

REPORT

# Teacher workforce: secondary and further education

Department for Education

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# Teacher workforce: secondary and further education

Department for Education

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## Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General

Ordered by the House of Commons  
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National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House  
of Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act

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**Gareth Davies**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**National Audit Office**

**17 April 2025**

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Key facts

217,600

full-time equivalent number of secondary teachers in 2023/24, 1,500 more than in 2022/23

£700mn

the Department for Education's (DfE's) estimated total budget for recruitment and retention initiatives in secondary schools and further education colleges in 2024-25

62%

percentage of target met for the number of secondary school postgraduate initial teacher trainees in 2024/25

Recruitment and retention

- 6,500 additional new teachers pledged over the course of this Parliament for schools and further education colleges
- 5.1 of 100 teaching roles vacant in general further education colleges, and 1.8 of 100 in sixth-form colleges, in 2022/23
- 1 number of times DfE has met its recruitment target for secondary school postgraduate initial teacher trainees in the past 10 years

Teacher numbers

- 54,000 headcount number of teachers in further education colleges in 2022/23, 2,000 more than in 2021/22
- Between 8,400 and 12,400 number of additional teachers DfE estimates colleges will need by 2028/29 to meet demographic pressures and offer T Levels
- 1,600 number of additional secondary teachers DfE currently estimates will be needed between 2023/24 and 2027/28 to meet the demand from growing pupil numbers

Teacher pay

- 5.5% fully funded pay award for all schoolteachers in 2024/25
- c £10,000 difference in median salary between secondary teachers and teachers in further education colleges in 2022/23

Throughout this report, central government financial years are written as, for example, '2024-25' and run from 1 April to 31 March. Academic years are written '2024/25' and run from 1 September to 31 August for schools and 1 August to 31 July for colleges.

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## Summary

**1** The Department for Education (DfE) considers that the school and college workforce will impact the Government's ability to achieve its growth and opportunities missions first set out in summer 2024. It has focused on having enough high-quality teachers across all subjects and in all parts of the country. This relies on both high-quality teaching, which DfE sees as the factor within schools and colleges that has the biggest impact on educational outcomes, and there being enough teachers. Teacher shortages can impact quality if schools and further education colleges then use non-specialist or supply teachers, have larger class sizes, or limit the subjects offered. DfE currently sees not having enough teachers as a significant issue impacting educational outcomes for children and young people.

**2** In 2023/24, there were 217,600 teachers across 3,450 secondary schools, with 54,000 teachers in 230 further education colleges in 2022/23.<sup>1</sup> Across both settings, teacher recruitment and retention has been a challenge. In secondary schools, pupil-teacher ratios have increased, and DfE has missed all but one of its targets for postgraduates starting teacher training since 2015/16. Over the next three years, DfE expects to need more secondary teachers as student numbers rise. These students may then move into further education. 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 (spring 2029 at the latest).

**3** DfE is accountable for securing value for money from the funding it provides schools and further education colleges across England. Educational settings are responsible for planning, recruiting and managing their own workforces, with DfE responsible for the overall system and national approach. This includes setting pay ranges for secondary school teachers, but not for teachers in further education colleges.

**4** In 2019, DfE published its first teacher recruitment and retention strategy, covering schools. It set out its vision to make teaching careers attractive, rewarding and sustainable, through more supportive school cultures and reduced workload; better early career support; making sure teaching remains attractive; and making it easier to become a teacher. We estimate that DfE budgeted to spend £700 million on recruitment and retention initiatives covering secondary schools and further education colleges in 2024-25.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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## Focus of our report

**5** This report assesses whether DfE is achieving value for money through its work to recruit and retain teachers in state-funded secondary schools and further education colleges (including sixth-form colleges) in England. Demand for teachers across these settings is increasing, as the number of pupils continues to rise and is expected to peak in secondary schools in 2028. We do not consider other settings, such as primary schools or independent training providers. We look at teacher numbers, rather than whether teachers deliver good-quality teaching, but recognise both are needed for DfE to achieve its objectives. We also only look at teaching roles, rather than leadership or teaching assistants, as teachers represent the largest group of staff. This report examines DfE's:

- understanding of the teacher workforce needs across secondary schools and further education colleges (Part One); and
- pay, financial and non-financial initiatives to address recruitment and retention needs, and how it brings these together (Part Two).

We set out our audit approach and methodology in Appendix One. Appendix Two provides a list of the initiatives included in our estimate of DfE's £700 million budget for 2024-25.

## Key findings

Sufficiency of teachers in secondary schools and further education colleges

**6** **There is a longstanding nationwide teacher shortage, particularly in further education colleges, with teacher numbers not increasing in line with pupil numbers.** Between 2015/16 and 2023/24, secondary teacher numbers increased by 3% to 217,600, compared with a 15% rise in secondary school pupils to 3.7 million. In 2023/24, 46% of secondary schools reported at least one teaching position vacant. DfE expects secondary school pupil numbers to grow until 2028, subsequently contributing to more students in further education colleges, which face significant challenges recruiting teachers. In 2022/23, 5.1 of 100 teaching posts were vacant in general further education colleges, and 1.8 of 100 in sixth-form colleges. The teacher vacancy rate was 0.7% in secondary schools (paragraphs 1.8, 1.13 and 1.15, and Figure 2).



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**7 Teacher numbers have been impacted by challenges in both recruiting and retaining teachers.** DfE struggles to attract postgraduates into secondary school teaching. For all but one of the past 10 years, DfE has missed its target for postgraduates starting training to become secondary school teachers, achieving between 48% and 87% of its target. Also, not all those who complete their training go into teaching in the state-funded sector in England, with DfE estimating 76% of those finishing in the 2022/23 academic year going on to teach in state-funded schools within 16 months. The number of qualified teachers leaving secondary schools has started to increase to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022/23, 19,900 teachers left, compared with 18,500 in 2018/19, with the retention rate lower across education compared with other sectors. Retaining teachers early in their career is challenging – just over one-third of secondary teachers leave within five years of qualification. In 2024, 84% of teachers who had left in the preceding year described high workload as a reason for leaving, in a survey by DfE, with 75% citing stress and/or wellbeing (paragraphs 1.9 to 1.11, 2.17 and 2.24).

**8 Recruitment and retention challenges are worse for certain subjects, and schools in deprived areas.** In 2024/25, DfE failed to meet its targets for those starting their initial teacher training in 13 out of 18 secondary subjects, for example, in physics (31% of target met), computing (37% of target met), and modern foreign languages (43% of target met). It exceeded targets for classics, history, biology, physical education and English. Schools with higher levels of disadvantaged pupils tend to have greater staff turnover and unfilled vacancies. In 2023/24, secondary schools with the highest percentage of disadvantaged pupils had 34% of teachers with up to five years' experience, compared with 20% in schools with the lowest percentage of disadvantaged pupils (paragraphs 1.9 and 1.12, and Figure 4).

**9 DfE has a good understanding of secondary school teacher numbers, but its modelling of future requirements does not build in known shortages, nor indicate the total number of teachers needed.** Since 2010, DfE has collected information on teachers in state-funded schools through an annual census. It uses this to build a comprehensive picture of teacher numbers and to understand, for example, subject-specific shortages, and teachers' qualifications and working patterns. DfE feeds information into a model which it uses to estimate the number of qualified teachers, and sets an annual target for the number starting postgraduate initial teacher training. It does not set targets for the number of teachers it will recruit through other routes. The model assumes that current teacher numbers meet existing demand and does not fully reflect where fewer people than targeted start initial teacher training (paragraphs 1.16 to 1.18, and Figure 5).

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## **10 Because of a lack of data, DfE is not yet able to use its further education workforce demand model to identify how many teachers colleges need to recruit.**

DfE has less mature and comprehensive data for further education than for schools. DfE has overseen further education colleges since July 2016, and started a workforce data collection in 2020, publishing it from 2021/22. Before this, DfE collected workforce data through smaller sector surveys. A smaller proportion of further education colleges (94.0% in 2022/23) has provided data compared with schools (99.7%), but DfE expects this to improve as colleges become familiar with the mandatory requirements. DfE has developed a model to project the teachers required, based on student number projections. It compares this with actual teacher numbers in 2020/21, rather than more recent numbers. DfE does not currently use the model to set targets for how many teachers it needs in further education colleges, and most of the model assumptions are based on incomplete data. DfE uses the model to provide contextual information when preparing business cases and spending review bids (paragraphs 1.14, 1.16, 1.19 and 1.20, and Figure 5).

### Recruitment and retention initiatives

**11 Evidence suggests pay increases have more impact on teacher numbers than other initiatives, but there are affordability implications and teachers' real-terms pay was 10% less in 2024 than in 2010.** DfE recognises competitive pay as its strongest lever in influencing teacher recruitment and retention. However, in 2024, real-terms education sector pay was around 10% below 2010 levels, compared with average public sector pay being 2.6% below. Teacher salaries in general further education colleges are around £10,000 below those in secondary schools, making it harder for colleges to attract staff. For 2024/25, the Government fully funded a 5.5% pay award for all schoolteachers, representing an additional £1.2 billion funding. For further education, government has no role in setting pay, and colleges set their own salaries. DfE has given colleges additional funding of £285 million for 2024-25 and £300 million for 2025-26, which they can choose to use to increase pay. However, sector bodies have said that the 2025-26 funding will mostly be used to cover the additional costs resulting from higher student numbers. Any pay decisions will become embedded for future years, so need to be considered from a longer-term affordability perspective (paragraphs 2.3 to 2.7, and Figure 8).

**12 In 2024-25, DfE budgeted to spend around £700 million on wide-ranging financial and non-financial initiatives (excluding pay) designed to improve recruitment and retention.** Of this, £390 million relates to financial incentives, such as training bursaries and retention incentives. These are often aimed at those teaching specific subjects, with some targeted at those teaching in deprived areas. DfE also has initiatives without financial incentives, such as providing opportunities for professional development. For example, in 2021, DfE introduced a framework to encourage greater consistency in how schoolteachers develop in their first two years of teaching. Fewer initiatives apply to further education colleges than to schools, mainly because DfE has less influence across this sector (paragraphs 1.5, 2.2, 2.8 to 2.12, and 2.19 to 2.30, Figure 1 and Appendix Two).

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**13 DfE has limited evidence on the effectiveness of initiatives to improve workload or wellbeing, despite these being common reasons for teachers leaving.** DfE has good evidence that financial incentives (training bursaries and retention payments) lead to a sustained increase in long-term teacher numbers. However, workload and wellbeing are the issues teachers most commonly cite for leaving the state sector. DfE provides schools and colleges with guidance and support to improve their culture and ways of working, such as around flexible working, but there is less evidence of the effectiveness of this type of initiative (paragraphs 2.10, 2.13, 2.24 to 2.27, and 2.30).

## Bringing together initiatives

**14 DfE is taking innovative steps to consider challenges across the education sector as a whole and to start comparing the costs and benefits of certain initiatives.** In 2019, DfE published a recruitment and retention strategy for schools, reflecting its then approach of considering schools and further education separately. It has started identifying opportunities for a more integrated recruitment approach, such as using digital tools to encourage recruitment across further education and schools. To make better decisions, DfE has also started analysing the value for money of its financial initiatives in secondary schools, to compare the cost-effectiveness of recruiting additional teachers through different routes. For example, it has identified that improving the percentage of trainee teachers who move into the profession would reduce the average cost of recruiting a new teacher and increase overall value for money (paragraphs 1.3, 2.17, 2.19 and 2.32 to 2.36, and Figure 9).

**15 Given the upcoming multi-year spending review, DfE has not yet agreed plans setting out how it will achieve, and routinely monitor progress towards, the pledge for 6,500 more teachers.** In July 2024, the Government pledged 6,500 new teachers for schools and colleges over the course of this Parliament. Following this announcement, DfE considered a range of levers including pay and financial initiatives, and produced an initial delivery plan in autumn 2024. However, given the upcoming multi-year spending review, DfE has yet to formalise its delivery plans, which will need to align with government funding and wider spending priorities. DfE told us it aims to consider demographic pressures, to best target initiatives where they are needed most, in the context of a constrained fiscal environment. While developing these plans, DfE announced a 5.5% pay increase for all schoolteachers and a package of bursaries and scholarships for initial teacher training. Ten months after the pledge was announced, it currently assesses its confidence in delivering the pledge as significantly challenging given the fiscal context. DfE is considering how to collect data on a more frequent basis than its current annual workforce data collections, to monitor progress towards the pledge (paragraphs 2.38 to 2.42, and Figure 10).

