intake allocations, EWC](#)



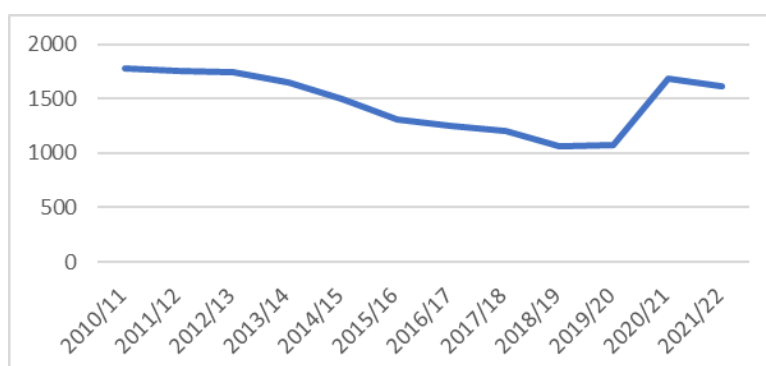
102. This is being matched by increasing capacity in terms of allocations across the four main ITE providers (Cardiff, APLP, Swansea and USWP - see figure 12)

Figure 12: ITE allocation totals across the 4 main ITE providers 2020-2025³⁷

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Primary ITE allocations	724	622	662	632	653
Secondary Priority allocations	365	486	531	621	621
Secondary – non priority allocations	1003	948	948	1056	1056

103. Whilst allocations and capacity have increased, the number of ITE applications have been steadily decreasing, however, with the exception of a noticeable increase post-Covid. This spike has now plateaued (see figure 13).

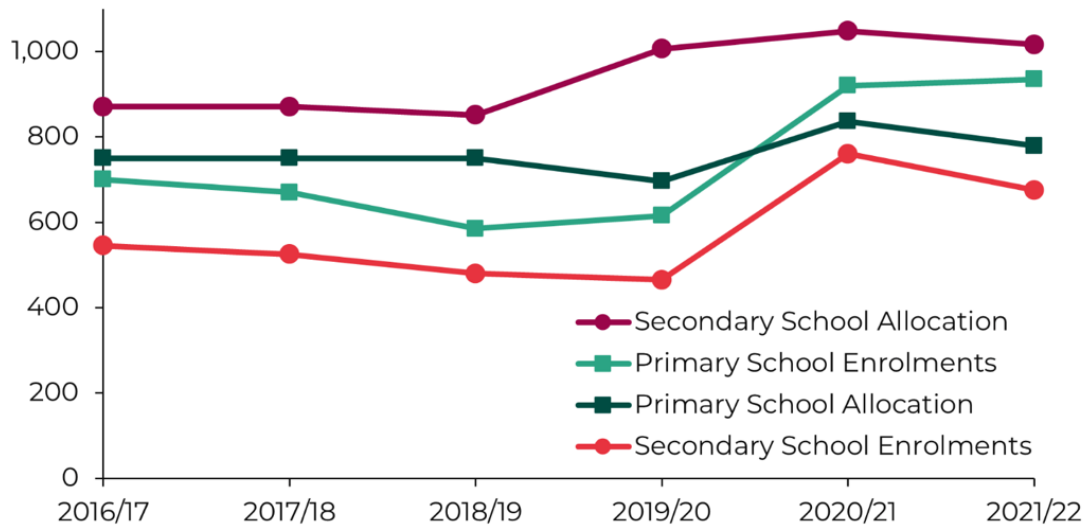
Figure 13: Total number of ITE applications in Wales 2010-2022³⁹



³⁹ ITE total allocations – Stats Wales

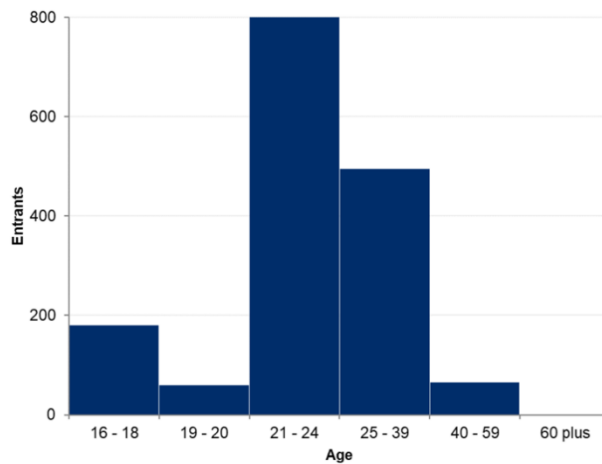
104. This kind of data, however, masks the difference between applications and allocations and how this varies according to sector. Figure 14 illustrates the most recent report by the Welsh Government into ITE⁴⁰ and the changes post pandemic. There is a pronounced gap between allocation and enrolments in secondary education with a far more positive picture in primary education.

Figure 14: Enrolment and allocation trends in Welsh Schools 2016-2022



105. Figure 15 shows the age profile of those enrolling onto ITE courses³⁸. Typically, the most popular age is 21-24 (post-graduate intake) but there is a rapid decline in interest beyond this cohort suggesting that more could be done to market and advertise older graduates into the profession.

Figure 15: Age profile of ITE post-graduates in 2022



⁴⁰ EWC Wales – Initial Teacher Education Allocations

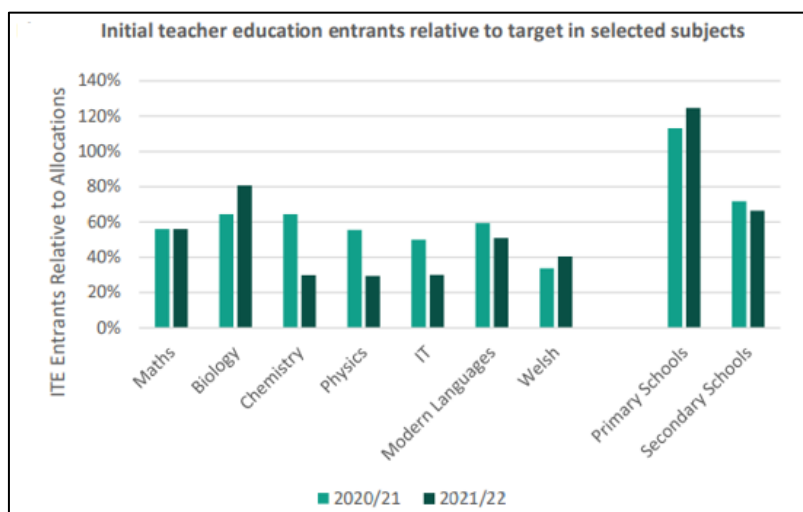
106. Figure 16 identifies particular recruitment variability in secondary ITE – the biggest concern area. The low number of science graduates as well as the comparison between English and Maths gives some idea of how difficult schools are finding it to recruit to these core curriculum areas. Whilst this report is somewhat dated, ASLC Cymru members report that this pattern continues alongside a national shortage of specialist supply teachers to cover on fixed term contracts.

Figure 16: The numbers of recruited ITE students to subject specific courses 2021-22³⁷

	2021/22
Priority subjects	255
Total Science	100
Biology	50
Chemistry	20
Physics	20
General Science	10
Mathematics	75
Welsh	35
Modern Languages	30
IT	15
Non-priority subjects	420
Art	25
Business	15
DT	30
Drama	30
English	105
Geography	30
History	80
Music	15
PE	65
RE	20
Total Secondary School	675

107. The chart⁴¹ below (figure 17) shows ITE recruitment against target, clearly demonstrating the seriousness of the issue in secondary.

