

Committee of Public Accounts

Increasing teacher numbers: Secondary and further education

Thirty-Eighth Report of Session 2024–25

HC 825

Committee of Public Accounts

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Publication

This Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report, was Ordered by the House of Commons, on 30 June 2025, to be printed. It was published on 9 July 2025 by authority of the House of Commons.
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Summary

After a decade of nationwide teacher shortages, the Department for Education (the Department) still does not have a grip on how its dedicated £700 million annual budget for recruitment and retention will provide the teachers urgently needed in secondary schools and further education colleges. In the 2023–24 academic year, 46% of secondary schools in England reported at least one vacant teaching position with colleges facing even higher vacancy rates. These challenges will only grow – the Department estimates 1,600 more secondary teachers will be needed by 2027–28, with 8,400 to 12,400 more further education teachers by 2028–29. This is to meet demographic pressures and deliver skills needed across the economy. While teaching quality is the most important factor in successful learning outcomes, not having enough teachers impacts outcomes for students.

Schools and colleges have discretion to decide for themselves how many teaching staff they need. This has led to differing approaches, with some schools managing to overcome staffing challenges. However, there remain higher teacher vacancies and difficulties keeping staff in certain schools or areas and across some core subjects, amplifying the risk that some pupils will not get the education they should. For example, of schools in the most disadvantaged areas, 31% do not offer Computer Science A-level and 9% do not offer Physics A-level, as they do not have enough trained teachers.

Encouragingly, the Department has adopted new recruitment and retention initiatives with some early signs of success. However, it lacks a coherent plan, suitable targets, and sufficient evidence of what works to provide assurance that it focuses its funding on what works best. In particular, the Department needs to clarify the relative importance of its initiatives, and build evidence on the impact of improving working conditions in keeping teachers in state-funded education. In 2024, 84% of teachers who had left in 2023 described high workload as a reason for leaving. The Department is currently looking to help schools and colleges to improve working conditions through encouraging them to sign up to its Wellbeing Charter (with only 17% signing by November 2024); sharing insights on how to modernise working patterns; and looking at ways to improve pupils' behaviour. Alongside this, the Department needs to assess the importance of pay and its effectiveness as a recruitment and retention tool compared to other initiatives.

With the new government having pledged to recruit 6,500 ‘new’ teachers, the Department must also remain focused on keeping those currently teaching within state-funded schools and colleges. As it stands, it is unclear how the pledge changes the Department’s work and, equally importantly, how meeting this pledge will ensure there are enough teachers in the right areas over the coming years. With delivery already underway, it is worrying the Department does not have a clear baseline or milestones against which to measure progress and be held accountable over the coming years.

Introduction

The Department for Education (the Department) is accountable for securing value for money from the funding it provides to schools and further education colleges across England. Educational settings must plan, recruit and manage their own workforces, with the Department responsible for the overall system and national approach. The Department considers that having enough school and college teachers will impact the government's ability to achieve its growth and opportunities missions.

In the academic year 2023–24, there were 217,600 teachers across 3,450 secondary schools, and 54,000 teachers in 230 further education colleges in 2022–23. In secondary schools, pupil-teacher ratios have increased, and the Department has missed all but one of its annual targets for the number of postgraduates starting teacher training since 2015–16. Over the next three years, the Department expects to need more secondary school teachers as student numbers rise. This demand will subsequently impact further education colleges as those children grow older.

In July 2024, the new government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers for schools and further education colleges by the end of this Parliament. The Department budgeted £700 million to spend on recruitment and retention initiatives, excluding pay and pensions, covering secondary schools and further education colleges in the 2024–25 financial year.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 1. It is unclear how the Department will deliver the pledge for 6,500 additional teachers, measure its progress, or what achieving the pledge will mean for existing and forecast teacher shortages.** In July 2024, the government pledged 6,500 additional teachers for schools and further education colleges over the course of this Parliament. The Department could give us no clear explanation of how the pledge was calculated or how it will fill existing teacher gaps – it estimates a need for 8,400 to 12,400 more teachers in colleges alone by 2028–29. There remains no information on the baseline against which the pledge will be measured, how it will be split across schools and colleges, or the milestones that will need to be met for the Department to be on track to deliver by the end of this Parliament. The Department has signalled that further details on the pledge will be released after the Spending Review. Despite this, delivery is already underway, with the 5.5% pay award for schoolteachers in 2024–25 and increased expenditure on initiatives, described by the Department, as part of this endeavour. The Department estimates that these actions will lead to 2,500 more teachers staying and 1,000 more applying the next year. The pledge focuses on additional teachers, but the Department assured us that, alongside recruiting teachers, it would continue to focus efforts on retention and that this is not a cap or a limit on how many it will recruit. We note that recent changes to employer national insurance contributions may impact this.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should set out how it plans to deliver the pledge for 6,500 additional teachers to provide assurance that this will fill the most critical teacher gaps. This should set out:

- how the pledge will be split across schools and colleges;
- the baseline and milestones so Parliament can track progress; and
- how it will stay focused on teacher retention alongside recruitment.