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**16 The extent to which the pledge for 6,500 more teachers will address current and expected shortages depends on how it will be delivered across schools and further education colleges.** DfE is considering how to split the pledge across settings but will not formalise the split until funding has been agreed as part of the spending review. As such, it cannot confirm the extent to which meeting the pledge will provide the teachers needed. Latest figures show that, in 2022/23, there were around 1,500 teacher vacancies and 1,700 temporarily filled posts across secondary schools. DfE told us it estimates that 1,600 more secondary teachers will be needed between 2023/24 and 2027/28 to meet the demand from growing pupil numbers. Also, in 2022/23, there were 2,500 teacher vacancies in further education colleges, with DfE estimating colleges will need between 8,400 and 12,400 more teachers, compared with 2020/21 levels, by 2028/29 (paragraph 2.37).

## Conclusion

**17** Having enough good-quality teachers is fundamental to achieving positive outcomes for all secondary school and further education students. DfE has taken positive steps in seeking to understand and increase teacher numbers, with a range of initiatives budgeted to cost around £700 million in 2024-25. However, there remains a shortage of teachers, particularly in certain subjects, disadvantaged areas and further education colleges.

**18** Looking ahead, secondary school and further education student numbers will rise and DfE has identified not having enough teachers as an ongoing issue. In July 2024, the Government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers by the end of the current Parliament, but it is not yet clear whether this will fully address current and expected teacher shortages. In developing its plans in line with the June 2025 multi-year spending review, DfE is considering how to split the 6,500 pledge across different educational settings, taking into account the fiscal environment and demographic changes. Following on from this, to be confident of allocating available funding in a way that delivers value for money, it needs to continue building its evidence base and exploring opportunities to consider challenges from a system perspective.

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## Recommendations

**19** To address the continuing challenges with teacher recruitment and retention, and work towards the Government's pledge to recruit an additional 6,500 new teachers, DfE should:

- a** develop cross-sector data and insights across schools and further education colleges, to understand career paths and the unintended impact of sector-focused initiatives, to create a cross-sector approach;
- b** collect more comprehensive data on further education teachers by reiterating the importance of providing data returns, and exploring how to build a historical picture;
- c** as part of its thinking around meeting the 6,500 pledge, fully assess, balance and manage the implications for value for money, affordability, responding to future teaching requirements and demographics, and the extent to which it can deliver its longer-term aims;
- d** following announcement of the multi-year spending review settlement, provide greater transparency around what the 6,500 pledge means in practice for the school and further education sectors, with a published delivery plan setting out objectives, responsibilities, milestones, and how increases will be measured, and subsequently, publicly report on progress;
- e** extend its evidence base of what works to recruit and retain teachers to include non-financial initiatives, and analyse the relative costs and benefits of initiatives to decide where to prioritise resources;
- f** consider what more it can do to encourage those undertaking teacher training to move into teaching jobs in the state-funded sector, and ensure the right type of students enrol on training, particularly for subjects that are seeing the greatest attrition; and
- g** assess the extent to which its further education workforce demand model is fit for purpose and uses the best available data and assumptions, implementing any required changes based on this assessment.

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## Part One

### Sufficiency of teachers in secondary schools and further education colleges

**1.1** To provide an effective education system in England, the Department for Education (DfE) supports schools and further education colleges in securing enough teachers. However, this has been an enduring challenge, which will worsen as more pupils enrol in these settings over the next few years. This part of the report describes roles and responsibilities, current teacher numbers, and DfE's understanding of future requirements.

#### **Importance of the teaching workforce**

**1.2** DfE recognises that high-quality teaching is the factor within schools and colleges that makes the biggest difference to a student's outcomes. A core focus for DfE is to have enough high-quality teachers across all subjects and in all parts of the country. Shortages can have a negative impact on schools and colleges if they then need to use more non-specialist or supply teachers, have larger class sizes, or limit the subjects offered. DfE currently assesses not having enough teachers in either secondary schools or further education colleges as a significant issue, as the risk has materialised.

**1.3** DfE has continually focused on ways to increase the number of teachers, and on whether it has enough. In 2019, it published a recruitment and retention strategy for schools, setting out its vision to make teaching careers attractive, rewarding and sustainable through more supportive school cultures and reduced workload; better early career support; making sure teaching remained attractive; and making it easier to become a teacher. Also, in July 2024, the new Government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers in schools and further education colleges over the course of this Parliament (by spring 2029 at the latest). Given the critical role teachers play in learning and development, the pledge is described as the first step for the opportunities mission aim for "all children to have every opportunity to succeed, no matter who they are, where they're from, or how much their parents earn". The pledge focuses on subjects with teacher shortages and areas with recruitment challenges. It also contributes to the Government's growth mission by creating greater capacity across further education to support young people to move into certain sectors, such as clean energy and technology.

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## Roles and responsibilities

**1.4** DfE is accountable for securing value for money from the funding that it provides schools and further education colleges in England. Settings decide how to spend this funding themselves, with a significant share spent on teachers' pay. DfE estimates local-authority-maintained secondary schools spent around £2.8 billion on teaching staff in 2023-24, 53% of their total spending, with secondary academies spending £10.1 billion (54% of their total spending) in 2022/23. For the same year, further education colleges spent £2.2 billion on teaching staff, 36% of their total spending. Possible factors leading to this lower percentage in further education colleges include proportionally more being spent on non-teaching staff and non-staff costs, such as equipment, as these settings typically provide more technical and practical courses than schools.

**1.5** DfE sets the framework, policies and overall conditions within which schools and further education colleges operate. As such, they have a national influence over the teacher market, but schools, trusts and further education colleges plan, manage and recruit 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. DfE has much less influence in further education than in schools (**Figure 1** overleaf) and does not set or make recommendations about pay as it does for schools. The Office for National Statistics reclassified colleges as part of the public sector from November 2022.

**1.6** To inform its approach, DfE has various ways to understand schools' and colleges' perspectives. For example, DfE regularly engages groups of secondary school and college leaders, and is involving unions and employer representative organisations in a new board to co-create the design and implementation of education policy from January 2025. Its nine regional teams, set up in 2022, also provide feedback to and from schools. Three geographically based teams gather insights from further education colleges. However, while most stakeholders told us they have confidence that DfE understands challenges across the whole system and different subject areas, fewer were confident about its understanding of challenges faced locally and across different types of provider (such as maintained schools, academies and colleges).

## Secondary school teacher workforce

**1.7** Each year since 2018/19, more people have become secondary school teachers than have left, leading the number of full-time equivalent secondary school teachers to increase annually. In 2023/24, 217,600 teachers worked across 3,450 secondary schools, a 7% increase from a low of 203,800 in 2018/19. Of these, where data are available, almost two-thirds (63%) were female; 20% were aged under 30, 60% aged 30 to 49 years, and 20% aged 50 or above; and 86% were white (including white minority groups), with the largest non-white ethnicity being 'Asian or Asian British' (7%).

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**Figure 1**  
Differences in the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) relationships with state-funded secondary schools and further education colleges

DfE has more direct influence in secondary schools than in further education colleges, most notably in setting teacher pay

	Secondary school teachers	Further education teachers
Employer	Schools/local authorities	Colleges
Number of teachers (in year with most recent data)	217,600 (in 2023/24)	54,000 (in 2022/23)
Responsibility for ...		
setting pay	<div>DfE/employer</div> <div>DfE has a statutory responsibility to set pay.</div>	<div>Employer</div> <div>DfE does not have a statutory responsibility to set pay and there is no independent pay review body.</div> <div>Pay is set by individual providers.</div>
setting conditions (hours, benefits, flexibility)	<div>DfE/employer</div> <div>DfE sets statutory terms and conditions, through the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions document. For some of these conditions, schools have some flexibility over implementation, to best suit their needs.</div>	<div>Employer</div> <div>Some teaching occurs in the evening, so the working day may vary.</div>
setting qualification and training requirements	<div>DfE/employer</div> <div>New teachers entering the classroom have, or are working toward, qualified teacher status.</div>	<div>Employer</div> <div>There is no specific entry path or requirement to hold a teaching qualification or professional status.</div>
funding financial incentives for initial training and teacher retention	<div>DfE</div> <div>DfE offers training bursaries and scholarships as incentives for graduates to undertake teacher training, and retention payments for those who teach subjects in high need.</div>	<div>DfE/employer/individual</div> <div>DfE provides training bursaries for certain subjects and offers eligible teachers a retention incentive payment in their first five years of teaching.</div>
funding professional development	<div>DfE/employer</div> <div>DfE funds professional development including the early career framework providing a two-year package for early career teachers.</div>	<div>DfE/employer</div> <div>DfE funds professional development through some targeted programmes and initiatives. There is no early career framework.</div>

Level of DfE influence

■ High   ■ Medium   ■ Low

Notes

- 1 Full-time equivalent numbers are used for the number of secondary teachers to reflect the varied working patterns that the workforce may have. Headcount numbers are used for the number of further education teachers.
- 2 There may be differences in the level of influence DfE has, for example between academies and local-authority-maintained schools, and between statutory and non-statutory further education providers.
- 3 Ratings for DfE’s level of influence are DfE’s assessment and are subjective.

Source: National Audit Office review of Department for Education documents



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**1.8** Despite rising teacher numbers, there are not enough secondary school teachers nationwide, given an increase in pupil numbers. This has led to higher numbers of pupils for each teacher (**Figure 2** overleaf) and more teacher vacancies. Between 2015/16 and 2023/24, the number of secondary school teachers rose by 3%, compared with a 15% rise in pupils. As a result, the average number of pupils per teacher increased from 15.1 to 16.9. The vacancy rate for teaching positions in secondary schools was 0.7% in 2022/23. The proportion of secondary schools reporting at least one teaching position being vacant, or temporarily filled, more than doubled from 2010/11 (17%) to 2023/24 (46%). All English regions saw vacancies increase, with outer London seeing the largest increase, from 21% to 55% of schools, and the North East the smallest (from 14% to 37%).

## Recruitment

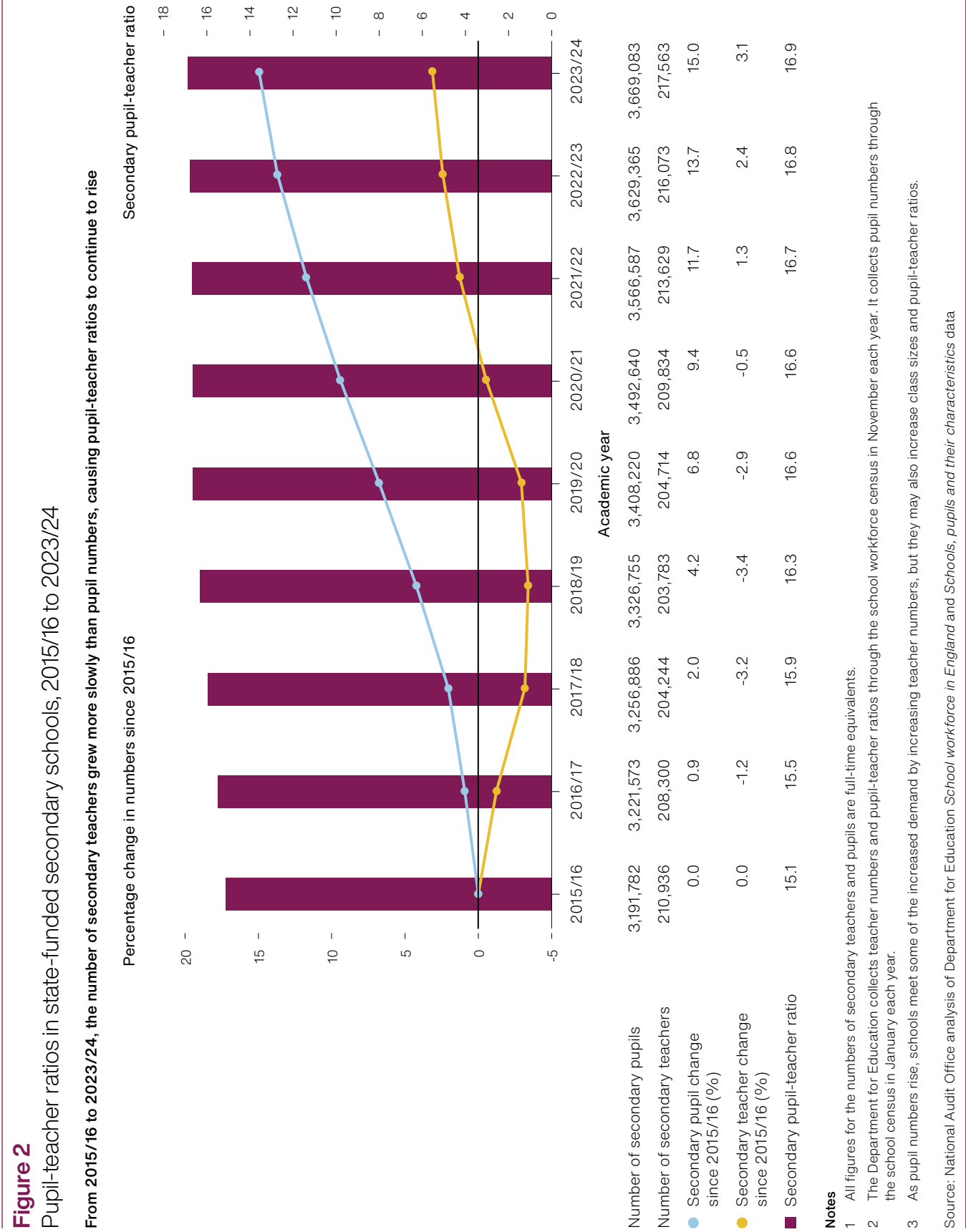
**1.9** Secondary schools rely on newly qualified teachers to increase teacher numbers. Other routes include teachers returning or new to state-funded secondary schools, having worked, for example, in the independent or further education sectors, or outside of England (**Figure 3** on page 17). Despite the importance of newly qualified teachers, between 2015/16 and 2024/25, DfE only met its overall target for the numbers starting postgraduate initial teacher training for secondary schools once (2020/21). In 2024/25, 14,800 trainees started postgraduate initial teacher training against a target of 24,000 (62% of target). In the remaining years, DfE met between 87% (in 2016/17) and 48% (in 2023/24) of its targets. There have been challenges recruiting trainees for certain subjects, particularly in STEM subjects.<sup>2</sup> In 2024/25, DfE failed to meet its subject-specific targets across 13 out of 18 secondary subjects (**Figure 4** on pages 18 and 19). Subject-specific shortages can impact the subjects a school can offer its pupils, or lead them to use non-specialist teachers. Evidence suggests this can negatively impact a pupil's learning.<sup>3</sup>