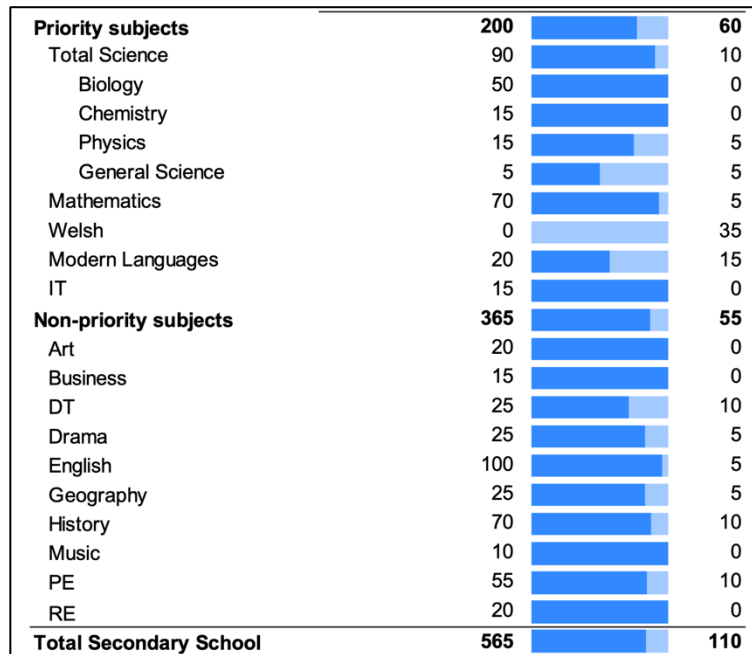
Figure 17



⁴¹ Incentives to recruit and retain teachers in Wales, EPI, November 2024

108. The situation in Welsh-medium schools is even more chronic. Figure 18 shows the ratio of non-Welsh speaking ITE students (darker blue) to Welsh speaking ITE students. In some subjects (Biology, Chemistry, IT, Business and Music, there was not a single Welsh-speaking ITE student. Welsh-speaking schools represent 22.5% of institutions yet only 16.3% of ITE teachers are Welsh speakers

Figure 18: The ratio of Welsh-speaking to non-Welsh speaking ITE students 2021-22³⁷



109. In summary, whilst there has been an increase in capacity to deliver ITE in Wales and a recent improvement in applications and enrolments, particularly in the primary sector, there are significant concerns in terms of secondary ITE recruitment, particularly in the priority subject areas and most specifically, Welsh-speaking trainee teachers.

Early career salaries

- 110. Early career salaries are clearly not competitive with comparable graduate professions.
- 111. There are variety of forecasts around average graduate salaries in the UK, and teachers' starting salaries do not compare favourably with any of them.
- 112. The Institute of Student Employers (ISE) Student Recruitment Survey⁴² reported an average starting salary for a graduate of £32,000 in 2023.
- 113. High Fliers⁴³ expected the median graduate starting salary in 2024 to be £34,000.
- 114. The continued poor recruitment to ITE in secondary clearly demonstrates that the £30,000 starting salary has not achieved what the previous Westminster government, or the Welsh Government, intended.
- 115. Much more needs to be done, and we do not believe that this is just a case of looking at the year one salary. Good quality candidates will be comparing whole-career earning potentials, and the previous Westminster government's insistence on ignoring the importance of pay

⁴² What are the average salaries for graduates, school leavers and interns? ISE, October 2024

⁴³ The Graduate Market in 2024, High Fliers

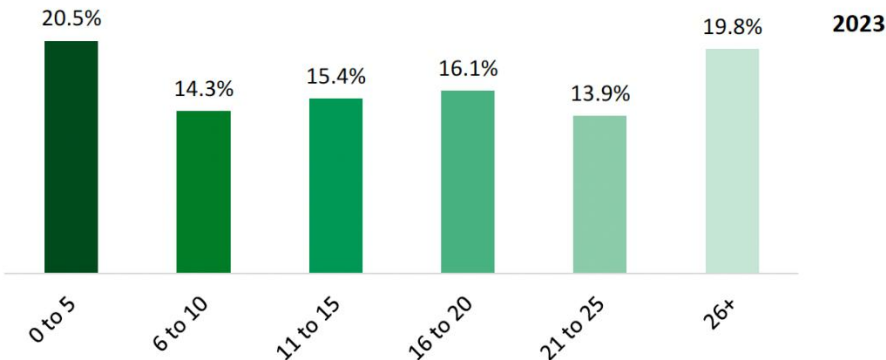
across the board is one of the reasons why we have not seen the required uptick in recruitment.

- 116. These issues also exist in Wales due to the pay setting arrangements pre-devolution and some of the changes made since then which have also focussed on early career salaries.
- 117. Salaries across the board must be comparable and competitive with other graduate professions, so that not only are good quality graduates attracted into the profession, but those already in the system are incentivised to stay. Furthermore, we must create a sustainable pipeline into leadership roles.

Recruitment and vacancies beyond Initial Teacher Education

- 118. Beyond ITE, there should be commensurate pay and conditions to ensure that progression into middle and senior leadership positions is attractive and well-remunerated. ASCL’s position is that, in Wales, there has been a level a lack of strategic ‘joined-up’ thinking, recruitment targets have been continually missed and this results in an inability for schools to effectively staff their curriculum.
- 119. As with every profession, there is a natural ‘churn’ as teachers retire or leave the profession on health grounds. This rate has accelerated post-Covid, alongside record numbers retiring early, after the age of 55 – an increase of 40% across England and Wales.⁴⁴ This picture will be exacerbated due to the demographic profile of teachers in Wales with almost a fifth of teachers with over 26 years’ experience (see figure 19) – this will be the next cohort of retirees.

Figure 19: The percentage of teachers in Wales and numbers of years of experience¹⁸:



- 120. With the job market, there have been some significant changes pre- and post-Covid in terms of recruitment. The number of jobs being advertised compared to the number of applications is of concern. Figure 20 shows the trends in terms of job adverts since 2007, with a noticeable spike after the pandemic.
- 121. This compares with a slow and steady drop in the number of applications most alarmingly in the secondary sector (see figure 21). This results in a record number of unfilled positions in Welsh Schools, again, most noticeably in Secondary Schools due to the very low number of applications as shown in figure 22.

⁴⁴ Number of teachers in England and Wales retiring early jumps by 40%, Financial Times

