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# Teacher recruitment and retention in England



## Summary

- 1 Teacher numbers and class sizes
- 2 Recruitment and retention
- 3 Initiatives to encourage teacher recruitment and retention
- 4 Further reading

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## Summary

### Teacher supply

Over the past decade [the overall number of teachers in state-funded schools has not kept pace with increasing pupil numbers](#). This means the pupil to teacher ratio (number of pupils per teacher) has increased from 17.1 in November 2010 to 18.0 in November 2024. In addition, the teacher vacancy rate has risen over this period.

### Teacher training

The postgraduate teacher training target was exceeded for primary school teachers in 2024/25 (26% more in training than target) and was not met for secondary school teachers (12% under target). This was an improvement on previous years – however, at the same time, targets have decreased, making direct comparison complicated. Recruitment for secondary teachers varies by subject.

### Teacher retention

In 2023/24, around 9.0% of teachers left the state-funded sector. This includes those retiring and was down on the previous two years (9.3% in 2021/22, 9.5% in 2022/23).

In recent years, between 10% and 15% of teachers typically have left the state-sector profession within a year of qualifying. This rate then decreases in subsequent years, with between 30% and 33% of teachers having left five years after qualifying. It is important to note that teachers classed as ‘out of the profession’ on a given date may return.

### Working hours

Survey data suggests the average primary teacher worked 53.2 hours in a typical week in 2025, and the average secondary teacher worked 51.2 hours. Teachers work fewer days of the year than other professions, meaning this may be thought of as equivalent in total annual hours to an NHS worker or civil servant working between 43.4 and 47.2 hours weekly.

### Teachers’ pay

Average pay for classroom teachers decreased in real terms by 14% from 2010/11 to 2022/23. It then increased by 4% over the following two years combined. A 4% pay rise was [recommended for 2025/26](#), above the [2.94% predicted inflation rate](#). Similar trends hold for school leadership and headteachers also.

## Initiatives to encourage recruitment and retention of teachers

There are several financial incentives aimed at encouraging recruitment to initial teacher training, including [bursaries and scholarships](#).

The previous Conservative government combined the existing initial teacher training core content framework and early career framework for teachers into the [Initial teacher training and early career framework](#) (ITTECF). The ITTECF was published in January 2024 and has been in place since September 2025. A review is expected in 2027.

In September 2025, the [early career teacher entitlement](#) (ECTE), a package of training and support based on ITTECF that teachers receive during their two-year induction, replaced the previous early career framework (ECF)-based training and induction.

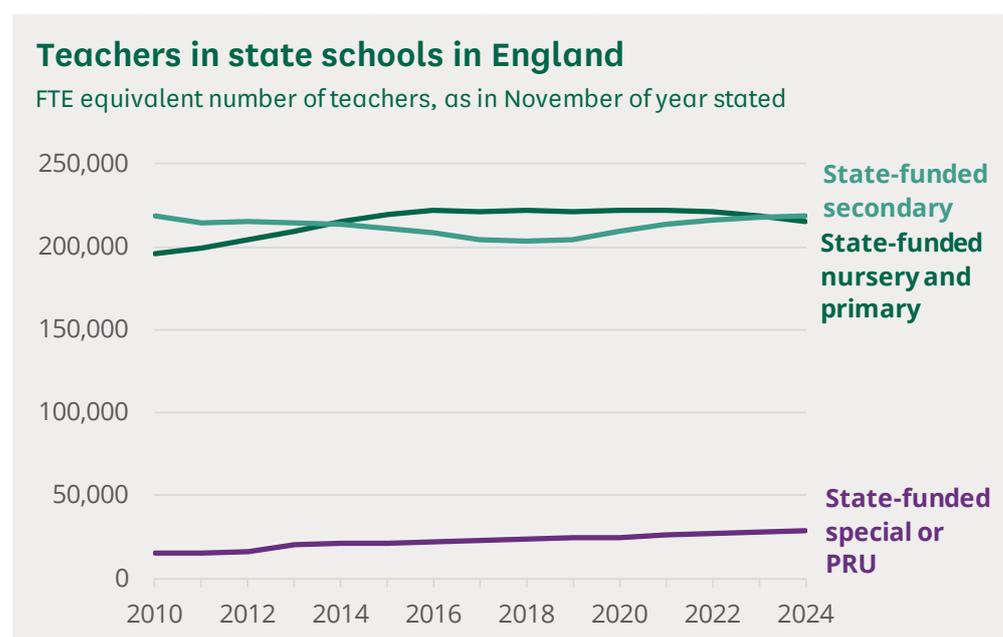
Since 2017, [a student loan reimbursement programme](#) has been in place for some teachers.