- 2. The Department has no clear or coherent approach bringing together its various initiatives on teacher recruitment and retention.** In 2024–25, the Department had a £700 million package, excluding pay and pensions, for recruitment and retention initiatives which the Department has allocated in a way to make as much progress as possible. This includes bursaries and scholarships to recruit teachers in particular subjects (£233 million budget in 2024–25), and a two-year support package for newly qualified teachers (£131 million budget in 2024–25). It has undertaken some evaluation of its recruitment and retention initiatives, but it has still to undertake a full evaluation, including non-financial initiatives despite a recommendation by a previous Public Accounts Committee in 2016. The Department has limited evidence on the effectiveness of initiatives to improve workload or wellbeing, despite these being common reasons for teachers leaving. Given these gaps, and a lack of targets (beyond those for those starting teacher training), the Department cannot make fully informed decisions on where best to focus resources and justify funding pots. More widely, the Department has started some cross-sector thinking, as well as value for money analysis. This has been used to stop, for example, international relocation payments for trainees.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should develop a whole-system strategy to help frame how it will recruit and retain school and college teachers. This should be based on a fuller evidence base, establish the preferred balance between recruitment and retention initiatives; set appropriate targets for those joining teaching through different routes; and include value for money analysis of different initiatives.

- 3. Teacher vacancies and the challenges of retaining experienced teachers are greater for schools in deprived areas, and across some core subjects, leading to inequities in provision and career opportunities.** Schools and colleges decide their own staffing model and have discretion around how they chose to use funding which may, for example, lead to variances in the use of supply teachers and pupil-teacher ratios. Schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils tend to have higher turnover rates and less experienced teachers – 34% of teachers in the most disadvantaged schools had less than five years of experience, compared to 20% in the least disadvantaged schools. These schools also suffer teacher shortages in specialist subjects, such as in Computing (1.4% vacancy rate against 0.8% in secondary schools overall). This means that disadvantaged students are at risk of being locked out of particular careers due to a lack of trained teachers 31% of schools in the most disadvantaged areas do not offer Computer Science A-level (compared to 11% in the least disadvantaged areas), and 9% do not offer Physics A-level (1% in the least

disadvantaged areas). This issue is critical to the government's mission of breaking down barriers to opportunity, but the Department does not have a timescale for when we can expect to see reduced variation between schools in more and less disadvantaged areas. Challenges extend to colleges which struggle to find trained teachers in specialist subjects, such as construction, where shortages in the wider labour market increases the competition for talent and means fewer people are likely to apply.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should work with schools and colleges to understand the reasons behind variations, particularly within deprived areas and core subjects, setting this out in published information to help identify and share good practice and ideas on what works best.

- 4. The Department has recently increased its focus on addressing the significant teacher gaps across further education colleges, but there remains much more to do.** A shortage of further education college teachers, which impacts the type and extent of skills developed, puts the achievement of the government's missions for opportunity and growth at risk. In general, further education colleges, 5.1 out of every 100 positions were vacant in 2022–23 and the Department estimate that colleges will need 8,400 to 12,400 more teachers by 2028–29. Compared to schools, the workforce data kept by the Department is less detailed and complete, requiring it to make broader assumptions as part of its workforce model. The Department has begun to focus more on addressing teacher shortages in further education, describing this as now a strong focus. The Department say this includes recently providing £400 million additional funding to the sector, extending targeted retention incentives to further education from October 2024, and bringing in professionals who teach alongside working in industry. This also helps ensure students are taught the latest practices. College teacher pay remains, on average, £10,000 lower than school teacher pay. With no national pay review body, colleges set their own pay considering the funding from the Department, but colleges continue to feel there has been limited additional funding despite government's positive messages.

RECOMMENDATION

Given the urgent need for further education teachers, the Department should update the Committee on its full recruitment and retention plans for the further education sector as soon as possible, including expanding dual professional and industry partnerships in areas of key skill shortages, and then every six months until summer 2028, on its progress addressing gaps.

5. Teachers' working environment and conditions remain critically important to teacher retention, with workload cited as the top reason for teachers leaving, and pupil behaviour an escalating challenge.

The Department does not offer payments or structured support for more experienced teachers, which means their working environment constitutes one of the main levers keeping them in the profession. The Department recognises workload as the top reason for teachers leaving and has, for example, worked with Ofsted to reduce marking requirements. However, it does not understand the root causes behind these factors including, for example, why and where workload is high. The Department does not dictate working patterns, or maternity and paternity leave, with schools and colleges making these decisions. However, there remains a lack of flexible working arrangements for teachers, although the Department has signalled an intention to raise improving maternity and paternity leave for teachers. More widely, the Department is looking to learn from the health sector on creating clearer career pathways. We are concerned about worsening pupil behaviour impacting workload and the wider environment, with the Department aiming to address this through new attendance and behaviour hubs. Only 17% of schools and colleges have signed the Department's wellbeing charter.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should work to better understand why teachers leave and then better support schools and colleges in addressing these factors. This includes looking at changes to contractual and working conditions, such as flexible working, and at how teacher workload can be reduced. It should also collect data on the effectiveness of the newly-announced behaviour hubs, rolling them out further if they prove to be successful.