Figure 20: The number of job adverts for teaching posts in Wales since 2007⁴⁵

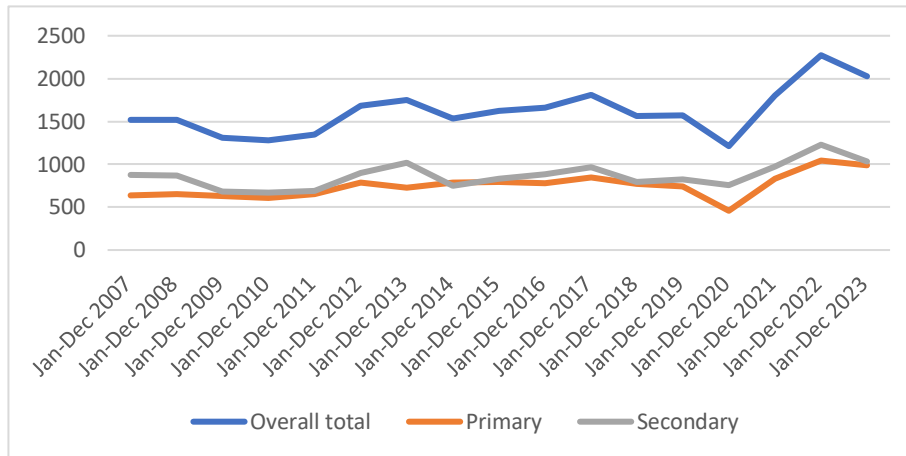


Figure 21: The number of applications for teaching posts in Wales since 2007⁴⁵

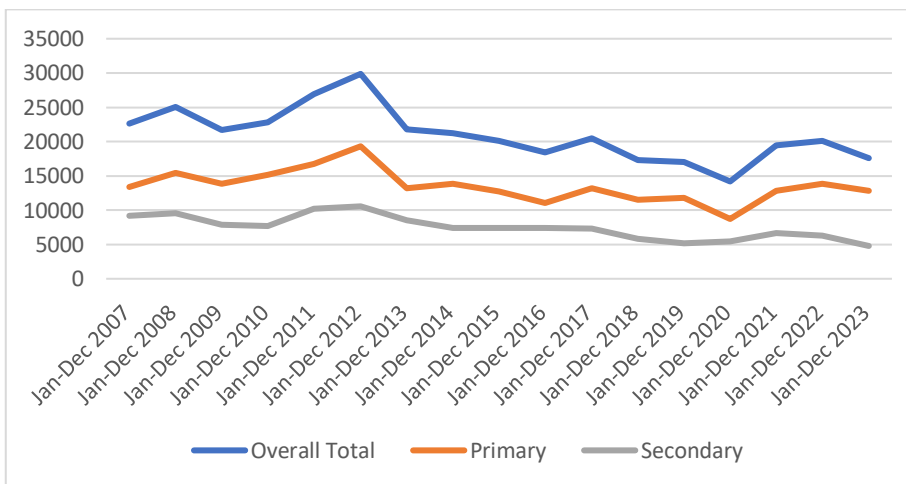


Figure 22: Changes pre and post-Covid-19 in terms of job adverts, applications and posts filled⁵⁰

	Sector	Jan-Dec 2019	Jan-Dec 2023	% Increase
Posts Advertised	Primary	743	991	133%
	Secondary	828	1033	125%
	Total	1571	2024	129%
Applications received	Primary	11826	12824	108%
	Secondary	5155	4783	93%
	Total	16981	17607	104%
Applications per post	Primary	15.9	12.9	
	Secondary	6.2	4.6	
	Total	10.8	8.7	
Appointments made	Primary	696	940	
	Secondary	744	891	
	Total	1440	1831	

Vacancies filled %	Primary	94%	95%	
	Secondary	90%	86%	
	Total	92%	90%	

122. In general, figure 22 shows that the job market is now far more volatile with a 29% increase in the total number of jobs being advertised. This has had a cumulative effect with over 30% of pupils in Wales attending schools in which teaching is affected by lack of teaching and support staff, according to a recent ASCL Cymru survey, with more than 17% of teachers in Wales intending to leave the profession within the next three years.
123. The escalating alarm for teacher recruitment within the secondary sector is further nuanced when subject specialism is examined. Figure 23 illustrates the most significant shortage subjects with the core subjects of maths, science the worst affected. It is also a concern that headteacher positions are only attracting, on average, only five applications per post.

Figure 23: The most significant areas of staff shortages in the secondary sector⁵⁰

Secondary School Vacancy Data per Specialism	Vacancies	Applications	Average field	Appointments	%Appointments
Business Studies	12	39	3.3	6	50%
ICT	45	99	2.2	33	73%
Biology	12	39	3.3	9	75%
Chemistry	12	30	2.5	9	75%
Physics	12	27	2.3	9	75%
Social Sciences	12	42	3.5	9	75%
Welsh	105	192	1.8	84	80%
Religious Education	33	144	4.4	27	82%
Mathematics	141	498	3.5	120	85%
Design & Technology	63	213	3.4	54	86%
Music	21	39	1.9	18	86%
Science	138	516	3.7	120	87%
Drama/Theatre	24	135	5.6	21	88%
History	27	252	9.3	24	89%
Art	30	243	8.1	27	90%
Modern Foreign Language	30	111	3.7	27	90%
Physical Education	66	450	6.8	60	91%
English	150	747	5.0	138	92%
General teaching posts	39	174	4.5	36	92%
Headteachers	18	90	5.0	18	100%
Other Leadership posts	75	714	9.5	75	100%
Geography	18	84	4.7	18	100%
Personal & Social Education	3	6	2.0	3	100%

Vocational Subject	9	57	6.3	9	100%
Welsh Baccalaureate	3	9	3.0	3	100%
Other Humanities	36	261	7.3	36	100%
Other Subjects	36	174	4.8	36	100%
Total	630	2013	3.2	519	82%

124. With 22.5% of schools operating as Welsh-medium secondary schools, the situation here is much worse and continues to deteriorate, with 20% of posts remaining unfilled and just 1.8 applications per post, down from 5.4 per post pre-pandemic in December 2019⁴⁷.
125. At a granular level in Welsh-medium schools, there is particular concern in maths and the sciences. For example, in 2023, there were 12 vacancies advertised for Maths in Welsh-medium Schools, with only 18 applicants and only 9 appointments made.
126. In summary, teacher recruitment beyond ITE is challenging. The erosion of pay and poor working conditions has made teaching a less attractive life-long career than it once was. In Wales, there are some specific issues which aggravate staffing shortages. There is a distinct difference between primary and secondary teacher shortages with the significant issues with the latter also leading to dire subject specialism shortages. This is further compounded in Welsh-medium schools which are generally less popular for applicants.

School leader recruitment

127. There is a wealth of academic and educational research which demonstrates that quality of leadership comes second only to high quality classroom teaching in terms of impact on pupil outcomes, which do not compare well with the other twelve regions of the UK⁴⁵.
128. It has already been demonstrated that the number of applications for the role of secondary headteacher is averaging only 5 applicants per post (see figure 24) – it is worse for Primary Headships with only four applicants per post and 20% of schools unable to recruit to this key position.

Figure 24: Headteacher Vacancies for January-December 2023⁵⁰

Phase	HT Vacancies	Applications	Av. No. Applications	Appointments	Unfilled
Primary	99	402	4.1	78	21
Secondary	18	90	5.0	18	0

Furthermore, figure 25 shows the number of vacancies, applications and appointments for leadership positions on Wales over the last 3 years. It is clear to see how the number of vacancies is spiralling exponentially, and the quality of the field is weakening leading to record numbers of unfilled positions.

Figure 25: The number of applications per leadership post since 2007⁵⁰

⁴⁵Leithworth et al. (2006). Seven Strong Claims about School Leadership.

Year	Role	No. Vacancies	No. Applications	No applications per post	No. Appointments	Unfilled posts
2020/21	Headteacher	63	339	5.4	60	3
	Other leadership	72	933	12.9	69	3
2021/22	Headteacher	87	420	4.8	78	9
	Other leadership	150	1617	10.8	141	9
2022/23	Headteacher	117	492	4.2	96	21
	Other leadership	153	1233	8.1	141	12

129. ASCL Cymru members also tell us that the funding constraints are also putting pressure on schools to cut salary bills. Headteachers are having to maintain classroom delivery at the cost of reducing senior leadership teams. This reduction in leadership headcount or replacing deputy headteachers with assistant headteachers undermines school improvement capacity and, in some cases, the ability to manage and keep the school safe for its pupils.
130. Our members also report that there are particular concerns recruiting headteachers in deprived areas or in schools with a poor Estyn report. Individual stories of headteachers struggling with stress, burnout and financial pressure have been widely reported in the media⁴⁶. These issues are affecting leadership retention rates which are further discussed below.