# 1 Teacher numbers and class sizes

## 1.1 Number of teachers

As of November 2024, there were 468,258 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in state-funded schools in England. While the total amount has remained relatively steady in the last three years, it has risen from around 441,000 in November 2010<sup>1</sup>,

From 2010 to 2024, the number of teachers in special schools or pupil referral units (PRU) has increased from around 15,000 to 29,000 (+90%). The total teachers in nursery or primary schools increased by around 19,000 (+10%) over the same period. The number of secondary school teachers decreased before increasing again, meaning the totals in November 2010 and 2024 were similar (around 219,000). These changes were all linked with changes in pupil numbers, discussed shortly.



Source: Department for Education (DfE), [School workforce custom table](#), published June 2025.

<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (DfE), [Total FTE of all teachers at state-funded schools by year](#), published June 2025.

Shortly after taking office in July 2024, the government announced its [aim to recruit 6,500 new teachers](#) by the end of the current parliament.<sup>2</sup> This target includes special schools, secondary schools, and further education colleges.<sup>3</sup>

School workforce data is collected in each November and published each June. This means we do not yet have a complete year of data following the July 2024 election to assess progress towards this target against. However, the Government points to [increasing numbers of people in teacher training](#) as evidence they are working towards this goal. Teacher training is discussed more in [section 2.2](#).

The National Audit Office said in an April 2025 report that the government [should publish a delivery plan](#) for achieving the 6,500-teacher target, after raising particular concerns about the situation in secondary schools and further education colleges.<sup>4</sup>

## Teacher vacancies

The number of reported teacher vacancies (full-time and part-time) in state-funded schools has also risen steadily since 2010, from 452 (0.1% of the workforce) in November 2010 to 2,173 (0.5% of the workforce) in 2024. This is down slightly on a peak of 2,802 (0.6% of the workforce) in 2023.<sup>5</sup>

In November 2022, vacancy rates for secondary classroom teachers varied considerably by subject, and were highest in:

- Modern foreign languages other than French, Spanish, and German (3.2%)
- General/Combined Science (1.3%)
- Design and technology – food technology (1.2%)
- Maths (1.2%)<sup>6</sup>

In absolute terms, the highest number of vacancies were in the following subjects: general/combined science (441); mathematics (398); and English (323).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Education, [Education Secretary begins push to recruit 6,500 new teachers](#), 8 July 2024

<sup>3</sup> [Letter to the education workforce from Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson](#); PQ [HL9576](#)

<sup>4</sup> National Audit Office, [Government's 6,500-teacher pledge faces uncertainties as student numbers surge](#), 30 April 2025

<sup>5</sup> [Teacher vacancies and temporarily filled posts](#), 5 June 2025

<sup>6</sup> [Teacher vacancies by subject](#), 5 June 2025

<sup>7</sup> [Teacher vacancies by subject](#), 5 June 2025

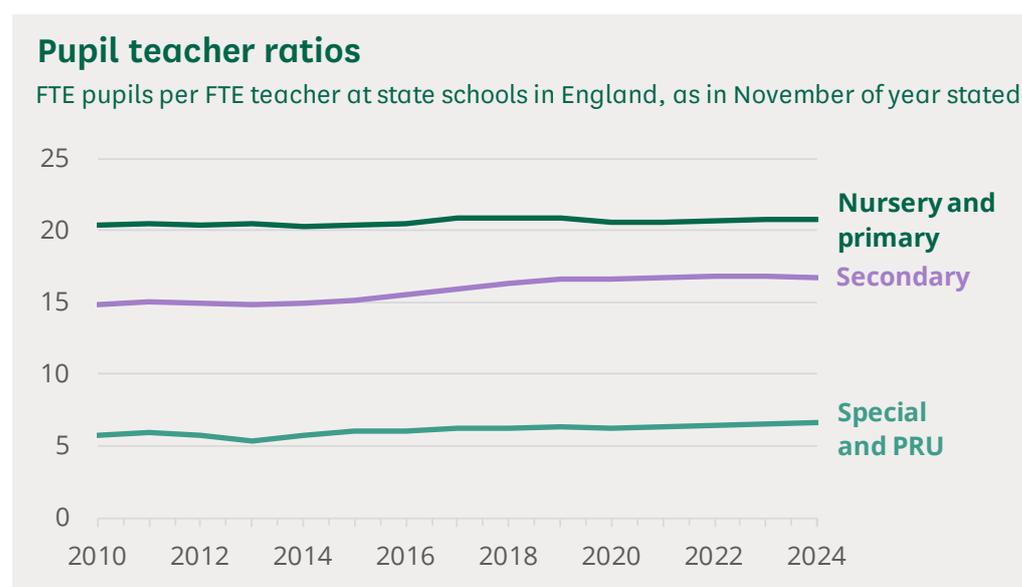
These vacancy statistics are unlikely to fully reflect recruitment difficulties, in part because they are collected in November when vacancy rates are comparatively low compared to other times of the year.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Class sizes and changing pupil numbers

As teacher numbers have risen, the number of pupils in schools has risen at a faster rate. This means that the pupil to teacher ratio, the number of pupils per teacher, has increased.<sup>9</sup>

Across all state-funded schools, there were 17.1 pupils per teacher in November 2010, compared to 18.0 in November 2024. This is down slightly from a peak of 18.2 in November 2019.