**1.10** Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, the number and proportion of teachers who were newly qualified starting in state-funded secondary schools fell from 12,000 (56%) to 8,700 (41%), the lowest since 2010/11. To some extent, an increase in returners over the same period, from 6,200 (29%) to 8,200 (39%), the highest since 2011/12, will have compensated for this fall.

<sup>2</sup> STEM subjects are science, technology, engineering and maths.

<sup>3</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research, *Teacher supply and shortages: the implications of teacher supply challenges for schools and pupils*, November 2022.

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**Figure 3**  
Routes for secondary school teachers entering and leaving the workforce in the year to November 2023

There are multiple entry routes into the teacher workforce



**Notes**

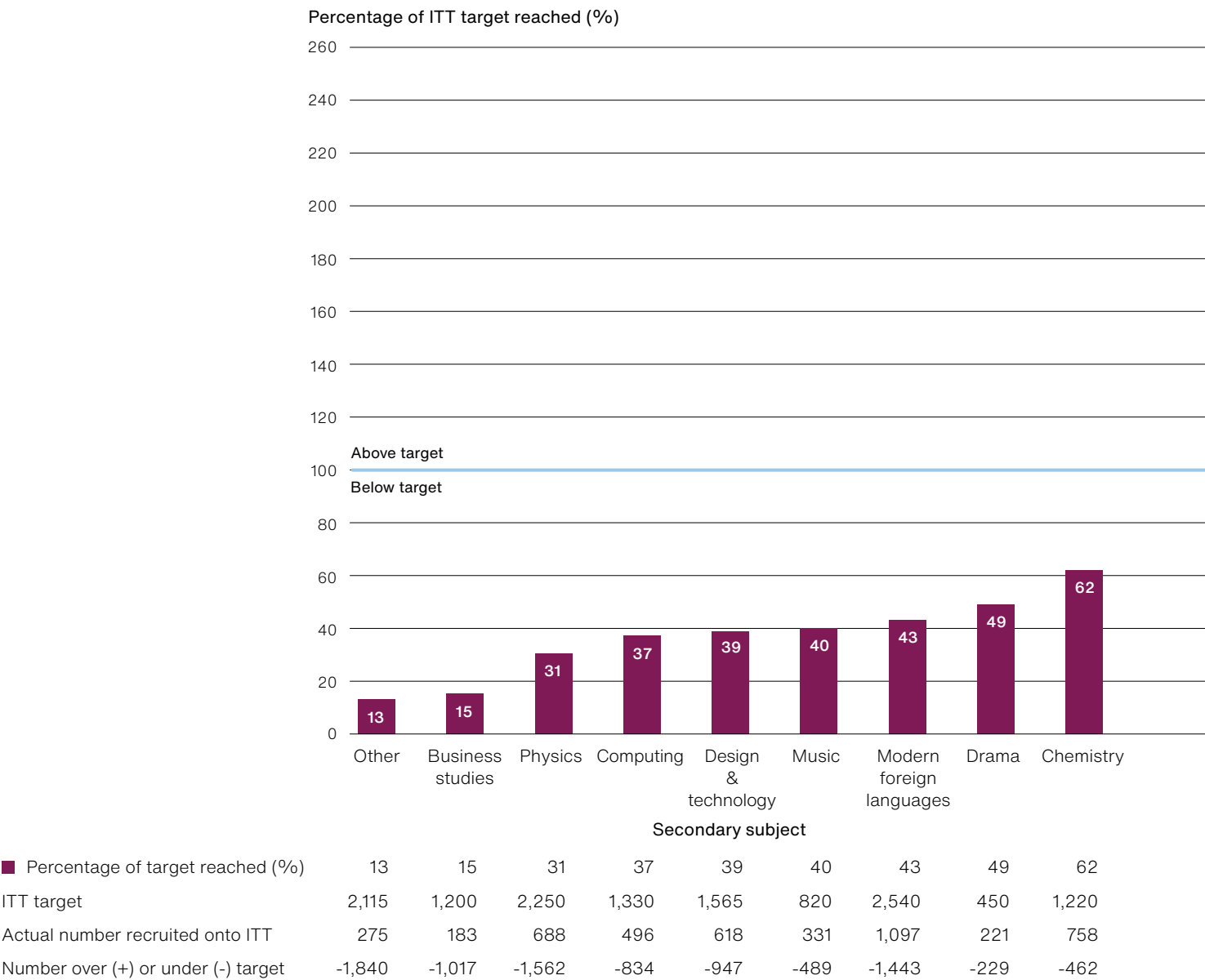
- 1 This figure relates to the state-funded secondary sector and uses data from the school workforce census that runs each November.
- 2 Entrants and leavers are for the period November 2022 to November 2023. The number of teachers in the workforce in November 2023 was 217,560.
- 3 All figures are full-time equivalents.
- 4 Entrants new to the state-funded sector are those qualified for more than two years taking up their first post in a state-funded school in England, and include those who have previously worked in the independent or further education sectors, or outside of England.
- 5 Leavers before retirement include teachers leaving the profession entirely, teachers moving to other UK education sectors and teachers leaving on career breaks such as maternity leave or secondments outside of the state-funded school sector.
- 6 The 19,860 leavers include 78 teachers who died during the year while still working.
- 7 Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Education *School workforce in England* data

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**Figure 4**  
The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) performance in achieving its postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment targets by secondary school subject, 2024/25

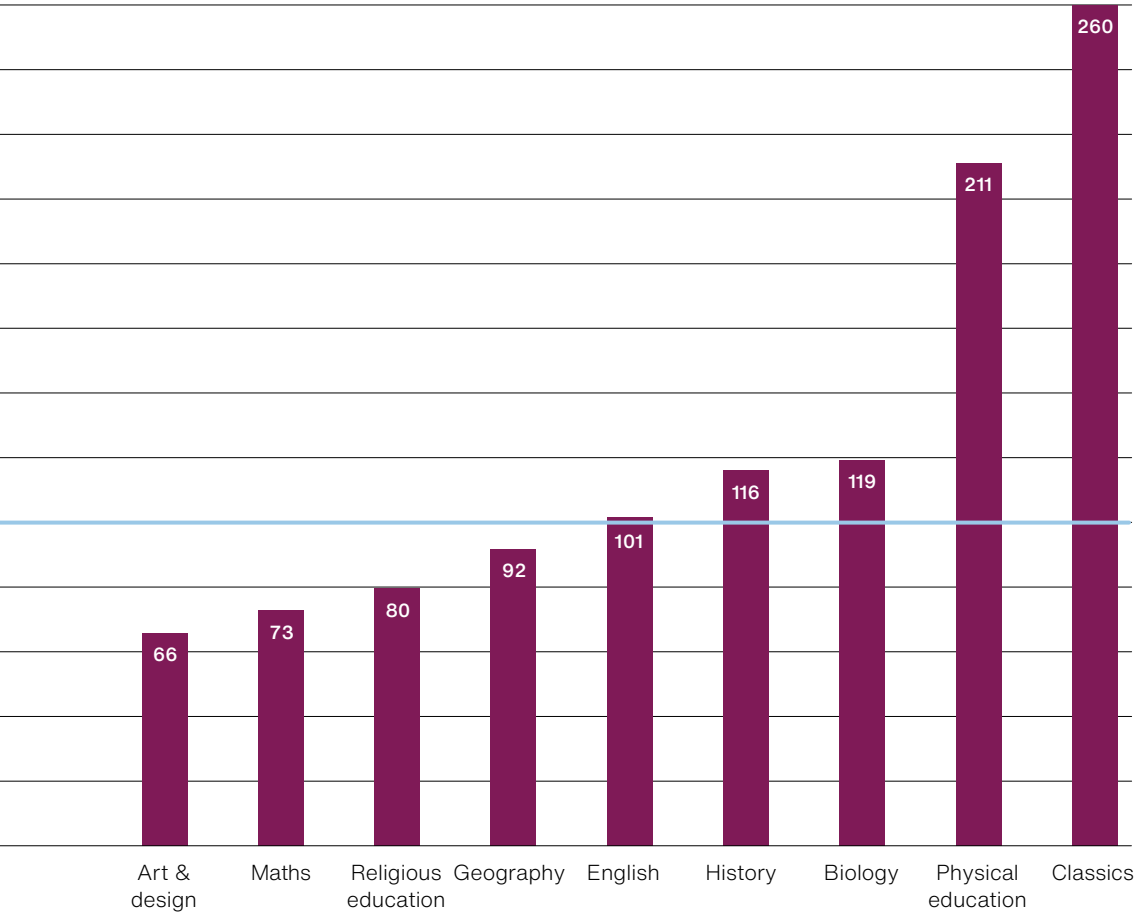
There is significant variance in ITT recruitment by subject, with five subjects reaching the target



Notes

- 1 DfE uses its teacher workforce model to set the postgraduate ITT targets each year, which it estimates are needed to provide a sufficient number of qualified teachers for state-funded schools in England.
- 2 ‘Other’ includes media, communication studies, social studies, citizenship, and psychology. DfE data do not provide individual targets or actual numbers recruited for these subjects.
- 3 Recruitment to postgraduate ITT in 2024/25 was not limited for any subject.
- 4 Data were extracted on 7 January 2025.

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Secondary subject								
66	73	80	92	101	116	119	211	260
1,095	3,065	580	945	2,290	725	1,120	625	20
721	2,229	462	868	2,309	841	1,336	1,320	52
-374	-836	-118	-77	+19	+116	+216	+695	+32

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## Retention

**1.11** The number of qualified teachers leaving secondary schools has started to increase to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022/23, 19,900 teachers left, compared with 14,700 in 2019/20 and 18,500 in 2018/19, the year before the pandemic. However, the proportion of teachers retiring has dropped significantly, from 33% in 2010/11 (6,900) to 7% in 2022/23 (1,500), meaning people are leaving teaching but continuing to work. Retaining teachers early in their career is a major challenge, with 36% of secondary teachers leaving within five years of qualifying. More widely, 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 and 49% in the private sector.

**1.12** Schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged pupils have more teachers leaving than those with lower proportions of disadvantaged pupils. They also have higher proportions of unqualified teachers, with 4% in the most disadvantaged schools compared with 2% in the least.<sup>4</sup> In 2023/24, 34% of teachers in the most disadvantaged schools had up to five years' experience, compared with 20% in schools with the lowest proportion of disadvantaged pupils.<sup>5</sup>

## Further education teacher workforce

**1.13** The current increase in pupils of secondary-school age will impact further education colleges as those children grow older. Further education colleges need enough skilled teachers to meet the increase in 16- to 19-year-olds and to help support DfE's aims for economic growth and the opportunities mission. However, colleges face significant challenges recruiting teachers. In 2022/23, there were 54,000 further education teachers in 230 colleges, 2,000 more than in 2021/22, but 5.1 of 100 positions were vacant in general further education colleges and 1.8 of 100 in sixth-form colleges. Certain subjects had more vacancies. For example, 9.6% of construction teaching positions were vacant nationally, ranging from 16% in the East Midlands to 5% in London. Many further education teachers require specific industry skills alongside teaching qualifications to deliver vocational training. Their pay and conditions are widely regarded as less competitive than both secondary schools and industry, with colleges competing against both to recruit and retain the staff they need. Retaining further education teachers early in their career is a particular challenge. For example, of 6,970 new teachers in 2018, only 43% were still teaching after five years.