Retention

ASCL recommends that:

- ✓ **Retention at all levels is made a key focus for the Welsh Government, in order to retain the teachers and school leaders who have already chosen the profession and who are fully trained and qualified. This will in turn reduce the pressure on teacher recruitment bringing with it staffing stability in schools along with other savings in recruitment, training, onboarding and mentoring costs. The Welsh Government therefore needs to consider the attractiveness of the teaching profession alongside competition from other sectors beyond education.**
- ✓ **A holistic approach to bursaries and other incentive payments made by the government must be taken so that they support the pay framework as set out in the STPC(W)D.**

⁴⁶ [ITV Headline – South Wales Headteacher says ‘harrowing pressure of the job forced him off work’.](#)

- ✓ Tailored student loan repayment arrangements for all teachers and leaders should be introduced⁴⁷. This could range from no repayment for teachers in certain shortage subjects to a sliding scale of repayment rates depending on subject, phase, sector, whether the teacher or leader is in a hard-to-recruit area, and how long they stay in the profession.
 - ✓ The scope of the IWPRB and the STPC(W)D is broadened to include those working in business leadership roles to ensure that they receive the recognition and remuneration for the crucial roles they hold, and which support other school leaders to deliver their core functions (see Business Leader section below).
 - ✓ The Welsh Government continues to work with trade unions and key stakeholders on the development of the strategic education workforce plan⁴⁸ to raise the profile of the workforce, and that this plan indicates clear, manageable and timed tangible outcomes
 - ✓ The workload of teachers and leaders is purposefully addressed by fully supporting the recommendations of the Strategic Workload Coordination Group,⁴⁹ and its associated sub-groups, ensuring that they are implemented swiftly, including the provision of sufficient resources for schools to enable this.
 - ✓ The wellbeing of the workforce is supported and improved by acting on the recommendations of multiple stakeholders, including around accountability and inspection.
 - ✓ Schools are provided with the training and resource needed to enable them to fully embrace flexible working.
131. We believe that the IWPRB should consider a variety of factors relating to retention when making its recommendations:
- a. Retention rates for classroom teachers
 - b. Retention rates for school leaders
 - c. Workload and wellbeing
 - d. Flexible working

Classroom teacher retention

132. Teacher and school leader retention⁵⁰ rates continue to be a problem across the education sector. The average retention figures (attrition rates) for teachers both England and Wales are alarming (see figure 26).

Figure 26: The percentage of teachers who leave the profession in the first 5 years

	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
England	48.8%	46.9%
Wales	55.7%	42.8%

⁴⁷ [ASCL Manifesto for the 2024 General Election](#)

⁴⁸ [Statista Report July 2024](#)

⁴⁹ [Written Statement: Reducing workload and bureaucracy for education staff](#)

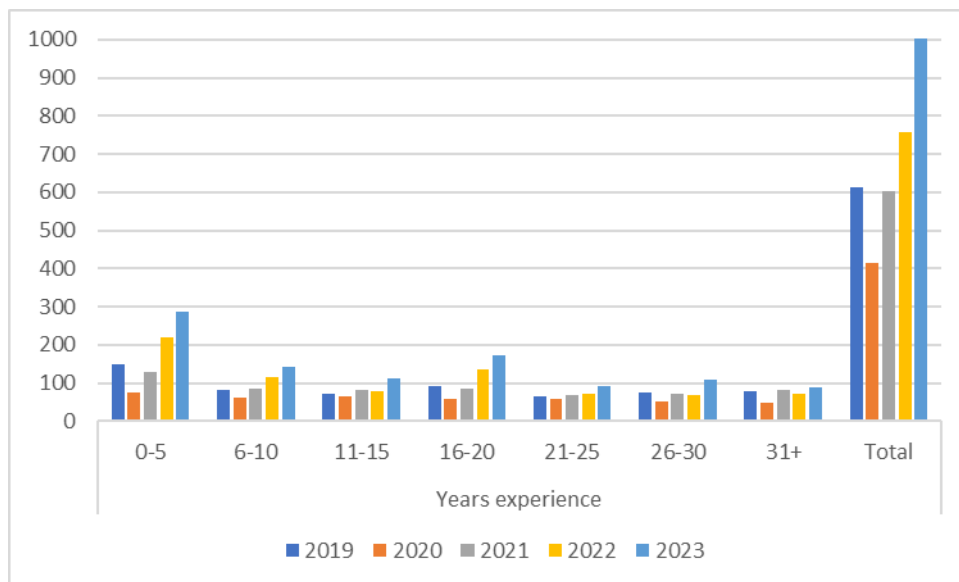
⁵⁰ [Stats Wales 2023-2024](#)

⁵¹ [EWC Annual workforce statistics for Wales 2024](#)

⁵² [Hutchinson, J. et al. \(2024\) Incentives to recruit and retain teachers in Wales](#)

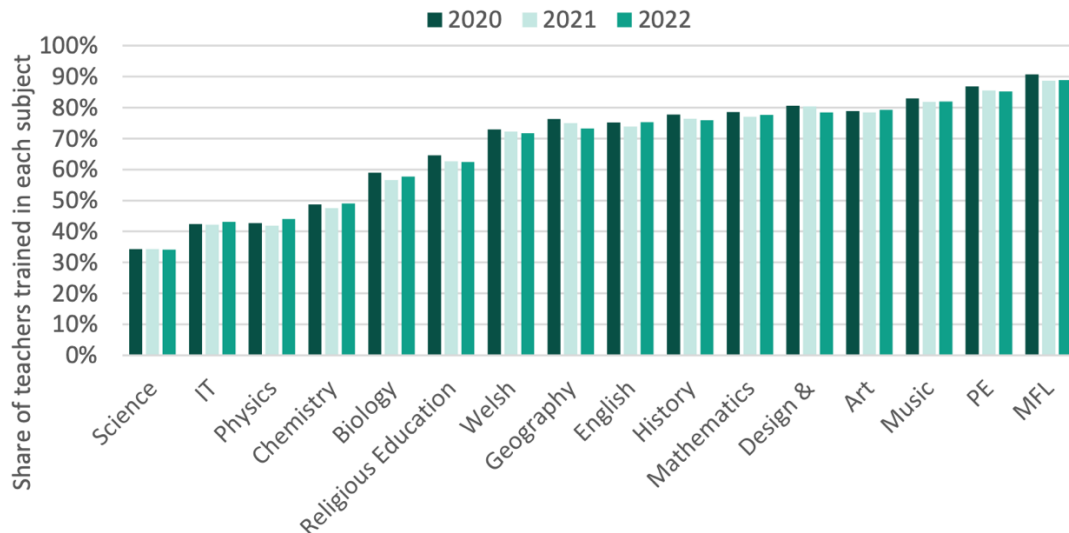
- 133. In the most recent Education Workforce Survey (2024)⁵¹ the data shows that 42.5% of teachers have left the profession in the last 10 years with 24% having left in the last 5 years. The report also shows that only 76% of teachers registered in 2019 were still working as teachers 5 years later. That is, almost a quarter of the 35,545 teachers in 2019 are no longer teachers today. Whilst some of this ‘churn’ can be attributed to retirement and ill-health, this only equated to 11% in 2024 and, therefore, a record 14% left for ‘other reasons.’
- 134. High teacher attrition rates completely undermine attempts to recruit new teachers into the profession. Attrition rates are highest amongst young teachers and those in their first 5 years of teaching with the dropout rate standing at 40% in the context of the UK.
- 135. The StatsWales data on teacher attrition (see figure 27) shows a significant rise (33%) in the total teachers leaving the profession during the year ending December 2023 from the previous year's and demonstrates an upward trend over the five-year period shown. Of note, for those leaving in 2023, is not just the rate of attrition of those in their early years (0-5) in the profession (28%) but also those teachers with between 16 and 20 years of experience (17%). This is of particular concern when considering the availability of experienced teachers and the impact that this may have on the capacity to recruit senior leaders.