The number of pupils per teacher has increased proportionally most at special schools and pupil referral units (PRU, from 5.8 to 6.6 pupils per teacher, +14%). This is followed by state-funded secondary schools (14.8 to 16.7, +13%), then nursery or primary schools (20.4 to 20.8, +2%).



Source: DfE, [Pupil to teacher ratio \(Qualified and unqualified teachers\), 2010/11 to 2024/25](#), published June 2025

<sup>8</sup> Education Committee, [Recruitment and retention of teachers](#), February 2017, paras 37-42

<sup>9</sup> DfE, [Pupil to teacher ratio \(Qualified and unqualified teachers\), 2010/11 to 2024/25](#), published June 2025

Estimates for the likely future number of pupils in schools are [produced annually](#) by DfE. These are based on [future population estimates](#) made by the Office for National Statistics.

The number of pupils in state-funded schools is expected to have peaked in 2024, at around 7.95 million.<sup>10</sup> This decreased to 7.90 million in 2025 (-0.7%) and is projected to decrease by between 0.6% and 1.3% each year until the end of the model in 2030. By then, there are expected to be 7.50 million pupils in state-funded schools, a decrease of 5% from 2025.

Most of this change is expected at primary schools, with pupil populations decreasing by 9.3% from 2025 to 2030 (from 4.48 million to 4.18 million). Regional variations are also likely.<sup>11</sup>

This change will present a number of choices for policymakers. Broadly speaking, these are either reducing expenditure on schools in line with falling student numbers, or maintaining current levels of expenditure and using the increased per-pupil funding in another way (reducing class sizes, decreasing workload for teachers, or another purpose).

This is discussed further in the Institute for Fiscal Studies' [Demographic change and schools across the UK: lessons from history](#) report.

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<sup>10</sup> DfE, [National pupil projections](#), 17 July 2025

<sup>11</sup> Education Policy Institute, [So Long, London – An analysis of London primary pupil movements](#), 24 September 2025

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## 2 Recruitment and retention

### 2.1 Routes into teaching

There were 41,736 teachers who started to work within the state-funded schools sector in 2024/25. Of these:

- 19,709 (47%) joined as newly qualified teachers or following a deferment after qualifying.
- 22,027 (53%) had worked as a teacher previously and were either moving from the private sector or returning to the state funded sector after working elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

People can qualify as teachers through:

- Postgraduate Initial Teacher Training (PGITT). This includes things like people completing [PGCE courses](#) after a previous degree, or the high potential initial teacher training (this is currently delivered by [Teach First](#)).<sup>13</sup> In 2025/26, there were 26,620 new entrants to this kind of training.
- [Undergraduate initial teacher training](#). This includes undergraduate degrees with components needed to provide qualified teacher status, and the newly introduced [degree apprenticeship route](#). In 2025/26, there were 5,555 new entrants to this kind of training.<sup>14</sup>

People with previous teaching experience may also be able to qualify through an [assessment only](#) route, or having a [recognised overseas qualification](#).

The government develops the [Teacher Workforce Model](#) to estimate the number of teachers it will need in future years.<sup>15</sup> This is then used to set [targets](#) for trainees through PGITT.

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<sup>12</sup> [Schools workforce in England](#), 5 June 2025

<sup>13</sup> [PQ 67957](#), 15 July 2025

<sup>14</sup> [Initial teacher training census](#), 4 December 2025

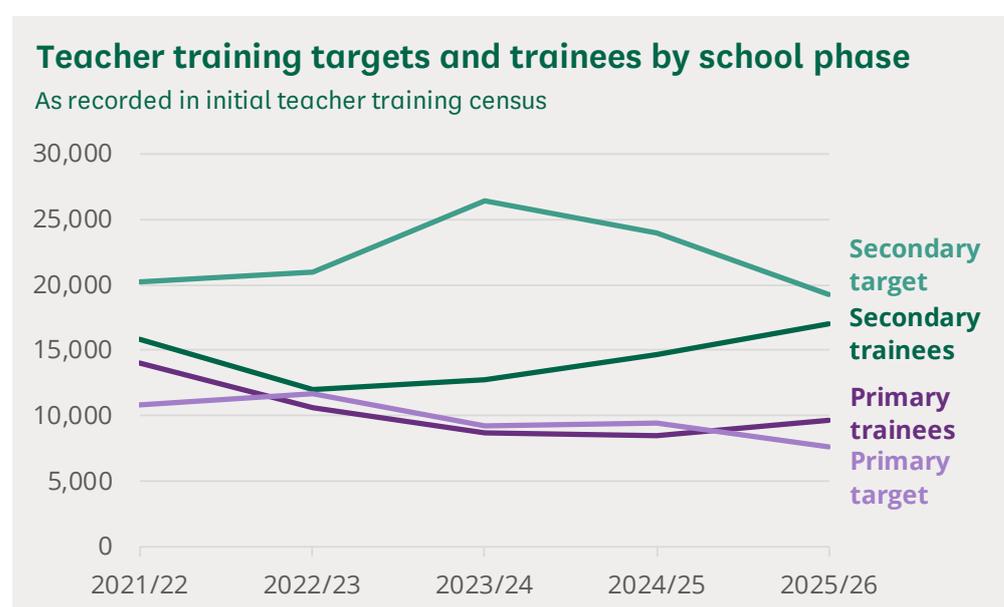
<sup>15</sup> See the “Additional supporting files” section of [Postgraduate initial teacher training targets](#) for details of how this model works.