<sup>4</sup> The proportion of pupils in a school who are eligible for pupil premium funding provides a measure of the level of disadvantage in a school. Pupils eligible for pupil premium include those registered for free school meals or who are looked after by a local authority.

<sup>5</sup> Schools are split into 10 equally sized groups based on pupil premium eligibility.

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**1.14** DfE took responsibility for further education from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in July 2016, following a machinery of government change. To build data across the sector, DfE initially used surveys of college staff and education training providers, alongside individual staff records. It then called for evidence on how to improve further education workforce data. DfE subsequently started the Further Education Workforce Data Collection in 2020. It first published data in 2021/22, when the data were more mature. So far, the response rate has been lower for further education colleges, where 94.0% responded for 2022/23, compared with schools, where nearly all responded (99.7% for 2023/24). DfE expects this to improve as colleges become familiar with the mandatory requirements. Pupil-teacher ratios are harder to measure across further education, as practical subjects, such as construction, limit class sizes.

## Understanding future requirements

**1.15** DfE needs to support schools and colleges to flex their teacher numbers, based on changing student numbers and government's wider strategies to focus on developing certain skills and qualifications, or the use of developing technologies. Between 2015/16 and 2023/24, the number of pupils in state-funded secondary schools increased from 3.2 million to 3.7 million. Based on demographic projections, numbers are estimated to continue growing, and to peak in 2028. These numbers will subsequently impact further education, which DfE predicts will need an additional 8,400 to 12,400 teachers by 2028/29, compared with 2020/21 levels, to meet demographic pressures and deliver T Levels. In the longer term, DfE will need to plan for falling pupil numbers, with pupils at state nursery and primary schools expected to fall by over 200,000 between 2024 and 2028.

**1.16** DfE has developed workforce models for schools and further education colleges, to understand and identify future gaps and trends in the availability of teachers. The schools model looks ahead to estimate the number of qualified teachers working in schools. It then compares this with expected pupil numbers to set a target for how many it will need to start postgraduate initial teacher training, but not those that need to be recruited through other routes. The further education model looks at demand only. It compares the workforce at one static point in time (2020/21) with expected student numbers, to estimate how many teachers will be needed to meet demand up to 2028/29. DfE does not currently use the further education model to set targets for how many teachers it needs. **Figure 5** overleaf shows differences in how the two models are developed and used.

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**Figure 5**  
Comparison of the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) schools and further education teacher workforce models

While both models estimate future teacher requirements, the models are set up and used differently

	Schools model	Further education model
Coverage	All state-funded primary (including maintained nurseries attached to schools) and secondary schools (including post-16 provision in such schools), academies, and free schools in England.	All funded 16- to 18-year-old and adult students studying at general further education colleges, specialist colleges, and sixth-form colleges in England.
Input: forecasts of teacher numbers	Uses latest teachers (currently 2022/23) to forecast numbers up to three years in the future, considering expected leavers, returners, teachers new to the state sector, and changes in working hours.	Uses teacher numbers from 2020/21.
Updates to teacher numbers	Updates every year with the latest school workforce census.	Assumes teacher numbers will remain constant up to 2028/29.
Input: forecasts of pupil numbers	Based on national pupil projections produced as an official statistic by DfE and published on gov.uk. The data are based on Office for National Statistics (ONS) population estimates and projections.	Uses ONS population estimates to forecast 16- to 19-year-old students. For 19+ students, uses number of students in 2020/21 and assumes this will remain constant.
Main assumptions	The current number of teachers meets demand.	Teacher numbers are constant for the period 2020/21 to 2028/29.
	Current breakdown of students by region and subject remains stable.	Teacher numbers in 2020/21 were sufficient for the number of students.
Testing of the model	Each year DfE tests the accuracy of the previous year’s forecast, to identify what changes might be needed, and how the model may need to be updated.	DfE has not tested or modified the model.
Outputs	Overall trainee target for postgraduate initial teacher training (latest 2024/25 intake), and individual targets for primary, and each secondary subject.	Teachers required from 2020/21 to 2028/29 and the surplus/shortfall over the projected period. The model can split this by provider type, qualification route of student or region.
	DfE publishes targets each year, details of the model and reasons for figures changing each year.	There are no published outputs from this model.
Purpose of model	Includes estimating the ‘right’ number of trainees to recruit onto postgraduate initial teacher training courses.	To provide contextual information for business cases supporting interventions and spending review bids.

Notes

- 1 While the schools teacher workforce model covers both primary and secondary schools, the review in this figure only covers the parts of the model relating to secondary schools.
- 2 Sixth forms in secondary schools are covered in the schools model, not the further education model.
- 3 We conducted our review of DfE’s workforce models between October 2024 and February 2025. Our review does not cover the most recent update to the further education workforce demand model.

Source: National Audit Office review of the Department for Education’s schools teacher workforce model and further education workforce demand model



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## Secondary school workforce model

**1.17** DfE has evidence to support its assumptions in the school workforce model and understands which impact the model's main output – DfE's annual recruitment target for postgraduate initial teacher training – most. It has comprehensive data, from 2010, through a census of schools and local authorities, which has a high response rate (99.7% for 2023/24). It uses the school workforce census to understand, for example, subject-specific shortages, and teachers' qualifications and working patterns.

**1.18** There are some limitations with DfE's school workforce model, as the following examples show.

- DfE starts with the assumption that there are enough teachers to meet current demand, which does not account for teacher vacancies. DfE then makes an uplift to targets if the model estimates that there will be an under-supply from recruitment (including the two most recent initial teacher training recruitment rounds) and retention.
- DfE recognises uncertainties that impact the model and its outputs, and is, for example, looking to show the impact of policy changes and new information. However, although the model only produces a central estimate DfE told us it is working on producing ranges around this. DfE does not consistently make clear to users of the model any limitations or ranges that may be appropriate to consider.

## Further education workforce demand model

**1.19** DfE's further education workforce demand model projects how many teachers will be needed based only on student numbers. This differs from the schools model, which also includes estimates of how many teachers are expected to join and leave. The further education model uses pension data to identify the current number of teachers as at 2020/21 which it compares with expected pupil numbers, considering demographics and wider changes such as the introduction of T Levels, to show the number of teachers needed in 2028/29.<sup>6</sup> Latest modelling, using 2021 census data and revised T Level numbers, shows colleges would need between 8,400 and 12,400 more teachers, compared with 2020/21 levels, without reflecting the potential impact of any initiatives. The range reflects the uncertainties associated with the evidence feeding into the modelling.

**1.20** DfE's assumptions for the further education model are more uncertain than for the schools model and often lack supporting evidence. DfE has sought to understand these uncertainties, and it assesses over 60% of its assumptions as having limited or no underlying evidence. For example, the model assumes teacher numbers will remain constant, an assumption which DfE acknowledges is highly unlikely to be correct. It has not validated this assumption, for example by comparing the forecast with more recent data. DfE told us it is reviewing its assumptions but could not provide further details, given the early stages of this work.

<sup>6</sup> T Levels, which focus on technical skills, are an alternative to A levels, apprenticeships and other courses aimed at 16- to 19-year-olds. T Levels have a higher number of teaching hours than qualifications they are intended to replace.

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## Part Two

### The Department for Education's approach to improving teacher recruitment and retention

**2.1** The Department for Education (DfE) funds initiatives to support secondary schools and further education colleges to recruit and retain enough teachers. This part of the report sets out these initiatives, alongside underlying evidence of their effectiveness, and how DfE brings these together, including to meet the Government's recent pledge to recruit an additional 6,500 teachers by the end of this Parliament.

#### **DfE's spending on recruitment and retention**

**2.2** In 2024-25, DfE budgeted around £700 million across a range of initiatives, other than pay and pensions, designed to improve teacher recruitment and retention.<sup>7</sup> This includes initiatives providing financial incentives, as well as non-financial initiatives designed, for example, to improve ways of working. Most initiatives (88% of the £700 million) relate primarily to teachers in schools. DfE told us that this balance is largely because it has less influence in further education (paragraph 1.5). Initiatives range from those targeted at encouraging people to become teachers, to those aimed at retaining teachers throughout their career (**Figure 6**, and **Figure 7** on page 26). Appendix Two provides a full list of initiatives. To manage and oversee these initiatives, DfE spends around £20 million each year.

#### **Pay**

**2.3** DfE identifies fair pay as critical to meeting its objective for ensuring enough teachers in schools and colleges, with pay its strongest lever. Stakeholders completing our survey chose 'making teacher pay more competitive' as the most effective way of improving teacher recruitment and retention, followed by 'training bursaries' and 'reducing workload'. Pay increases become embedded for future years, so they need to be considered from a longer-term affordability perspective than one-off initiatives. 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 around 2.6% less than in 2010.

<sup>7</sup> The initiatives included in our estimate are set out at Appendix Two. We have not audited these data.

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**Figure 6**

The 10 initiatives for improving teacher recruitment and retention on which the Department for Education (DfE) budgeted to spend the most in 2024-25

**DfE spends more on financial than non-financial initiatives to improve teacher recruitment and retention**

Initiative	Schools or further education	Recruitment or retention	Financial or non-financial	DfE budget in 2024-25 (£mn)
Training bursaries and scholarships	Schools	Recruitment	Financial	205.0
Early career framework	Schools	Retention	Non-financial	131.0
Targeted retention incentive (schools)	Schools	Retention	Financial	63.5
Targeted retention incentive (further education)	Further education	Retention	Financial	51.2
Initial teacher training reform funding	Schools	Recruitment	Financial	47.0
National professional qualifications	Schools	Retention	Non-financial	46.0
Get Into Teaching	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	26.0
High-potential initial teacher training	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	23.8
Taking Teaching Further	Further education	Both	Financial	11.6
Subject knowledge enhancement	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	9.5

**Notes**

- 1 We have not audited DfE's budget figures.
- 2 Financial initiatives are those where a financial incentive is available to a trainee, teacher or provider.
- 3 A full list of initiatives is shown at Appendix Two.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Education information

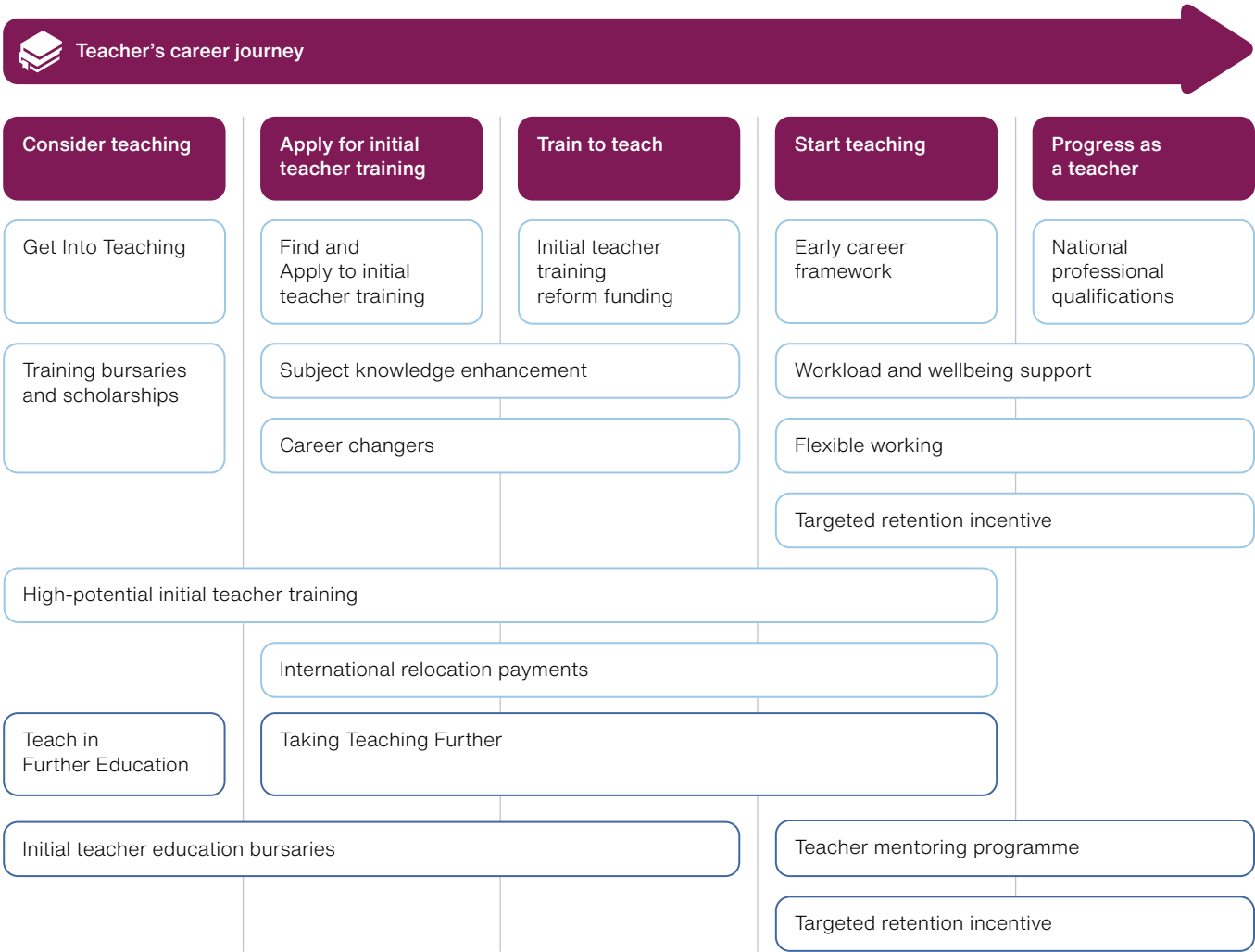
**2.4** Further education colleges must compete with both schools and industry to attract teachers. However, teachers in further education colleges get paid less than secondary school teachers, which has been the case historically (**Figure 8** on page 27). In 2022/23, the difference in median salary was around £10,000. Analysis by DfE suggests that, for example, engineering professionals in industry are paid over £8,000 more than an equivalent further education teacher, and IT professionals earn over £11,000 more.