6. The Department recognises pay as important in recruiting and retaining teachers, but is less clear on how it considers pay alongside other initiatives and how schools and colleges can afford pay rises.

Pay is important in recruiting and retaining teachers. The Department's influence on pay differs between schools and colleges, for schools, it sets pay ranges and then provides schools a funding package to be used, by schools, on pay and other areas of spend – it has assumed schools will make 1% efficiency savings in 2025–26 to afford pay rises. Colleges do not have a pay review body, setting their own salaries from the funding received. Schoolteachers have received a 17% combined pay increase from the last three pay awards. The Department has reduced its teacher trainee targets as it expects 2,500 more teachers to stay because of the most recent 5.5% pay award. The Department recognises college teachers continue to receive less than those in secondary, who earn around

£10,000 more, and those in industry where, for example, IT professionals can earn over £11,000 more. The Department has assessed the relative value for money for some of its financial incentives but has not assessed the extent to which increasing pay has a similar impact. It is unclear how important the Department considers pay over, for example, the Early Career Framework in retaining teachers. It is also worth noting that teachers benefit automatically from a defined benefit pension scheme, a hugely valuable yet easily under-sold perk of the job.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department should assess the effectiveness and relative value-for-money of pay against other recruitment and retention initiatives, to make an explicit decision on whether it needs to do more to ensure teachers are paid the right amount.

1 The Department's approach to considering teacher recruitment and retention

Introduction

1. On the basis of a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, we took evidence from the Department for Education (the Department) on increasing teacher numbers across secondary schools and further education colleges.¹
2. The Department is accountable for securing value for money from the funding it provides schools and colleges across England. Schools and colleges plan, recruit and manage their own workforces. The Department oversees the whole system and provides support through national recruitment and retention initiatives. For the 2024–25 financial year, the National Audit Office estimated that the Department budgeted £700 million for these initiatives, excluding pay and pensions, across secondary schools and further education colleges.²
3. The Department considers that the school and college workforce will impact the government's ability to achieve its growth and opportunities missions, which it first set out in 2024. In the 2023–24 academic year, there were 217,600 teachers across 3,450 secondary schools, with 54,000 teachers in 230 further education colleges in 2022–23.³ However, over the last decade, teacher numbers have failed to grow in line with pupil numbers leading to rising pupil to teacher ratios. In 2023–24, 46% of secondary schools reported at least one teaching position vacant, more than double

1 C&AG's Report, [Teacher workforce: secondary and further education](#), Session 2024–25, HC 854, 30 April 2025. For the purposes of this report, further education colleges include general further education colleges (specialist and tertiary providers) and sixth-form colleges. Independent training providers and other publicly funded providers are excluded.

2 C&AG's Report, paras 3–4

3 C&AG's Report, paras 1–2

2010–11 levels.⁴ Further education colleges are often harder hit as teachers require specific industry skills alongside teaching qualifications to deliver vocational training. In 2022–23, 5.1 out of every 100 positions were vacant in general further education colleges.⁵ Over the next three years, the Department expects to need more teachers as secondary school pupil numbers rise. These students are likely to then move into further education. In July 2024, the new government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers for schools and colleges by the end of this Parliament.⁶

4. We also received written submissions from a range of different sources including representative bodies, academics and research organisations and trade unions. A full list of the written evidence we received is available on the inquiry page of the Committee’s website.⁷ Particular matters drawn to our attention included:

- the reasons behind increasing teacher workload and how workload impacts teachers’ mental health and wellbeing and quality of teaching;
- the importance of competitive, teacher pay in attracting and retaining skilled and high-quality teachers;
- the need for the Department to think more widely about who may take up jobs in state-funded schools and colleges, such as those returning to the profession or changing careers; and
- the need for a better offer for teachers to professionally develop and access relevant support.

Meeting the pledge for 6,500 additional teachers

5. In July 2024, the new government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers for schools and colleges by the end of this Parliament (spring 2029 at the latest).⁸ When we asked how the pledge was calculated, the Department told us it was part of the current government’s manifesto. It did not provide further detail aside from describing it as deriving from “factors that represented some of the pressures on teacher numbers across schools and colleges, such as vacancy rates”.⁹