## 2.2

## Postgraduate teacher training

For the 2025/26 academic year, the target was to train 26,920 teachers in total. Of these, 7,650 would be for primary schools and 19,270 for secondary schools. The primary target was exceeded (9,645 teachers were in training, 126% of target), and the secondary target was not met (16,975 teachers were in training, 88% of target).

This is an improvement on previous years. In 2024/25 for example, 90% of the primary target and 61% of the secondary target was met. However, the targets were higher in previous years also, making this comparison more complicated.<sup>16</sup> The graph below shows data on training targets and trainees recorded since 2021/22.



Source: [Initial teacher training census, custom table](#). Note: Teacher training places were limited by subject until 2023/24 but can now exceed targets.<sup>17</sup>

A breakdown of this data by subject is [available](#). The subjects which were proportionally the most below target (excluding the 'other' subject category) were:

- Business studies (84% below target)
- Drama (59% below target)
- Music (35% below target)<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For further detail, including a secondary subject breakdown, see the following [custom table](#).

<sup>17</sup> DfE, [Postgraduate initial teacher training targets 2023/24](#), 27 April 2023

<sup>18</sup> DfE, [Postgraduate initial teacher training targets - custom table](#),

In 2025/26, 22% of recruits had a first-class degree, and 49% had an upper second-class degree (a 2:1). This compares with 27% and 45% of UK degrees in general.<sup>19</sup> The proportion of recruits with a 2:1 degree or higher has remained largely unchanged since 2019/20 (fluctuating between 71-78% over the period).<sup>20</sup>

In 2024/25, 83% of people entering teaching through PGITT did so through a fee-funded course (51% through a course at a higher education institution and 32% through a [school-centred course](#)). The remaining 17% received a salary during their training – 8% through a [postgraduate apprenticeship](#), 6% through the salaried [Teach First](#) scheme, and 4% through [Schools Direct](#).<sup>21</sup>

The DfE [commissioned a market review of teacher training providers in 2021](#). The full [report published in 2022](#), recommended a new accreditation process and all providers were required to apply for reaccreditation for academic year 2024/25 with new DfE quality requirements. Providers are inspected by Ofsted every three years, as stipulated in the [Initial Teacher Education Framework and Handbook](#), and the DfE now publish a full [list of accredited initial teacher training providers](#).

## 2.3

### Qualified teachers from overseas

Teachers who are fully qualified in the European Economic Area (EEA) and several other countries, can be awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) in England with no requirement for further training. For certain science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) shortage subjects, the range of countries in scope is broader, and includes India, Ghana, Jamaica, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.<sup>22</sup>

In the 2024/25 financial year, 5,230 QTS awards were made to teachers qualified overseas, an increase from 4,102 in 2023-24 (+27%).<sup>23</sup> Fewer applications were submitted in 2024/25 than in 2023/24 (7,417 compared to 18,310), meaning this number may decrease in future years.

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<sup>19</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), [Qualification numbers and classifications achieved](#), 3 April 2025

<sup>20</sup> [Initial teacher training census – custom table](#), 4 December 2025. See this link for a subject breakdown also.