Figure 27: Teacher attrition rates since 2019 showing length of service against cumulative number⁴³



- 136. Teachers at the beginning of their teaching career in Wales are more likely to leave teaching (Hutchinson et. al (2024)⁵² with less experienced teachers having higher leaving rates than their more experienced counterparts (see figure 28). This issue is more significant in the primary sector. This report also highlights the issue of regional disparity, with rural and more deprived Welsh communities seeing the highest levels of attrition combined with the lowest number of applications per post.

Figure 28: The percentage share of teachers trained to teach their subject 2020-2022



137. Commenting in a recent TES article,⁵¹ further to this concern, Emma Hollis, chief executive of the National Association of School Based Teacher Trainers said... ‘many early career teachers experience a “dissonance” between what they expect when they apply for initial teacher training and “the reality when they enter the classroom. Primary school teachers often go into teaching with a motivation to develop young people holistically, and secondary school teachers are generally excited by the opportunity to deliver the subject they are passionate about. Yet they end up number crunching and dealing with a host of other issues.’
138. Secondary subject specialisms are causing concern in terms of teacher recruitment and there is considerable variation across the sector. Figure 25 shows the percentage of teachers who are fully qualified to teach their subject specialism. Whilst over 80% of teachers in MFL, PE and the Arts are fully qualified to teach their subject in Wales, this figure drops to less than 50% for key subjects such as Science and IT. In reality, this means that a Welsh pupil has a greater chance that they will be taught science by a non-specialist than a specialist. These figures show a very similar trend over a three-year period and future forecasts indicate that the pattern is likely to remain.
139. The most recent EWC workforce survey (2021)⁵² with over 3,300 responses showed very clearly that there is a dissatisfied teaching body who are over-worked and ground down by excessive administrative tasks, class size, timetable loading and bureaucracy. Moreover, the most recent school census (November 2023)⁵³ showed that the average number of working days lost per teacher that had taken a period of sickness absence was 11.3, only slightly down on the heightened Covid-19 absent rate of 12.8%. These are symptoms of a public sector under-resourced and under strain.
140. A recent ASCL Cymru survey⁵⁴ on teacher shortages in 2024 concluded that 95% of those responding were experiencing difficulty in recruiting teachers, with 42.8% experiencing severe difficulty in recruiting teachers and 90.8% receiving low numbers of applicants with 69.4% receiving no applicants at all for some posts.

⁵¹ [New data reveals the scale of the teacher retention crisis | Tes](#)

⁵² [2021 National Education Workforce Survey Report](#)

⁵³ The School Workforce Census (November 2023)

⁵⁴ [ASCL-survey-on-teacher-shortages](#)

141. These findings are mirrored across the UK in the most recent Teacher Wellbeing Index report (2024).⁵⁵ Acute levels of stress (78% of the workforce feeling stressed) and high levels of mental health concern are the most significant issues. Moreover, teachers in Wales reported an overall wellbeing score of 43.77 (lower than for 2023) compared to the national average of 48.2, with a variance factor of 4.43 seen as significant.
142. Over the last ten years, the erosion of pay and poor working conditions have resulted in a teacher exodus not seen before, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. Whilst the case for more pay has been detailed in our earlier section and can be presented in a more quantifiable methodology, workload and wellbeing is more subjective. However, our recent survey highlights these concerns.
143. In summary, with record attrition rates in Wales alongside poor working conditions and low self-esteem, the teaching profession is haemorrhaging. Attrition rates in rural and deprived areas are a particular concern. This, combined with poor working conditions and underfunding from LAs, is leading to inadequate induction support, mentoring and training. Furthermore, there is a poor level of service support from the middle tier compounded by a lack of certainty around how the School Improvement Partnership Programme will develop.

School leader retention

144. The recruitment and retention of school leaders is at crisis point in Wales. School leaders are at the fulcrum of school improvement and raising standards for pupils in Wales and yet there are record numbers of unfilled positions as well as record numbers of resignations. As Claire Armitstead, Director of ASCL Cymru states "*In Wales our ability to recruit and hold onto school leaders is a real concern of our members, how they can continue to provide the best provision for our children when there simply aren't enough teachers and leaders to deliver it.*"
145. This perspective supports the view of Aleynikova et al.⁵⁶ who state that "*The role of a school leader is fundamental to shaping the educational environment and influencing the overall success of a school. Effective school leaders inspire and motivate both teachers and students, creating a vision for the school and fostering a positive and inclusive school culture. However, maintaining the supply of school leaders in Wales and across the UK is challenging, a situation that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.*"
146. ASCL Cymru fully supports this position and in previous evidence submissions we have highlighted our concerns over the retention of school leaders in Wales. There have been a number of recent pieces of research which highlight levels of stress and burnout amongst senior leaders in Welsh schools leading to a significant reduction in length of service (Marchant et. al 2024⁴⁸). The 2024 Teacher Wellbeing Index⁵⁷ paints a similar picture across the UK, with almost a third of all school leaders citing mental health concerns.
147. Aleynikova et al.⁵⁸ also highlight the issue of a broken leadership pipeline in Wales. There are now record numbers of senior leaders aged 50-59 which will, in turn, lead to record numbers of retirements over the next 5-10 years. In particular, headteachers are closer to retirement than other school leaders (see figure 29).

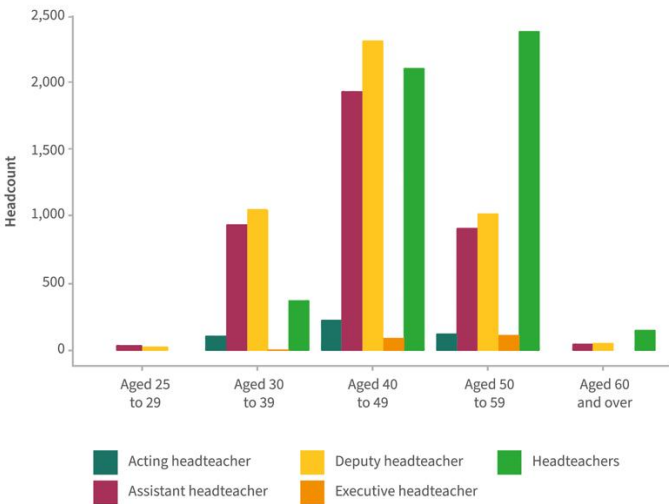
⁵⁵Teacher Wellbeing Index (2024)