4 C&AG’s Report, para 1.8

5 C&AG’s Report, para 1.13

6 C&AG’s Report, para 2

7 Committee of Public Accounts, [Increasing teacher numbers: Secondary and further education Written evidence](#)

8 C&AG’s Report, para 2

9 Q 62

6. In terms of how the pledge relates to existing gaps, in 2022–23 there were around 1,500 teacher vacancies and around 2,500 teacher vacancies in general further education and sixth-form colleges. In addition, the Department estimates 1,600 more teachers will be needed for secondary schools by 2027–28, with colleges needing 8,400 to 12,400 more teachers by 2028–29 compared with 2020–21 levels.¹⁰ More specifically, written evidence from the Campaign for Mathematical Sciences identified a 5,100 shortfall in maths teachers and the National Foundation for Educational Research highlighted that, in 2024–25, the Department missed its target for postgraduates signing up to teacher training by more than the pledge itself.¹¹ In 2024–25, 14,800 trainees started postgraduate initial teacher training against a target of 24,000 (62% of target).¹² The Department reassured us that the 6,500 pledge was “not a cap or a limit” on recruitment and, following our challenge, that it would focus on teacher retention alongside recruitment.¹³
7. We asked the Department what baseline it was using to measure whether 6,500 additional teachers had been recruited. It told us it had not set a year as a baseline, but that the number of teachers would be more than before the pledge had started and that it was working on the detail as part of the Spending Review.¹⁴ It was unable to tell us how the 6,500 teachers would be distributed across schools and further education colleges, although it did say it would consider the need for skilled special educational needs teachers.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Department could not indicate how we could follow progress with the pledge, for example through milestones that would help show whether it was on track. It reiterated that it would not be able to provide further details until after the Spending Review.¹⁶ Written evidence from the Gatsby Charitable Foundation stressed the importance of “transparent reporting against the “6,500 additional teachers” pledge, broken down by sector, subject, and region”.¹⁷
8. Although unable to breakdown the pledge by time or educational setting, or provide a baseline, the Department described having started delivering the pledge through, for example, the 5.5% pay award for schoolteachers in 2024–25 and an increase to the financial incentives package for schools

10 C&AG’s Report, para 2.37

11 [ITN0006, Written evidence submitted by the National Foundation for Educational Research](#) ; [ITN0012, Written evidence submitted by the Campaign for Mathematical Sciences](#)

12 C&AG’s Report, para 1.9

13 Qq 14, 65

14 Q 63

15 Q 66

16 Qq 65-67; C&AG’s Report, paras 19, 2.41-2.42

17 [ITN0011, Written evidence submitted by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation](#)

and colleges.¹⁸ The Department told us it was already seeing a positive impact, including 2,000 more secondary teachers starting training than the previous year and early signs of around 1,000 more teachers applying for the next year. It also now expects to retain about 2,500 more teachers than it had previously expected.¹⁹

Recruitment and retention

9. In 2024–25, the Department budgeted to spend around £700 million across a range of initiatives, other than pay and pensions, designed to improve teacher recruitment and retention.²⁰ Of this, £390 million (49%) related to financial incentives. This included training bursaries and scholarships (£233 million) and retention payments for teachers, often aimed at those teaching specific subjects and those teaching in deprived areas.²¹ The remaining £310 million (51%) of funding related to the Department providing non-financial benefits, such as opportunities for professional development. For example, it budgeted to spend £131 million on a framework to better support those in the first two years of their career.²²
10. We asked the Department how confident it was that the initiatives funded through the £700 million represented the best value for money. It told us it had allocated the funding in a way to make what is described as “as much progress as possible”.²³ We challenged the Department on, for example, whether the £26 million annual spend relating to its recruitment website reflected the right amount. The Department subsequently clarified what these costs covered the whole of the Get Into Teaching service for 2024-25, which comprises the School Teacher Recruitment marketing campaign, candidate support services, teaching internships and digital products and services including the website, costing £1.3 million. However, the Department’s response does not allow like for like comparison with the costs for other comparable recruitment websites or activities or show any analysis of whether the costs were appropriate.²⁴
11. In 2016, the previous Public Accounts Committee recommended that the Department should undertake a full evaluation of all its recruitment and retention initiatives to understand what works, including

18 Q 62; C&AG’s Report, para 2.38

19 Qq 22, 62

20 C&AG’s Report, para 2.2

21 Q 14; C&AG’s Report, paras 2.8–2.9, 2.11–2.12, 2.38, Figure 16

22 C&AG’s Report, paras 2.8, 2.14, 2.19

23 Q 14

24 Qq 18, 21; [Letter from the Department for Education to the Committee, 2 June 2025](#)

those not providing a financial incentive.²⁵ The Department accepted the recommendation and, while it has undertaken some evaluation, it has yet to undertake a full evaluation which includes non-financial incentives and all those initiatives available to further education colleges. The Department recognised that for further education initiatives, its evaluation activity was less mature. The Department stressed that it did not want to spend public money “on things that do not work”, and that it had used evidence to discontinue some schemes such as international relocation payments for trainee teachers. It intends to use the analysis of school related financial recruitment incentives to help decide where to direct funding. It plans to expand this analysis to include retention initiatives such as flexible working, and the newer further education initiatives.²⁶