<sup>21</sup> [Initial teacher training census 2025/26](#) – 4 December 2025. Numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>22</sup> Department for Education, [Routes to qualified teacher status \(QTS\) for teachers and those with teaching experience outside the UK](#), 28 September 2023

<sup>23</sup> Teaching Regulation Agency, [Annual report and accounts 2024/25](#), 11 July 2025

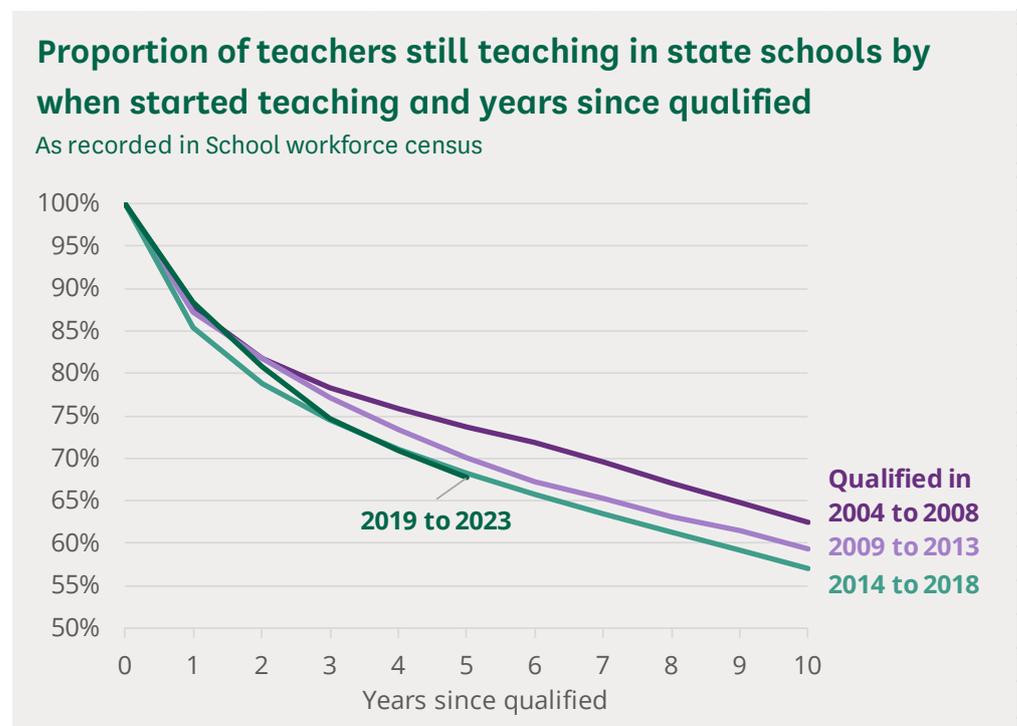
## 2.4

## Teachers leaving the profession

In 2023/24, around 40,800 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers left the state-funded sector, a ‘leavers rate’ of 9.0%. This rate includes those retiring and was down on the previous two years (9.3% in 2021/22, 9.5% in 2022/23). Around 900 more FTE teachers entered the profession than left it in 2023/24.<sup>24</sup>

In recent years, between 10% and 15% of teachers typically have left the state-sector profession within a year of qualifying. This rate then decreases in subsequent years, with between 30% and 33% of teachers having left five years after qualifying. It is important to note that teachers classed as ‘out of the profession’ at any one date may return.

Long-term retention rates were historically higher, as can be seen in the below chart.



Source: [School workforce census](#), 5 June 2025. Note: Some data points for five-year averages are based on fewer than five years of data where insufficient time has passed for all years to be included.

<sup>24</sup> Department for Education, [School workforce in England: Reporting year 2024](#), 5 June 2025, main text

## 2.5

## Factors affecting teacher retention

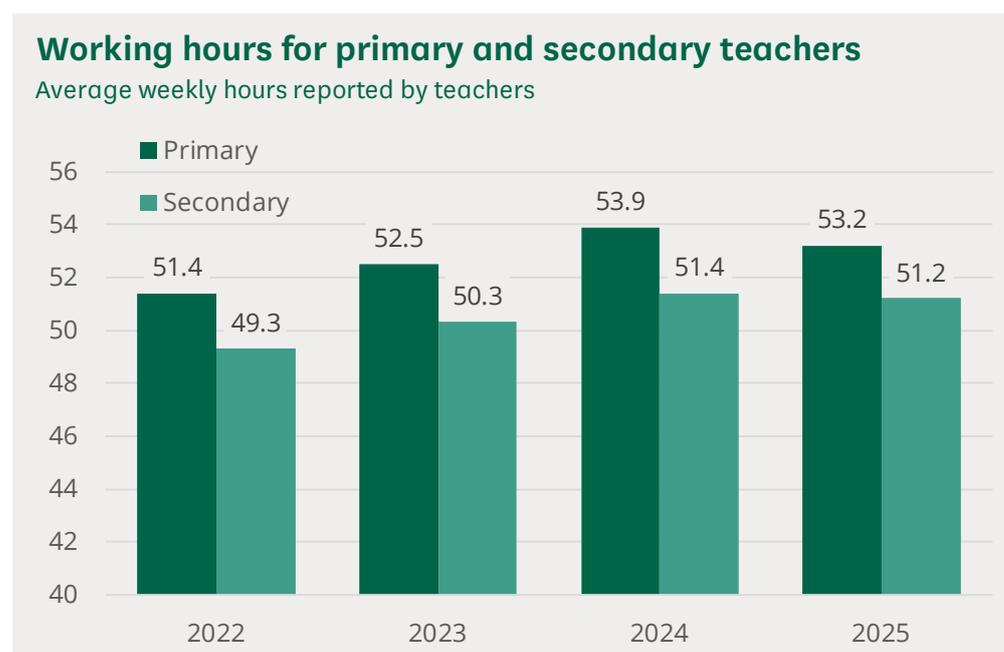
A number of reports have been produced exploring the reasons for teacher retention issues in recent years, including:

- [Revisiting the teacher retention crisis: recommendations for change](#) by the [Education Support](#) charity, which points to issues around high workloads, stress, and teachers feeling undervalued.
- The [Teacher recruitment, training and retention](#) report produced by the [Education committee](#), which also highlights that retention differs between different school subjects, issues around flexible working, and raises that teachers feel pupil behaviour has worsened since the covid-19 pandemic.
- [Evidence](#) submitted by the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) to the Education committee, which also raises similar points.
- [The Working lives of teachers and leaders survey](#) conducted by DfE. While not explicitly focused on retention, this explores areas teachers find difficult in their work, and highlights similar points to the above.

### Working hours

Data on working hours has been collected annually since 2022 in the [Working lives of teachers and leaders](#) report. This is based on surveying a sample of teachers about their workload in the most recent week.

The graph below shows that the average weekly workload increased for teachers each year from 2022 to 2024, and decreased slightly in 2025.



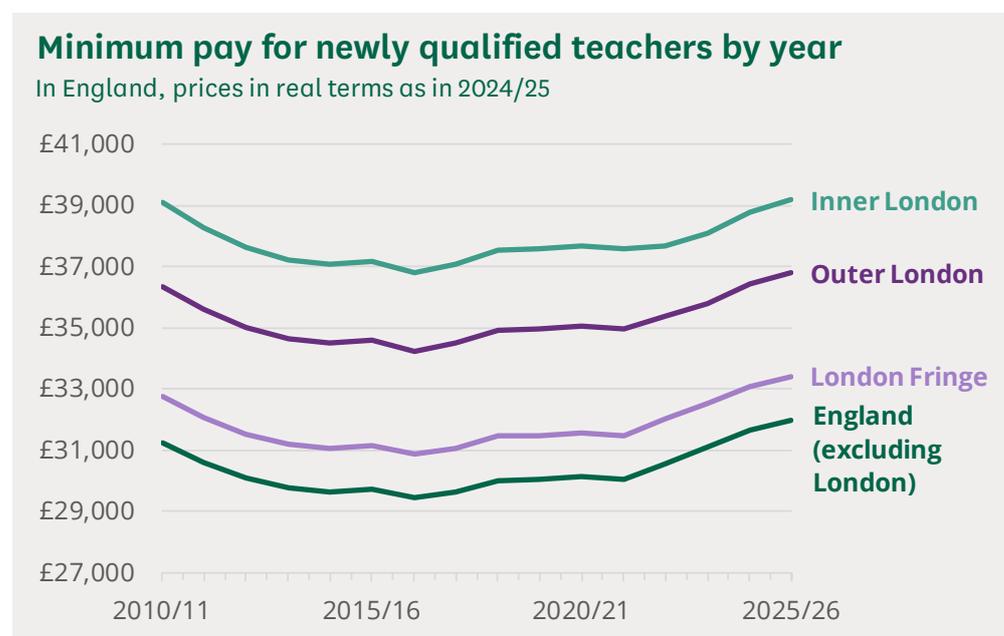
Source: DfE, [Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 4](#), 27 November 2025

Teachers are [contracted](#) to work for 195 days per year; 190 teaching days and 5 days for other tasks only. For comparison, in 2025 a typical NHS employee would have worked between 220 and 226 days, and a civil servant at one of the larger departments between 222 and 230 days.<sup>25</sup> A 51.2 or 53.2-hour week for someone working 195 days annually is equivalent in total annual hours to a 43.4 or 45.1-hour week for someone working 230 days annually, in terms of total hours worked. For someone working 220 days annually, the figures are 45.4 and 47.2 hours respectively.

## Teachers' pay

Teachers within local authority-maintained schools are paid within set bands. Academies do not have to follow these bands, [but often do](#). They are changed annually in England, following recommendations from the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), in line with a remit set by the Secretary of State. A 4% pay rise was [recommended for 2025/26](#), above the 2.94% [predicted inflation rate](#).