**2.5** DfE has some influence over teacher salaries, for example, through supporting HM Treasury in setting funding allocations and teacher funding packages as part of wider government spending decisions. Beyond this, DfE's influence varies between settings.

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**Figure 7**  
The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) recruitment and retention initiatives at different points of a teacher’s career

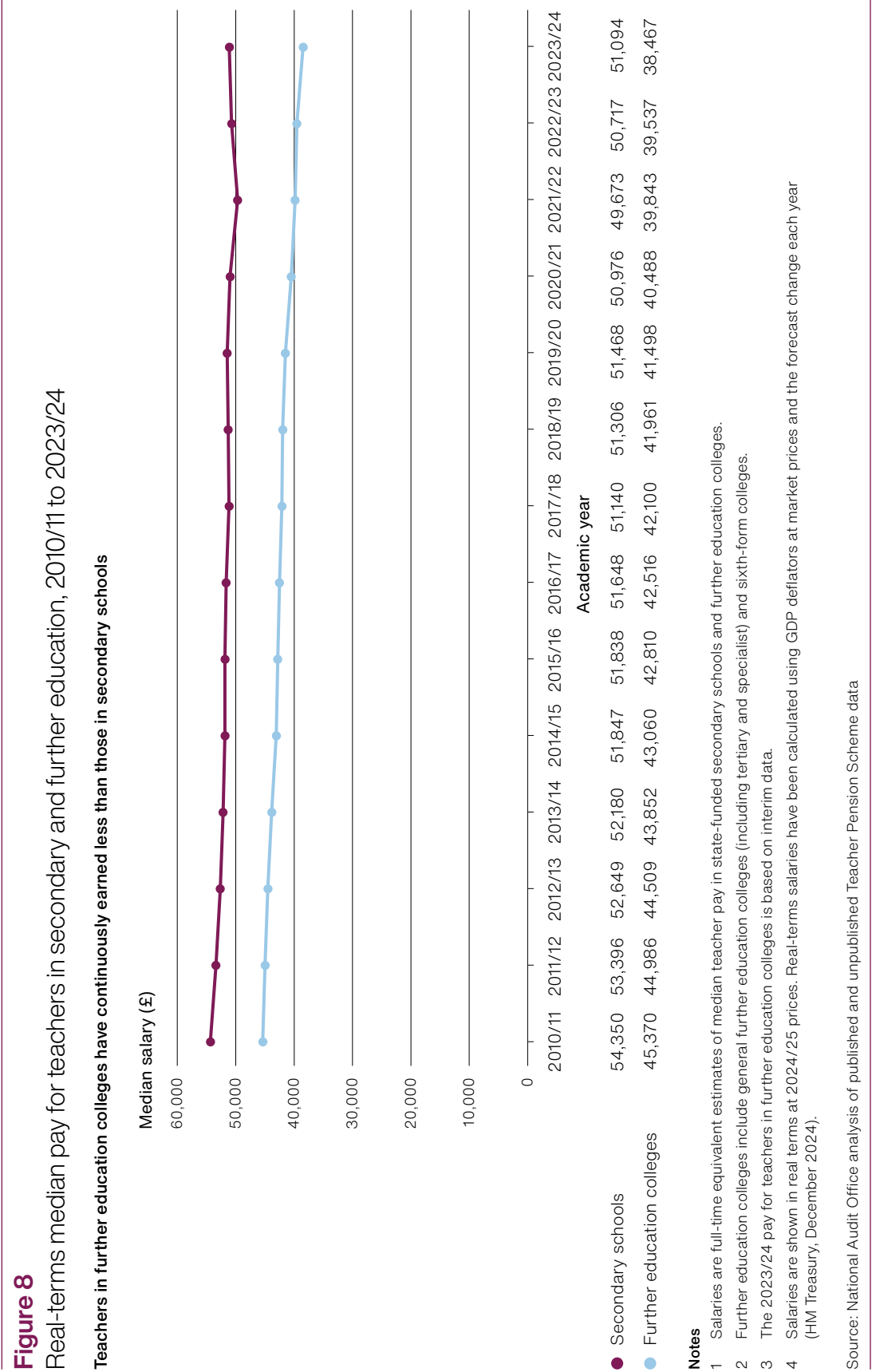
DfE has initiatives to support recruitment and retention across a teacher’s career, from considering teaching to continuing their career



- Teacher's career journey
- Initiatives in schools
- Initiatives in further education

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Education information

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**2.6** In secondary schools, DfE sets pay scales based on advice from a pay review body. Local-authority-maintained schools must apply these scales. Academies set their own pay, with many following DfE's guidance. In July 2023, DfE announced a 6.5% pay award for schoolteachers, supported by £525 million extra funding.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, in July 2024, DfE announced a fully funded pay award of 5.5% for schoolteachers in 2024/25, representing an additional £1.2 billion funding. Despite this, DfE identifies a growing risk that schools will increasingly struggle to compete for staff with other sectors, such as the NHS.

**2.7** In further education colleges, DfE has little influence on pay. With no central pay review body, colleges set their own salary rates.

- In July 2023, DfE announced additional further education funding of £185 million for 2023-24 and £285 million for 2024-25. This was designed to help colleges and other providers address key priorities as they saw fit, including tackling recruitment and retention. Research undertaken on behalf of DfE in early 2024 found that 97% of colleges were prioritising recruitment and retention of teaching staff, and 95% had used the funding to provide a uniform percentage pay rise for all existing teaching staff. Providers reported a perceived impact of this on their ability to increase or maintain teaching quality through recruitment and retention.
- In the 2024 Budget, the Government announced an additional £300 million in general further education funding for 2025-26, which colleges can decide how to use, including on workforce initiatives. However, sector bodies have said that most of this funding will be needed to cover the additional teaching costs associated with more students, rather than used to increase salaries. DfE recognises that the lack of funding for further education teacher pay could put at risk its growth and opportunity missions, alongside its commitment to recruit 6,500 new teachers.

## Initiatives providing financial incentives

**2.8** All schoolteachers get paid within the same pay ranges, irrespective of what subject they teach. DfE uses a range of financial incentives for trainees, teachers or providers, with a combined budget of £390 million in 2024-25. These primarily aim to improve recruitment and retention across specific subjects in secondary schools and further education, and DfE has good evidence on their effectiveness.

<sup>8</sup> The additional funding covered mainstream schools, special schools and alternative provision, early years, and 16-to-19 provision.

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## Training bursaries

**2.9** DfE offers bursaries and scholarships to eligible initial teacher training applicants, with a budget of £205 million for those training to teach in schools and £8 million for those in further education in 2024-25. DfE told us the scale of funding differs between the two sectors as schoolteachers are more likely to train before starting a teaching job, compared with further education teachers, who more commonly train on the job. For 2024/25, postgraduate secondary school teacher bursaries range from £10,000 for art and design, English, music and religious education to £28,000 for chemistry, computing, maths and physics. In further education, bursaries for priority subjects are worth between £15,000 and £30,000 in 2024/25. In 2023/24, the latest year for which data are available, 8,327 people training to become schoolteachers benefited from bursaries and equivalent funding, and 371 people training to become further education teachers received bursaries.<sup>9</sup>

**2.10** DfE has good evidence to support the effectiveness of training bursaries. This includes the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) finding, in 2023, that bursary increases were associated with more people starting initial teacher training and a sustained longer-term increase in teachers.<sup>10</sup> In 2023/24, DfE increased bursary amounts for postgraduate trainees in all eligible subjects. In total, 743 more trainees started their secondary school teacher training than the 12,023 the year before. The NFER also concluded that bursaries were cost-effective compared with untargeted initiatives such as universal pay increases, and with other targeted initiatives such as early career payments.

## Retention payments

**2.11** DfE offers financial incentives to those qualified to teach secondary school maths, physics, chemistry or computing in the first five years of their career. The incentive, introduced in 2022/23, provided payments worth up to £3,000 after tax. From 2024/25, the maximum payment has increased to £6,000 per year in one lump sum. Newly qualified teachers at schools in socio-economically deprived areas, which face significant challenges recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, receive the highest payments.

**2.12** From 2024/25, DfE extended this incentive to eligible further education teachers. This includes those teaching the same priority subjects as in schools, alongside some additional subjects such as construction, with higher rates for those in disadvantaged areas. For 2024-25, DfE budgeted to spend £51 million for those teaching in further education, and £64 million for those in schools.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The number of people training to become schoolteachers benefiting from bursaries and equivalent funding includes those who received scholarships. It also includes equivalent funding paid to providers in relation to those undertaking salaried training.

<sup>10</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research, *The impact of training bursaries on teacher recruitment and retention: An evaluation of impact and value for money*, November 2023.

<sup>11</sup> The £64 million budget for the schools targeted retention incentive also includes £22 million for two other schemes: early career payments, which ceased in 2024-25, and teachers' student loan reimbursements.

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**2.13** Research by University College London, published in 2022, found that, where early career maths and physics teachers received retention payments, an initiative piloted by DfE, they were 23% less likely to leave teaching, compared with ineligible teachers.<sup>12</sup> The NFER has also found that, while both bursaries and retention payments are powerful tools for increasing the number of teachers in state-funded schools, although depending on their value, training bursaries were probably more cost effective than retention payments.<sup>13</sup>

## Non-financial initiatives

**2.14** DfE has a range of non-financial initiatives to improve recruitment and retention. These include initiatives to encourage people to become teachers, such as a website (Get Into Teaching, with a budget of £26 million in 2024-25) providing relevant information and links to advice. It also established a platform (Teach in Further Education, with a budget of £6 million in 2024-25) to provide prospective further education teachers with information and support.

## Initial teacher training

**2.15** Although there are several routes into teaching, DfE relies on newly qualified teachers, who represented 41% of secondary school teachers starting in the year to November 2023 (Figure 3). Postgraduate initial teacher training usually takes between nine and 24 months, with other training options including undergraduate courses. From autumn 2025, potential teachers will also be able to do a degree apprenticeship.

**2.16** In 2024-25, DfE budgeted to spend £34 million on teacher training initiatives targeted at areas of particular need. This included:

- 'high-potential initial teacher training', placing high-achieving trainees in schools serving low-income communities with high numbers of disadvantaged and low-attaining pupils;
- 'subject knowledge enhancement', designed to widen the pool of people able to train as teachers by providing the minimum knowledge required to train to teach chemistry, computing, languages, maths or physics; and
- 'career changers', a programme to attract and support people with significant industry experience into teaching. DfE will not continue to fund this beyond the 2024 intake.

<sup>12</sup> University College London, *The effect of financial incentives on the retention of shortage-subject teachers: evidence from England*, April 2022.

<sup>13</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research, *The impact of training bursaries on teacher recruitment and retention: An evaluation of impact and value for money*, November 2023.



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**2.17** In 2022/23, 23,400 trainees came to the end of postgraduate initial teacher training, of whom 21,600 (92%) were successful in gaining qualified teacher status.<sup>14</sup> DfE estimates that 16,300 (76% of those gaining qualified teacher status) were teaching in a state-funded school within 16 months. Analysis by DfE suggests that improving this 'conversion rate' would significantly reduce the average cost of recruiting a new teacher and increase the value for money of all its recruitment initiatives. It is attempting to address this by, for example, enhancing mentoring for trainee teachers, but recognises that there is more that it could do.