12. We were interested to understand why the Department only has targets for those starting initial teacher training in primary and secondary schools, when this is just one of several entry routes into teaching.²⁷ In the year to November 2023, 41% of secondary teachers entering the workforce were newly qualified teachers, with 39% returners to the state-funded sector, 13% new to the state-funded sector and 7% being deferred newly-qualified teachers. Overall teacher numbers are also impacted by those staying, with the number of qualified teachers leaving secondary schools starting to increase to pre-pandemic levels – 19,860 in 2022–23.²⁸ The Department acknowledged that it had focussed on initial teacher training targets, despite considering other routes within its teacher workforce modelling to calculate these targets. The Department told us it wants to tell the “full story” and recognised the need to change the way it publicly presents other routes into teaching to better reflect how critical these are alongside initial teaching training.²⁹ Written evidence from Education Support proposed that, in the same way that the Department has a teacher trainee target, it should set targets for the numbers of teachers, leaders and support staff it needs to retain as a key performance indicator.³⁰
13. We questioned the Department on what it was doing to better understand the competition between schools and colleges when recruiting teachers.³¹ The Department has identified that around 60% of workers who leave an education occupation move into another education occupation. However, until recently, departmental teams for schools and further

25 Committee of Public Accounts, [Training new teachers](#), Third Report of Session 2016–17, HC 73, 10 June 2016; HM Treasury, [Treasury Minutes – Government responses to the Committee of Public Accounts](#), November 2016 (page 23)

26 Qq 56-57; C&AG’s Report, paras 2.32-2.33

27 Qq 55

28 C&AG’s Report, paras 1.10-1.11, Figure 3

29 Qq 22, 55

30 [ITN0009, Written evidence submitted by Education Support](#)

31 Q 42

education worked in silos, and the Department's only recruitment strategy, from 2019, applied just to schools.³² The Department has now started to think in a more joined-up way, to help better understand what works and the trade-offs of its decisions.³³

Focus on recruitment and retention within further education colleges

14. In offering vocational training, further education colleges support the government's missions for building skills for economic growth and spreading opportunities too all children. However, colleges struggle to compete with schools and industry to recruit the teachers required and have experienced more significant challenges than schools in getting a workforce with the relevant experience. This will impact the type and extent of skills that can be taught. In 2022–23, 5.1 out of every 100 teaching positions in further education colleges were vacant.³⁴ Looking ahead, the Department estimates colleges will need 8,400 to 12,400 more teachers by 2028–29.³⁵
15. We asked the Department if it thought there has been less focus on recruitment in further education than there should have been given the need to increase skills across the UK economy. For example, written evidence we received from the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and the Association of Colleges highlighted the £10,000 pay gap between teachers in schools and further education which they felt should be closed as a matter of priority.³⁶ Also, in 2024–25, the majority of the £700 million (88%) budget for recruitment and retentions initiatives related to schools, with colleges feeling there has been limited additional funding despite the government's positive messages.³⁷
16. The Department acknowledged that it was concerned about the position in colleges, where the vacancy rate was significantly higher than in schools, but it described having a "strong" focus on recruitment into further education.³⁸ It explained that it had introduced various initiatives such as recently investing £400 million in the sector;³⁹ extending targeted retention incentives to colleges from October 2024, with an estimated

32 C&AG's Report, paras 2.34–2.35

33 Qq 31, 43; C&AG's Report, para 2.35

34 C&AG's Report, paras 1.13, 2.4, Figure 8

35 C&AG's Report, Key Facts

36 [ITN0011, Written evidence submitted by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation](#); [ITN0014, Written evidence submitted by the Association of Colleges](#)

37 Q 12; C&AG's Report paras 2.2, 2.7

38 Q 44

39 Q 12

6,000 people benefitting to date, and positive feedback from colleges;⁴⁰ and a two-year programme to attract teachers and support them through their first two years.⁴¹ The Department also described expanding the use of “dual professionals” who teach alongside working in industry. They can upskill other teachers and ensure students are taught the latest practices.⁴² Written evidence from both the Construction Industry Training Board and the Education and Training Foundation support the value dual professionals bring to the further education sector.⁴³ However, written evidence from the Association of Colleges mentions these initiatives are still “fairly new” with none having fully been evaluated yet on their long-term impact.⁴⁴

17. The Department has overseen further education colleges since July 2016 with further education colleges reclassified into the public sector in November 2022. Its further education workforce data collection started in 2020, and while this was able to cover 94% of colleges in 2022–23, this compares to 99.7% of schools providing the Department with workforce data. As such, the Department must make broad assumptions as part of its further education workforce model which it uses to project the number of teachers needed. It has assessed 60% of assumptions in its model as having limited or no underlying evidence.⁴⁵

40 Qq 6, 8–10, 13, 45; [Targeted retention incentive for FE teachers: data as of 5 May 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

41 Qq 12, 44

42 Q 7

43 [ITN0001, Written evidence submitted by the Construction Industry Training Board;](#)
[ITN0007, Written evidence submitted by Education and Training Foundation](#)