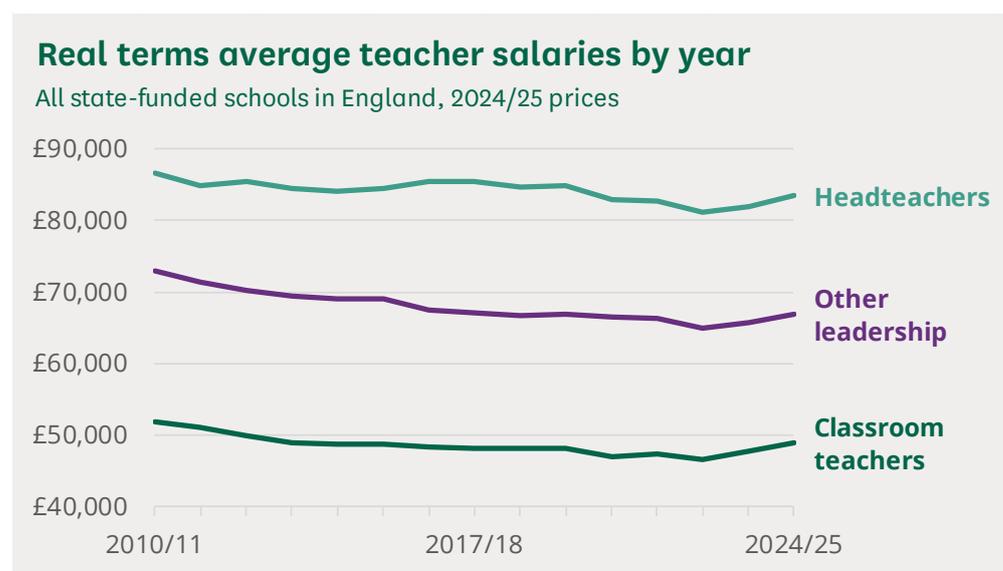
The below graph shows how the real terms minimum salary for a qualified teacher (the "newly qualified" salary) has changed. Outside of London, this decreased by 4.8% from 2010/11 to 2013/14. It then stayed relatively level until 2021/22, before increasing by 6.4% over the next four years. The newly qualified salary outside of London was £31,976 in 2025/26, which is 2.3% higher in real terms than in 2010/11. Trends were also similar in London.



<sup>25</sup> There were 261 weekdays in 2025, of which eight were bank holidays. [NHS staff](#) have between 27 and 33 annual leave. The [three largest core departments in terms of employees](#) in Q3 2025 were [DWP](#), [HMRC](#), and the [Home Office](#), who offer between 23 and 31 days annual leave, including the monarch's birthday.

Source: DfE, School Teachers' Pay and Conditions [2010](#), [2011](#), [2012](#), [2013](#), [2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#), [2021](#), [2022-25](#).

As a teacher's salary will change as their career progresses, it is valuable to look at the median pay for all classroom teachers and not just those newly qualified. This decreased in real terms by 10.4% total from 2010/11 to 2022/23, before increasing by 5.0% over the subsequent two years. Similar is true for teachers with leadership responsibilities.



Source: DfE, [School workforce in England: Reporting year 2024](#), 5 June 2025, [HM Treasury, GDP Deflators](#), 27 November 2025. Note: GDP deflators used as in financial rather than school year.

There is considerable variation within these categories. For example, secondary school headteachers are paid more on average than those at primary schools. Additionally, this data varies by region – [detailed datasets on this are available from DfE](#).

## 3 Initiatives to encourage teacher recruitment and retention

A range of initiatives are in place relating to teacher recruitment and retention. In April 2019 the DfE launched a [vacancy website for teachers](#).<sup>26</sup>

### 3.1 Bursaries and scholarships

There are various financial incentives aimed at encouraging recruitment to initial teacher training (ITT), including bursaries and scholarships for individuals training in certain subjects. The level of award varies by subject. Chemistry, Computing, Maths and Physics trainees with a lower second-class degree (a 2:2) or above, for example, may be eligible for a bursary of £29,000 in 2025/26; the bursary for a biology, design and technology, geography or languages (including ancient languages) trainee with a 2:2 or above is £26,000.<sup>27</sup>

Bursary levels also vary from year to year, and are not always available for the same subjects. For example, bursaries to teach English were not available in 2020/21 or 2021/22, but were available again in 2022/23 (£12,000), 2023/24 (£15,000), in 2024/25 (£10,000), and are £5,000 in 2025/26.<sup>28</sup> In 2026/27, English bursaries will not be available.

Bursary and scholarship levels have [been published for 2026/27](#). Bursaries are set at:

- £29,000 in chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics
- £20,000 in design and technology and languages (including ancient languages)
- £5,000 in biology and geography

Applicants may be eligible for a bursary if they have a 1st, 2:1, 2:2 or master's degree or a PhD.