⁵⁶ Aleynikova et al. (2024) Recruitment and Retention of School Leaders in Wales

⁵⁷ Ibid

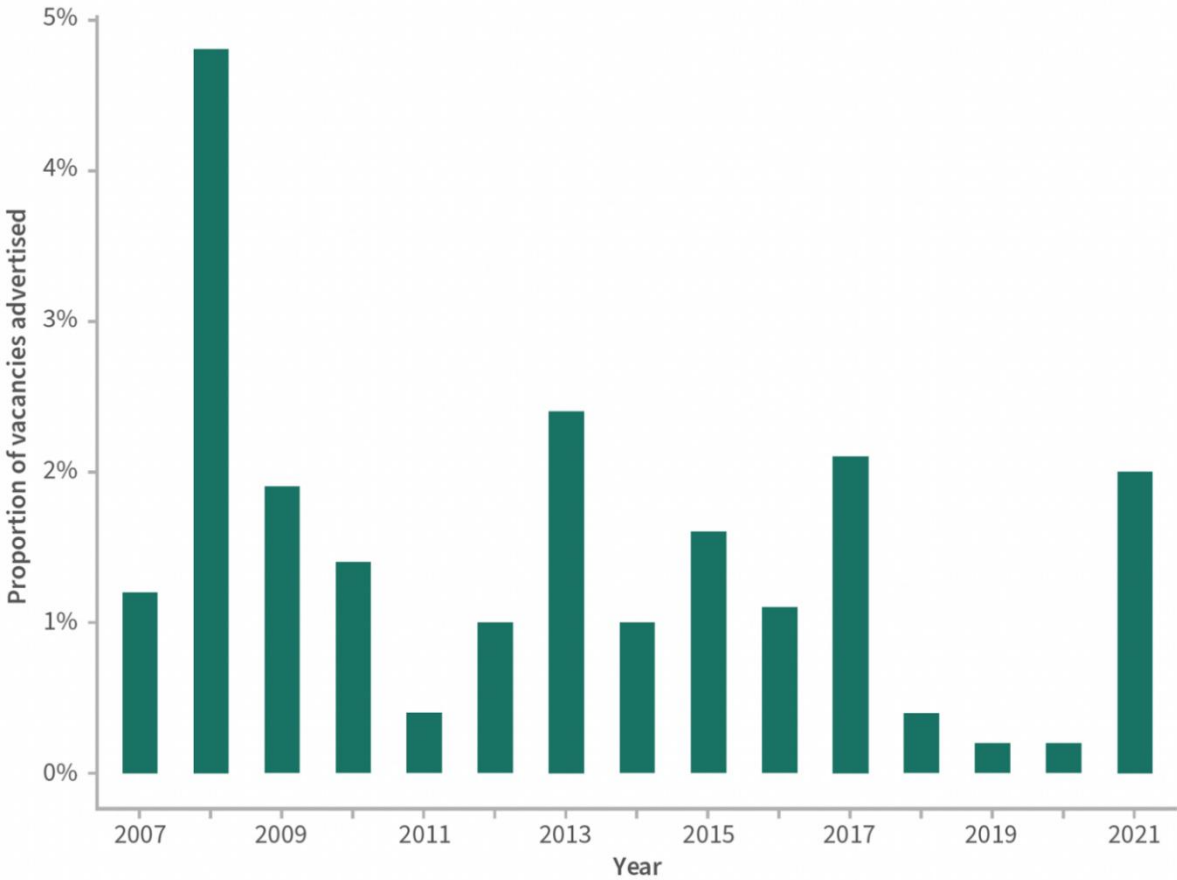
⁵⁸ Ibid

Figure 29: Age profile of different categories of school leaders in Wales⁵⁴



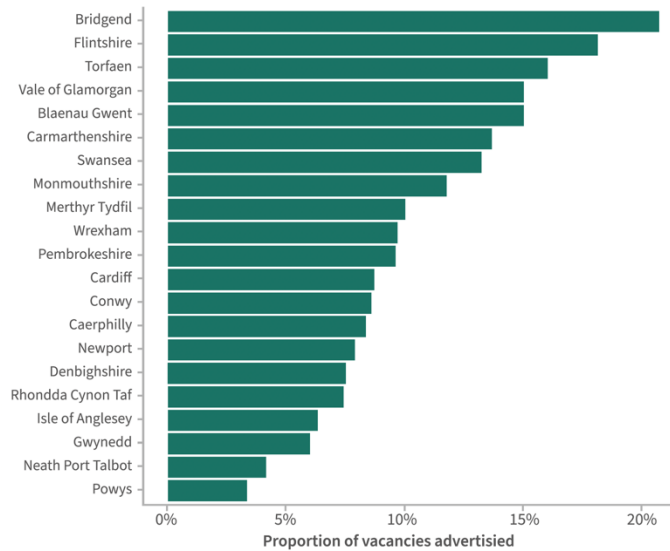
148. The number of vacancies advertised has also returned to Pre-Pandemic levels with an annual turnover of leadership vacancies running at 2-2.5% (see figure 30).

Figure 30: The proportion of leadership vacancies advertised per year 2007-2021⁵⁴



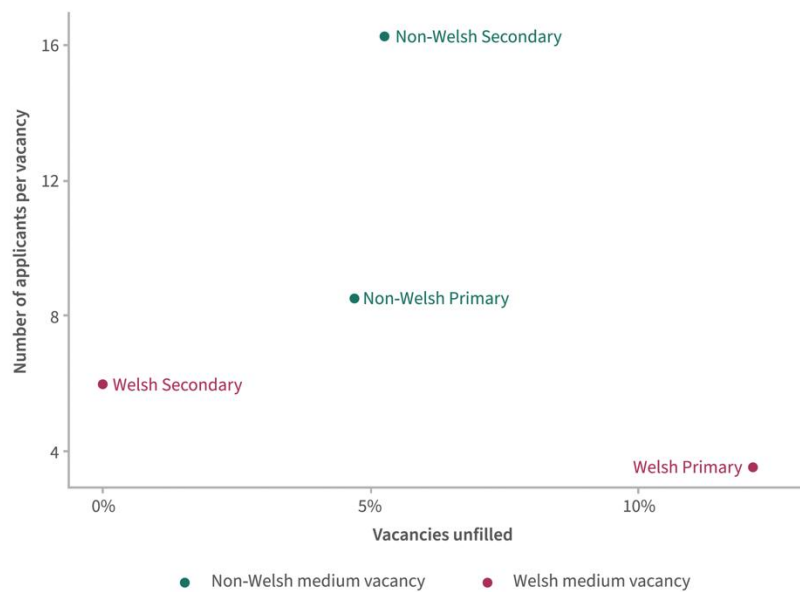
149. Leadership retention rates vary considerably across Wales. There are also fewer applicants for headship and a shorter tenure, particularly in rural and deprived areas. Figure 31 illustrates this point by looking at the variation in the proportion of leadership vacancies advertised with deprived communities such as Bridgend and Flintshire alongside rural areas of Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan.

Figure 31: Percentage vacancies for leadership positions advertised per Local Authority⁵⁴



150. Retaining school leaders in Welsh-medium schools is particularly challenging (as it is for recruitment). Figure 32 illustrates this point with the noticeably low number of applications per vacancy – particularly in Welsh-medium primary schools – leading to a high percentage of posts remaining unfilled.

Figure 32: The proportion of schools with unfilled leadership vacancies per sector⁵⁴



151. The inability to recruit and retain school leaders in Wales is placing an unacceptable burden upon those in post.

152. A recent survey of headteachers in 2024 conducted by the ASCL Cymru found, of 1,000 members in Wales, that 72.4% of respondents did not feel that they had an acceptable work/life balance, with 47.7% believing their workload to be unmanageable. More than half of the survey respondents said that they were considering leaving the profession in the next five years.
153. There is an urgent need for the Welsh Government to follow up its Workforce Survey in 2021.
154. Academic research on perceptions of school leaders in Wales is also limited but the work by the Education Policy Institute⁵⁹ is the exception, demonstrating strong empirical quantitative data alongside some poignant qualitative evidence such as these:

"I know that people don't want to be headteachers anymore, they don't want that role. I've tried to persuade my senior leadership team, there's 2 of them, I've tried to persuade them for several years to do their NPQH to progress into headship. They're both more than capable...and neither of them was willing to do NPQH because they said, we have no interest in ever becoming head teacher, we've seen what you do and we don't want to do it."