44 [ITN0014, Written evidence submitted by the Association of Colleges](#)

45 C&AG’s Report, paras 10, 1.20

2 Initiatives and incentives to improve teacher recruitment and retention

Teachers' working environment and conditions

18. We asked the Department what it was doing to understand why fewer people stay working in the education sector compared with other sectors – 38% of those who had worked within the education sector at some point between the ages of 17 and 29 were still doing so at age 30, compared with 44% in health, 48% in the public sector as a whole and 49% in the private sector. The Department told us it had done some significant work looking at “cross-fertilisation between parts of the education sector”, and that it was considering learning from the health sector on how it could make it easier for people to build careers but accepted that it could do more.⁴⁶
19. The Department's annual teacher survey showed that 84% of teachers who had left between its 2023 and 2024 surveys described high workload as a reason for leaving, with 75% citing stress and/or poor wellbeing. Full-time secondary school teachers in England work on average 50.3 hours per week in term time.⁴⁷ The Department told us schoolteachers in England work more than their international counterparts but spend fewer hours in the classroom with pupils. It also told us that while it has made some progress on reducing hours by working with Ofsted to reduce marking requirements, it is “quite hard” to understand the root causes behind what contributed to high teacher workloads and when or why this would be a problem.⁴⁸
20. The Department does not offer experienced teachers any financial incentives to stay, such as bursaries or retention payments, or structured support, such as the Early Career Framework for those with up to two years of experience. The Department's ability to influence teacher workload and working patterns is limited, with school and college leaders responsible

46 Q 30; C&AG's Report, para 1.11

47 C&AG's Report, paras 2.24-2.26

48 Q 34

for setting the conditions, arrangements and the overarching culture. However, the Department can support schools and colleges in improving the working environment.⁴⁹ The Department provides support and guidance to schools and colleges, which includes:

- A wellbeing charter for schools and colleges to sign-up to, setting out their commitments.⁵⁰ We challenged the Department on whether it was fit for purpose given that only 17% of eligible schools and colleges had signed up. The Department recognised it needs to do more to encourage take up and are considering whether the charter’s promotion or content needs to be refreshed.⁵¹
- Working with Education Endowment Foundation to build its evidence base on flexible working.⁵² While the school teaching workforce is predominantly female, 26% of female teachers worked part-time in 2023–24, compared with 37% of female employees in the UK labour market.⁵³ Written evidence from the Maternity Teacher Paternity Teacher Project states that “teaching is incompatible with motherhood”.⁵⁴ The Department could provide some good practice, mentioning Dixons academy in Bradford who had implemented nine-day fortnights. We also asked how fathers are expected be teachers with just two-weeks paternity leave. While the Department said this is for schools and teaching unions to negotiate it agreed to look at this in the Burgundy Book and signalled intentions to look at how this could be improved.⁵⁵

- 21.** We challenged the Department on the extent to which poor pupil behaviour could negatively impact teachers’ mental health and wellbeing, as set out in written evidence from Education Support.⁵⁶ 60% of schoolteachers felt they spent too much time following up on behaviour incidents and the proportion of ex-teachers citing pupil behaviour as a reason for leaving rose from 32% to 44% in one year alone (2023 to 2024). The Department told us that a lot of the good practice work on behaviour issues highlighted good quality whole-school behaviour policies. In May 2025, the Department announced 90 new attendance and behaviour hubs that will target “intensive” support

49 C&AG’s Report, Figure 1 and 11

50 C&AG’s Report, para 2.27

51 Q 35

52 Q 33

53 C&AG’s Report, para 2.29

54 [ITN0004](#)

55 Q 28

56 [ITN0009](#)

to 500 schools a year and for best practice on tackling behaviour to be spread to 450 other schools. It noted that the network and regional learning from this will “make a difference”.⁵⁷

Importance of pay

- 22.** The Department regards pay as its strongest lever in recruiting and retaining teachers. For example, following the most recent 5.5% pay award, the Department reduced its teacher trainee targets as it expected 2,500 more teachers to stay. However, teacher pay has lagged behind others – in 2024, those working in the education sector were paid around 10% less in real terms than in 2010, with the wider public sector being paid on average 2.6% less than in 2010.⁵⁸ Written evidence from the National Foundation for Educational Research stated that the Department’s 2.8% pay increase for 2025–26 is lower than the Office for Budget Responsibility’s 3.7% forecast for earnings growth in 2025–26.⁵⁹ Subsequently, the government announced schoolteachers will receive a 4% pay increase for 2025–26.⁶⁰ The Department recognises college teachers continue to receive less than those in secondary, who earn, on average, around £10,000 more.⁶¹ Also, the Department’s own analysis suggests IT professionals in industry, for example, earn £11,000 more than an equivalent further education teacher.⁶² Written evidence from the National Association of Head teachers, Royal Society of Biology and the National Education Union all stressed the need for the competitiveness of teacher pay to be improved to attract and retain enough teachers.⁶³
- 23.** The Department’s influence on teacher pay differs across schools and colleges. For secondary schools, the Department sets teacher pay ranges based on advice from a pay review body. Local-authority-maintained schools must apply these ranges, whilst academies set their own pay although many follow the Department’s guidance.⁶⁴ We asked the Department how it would ensure schools can afford the pay awards, particularly given the 17% combined pay increase over the last three pay awards, the wider financial pressures faced by schools and the need to find, for example, efficiencies through improving procurement policies or energy contracts.⁶⁵ The Department told us that it funds pay awards

