



National Audit Office

Report

by the Comptroller
and Auditor General

Department for Education

Training new teachers

Key facts

33,200

trainees starting initial
teacher training in 2015/16

£700m

Department for
Education's estimate
of annual spend by
central government and
schools on training new
teachers in 2013/14

4

years since the
Department's trainee
recruitment targets
were met

455,000

teachers in mainstream, state-funded schools in England in
November 2014

53%

of the 44,900 teachers entering state-funded schools in 2014 were
newly qualified

6%

of the 29,787 available postgraduate teacher training places were
unfilled in 2015/16

29%

of the 1,055 physics training places were unfilled in 2015/16

75%

of postgraduate entrants to teacher training with at least
an upper-second degree in 2015/16, up from 63% on 2010/11

63%

of physics postgraduate entrants to teacher training with at least
an upper-second degree in 2015/16

155

school-centred initial teacher training providers in 2015/16
compared with 56 in 2011/12

841

School Direct partnerships in 2015/16 compared with none in 2011/12

In this report, dates in the format '20xx-xx' refer to central or local government financial years (1 April to 31 March); dates in the format '20xx/yy' refer to academic years (1 September to 31 August).

Summary

1 Teachers are critical to the success of all money spent in England's schools. Attracting and training high-quality new teachers are vital elements of the Department for Education's (the Department's) objective to improve the quality of teaching in classrooms. In 2014, 23,900 newly qualified teachers entered the workforce of 455,000 teachers. The cost to central government and schools of training new teachers is around £700 million each year.

2 The Department's objectives for training new teachers are to:

- assure the supply of new teachers;
- raise the quality of the teaching profession; and
- give teachers and headteachers greater professional autonomy and responsibility for recruitment and training.

3 The training of new teachers is complex. Many factors affect it and the Department has introduced changes to how it is done. The Department and its executive agency, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (the Agency), have increased the number of routes by which trainees can achieve qualified status, placing greater emphasis on training led by schools (**Figure 1** overleaf). There are currently 8 routes into teaching, of which 6 provide 99.9% of all training places. Two – Troops to Teachers and Researchers in Schools – are aimed at particular groups, have few trainees and are not examined in this report.

4 The experience of trainees varies depending on the route they follow but all training involves both study of the theory of teaching and practical placements in at least 2 schools (**Figure 2** on page 7). The main roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are as follows:

- **The Department** is accountable for achieving value for money. It sets the policy framework, retains overall responsibility for assuring the supply of new teachers, and sets the teaching standards against which trainees are assessed.
- **The Agency** controls training places, distributes provider grants and trainee bursaries, runs the national marketing campaign, accredits providers and oversees the market for training providers.
- **Providers** are responsible for recruitment to individual training programmes they lead and for training on programmes in which they are involved. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) runs the application process. Teach First applications are handled separately. All applicants must pass a skills test.
- **The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills** is responsible for the system for paying out student loans and collecting repayments.

Figure 1

Main routes to qualified teacher status (QTS)