**2.18** In further education, the Taking Teaching Further programme supports colleges and other providers to recruit people with relevant experience to retrain as teachers. It is a two-year programme providing funding to cover the cost of initial teacher training and early career support. DfE budgeted to spend £12 million on this in 2024-25. An evaluation, published in November 2022, of the first two years of the programme, which started in 2018, found that there was strong evidence to suggest that the programme had been successful.

## Continuing professional development

### Early career framework

**2.19** DfE's 2019 teacher recruitment and retention strategy, covering schools, increased its focus on retention, rather than just recruitment. The strategy identified four barriers to DfE achieving its ambitions, including the fact that not enough teachers received the high-quality support they need in their early career. To address this, in 2021, DfE introduced the early career framework, providing two years of professional development and mentoring post qualification. This built on the content framework for initial teacher training, which took effect from 2020. In 2023/24, 10,471 early career secondary teachers started an early career framework induction run by a DfE-funded training provider.<sup>15</sup> DfE's budget for the early career framework – £131 million in 2024-25 – is more than that for other retention initiatives.

<sup>14</sup> The 23,400 trainees are those with a course outcome in 2022/23. This includes those who were awarded qualified teacher status, those who completed their training but were not awarded qualified teacher status and those who left before the end of the course.

<sup>15</sup> Schools can use external DfE-funded providers to deliver the induction, or provide their own induction programme based on the framework.

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**2.20** There has been positive feedback on the framework's impact, for example:

- stakeholders we consulted told us teachers viewed the framework as a positive intervention, with one describing how it added rigour for new teachers;
- of early career teachers who started the framework in 2022, 88% remained teaching in state secondary schools after one year; of those starting in 2021, 78% were still teaching after two years; and
- an evaluation of the framework's early rollout found no significant impact on retention overall, with the caveat that the finding was not robust due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It did find that participating teachers were more likely to stay in their original school. An evaluation of the framework's national rollout, following the first full cohort of early career teachers, found that the vast majority intended to stay in teaching, within their current school, beyond their induction.

**2.21** In 2023, DfE reviewed the early career framework and initial teacher training content framework, seeking evidence from the sector. As a result, it is introducing some changes from September 2025 which include a combined and updated content framework, including updated content on teaching pupils with special educational needs and providing mentors of early career teachers with more support.

## **National professional qualifications**

**2.22** DfE has developed a range of national professional qualifications to provide professional development opportunities for schoolteachers to develop their knowledge and skills and improve school outcomes. Since 2021, this has included five specialist qualifications focusing on, for example, maths, literacy, or behaviour and culture, and five leadership-related qualifications. In 2024-25, DfE budgeted to spend £46 million across all these qualifications.

**2.23** Though early in delivery, interim findings from an evaluation of qualifications introduced since 2021 found that they were largely well received by participants. Participants said that the qualifications had a positive impact on them, including by increasing their skills, knowledge and confidence levels. The report also found early evidence of wider impacts for schools, particularly when multiple members of staff undertook qualifications. In 2023/24, 6.4% of the teaching workforce in secondary schools (16,272 people) started a qualification, up from 5.9% (14,908) in 2022/23. Of those starting in 2022/23, 49% had completed the qualification, with 96% of these passing.

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## Working arrangements and wellbeing

**2.24** School teachers and leaders most commonly report high workload, stress and wellbeing as reasons to leave the state education sector. DfE's annual teacher survey showed that 84% of teachers who had left between the 2023 and 2024 surveys described high workload as a reason for leaving, with 75% citing stress and/or poor wellbeing.<sup>16</sup>

**2.25** Managing workload and changing working patterns have the potential to boost teacher morale, which may help improve retention. DfE's ability to address these issues is limited by the fact that school and college leaders are responsible for setting the conditions and culture within which teachers work. It has implemented some initiatives designed to address these issues by providing support and guidance to schools and colleges, some of which we describe below. However, it has less evidence on how addressing these factors will impact workforce trends, and their longer-term impact is difficult to quantify.

### Workload

**2.26** High workload can affect teachers' mental health and wellbeing, alongside their ability to undertake professional development activities, all of which can impact teaching quality. Teachers most often cite concerns over work-life balance as a reason not to seek promotion. DfE's 2024 survey of teachers showed that full-time secondary teachers worked an average of 50.3 hours per week, including 21.5 hours of teaching.<sup>17</sup> The most common non-teaching tasks that teachers in primary and secondary schools felt they spent too much time on were general administrative work (74%) and following up on behaviour incidents (60%).

**2.27** DfE has various initiatives designed to address workload across schools and colleges. For example, it is supporting a project that will bring teachers and technology companies together to develop tools that save marking time. It also has a website with resources for school leaders to improve workload and wellbeing for school staff.<sup>18</sup> This includes:

- a **toolkit** of resources, produced with school leaders, to reduce workload;
- a **wellbeing charter** created with the education sector and mental health experts in 2021, which sets out commitments from DfE and Ofsted, and commitments for schools and colleges to sign up to, to protect staff wellbeing. As of November 2024, 3,700 schools and colleges (approximately 17% of those eligible to sign up) had signed up to the charter; and
- **mental health and wellbeing support** through online resources, free, professional supervision to leaders, and a free 24-hour helpline for staff; as of November 2024, 1,900 leaders had benefited from this support.

<sup>16</sup> Department for Education, *Working lives of teachers and leaders: wave 3 – Summary report*, November 2024. The survey was carried out between 26 January and 4 May 2024 and 10,020 teachers and leaders participated.

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 16. Working hours cover secondary teachers and not leaders.

<sup>18</sup> Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff ([improve-workload-and-wellbeing-for-school-staff.education.gov.uk](https://improve-workload-and-wellbeing-for-school-staff.education.gov.uk)).

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**2.28** In July 2023, the Government launched a school workload reduction taskforce, building on earlier reviews, as part of a commitment to reduce workload. The taskforce included school leaders, union members and sector representatives and published initial recommendations in January 2024. These included removing a requirement for performance-related pay in schools, and re-inserting into teacher pay and conditions examples of the administrative tasks teachers should not do. DfE told us that the recommendations were not formalised because of the change in government, but that it is taking them forward.

## Flexible working

**2.29** All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working.<sup>19</sup> DfE recognises that, especially since the pandemic, fewer schoolteachers have flexible working arrangements than those in other professions. Survey data show that those leaving teaching for another job are more likely to be working flexibly in their new role, compared with the average teacher (62%, compared with 46% of teachers in 2023/24).<sup>20</sup> 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, according to the latest available data.

**2.30** DfE aims to support school leaders develop and implement flexible working, and provides a range of guidance and support. This includes a toolkit to help schools adopt flexible working, which can be adapted to other settings; ambassador schools and trusts offering advice and practical support; and free workshops and training for school leaders and teachers.

## Making effective use of recruitment and retention initiatives

**2.31** In developing how it will improve teacher recruitment and retention, DfE needs to bring together a package of initiatives that are affordable, cost-effective, and get at the root causes of challenges. Although its 2019 recruitment and retention strategy focused on schools, DfE is now thinking about these challenges from a cross-system perspective, and in relation to their relative cost and impact, to help focus its efforts. The Government's pledge to provide an additional 6,500 teachers by the end of this Parliament has added urgency to this work.

## Comparing initiatives

**2.32** In 2023, DfE began work to consistently understand the relative costs and benefits (value for money) of its school-focused recruitment initiatives. It plans to use this analysis to help decide where to direct funding, particularly when thinking about comparing the cost-effectiveness of recruiting more teachers in particular subjects.

<sup>19</sup> DfE defines flexible working as arrangements which allow employees to vary the amount, timing, or location of their work.

<sup>20</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research, *Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2025*, March 2025.

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**2.33** Although DfE is developing its analysis, early findings show that, while some initiatives cost considerably less than others, they cannot necessarily be scaled up or may not be appropriate for all subjects, or there is a lack of strong evidence on their efficacy (**Figure 9**). For example, DfE has the best evidence to support the effectiveness of bursaries, which are scalable but cost much more than other initiatives for each additional teacher recruited. Courses to enhance subject knowledge are cheaper but less scalable, and international teacher relocation payments have not yet been shown to be as effective.<sup>21</sup> DfE plans to expand this analysis through, for example, looking at initiatives designed to encourage people to stay teaching in state schools.

## Figure 9

Department for Education (DfE) comparative analysis of teacher recruitment initiatives for schools, 2024

DfE assesses the quality of evidence behind its initiatives as mixed

Initiative	Average cost per teacher	Scalability potential	Quality of evidence	Initiative targeted on subjects?
Initial teacher training bursaries	£14,000 to £61,000	Yes	High	Yes
Subject knowledge enhancement	£21,000 to £64,000	To some extent	Medium	Yes (shortage and core subjects)
High-potential initial teacher training	c £57,000	No	Medium	Not explicitly (targeted on schools serving low-income communities)
International relocation payments for trainees	c £79,000 (physics)	Yes	Low	Yes (physics and modern foreign languages)
International relocation payments for teachers	c £21,000 (physics)	Yes	Low	Yes (physics and modern foreign languages)

### Notes

- 1 DfE currently funds subject knowledge enhancement courses in five secondary subjects: chemistry, computing, languages, maths, and physics.
- 2 DfE's analysis in this table is for state-funded schools only, and covers primary and secondary schools.
- 3 DfE's analysis is provisional. All inputs, assumptions and modelling are subject to further scrutiny and may change. We did not audit DfE's analysis.
- 4 The average cost per teacher seeks to indicate the system-wide costs to recruit a teacher that way. Methodology, assumptions and input data vary for different initiatives. Where relevant, input data include financial payments to recruited teachers, potential for unpaid student loans by recruited teachers, adjustments for trainee-to-teacher conversion rates, school recruitment costs, and services provided by DfE.

Source: Department for Education analysis

<sup>21</sup> The international relocation payment is worth up to £10,000 to eligible non-UK teachers of languages and physics. The payment is designed to cover visa costs, the immigration health surcharge, and other relocation expenses. DfE is piloting the payment in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

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## Considering education sector challenges

**2.34** DfE has estimated that nearly two million people work across sectors it oversees, including childcare providers and higher education academic staff. In 2023/24, there were around a million (full-time equivalent) in the state-funded school workforce, half of whom were teachers, and, in 2022/23, around 205,000 (headcount) in the further education workforce, including 81,900 teaching staff. DfE has identified that around 60% of workers who leave an education occupation move into another education occupation. As a result, there is a risk that staff shortages and initiatives in one sector have wider consequences, and impact DfE's ability to achieve its wider objectives. For example, an NFER report has found that one of the reasons it is harder to recruit further education teachers is that teachers get paid less than those in schools.<sup>22</sup> DfE also recognises that its policy initiatives in one area, such as schools, are likely to have unintended consequences elsewhere, such as further education, given the high level of competition over workforces, which it does not currently consider.

**2.35** Within DfE, sector teams, such as schools and further education, oversee the initiatives and approaches across their individual sectors. The 2019 strategy only applied to schools. DfE has now started to think in a more joined-up way, to help better understand what works and the trade-offs of its decisions. In February 2023, it started a project to understand the extent to which workforces align and to identify opportunities for a more integrated approach. For example:

- DfE has begun to consider how its initiatives can apply to different settings. For example, from October 2024, the targeted retention incentive became applicable to further education teachers as well as schoolteachers.
- In autumn 2024, DfE trialled joined-up 'job show' events across schools, further education and early years, creating opportunities to have conversations and triage potential teaching candidates, linking them to the most relevant role based on their skills and qualifications.
- At the same time as considering schoolteacher pay award decisions, DfE has provided funding for the further education sector to allow it to address its key priorities.

**2.36** DfE is looking to improve digital signposting between schools and further education, given the overlap between the two sectors. For example, the Get Into Teaching website includes information on teaching in primary, secondary and special educational needs schools, and further education, providing informed signposting for candidates to the role most suited to them.

<sup>22</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research, *Building a stronger workforce: How improving pay and working conditions can help support FE college teacher supply*, September 2024.

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## The pledge for 6,500 new teachers

**2.37** In July 2024, the new Government pledged to recruit 6,500 new teachers across schools and further education colleges, over the course of this Parliament. The Government has not explained how it decided on 6,500. Also, DfE has yet to commit to how the pledge will be split across mainstream schools, special schools and further education colleges, or how many extra teachers are expected each year in each setting. As such, it is not clear if, or how, this number relates to known and forecast shortages across different settings.