"There is also the stigma around being a head, it's not positive. Because people do see the stress and the workload and the accountability. Actually, for a lot of people being a head is not something they aspire anymore."

155. This perception is unacceptable and is seriously undermining future leadership capacity.
156. In the face of these highly concerning facts and the reality of leaderless and under-resourced schools in Wales, ASCL Cymru calls for the recruitment and retention of school leaders to be prioritised by the Welsh Government with clear action taken to address it.

Business leaders

157. Business leaders are a crucial and integral part of school leadership, with high levels of strategic responsibility and accountability. Where schools do not have a strong business leader, or business leadership team, then the work of the rest of the school leaders is compromised and their workload is increased. This is affirmed in our position statement⁶⁰ on business leader pay and conditions, which says:

'Business leaders who undertake whole school or college responsibilities are an integral part of the leadership team. ASCL believes that this should be reflected in their status and remuneration by them being brought into the scope of the STPCD/STPC(W)D alongside their leadership colleagues.'

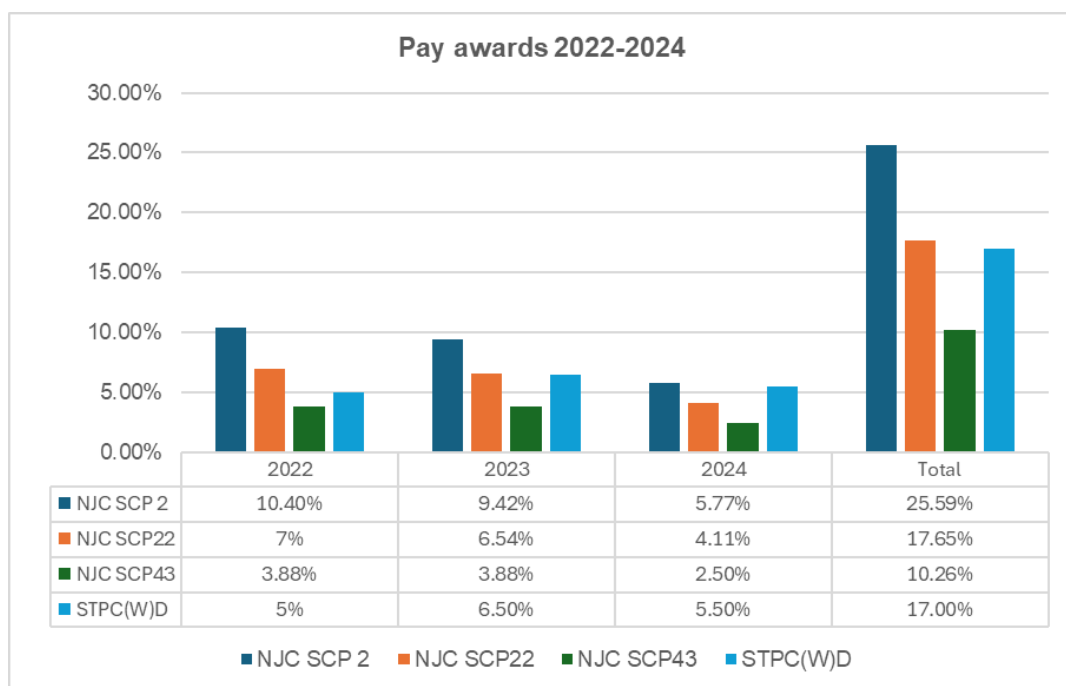
158. We firmly believe that business leaders who have whole school or college responsibilities should be paid with parity to other leadership colleagues holding the same level of responsibility, regardless of the route they have taken into education leadership.
159. As we have previously highlighted, as there is no national pay framework that specifically recognises business leadership roles, and pay for these roles is locally determined, there is a disparity in the level of pay and recognition in these roles.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ [ASCL Position on policy](#)

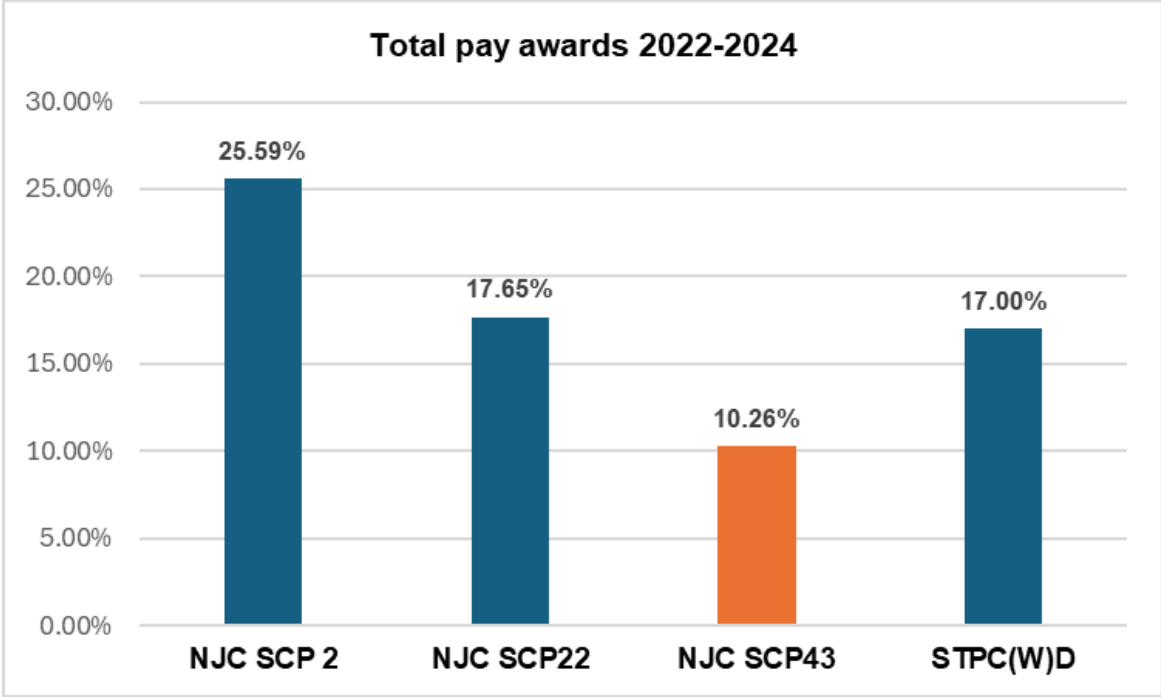
- 160. The situation has been exacerbated by outdated job profiles used by some local authorities which do not always reflect how the responsibilities and accountabilities of these roles and the profession have evolved over time.
- 161. Local authorities operate their own job evaluation and grading framework, generally within the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales, and this varies greatly between authorities. The result is a fragmented situation where some schools are denied access to higher pay scales which are warranted by these roles, and others are not.
- 162. The NJC pay awards for the last three years have seen those working in business leadership roles receive the lowest pay award in the sector; lower than support staff colleagues and lower than teachers and leadership colleagues employed under the STPC(W)D. (Figure 34)
- 163. The chart below (figure 33) shows the last three year’s annual pay awards for NJC scale points (SCP) 2 (minimum), 22 (mid-point) and 43 (maximum of published points), alongside the annual uplifts in the STPC(W)D (the 2022 STPC(W)D award also included a 1.5% non-consolidated award).
- 164. Business leaders are likely to paid towards, or above, the top of the NJC pay scale, for those being paid above SCP43, the situation will be even worse due to the 2022 award having no minimum floor.