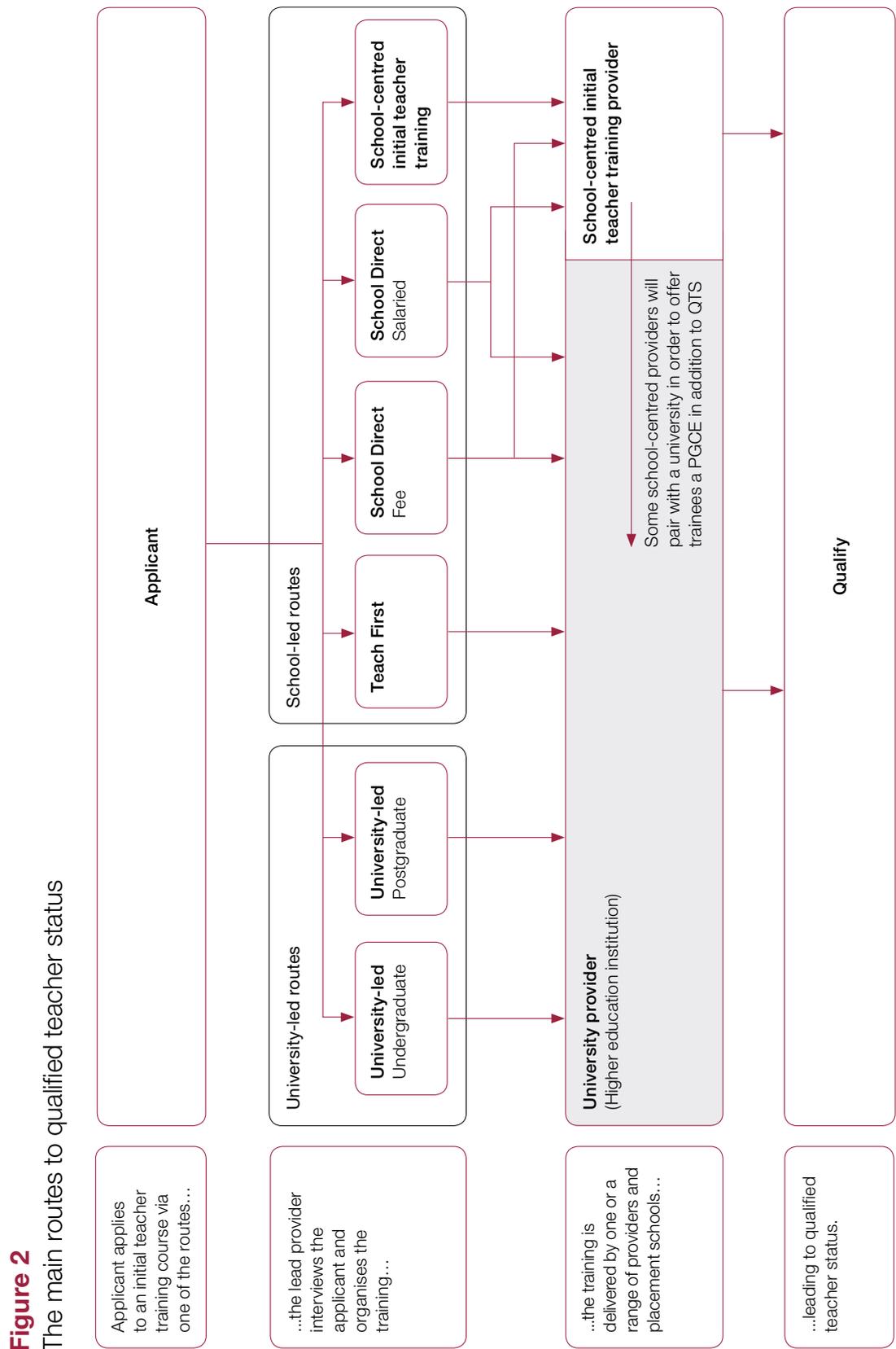
Route	Number started training 2015/16 ¹	Who leads recruitment and training design?	Who delivers training?	Are trainees students or salaried employees?	Qualification gained
University-led (undergraduate)	5,440 (16%)	University	University	Student	BA, BSc or BEd with QTS
University-led (postgraduate)	13,561 (41%)	University	University	Student	QTS and PGCE ²
School Direct – Fee (postgraduate)	7,086 (21%)	School	Mix of school-centred providers and universities	Student	QTS, usually with PGCE
School Direct – Salaried (postgraduate) Applicants must have around 3 years' experience	3,166 (10%)	School	Mix of school-centred providers and universities	Employee	QTS, usually with PGCE
School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (postgraduate)	2,372 (7%)	School-centred provider	School-centred provider	Student	QTS, usually with PGCE
Teach First (postgraduate)	1,584 (5%)	Teach First	Teach First and university	Employee	QTS and PGCE, optional masters
Total	33,209				

Notes

1 Provisional figures from the Initial Teacher Training Census, November 2015.

2 Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE).

Source: Department for Education



Scope of the report

5 This report assesses whether the Department's arrangements for training new teachers are value for money, given its objectives of having enough teachers of the right quality, and examines:

- the Department's understanding of how many new teachers English schools need (Part One);
- the Department's arrangements for securing sufficient new teachers of the right quality (Part Two); and
- how effectively the Department manages the changing market of providers (Part Three).