<sup>26</sup> [PQ280317 \[on Schools: Vacancies\]](#), 29 July 2019

<sup>27</sup> Department for Education, [Funding: Initial teacher training \(ITT\), academic year 2025 to 2026](#), 7 October 2025

<sup>28</sup> Department for Education, [Funding: Initial teacher training \(ITT\), academic year 2025 to 2026](#), 7 October 2025, and earlier years

Scholarships, awarded separately to a bursary are available at levels of:

- £31,000 for chemistry, computing and physics
- £22,000 for French, German and Spanish (no other languages)<sup>29</sup>

Scholarships can include further benefits, such as membership of a relevant professional body. They are “awarded to high-calibre students who pass a robust application and interview process in one of the specialist subject areas.”<sup>30</sup>

Some teacher training routes also offer a salary during training. Further information is available on the Get Into Teaching website at: [Bursaries and funding](#).

### Targeted retention incentive payments

Eligible teachers of chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics can claim a [targeted retention incentive payment](#) for teaching in eligible state-funded secondary schools.

These payments of £3,000 to £6,000 are made to teachers in schools identified as having a high need for teachers.

## 3.2 Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework

Following a review, the previous Conservative government combined the existing initial teacher training core content framework and early career framework for teachers into the [Initial teacher training and early career framework](#) (ITTECF), published in January 2024 and in place from September 2025.

The framework states that training providers are expected to create “a carefully sequenced curriculum of training and professional development to support trainees and [early career teachers] ECTs to build their expertise” based on the framework.<sup>31</sup>

The ITTECF is planned to be reviewed in 2027.

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<sup>29</sup> Department for Education, [Funding: initial teacher training \(ITT\), academic year 2026 to 2027](#), 7 October 2025

<sup>30</sup> As above

<sup>31</sup> Department for Education, [Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework](#), January 2024, p4

## Early Career Teacher entitlement

The [early career teacher entitlement](#) (ECTE) replaced the previous early career framework (ECF)-based training and induction in September 2025.

The ECTE is a package of training and support based on ITTECF that teachers receive during their two-year induction and is intended as “a bridge between your teacher training and your teaching career.”<sup>32</sup>

## 3.3 Student loan reimbursement scheme

Since 2017, [a student loan reimbursement programme](#) has been in place for some teachers.

For the most recent batch of claims (for the 2024 to 2025 financial year), teachers can be eligible if they:

- taught biology, chemistry, physics, computing or languages during the 2024 to 2025 financial year
- taught at a school in an eligible local authority during the 2024 to 2025 financial year
- spent at least 50% of their contracted hours teaching one or more eligible subjects
- completed their initial teacher training (ITT) course between the 2013 to 2014 academic year and 2020 to 2021 academic year (1 September to 31 August), including those years
- are currently employed as a teacher at a state-funded secondary school in England

Claims can be made from March 2026. The amount repaid is based on the amount a teacher repaid to the Student Loans Company through Pay As You Earn (PAYE) while employed as a teacher.

Fuller information, including a [list of eligible local authorities](#), is published by the Department for Education.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Department for Education, [Get into Teaching: Early Career Teachers](#)

<sup>33</sup> Department for Education, [Teachers: claim back your student loan repayments](#), September 2025

## 3.4

# International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS)

[International qualified teacher status](#) (iQTS) is a teaching qualification which leads to the automatic award of qualified teacher status (QTS) for applicants living abroad.

The DfE is responsible for the regulatory framework for iQTS and accredits providers.

The rollout of iQTS was announced by the then Conservative government in 2022,<sup>34</sup> following [a consultation in 2021](#)<sup>35</sup> and a pilot phase launched in spring 2022.

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<sup>34</sup> Department for Education press release, [England opens doors to world's best teachers](#), 10 June 2022

<sup>35</sup> Department for Education, [International Qualified Teacher Status \(iQTS\) - government consultation response](#), August 2021

## 4 Further reading

Below are links to selected reports concerning teacher recruitment and retention that have been published since 2020.

- National Foundation for Educational Research, [Teacher recruitment crisis: Are we finally turning the corner?](#), 7 May 2025
- National Foundation for Educational Research, [Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2025](#), March 2025
- National Audit Office, [Teacher workforce: secondary and further education](#), April 2025
- House of Commons Education Committee, [Teacher recruitment, training and retention](#), May 2024. [Government response](#) published January 2025.
- Teachertapp, Gatsby, SchoolDash, [Teacher Recruitment and Retention in 2023: Teachers views on coping with shortages, job attachment and flexible work](#), June 2023
- Education Policy Institute, [The teaching workforce after the pandemic](#), June 2022
- University of Essex, [Does it pay to be a teacher?](#) [PDF], October 2021
- Education Policy Institute, [Teacher recruitment and retention in the eye of the pandemic](#), June 2021
- RAND Europe, [Understanding Teacher Retention](#), February 2021

The following webpages also provide links to further analysis of the teacher labour market:

- Education Datalab: [Teacher careers](#)
- Education Policy Institute: [Teaching and Leadership: Supply and Quality](#)
- National Foundation for Educational Research, [School workforce](#).

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