Figure 33: Annual pay awards 2022-2024



- 165. As result, the gap between the pay of business leaders and other senior leadership colleagues has widened even further.

Figure 34: Total pay awards 2022-2024



- 166. This is having a significant impact on our business leader members. Below are some examples provided by members of issues relating to this.
- 167. A member was paid on a support staff scale which was above the assistant headteacher pay range. Four years ago, the salary was over £5,000 above the assistant headteacher range, now it is almost £700 lower. It had been roughly the equivalent of L21 but is now lower than L18. This is purely as a result of the disparity in pay awards.
- 168. In our business leader pay survey in December 2023, a member told us that in 2020 their salary was above leadership point 20, but after the 2023 pay award sat between points 18 and 19; this will now be even lower after the 2024 pay award.
- 169. As we cited in our last evidence submission⁶¹, without a doubt the most worrying statistic from our pay survey was that 50% of respondents intend to leave their role within the next three years. This had increased from 29% in our 2021 survey.
- 170. We make no apology for repeating that this presents a huge risk to the sector. The work business leaders carry out and the responsibilities they hold are critical to the education system.
- 171. In October, we held our regular Business Leaders' Online Forum, which was attended by ASCL General Secretary, Pepe Di'lasio. We received the strong message that members were feeling underpaid and undervalued.
- 172. Unless we see urgent action to address this, schools face losing the significant expertise and experience that business leaders bring. Business leaders have a wealth of transferrable skills which enable them to move to higher paid roles in other sectors and professions, often with more flexible working opportunities than are on offer in the education sector.

⁶¹ ASCL Cymru evidence to IWPRB 5th Remit

173. We believe the solution to this is to broaden the scope of the STPC(W)D and the remit of the IWPRB to include those working in business leadership roles.
174. By bringing the role into the STPC(W)D alongside other senior leadership roles such as assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher, business leader pay would be set in the same way, giving full recognition to their whole school responsibilities and increasing their perceived status.
175. These roles have not been served well by the NJC arrangements, as demonstrated by our survey results.
176. We would rather see one review body for all education staff, and a school workforce pay and conditions document. However, while two systems are in place, it is our firm view that business leaders should be brought into the STPC(W)D alongside their leadership colleagues to receive the remuneration and recognition that these crucial senior strategic roles deserve.
177. In our later section on the gender pay gap, we again raise the issue of women being underrepresented in leadership roles and being paid less than their male counterparts.
178. The business leadership workforce is also predominantly female. However, just as in teaching, higher paid business leaders are predominantly male. This means that it is highly likely that in a senior leadership team made up of a mix of men and women, the female leaders will be paid less than the male leaders, with business leaders likely to be the lowest paid member of leadership, regardless of the level of responsibility and accountability they hold. This is something that simply must be addressed.
179. If action is not taken soon, we will undoubtedly see an exodus from the profession. This will not only mean that we will lose the extensive knowledge, skills and expertise held by business leaders, but it will also in turn drive up the workload of headteachers and other school leaders trying to fill the gaps, presenting real risks in terms of compliance and financial and operational accountability.
180. School business leaders are included in the senior leader categories in the TWIX report and also in a separate 'School Business Leader Wellbeing Index 2024'⁶² report by Education Mutual. This showed that, for 82% of respondents, excessive workload affected their mental health and wellbeing at work, and for 47% this was affected by working long unpaid hours.
181. Due to the timing of this remit, no later data is currently available. However, communications from our members give us no reason to believe that the situation has improved. If anything, it is likely to have deteriorated.
182. In ASCL's business leader pay survey in December 2023, members were given the opportunity to highlight any other issues. Workload and wellbeing were a concerning trend, and this has remained a recurring theme in our engagements with members throughout the last year.
183. We urge the Review Body to recommend that those working in business leadership roles be brought into the remit of the IWPRB, and for the scope of the STPC(W)D to be broadened to incorporate all school leadership roles. This will help support the whole school leadership team and in turn contribute to workload reduction.

⁶² [School Business Leader Wellbeing Index 2024, Education Mutual](#)

Flexible working

184. With the increasing challenges posed to the education workforce, flexible working practices could provide a solution to the increasing pressures on teacher retention in addition to promoting teacher and senior leader wellbeing.
185. Estyn⁶³ have observed that some school leaders have offered creative solutions in order to give staff greater flexibility and better work-life balance. This includes allocating PPA so that staff can work off-site. However, it notes that these approaches are increasingly difficult due to the constraints imposed by financial shortages. Curriculum planning within secondary schools can also be challenging.
186. A review carried out by NFER⁶⁴ (2023) into flexible working in schools suggests that flexible working is an important factor in improving teacher recruitment and retention. Successful strategies given are remote working, staggered hours and allocation of a small number of personal days during a term.
187. Staggered hours, in particular offers opportunity for those with childcare commitments to balance their professional duties with family demands that may otherwise be difficult to manage without significant costs. It may, as a result, also help create a more diverse and sustainable source of future school leaders. However, these are only possible where a school has the financial resources to accommodate these practices within their staffing structure.
188. The EPI report on school leaders in Wales⁶⁵ discusses the challenges that senior leaders face in meeting the demands of their role and maintaining a healthy work-life balance and concludes that this is a source of stress for them. This is also seen as a barrier for potential candidates who saw this as a factor that discouraged them from applying for senior leadership positions.
189. Strategies suggested to introduce more flexibility into leaders working patterns include, assigning more dedicated PPA time and providing TOIL as compensation for long working days or working weekends.
190. Whilst it is not without its challenges for some roles in education, flexible working is still not utilised as widely as it could or should be.
191. In summary, flexible working represents potential to improve the retention of teachers and school leaders in Wales. By promoting wellbeing, encouraging diversity in leadership, and fostering a sustainable career pathway, flexible working can help build a more resilient and motivated education workforce.

Conclusion

192. In summary, teachers and school leaders deserve to be remunerated appropriately and fairly for the crucial role they fulfil in society and to ensure that the government is able to achieve its National Mission⁶⁶.

⁶³ [Recruitment and retention – Adroddiad Blynyddol | Annual Report](#)

⁶⁴ [Is it time for more flexible working in teaching? - NFER](#)

⁶⁵ [Recruitment and Retention of Senior School Leaders in Wales, EPI,](#)

⁶⁶ [Our national mission: high standards and aspirations for all, WG, 2023](#)

193. We believe that a significant, fully funded increase is required to all pay ranges in order to address the erosion of pay since 2010 and the impact of differentiated awards on the pay of experienced teachers and school leaders.
194. Welsh Government must ensure that all local authorities pass on sufficient funding to all schools to fully meet the cost of their pay award.
195. The scope of the IWPRB and the STPC(W)D should be broadened to include those working in business leadership roles, to ensure that they receive the recognition and remuneration for the crucial roles they hold, and which support other school leaders to deliver their core functions.
196. Workload and working time for teachers and school leaders must be addressed.
197. The remit item on leaders' conditions of service must be expediated and followed up with clear recommendations for action and improvements. We must see provision within the STPC(W)D to ensure that school leaders receive some protections in relation to working time and guaranteed breaks through school closure periods.
198. We trust that this response is of value to your consultation. ASCL Cymru is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Chris Ingate and Louise Hatswell
Conditions of Employment Specialists: Pay
Association of School and College Leaders
March 2025