57 Qq 34, 36; C&AG’s Report, para 2.26

58 C&AG’s Report, paras 2.3, 2.5

59 [ITN0006](#)

60 [Teacher pay: everything you need to know about the 2025 pay award – The Education Hub](#)

61 Q 8

62 C&AG’s Report, para 2.4

63 [ITN0005](#), [ITN0008](#), [ITN0021](#)

64 C&AG’s Report, para 2.6

65 Q 60; [ITN0021](#)

at an aggregate level, as part of schools' wider funding package for pay and other areas of spend, but it has also assumed schools will make 1% efficiency savings in 2025–26 to afford pay rises.⁶⁶ Colleges do not have a pay review body, setting their own salaries from the funding received.⁶⁷

- 24.** We asked the Department if it has assessed whether spending on initiatives such as the Early Career Framework (£131 million budget in 2024–25) provides better outcomes than simply increasing teachers' pay. The Department did not confirm if it had undertaken this analysis but instead told us more generally that teaching quality would need to be considered alongside teacher numbers.⁶⁸ More widely, the Department has begun work to understand the relative costs and benefits of its school-focused financial incentives to recruit teachers which it plans to use to help decide where to direct funding.⁶⁹ New teachers also benefit from a defined benefit pension scheme.⁷⁰ While the Department has not considered pay as part of this analysis, the National Foundation for Educational Research concluded that bursaries were more cost-effective when compared with, for example, universal pay increases and other targeted initiatives such as early career payments.⁷¹

Increasing teacher numbers in disadvantaged areas and core subjects

- 25.** In 2023–24, 46% of secondary schools in England reported at least one vacant teaching position, more than double the figure of 17% in 2010–11.⁷² When we asked the Department how this has affected student outcomes, it told us the quality of teaching was the “single most significant factor” in schools impacting pupil's achievement.⁷³ However, the Department commented that it sees variation across schools in, for example, pupil-teacher ratios and retention rates. Vacancy rates can be a result of how schools use funding on, for example, supply teachers.⁷⁴ The Department described significant variation across vacancies in certain specialisms and subjects with, for example, more vacancies for Computing teachers (1.4% vacancy rate) compared to all secondary school subjects (0.8%).⁷⁵ Schools and further education colleges are responsible for deciding the

66 Qq 59–62

67 C&AG's Report, 2.7

68 Qq 15, 17

69 C&AG's Report, para 2.32

70 [What is a teacher's pension? | New Starter | Teachers' Pensions](#)

71 C&AG's Report, para 2.10

72 C&AG's Report, para 1.8

73 Q 3

74 Qq 38, 53, 55

75 Qq 3–5

staff they need and recruiting their own workforces. Local authorities employ teachers in maintained schools. Multi-academy trusts play a similar role in the academies sector. Further education colleges also employ their own teachers.⁷⁶

- 26.** Those schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils tend to have higher turnover rates and less experienced teachers.⁷⁷ This impacts the government’s mission of breaking down the barriers to opportunity and means disadvantaged children are at risk of being locked out from particular careers.⁷⁸ In 2023–24, 34% of teachers in the most disadvantaged schools had up to five years’ experience (20% in the least disadvantaged schools).⁷⁹ In the most disadvantaged areas, 31% of schools do not offer Computer Science A-level, compared to 11% of schools in the least disadvantaged areas, due to a lack of trained teachers. For Physics A-level, this is 9% compared to 1%.⁸⁰ We asked the Department when we could expect there to be less variation between schools in the most and least disadvantaged areas, but it did not commit to a timeframe. Instead, it noted that its retention initiatives providing financial incentives were targeting schools and colleges with the highest proportion of disadvantaged students.⁸¹
- 27.** Further education colleges have higher vacancy rates than schools, with challenges across certain subjects, particularly those that are more specialist.⁸² We asked the Department why further education colleges find it difficult to keep specialist teachers. The Department said it sees more recruitment challenges where there are shortages in the labour market, for example in construction, where 9.6% of teaching positions were vacant in 2022–23. Given a competitive wider labour market, in-demand jobs, like construction, are well-paid and offer salaries which colleges struggle to compete with to recruit the teachers they need.⁸³

76 C&AG’s Report, paras 1.4-1.5

77 C&AG’s Report, para 1.12

78 Qq 38, 41

79 C&AG’s Report, para 1.12

80 [Teacher shortages deny nearly a third of poorer pupils’ access to computer science A-level | Teach First](#)

81 Q 41

82 C&AG’s Report, paras 6, 1.13

83 Q 6; C&AG’s Report, para 1.13

Formal minutes

Monday 30 June 2025

Members present

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts

Sarah Green

Sarah Hall

Chris Kane

Sarah Olney

Declaration of interests

The following declarations of interest relating to the inquiry were made:

19 May 2025

Mr Luke Charters declared the following interest: wife is a primary school teacher.