Key findings

Schools' need for new teachers

6 Schools rely on a constant supply of newly qualified teachers to replace teachers leaving the workforce and to address increasing pupil numbers. Of the 44,900 teachers entering state-funded schools in 2014, 53% were newly qualified, with the remainder either returning to teaching after a break or moving into the state-funded sector from elsewhere. Between 2011 and 2014, the number of teachers leaving rose by 11%, with schools recruiting more teachers as a result. Primary schools have also had to recruit more teachers to keep up with rising pupil numbers. Secondary schools may now have to do likewise as pupil numbers start to increase (paragraphs 1.2, 1.3 and 1.10)

7 To date, the overall number of teachers has kept pace with changing pupil numbers and retention of newly qualified teachers has been stable. At a time of increasing pupil numbers in primary schools and falling pupil numbers in secondary schools, the ratio of pupils to teachers stayed stable between 2008 and 2014, so that nationally in 2014 there was 1 teacher for every 21.0 pupils in primary and 15.8 pupils in secondary schools. Data show that of teachers newly qualified over a 10-year period approximately 12% left state-funded schools within 1 year of joining while 28% had left within 5 years (paragraph 1.5).

8 Indicators suggest that teacher shortages are growing. It is difficult on the basis of current data to quantify accurately the extent to which shortages exist. However, the recorded rate of vacancies and temporarily filled positions in state-funded schools has doubled between 2011 and 2014 from 0.5% of the teaching workforce to 1.2% (a figure the Department accepts is unlikely to reflect recruitment difficulties fully). In surveys and other sources, a significant proportion of school leaders have also reported difficulty recruiting newly qualified teachers. In secondary schools, more classes are now taught by teachers without a relevant post-A-level qualification in their subject. For example, the proportion of physics classes taught by a teacher without such qualifications rose from 21% to 28% between 2010 and 2014. Meanwhile, leaving rates for existing maths and science teachers are above average (paragraphs 1.4 to 1.9).

9 The Department's teacher supply model has strengths but may still

inaccurately predict schools' need for trainee teachers. The teacher supply model is logical, has been carefully thought through and uses the Department's best routinely available data. However, the risk of it generating incorrect trainee recruitment targets remains significant:

- Inherently uncertain inputs, such as pupil and economic projections, mean that the model's forecasts lie within a big range. The Department's best estimate of the number of trainees required in 2016/17 is 29,200, but the model's results vary between 25,000 and 38,000 depending on whether the most optimistic or pessimistic assumptions are chosen. The Department has not calculated the probability of different scenarios occurring but considers these extreme values to be unlikely.
- The model has important knowledge gaps. For example, the Department does not have data that allows it to quantify teacher shortages reliably.
- The model does not aim to resolve pre-existing teacher shortages, including those caused by previously missed recruitment targets (where these have not been resolved by other initiatives such as encouraging people to change career or return to teaching) (paragraphs 1.11 to 1.18).

10 The Department is yet to demonstrate how accurate the model and its own judgements are.

The Department has not yet used indicators, such as surveys of school leaders and schools' long-term plans, to confirm independently the accuracy of its latest model. It does not have enough information to establish the accuracy of previous models for the purposes of comparison (paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18).

11 The Department's model assumes that, as pupil numbers rise, the number of teachers schools require will increase at a lower rate.

The forecast requirement for new teachers in 2017/18 is 4,500 (9%) lower than it would have been had the Department assumed that teacher numbers would rise in line with pupil numbers. This assumption is based on patterns observed when pupil numbers last rose between 1986 and the late 1990s. It may also accurately reflect the financial limitations schools will face because of forthcoming real-terms, per-pupil funding reductions. If incorrect, however, it could exacerbate existing teacher shortages and workload (paragraph 1.15).

Training sufficient new teachers

12 The Department has missed its targets for filling training places over the last 4 years with secondary training places particularly difficult to fill.

The Department missed its overall targets by an increasing margin between 2012/13 (1%) and 2014/15 (9%). In 2015/16, the Department changed its target to cover only postgraduate places (reporting undergraduate places separately) and missed this postgraduate target by 1,639 trainees (6%). It has missed secondary targets for the last 3 years, with 82% of postgraduate secondary places filled in 2015/16 compared with 116% for primary places. The improving economy is likely to increase competition for new graduates (paragraphs 1.10 and 2.2).