- In 2022/23, there were around 1,500 teacher vacancies and 1,700 temporarily filled posts in secondary schools. DfE told us it estimates that secondary teacher numbers need to grow by 1,600 between 2023/24 and 2027/28 to meet the demand from growing pupil numbers.
- There were also around a further 2,500 teacher vacancies in general further education and sixth-form colleges, although DfE estimates colleges will need 8,400 to 12,400 more teachers by 2028/29, compared with 2020/21 levels, to meet demographic pressures and offer T Levels.
- In the academic year prior to the pledge (2023/24), around 44,000 full-time equivalent qualified schoolteachers joined the profession, with around 43,500 leaving (representing 1 in 10 of all qualified teachers). Overall, there was a net growth of 300 teachers.<sup>23</sup>

**2.38** Given the upcoming multi-year spending review, DfE has yet to finalise the initiatives on which it will focus to achieve the pledge (**Figure 10** on pages 38 and 39). It has already announced a 5.5% pay award for teachers and leaders in maintained schools from September 2024 as a “key step towards our pledge to deliver an additional 6,500 teachers”. However, DfE cannot realistically rely on pay alone, with the NFER concluding that, while increasing pay for all teachers could deliver the required number, it would require an additional £4.9 billion per year by 2026/27.<sup>24</sup> After creating a Project Board, DfE produced an initial delivery plan in autumn 2024, which considered a range of levers, including pay and financial initiatives. In October 2024, it announced a package of bursaries and scholarships for initial teacher training for 2025/26, worth £233 million. It also continues to review its existing initiatives, and to revise and adapt its delivery plan to meet spending review timelines.

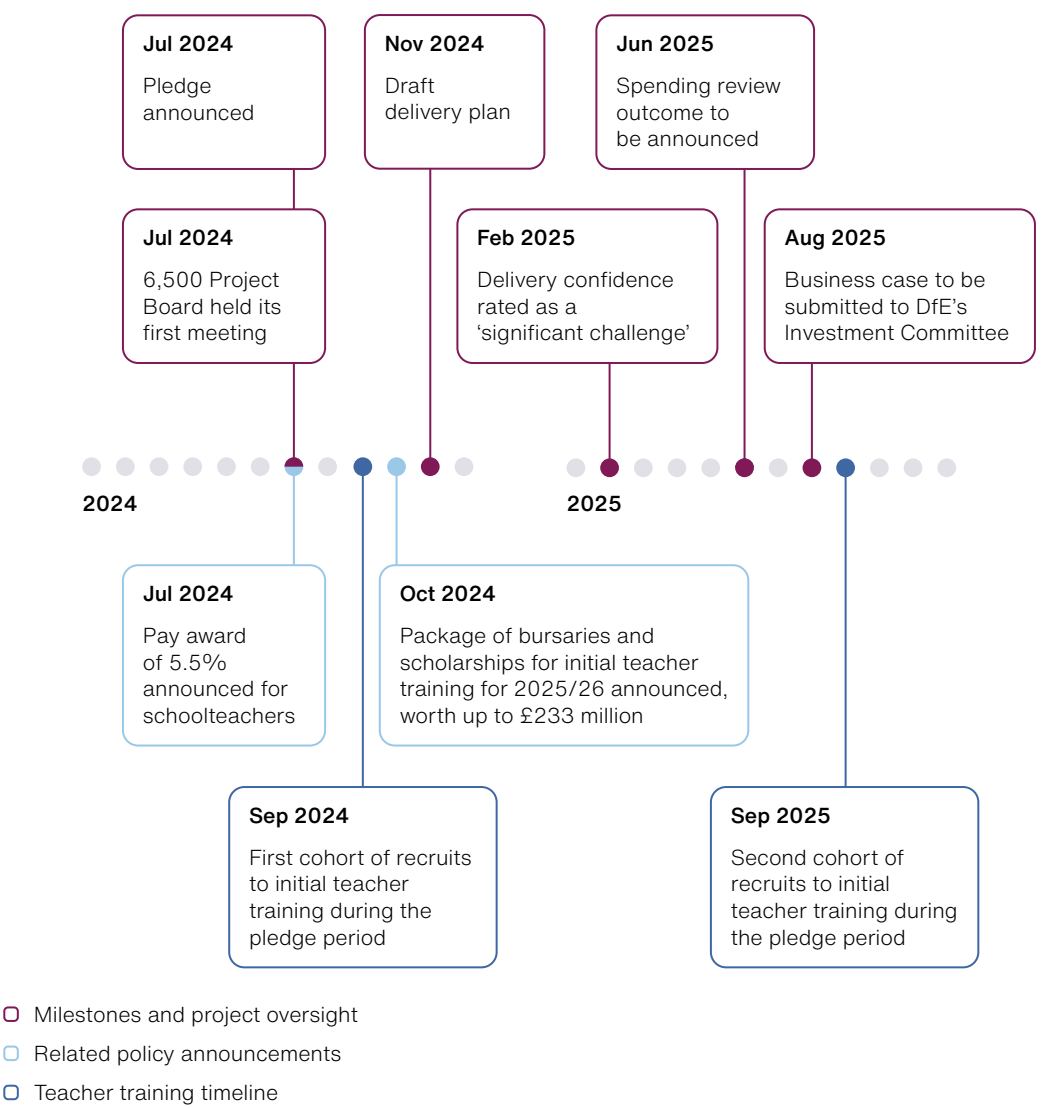
<sup>23</sup> In the reporting year 2023, there were 480 full-time equivalent more entrants than leavers. This, coupled with existing staff overall reducing their working pattern, and an increase in unqualified teachers, means that the overall full-time equivalent number of teachers increased by 300.

<sup>24</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research, *How to recruit 6,500 teachers? Modelling the potential routes to delivering Labour’s teacher supply pledge*, December 2024. NFER’s analysis is based on the school workforce, and not further education.

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**Figure 10**  
Timeline of progress on the 6,500 additional teachers pledge, as at April 2025

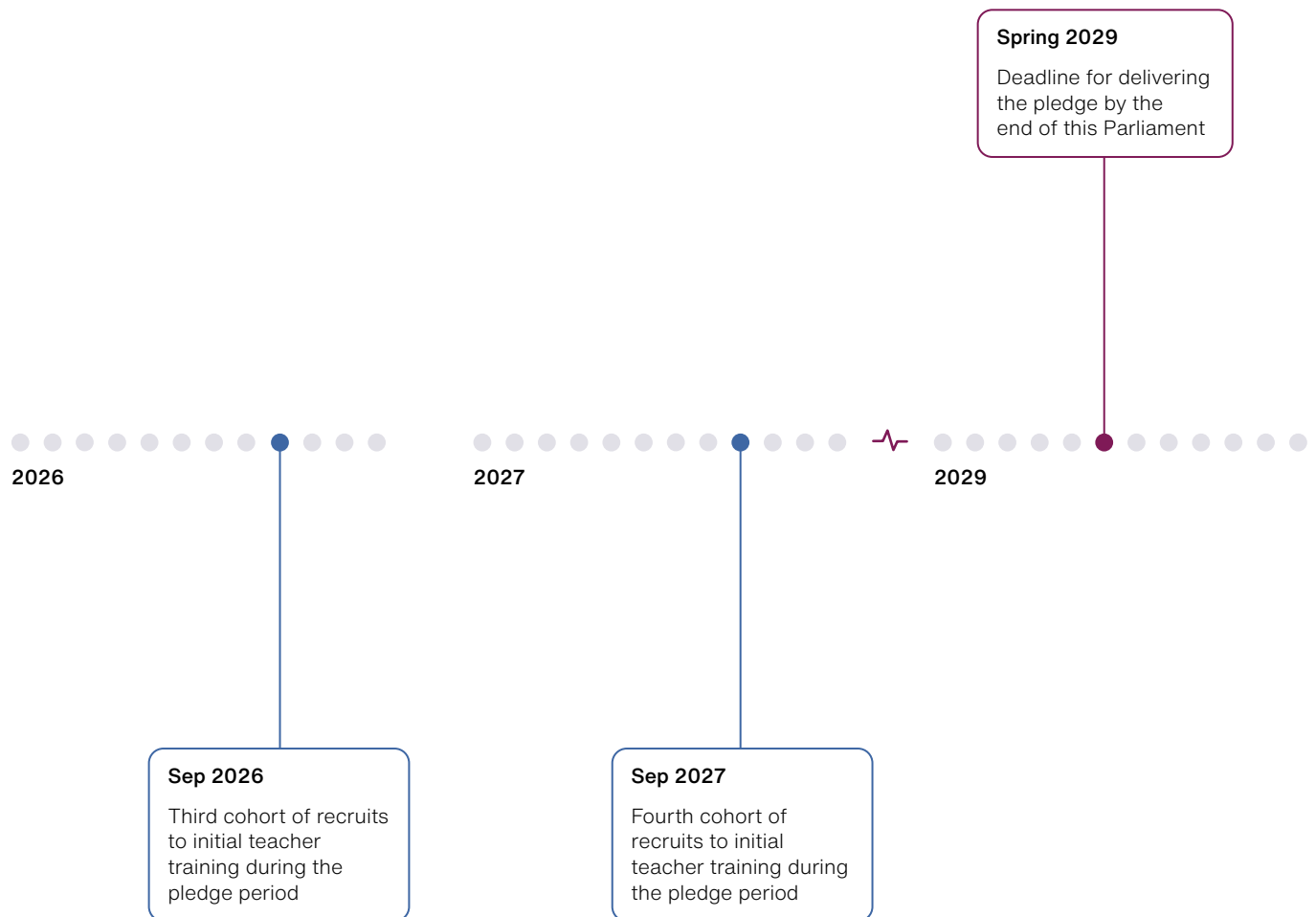
The Government has at most four years left, until the end of this Parliament, to deliver the pledge



**Note**  
1 In July 2024, the new Government pledged to recruit an additional 6,500 expert teachers across schools and colleges over the course of this Parliament.



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**2.39** DfE's strategy and implementation plans will ultimately depend on the outcome of the multi-year spending review in June 2025. Its delivery plans will need to align with government funding for the pledge and wider spending priorities. It can develop a business case after funding is decided. In developing its plans, DfE told us it aims to consider demographic pressures, to best target initiatives where they are needed most, in the context of a constrained fiscal environment. It told us it is primarily considering whether to expand existing initiatives, such as financial incentives, which it knows are effective, but is also exploring other ways to improve retention. It planned to work on some scenario plans and options to reflect different funding outcomes. Its proposals will need to include requests to scale up existing financial initiatives to help meet the 6,500 target, alongside core funding so settings can pay the salaries of the additional teachers. It expects to agree a plan in summer 2025, a year after the pledge was announced and four years before the latest date for the end of this Parliament, the timeframe for delivering the pledge.

**2.40** Given its awareness of a fiscally constrained environment, DfE has rated its confidence in achieving the pledge as a 'significant challenge', as it may not be able to use the best-evidenced (and most costly) initiatives. With training for new teachers starting in September each year, DfE has, at most, three more cohorts of new entrants to influence to meet the pledge, which allows limited time to trial new initiatives.

**2.41** DfE currently uses annual data to understand teacher numbers. It has yet to finalise reporting plans to monitor progress against the 6,500 pledge more frequently. However, the existing annual school workforce census and further education workforce data collection could be used to measure the change in teacher numbers since the start of this Parliament. However, these datasets are difficult to combine as they use different methodologies. They are also produced at different points in the year, with a time lag between data collection and publication. School workforce census data are published in June, using data collected in the previous November; and further education workforce data are published 10 months after the end of the academic year, in May.

**2.42** Beyond these annual datasets, DfE is exploring ways to monitor progress more frequently. For schools, this could include quarterly updates using data such as initial teacher training applicants and numbers, to overcome the time lag in actual data being available. However, this would not be relevant to further education.

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## Appendix One

### Our audit approach

#### Our scope

**1** This report assesses whether the Department for Education (DfE) is achieving value for money in ensuring a sufficient teacher workforce in state-funded secondary schools and further education colleges in England. We have not considered the teacher workforce in other settings – early years, primary and higher education settings are out of scope. The report’s coverage of further education includes general further education colleges and sixth-form colleges only. The following types of further education provider are excluded from our analysis: independent training providers, special post-16 institutions, local authority providers (including adult community education providers), and school-based providers.

**2** We have focused on teacher numbers rather than the quality of teaching, but recognise the need for both for DfE to achieve its objectives within schools and further education colleges. Teachers are those in teaching roles (which represent the largest group of staff), and we do not explicitly consider leadership roles or teaching assistants.

**3** Our independent conclusions are based on the analysis of evidence we collected between August 2024 and March 2025. In forming our conclusions, we used the study methods and evidence sources set out in the paragraphs below. In assessing value for money, we considered whether DfE has a good understanding of teacher workforce needs across secondary and further education; whether DfE makes sound decisions on where to invest or intervene to address the workforce needs it has identified; and whether DfE is making progress in addressing teacher recruitment and retention issues.