Rebecca Paul declared the following interest: serving Surrey county councillor.

Increasing teacher numbers: Secondary and further education

Draft Report (*Increasing teacher numbers: Secondary and further education*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 27 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Introduction agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Thirty-eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Thursday 3 July at 9.30 a.m.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Monday 19 May 2025

Susan Acland-Hood, Permanent Secretary, Department of Education;

Juliet Chua, Director General for Schools, Department of Education;

Julia Kinniburgh, Director General, Skills, Department of Education [Q1-73](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

ITN numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Adamson, Dr Carrie (Faculty of Health and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University); Ainsworth, Dr Steph (Faculty of Health and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University); and Oldfield, Dr Jeremy (Faculty of Health and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University)	ITN0024
2	Association of Colleges	ITN0014
3	Campaign for Mathematical Sciences	ITN0012
4	Centre for Policy Research on Men and Boys	ITN0019
5	Construction Industry Training Board	ITN0001
6	Cultural Learning Alliance	ITN0017
7	Edapt	ITN0013
8	Education Support	ITN0009
9	Education and Training Foundation	ITN0007
10	EngineeringUK	ITN0023
11	Gupta, Dr Achala (Lecturer, University of Southampton); and Newman, Mrs Rachele (Principal Teaching Fellow, University of Southampton)	ITN0018
12	Hill, Professor Andrew (Associate Pro Vice Chancellor: Research, York St John University, UK); Hong, Professor Ji (Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Arizona, USA); Kim, Dr Lisa (Senior Lecturer in Psychology, The University of Sydney, Australia); and Madigan, Professor Daniel (Professor of Health Psychology, York St John University, UK)	ITN0002
13	Institute of Physics	ITN0020
14	McQuade, Dr Laura (Lecturer, The University of Lincoln)	ITN0003
15	NAHT	ITN0005

16	NASBTT	<u>ITN0010</u>
17	National Education Union	<u>ITN0021</u>
18	National Foundation for Educational Research	<u>ITN0006</u>
19	Now Teach	<u>ITN0022</u>
20	Royal Society of Biology	<u>ITN0008</u>
21	Spicksley, Dr Kathryn (Research Fellow, University of Birmingham); and Stock, Dr Nicholas (Research Fellow, University of Birmingham)	<u>ITN0016</u>
22	STEM Learning UK	<u>ITN0015</u>
23	Teach First	<u>ITN0025</u>
24	The Gatsby Charitable Foundation	<u>ITN0011</u>
25	The MaternityTeacher PaternityTeacher Project	<u>ITN0004</u>

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

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37th	Immigration: Skilled worker visas	HC 819
36th	Jobcentres	HC 823
35th	Introducing T Levels	HC 822
34th	Department for Business and Trade Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24	HC 818
33rd	Supporting the UK's priority industry sectors	HC 1070
32nd	The Future of the Equipment Plan	HC 716
31st	Local Government Financial Sustainability	HC 647
30th	Antimicrobial resistance: addressing the risks	HC 646
29th	Condition of Government property	HC 641
28th	Decommissioning Sellafield	HC 363
27th	Government's relationship with digital technology suppliers	HC 640
26th	Tackling Violence against Women and Girls	HC 644
25th	DHSC Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24	HC 639
24th	Government cyber resilience	HC 643
23rd	The cost of the tax system	HC 645
22nd	Government's support for biomass	HC 715
21st	Fixing NHS Dentistry	HC 648
20th	DCMS management of COVID-19 loans	HC 364
19th	Energy Bills Support	HC 511
18th	Use of AI in Government	HC 356
17th	The Remediation of Dangerous Cladding	HC 362

Number	Title	Reference
16th	Whole of Government Accounts 2022-23	HC 367
15th	Prison estate capacity	HC 366
14th	Public charge points for electric vehicles	HC 512
13th	Improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children	HC 365
12th	Crown Court backlogs	HC 348
11th	Excess votes 2023-24	HC 719
10th	HS2: Update following the Northern leg cancellation	HC 357
9th	Tax evasion in the retail sector	HC 355
8th	Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage	HC 351
7th	Asylum accommodation: Home Office acquisition of former HMP Northeye	HC 361
6th	DWP Customer Service and Accounts 2023-24	HC 354
5th	NHS financial sustainability	HC 350
4th	Tackling homelessness	HC 352
3rd	HMRC Customer Service and Accounts	HC 347
2nd	Condition and maintenance of Local Roads in England	HC 349
1st	Support for children and young people with special educational needs	HC 353