13 The Department finds it difficult to recruit enough trainees in most secondary subjects. In 2015/16, 14 out of 17 secondary subjects had unfilled training places, compared with 2 subjects with unfilled places in 2010/11. In subjects with hard-to-fill places, providers are more likely to accept trainees with lower degrees, for example:

- 71% of physics places were filled in 2015/16 and 63% of trainees had at least an upper-second degree; and
- 93% of maths places were filled and 70% of trainees had at least an upper-second degree.

However, 113% of history places were filled and 88% of trainees had at least an upper-second degree (paragraphs 2.3 to 2.4 and 2.8 to 2.10).

14 The Department has concentrated on attracting graduates to start training, but not all trainees go on to take jobs in state schools. Of trainees who commenced a final year of training in 2013/14, 80% are known to have been recruited to teaching in England within 6 months of qualifying. The Department assesses that some of these posts are in independent, fee-paying schools, which do not contribute to training costs but that some teachers may return to the state sector later (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.16).

The quality of new teachers

15 The Department's indicators of trainee and training quality are encouraging, but not yet enough to prove that training is improving the quality of teaching in classrooms. The proportion of postgraduate trainee entrants with at least an upper-second degree increased from 63% in 2010/11 to 75% in 2015/16, exceeding changes in wider graduate results. Degree class is a reasonable indicator of subject knowledge but a less clear predictor of other aspects of teacher quality. In accrediting new school-centred providers, to assure itself of the quality of teacher training proposed, the Agency assesses the potential provider against a range of criteria, and may subsequently withdraw that accreditation if a provider fails to meet those criteria. Almost all (99.5%) of Ofsted's inspections of teacher training have resulted in 'good' or 'outstanding' ratings. In September 2012, Ofsted inspections began looking at trainees' performance in classrooms post-qualification. This assessment became a formal second stage of all inspections from June 2014, however a large majority of providers have not yet had one of these 2-stage inspections. The Department does not currently have data to compare retention of newly qualified teachers, or their quality, through different training routes. It is working to link data to better understand the relationship between training and retention, and, in the longer term, classroom performance (paragraphs 2.8 to 2.10, 3.5, 3.6, 3.13 to 3.15 and 3.18).

Incentives to train

16 The Department has general evidence that bursaries have some impact in attracting people to train as teachers but, given the level of investment, has more to do to demonstrate a longer-term positive impact. The Department spent £620 million on bursaries in the 5 years to 2014/15, and plans to spend £167 million each year in 2015/16 and 2016/17. The Department's analysis shows a statistical link between bursaries and the number of applications to train, particularly for physics when new bursaries were introduced in 2012/13. From interviews and focus groups with applicants from 2013/14, the Department has also found that in some cases, particularly those changing career, the funding available has been the main initial trigger to explore teacher training. The Department has not assessed the impact of bursaries on applicants' success or the number who go on to qualify and teach. It now plans to link data sets so that it can do this analysis on a statistical basis. The longer-term impact should also be explored through qualitative research, along with the risks, for example that successful applicants may have applied anyway, regardless of the bursary (paragraphs 2.11 to 2.15).

Market management

17 The Department and the Agency have grown school-led training, in line with policy, without university providers leaving the market in large numbers. The number of school-centred providers has increased from 56 to 155 in the last 5 years and only 5 higher-education institutions (out of 75) have stopped offering training. Although not all universities have been happy with the changes, they continue to be involved in most training, even when it is school-led. Some stakeholders told us the new approach had created positive new partnerships between schools and training providers (paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3).

18 Potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to make informed choices about where to train and the plethora of routes has been widely described to us as confusing. The Department has introduced, in line with policy, a range of training routes to offer prospective trainees a choice about where and how to train, and to attract applicants from particular groups, for example, with different prior experience. There are 6 main routes to train and hundreds of different providers. But there is little differentiation between how much providers charge trainees and, on quality, Ofsted has rated almost all inspected providers as at least 'good'. Meanwhile, 47% of school-centred providers are yet to be inspected. It will take until 2018 to inspect them all. This is because 8 out of 10 uninspected providers opened only recently and newly accredited providers are not inspected until the end of their second year of provision. Trainees do not have the same level of choice across the country should they wish to train near home. For example, there are more providers of salaried routes in London and the South East. Most providers and schools we visited described the range of routes as confusing for both providers and applicants. This could discourage potential applicants (paragraphs 3.21 to 3.25).

19 The Department has insufficient information to ensure the cost-effectiveness of its approach. There is little differentiation in price or quality between providers to enable consumer behaviour to shape the market. The Department has information about the short-term cost of training routes but does not yet have sufficient information about long-term costs and the extent to which each route, and increasing schools' role in the process, has improved teaching standards (paragraphs 3.13 to 3.20).

20 The Department's short-term approach means providers do not have a clear, stable basis on which to plan for the long term. Up to and including 2015/16, the Agency specified annually the number of trainees each provider could recruit. For 2016/17, the Agency has adopted a more open approach, controlling only the overall numbers to be recruited per subject. It cannot say what the approach will be in future, although it has stated its intent to expand school-led training further while capping recruitment by universities. In 2016/17, the Agency may intervene to prevent a provider having too large a market share, and may also control recruitment in individual regions, for example to enable providers in a region to recruit for longer. But it has set no thresholds on which to base these judgements. In November 2015, it made its first intervention – to stop universities recruiting physical education trainees – without sufficient warning (paragraphs 3.7 to 3.12).

Local recruitment issues

21 The Department takes a national approach to recruitment but has more to do to understand important local and regional issues. The number of trainees recruited as a proportion of the pupil population varies regionally. In 2015/16, 547 trainees were recruited for every 100,000 pupils in the North West compared with 294 in the East of England. Although not all trainees go on to teach close to where they train, this is a common career choice. In several regions, Ofsted has found that isolated schools struggle to attract and retain enough teachers of the right calibre. The Department does not use its teacher supply model to estimate how many teachers are required locally or regionally and largely relies on the school system to resolve problems. It has initiatives to address particular issues, such as its plan to create a National Teaching Service to work in underperforming schools. However, the Department has a weak understanding of the extent of local teacher supply shortages and whether they are being resolved locally (paragraphs 1.19 to 1.22 and 2.5).

Conclusion on value for money

22 Training enough new teachers of the right quality is central to the success of all money spent in England's schools. Central government and schools spend some £700 million a year recruiting and training new teachers. The Department, with the Agency, has made structural changes to the teacher training market in line with policy, effectively expanding schools' role in designing and delivering initial teacher training while maintaining a significant contribution from universities. The energy the Department has expended on innovation is welcome.

23 The Department has missed its recruitment targets for the last 4 years and there are signs that teacher shortages are growing. By taking a national view of the number of teachers required, the Department risks paying too little attention to clearly meaningful local patterns of supply and demand. The Department does not yet have the information it needs to understand how different routes into teaching impact on schools' ability to recruit and retain newly qualified teachers, and cannot yet demonstrate how new arrangements are improving the quality of teaching in classrooms. The Department has plans to analyse existing data further. However, until the Department meets its targets and addresses the remaining information gaps, we cannot conclude that the arrangements for training new teachers are value for money. The Department will also need to show that the arrangements are more cost-effective than alternative expenditure, for instance on improving retention.

Recommendations

- a The Department should demonstrate how, through new training routes and the incentives it offers, it is improving recruitment and retention of new teachers and the quality of teaching, and at what cost.** It should:
- continue working with the sector to link training data with data on the quality of teaching in the classroom, where possible using existing information;
 - examine the costs and benefits of different training routes over time; and
 - do the extra quantitative and qualitative work needed to conclude whether bursaries work, incorporating the results into decision-making.
- b The Department and the Agency should work with school leaders to:**
- **develop a good understanding of local demand for and supply of teachers.** It should then consider how it can use modelling, the allocation process and other interventions to resolve any difficulties; and
 - **establish the model's accuracy by comparing its outputs with data on actual levels of demand, recruitment and vacancies in schools.**
- c The Department should work with the sector to provide clearer, more accessible information to prospective applicants.** This should include information on course costs, structure and provider quality. The Department should encourage the creation of other sources of comparative information, similar to the 'good university guides' that exist.
- d The Department and the Agency should give greater certainty to providers to help them plan over the longer term.** This should include more detail about the Government's position on market size and structure, when and how it is likely to intervene and indicators of future patterns of demand.