**4** Throughout the report, financial years are written as, for example, ‘2024-25’, and run from 1 April to 31 March. Academic years are written as ‘2024/25’, and run from 1 September to 31 August for schools and 1 August to 31 July for colleges.

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## Our evidence base

**5** In examining these issues, we drew on a variety of evidence sources, including interviews with government officials and stakeholders, a survey of stakeholders, document review, a review of DfE's school and further education workforce demand models, and quantitative analysis.

### Interviews

**6** We held around 20 interviews with DfE officials to understand the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers in secondary schools and further education colleges, and the actions DfE has taken. We held interviews virtually on Microsoft Teams and these covered:

- DfE's overall strategy and approach for teacher recruitment and retention in secondary schools and further education colleges;
- DfE's policy approach and interventions for teacher recruitment and retention in secondary schools and further education colleges;
- DfE's cross-sector work on education workforces;
- analysis of teacher workforce data, including DfE's workforce models for schools and further education;
- DfE's relationships with the secondary and further education sectors; and
- the Government's pledge for an additional 6,500 teachers.

### Stakeholder engagement

**7** We invited a range of stakeholder representatives and research bodies to respond to a survey and submit written evidence to inform our work. We also received submissions from those seeing our published work-in-progress notice. We used this evidence to gain insight into frontline perspectives on teacher recruitment and retention in secondary schools and further education colleges. We considered this alongside evidence collated from government bodies. This evidence focused on:

- the extent to which DfE's interventions have a positive impact on teacher recruitment and retention;
- the extent to which DfE's interventions are working to address barriers to improve recruitment and retention;
- what is working well to improve recruitment and retention;
- what initiatives DfE should focus on to improve recruitment and retention of teachers in schools and colleges;

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- the extent to which DfE understands the challenges at a national level, as well as between different local areas, subjects and provider types, including whether DfE accounts for the respective nuances in its approach; and
- the extent to which DfE provides sufficient support, for example, guidance and good practice examples, to schools and colleges, so they can effectively plan for their future workforces.

**8** The stakeholder representatives and research bodies submitting evidence to our study were:

- the Association of Colleges;
- the Association of School and College Leaders;
- the Chartered College of Teaching;
- the Confederation of School Trusts;
- the Education Policy Institute;
- Gatsby;
- the National Foundation for Educational Research; and
- the Sixth Form Colleges Association.

**9** We also met with Ofsted, and members of DfE's Secondary Headteacher Reference Group and further education Principals Reference Group.

## Document review

**10** Between August 2024 and March 2025, we reviewed more than 150 documents from DfE to draw conclusions about our study questions and to supplement evidence from our interviews. This included published and unpublished DfE documents relating to teacher recruitment and retention and covered:

- strategic plans, including submissions on the 6,500 new teachers pledge;
- management information, such as risk reporting and progress reporting; and
- analysis, research and evaluation evidence.

**11** We reviewed published reports by other organisations including the Education Select Committee, the National Foundation for Educational Research, the Education Policy Institute, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and University College London.

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**12** To indicate the size of DfE’s investment in the secondary and further education teacher workforce, we estimated its total spending across its range of initiatives on teacher recruitment and retention for 2024-25. We reviewed financial figures from internal DfE documents and have collated these in Appendix Two. The sum of all the funding figures from Appendix Two produced the £700 million estimated total budget we report. We did not audit DfE’s budget figures.

## Model review

**13** We reviewed documentation relating to DfE’s models of the teacher workforce in secondary schools and further education colleges. We conducted our review between October 2024 and February 2025. As such, our review does not cover the most recent updates to the models.

**14** We reviewed DfE’s workforce models against the National Audit Office’s framework to review models, to understand what risks DfE had assessed the models to have, DfE’s assumptions in the models, how uncertainties had been estimated, and how the models’ outputs were used.<sup>25</sup>

## Quantitative analysis

**15** To understand the size, shape and trends of the secondary teacher workforce, we analysed DfE’s school workforce census data, published in its annual *School workforce in England* statistical release. The census runs each November and provides snapshot data on the school workforce for the academic year, so data collected in November 2023 are for the 2023/24 academic year. The school workforce census has data on the teacher workforce from 2010/11, when it started, up to 2023/24, the most recent data currently available, with the exception of leaver numbers, which go up to 2022/23. We used these data to:

- quantify the number of teachers in state-funded secondary schools, and how this has changed between 2010/11 and 2023/24; full-time equivalent numbers were used over headcount as this best reflects the varied working patterns that the workforce may have;
- understand how entrant routes have changed for secondary teachers between 2011/12 and 2023/24;
- understand how leaver routes have changed for secondary teachers between 2010/11 and 2022/23;
- illustrate the diversity of the teacher workforce for 2023/24, looking at sex, age and ethnicity; and

<sup>25</sup> National Audit Office, *Framework to review models*, January 2022.

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- quantify the number of secondary schools, by region, reporting at least one vacancy in 2023/24, and how this has changed from 2010/11; secondary schools include local-authority-maintained secondary schools and secondary academies.
- 16** To quantify the number of students in state-funded secondary schools, and how this has changed over time, we used DfE's school census data in its published *Schools, pupils and their characteristics* dataset. We analysed data for 2015/16 to 2023/24, the period for which comparable teacher numbers were available, using full-time equivalent figures. We calculated pupil-teacher ratios by taking the total number of students over the total number of teachers.
- 17** To illustrate how well DfE has achieved its postgraduate initial teacher training targets for each secondary subject, we analysed data from DfE's published *Initial Teacher Training Census* for the 2024/25 cohort, the most recent data available.
- 18** To explore how secondary and further education teacher pay has changed over time, we analysed full-time equivalent median salaries from Teacher Pension Scheme data. This was from both published data for state-funded secondary schools and unpublished data for further education colleges, between 2010/11 and 2023/24. The 2023/24 pay for further education colleges does not accurately reflect the latest pay awards because these data were extracted earlier than usual. We converted all median salaries into real terms, using the GDP deflator series published by HM Treasury in December 2024. Real-terms values are at 2024/25 prices.
- 19** To quantify the amount and proportion of their total spending that state-funded secondary schools and further education colleges spend on teaching staff, we used the following datasets.
- For local-authority-maintained secondary schools, we analysed financial data from DfE's published *LA and school expenditure*.
  - For secondary academies, we analysed DfE's financial data from academies' published accounts returns.
  - For further education colleges, we analysed financial management data on college accounts from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

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## Appendix Two

### The Department for Education's initiatives to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers

**1** In 2024-25, the Department for Education budgeted to spend around £700 million across a range of initiatives, other than pay and pensions, designed to improve teacher recruitment and retention. These are described in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.30 and summarised in **Figure 11** on pages 47 to 50. Of the total budget in 2024-25:

- 88% was on initiatives primarily focused on schools, and 11% on further education;
- 48% was on initiatives primarily focused on recruitment, 43% on retention, and 9% on initiatives covering both; and
- 56% was on financial initiatives, and 44% on non-financial initiatives.



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**Figure 11**

The Department for Education's (DfE's) initiatives to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers

DfE budgeted to spend £700 million on initiatives to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers in 2024-25

Initiative	Description	Schools or further education	Recruitment or retention	Financial or non-financial	Universal or targeted	DfE budget in 2024-25
						(£mn)
Training bursaries and scholarships	Bursaries and scholarships for initial teacher training applicants. Postgraduate bursaries are worth up to £28,000 in 2024/25 and £29,000 in 2025/26	Schools	Recruitment	Financial	Targeted at priority subjects	205.0
Early career framework	Provides two years of professional development and mentoring for newly qualified teachers	Schools	Retention	Non-financial	Universal	131.0
Targeted retention incentive (schools)	Offered to those qualified to teach certain subjects, in the first five years of their career. The DfE budget figure also includes early career payments, which ceased in 2024-25, and teachers' student loan reimbursements	Schools	Retention	Financial	Targeted at those teaching maths, physics, chemistry or computing, with higher payments for teachers in schools in deprived areas	63.5
Targeted retention incentive (further education)	Offered to those qualified to teach certain subjects, in the first five years of their career	Further education	Retention	Financial	Targeted at those teaching building and construction, chemistry, computing, early years, engineering and manufacturing, maths, or physics, with higher payments for teachers in colleges with higher levels of disadvantage	51.2
Initial teacher training reform funding	Teacher training providers and schools can apply for funding to support initial teacher training quality requirements that came into effect in 2024/25	Schools	Recruitment	Financial	Universal	47.0
National professional qualifications	Professional development courses for teachers and leaders to develop skills, progress careers and improve school outcomes	Schools	Retention	Non-financial	Universal	46.0
Get Into Teaching	Website providing information and links to advice for prospective trainee teachers	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	Universal	26.0

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**Figure 11** *continued*  
 The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) initiatives to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers

Initiative	Description	Schools or further education	Recruitment or retention	Financial or non-financial	Universal or targeted	DfE budget in 2024-25
(£mn)						
High-potential initial teacher training (ITT)	Recruitment and training of high-quality ITT trainees who are placed in challenging schools serving low-income communities with high numbers of disadvantaged and low-attaining pupils	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	Targeted at schools serving low-income communities with high numbers of disadvantaged and low-attaining pupils	23.8
Taking Teaching Further	Enables further education providers to support new teachers with relevant knowledge and industry experience to undertake a teaching qualification and receive wraparound early career support	Further education	Both	Financial	Targeted at new teachers who will teach across 15 technical routes, those who will teach English, maths or science, or who will provide support to students with special educational needs and disabilities	11.6
Subject knowledge enhancement	Aims to widen the pool of people able to access teacher training, by providing candidates with the minimum knowledge required to train to teach their chosen subject	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	Targeted at those wishing to teach chemistry, computing, languages, maths or physics	9.5
Further education initial teacher education bursaries	Bursaries to support individuals to train as further education teachers in priority subject areas, worth up to £30,000 for two years	Further education	Recruitment	Financial	Targeted at those training to teach maths, science, engineering and manufacturing, computing or English, or to teach students with special educational needs and disabilities	8.2
Teach in Further Education recruitment campaign	Promotes teaching in further education as a credible career for prospective teachers, targeting those with experience and skills in industry, guides them through the process, and directs them to the webpage to access information and support	Further education	Recruitment	Non-financial	Targeted at industry professionals aged 35 to 65, with a particular focus on construction, engineering, digital, and health and social care, although subsequent information and support is universal	6.2

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**Figure 11** *continued*

The Department for Education's (DfE's) initiatives to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers

Initiative	Description	Schools or further education	Recruitment or retention	Financial or non-financial	Universal or targeted	DfE budget in 2024-25 (£mn)
International relocation payments	Payments worth a total of £10,000 available to eligible non-UK teachers of languages and physics. The payment is designed to cover visa costs, the immigration health surcharge, and other relocation expenses. DfE is piloting the payment in 2023/24 and 2024/25	Schools	Recruitment	Financial	Targeted at physics and languages	4.0
National Institute of Teaching	Delivers ITT, the early career framework and national professional qualification courses, but also has a wider remit to undertake research into best practice in teacher training and development	Schools	Both	Non-financial	Universal	2.0
Teacher mentoring programme	Further education teachers undertake training to become effective mentors, with a particular focus on supporting early career teachers	Further education	Retention	Non-financial	Universal	1.7
Teaching vacancy service	Digital recruitment platform for schools to advertise education roles free	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	Universal	1.2
Career changers	Seeks to attract people with significant industry experience into teaching and support them through application, training and first year of early career teaching	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	Targeted – 90% of those starting the programme had to be in a priority subject. For the 2024 cohort, the priority subjects were biology, business studies, chemistry, computing, design and technology, English, geography, maths, modern foreign languages, and physics	1.0
Workload and wellbeing support	Initiatives to provide support and guidance to schools and colleges to address issues of teacher workload and wellbeing	Both	Retention	Non-financial	Universal	0.7

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**Figure 11** *continued*  
 The Department for Education’s (DfE’s) initiatives to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers

Initiative	Description	Schools or further education	Recruitment or retention	Financial or non-financial	Universal or targeted	DfE budget in 2024-25
(£mn)						
Return to Teaching advisory service	Free one-to-one support for people who have previously taught or trained to teach in the UK and who are thinking about returning to teaching	Schools	Recruitment	Non-financial	Universal	0.5
Flexible working	Flexible working best practice and peer support provided by a cohort of flexible working ambassador schools	Schools	Both	Non-financial	Universal	0.5
Find and Apply to ITT services	Online service to apply for a teacher training course to teach in a state school or in further education	Both	Recruitment	Non-financial	Universal	0.4
Other areas of spend	Additional areas of activity include teaching school hubs (£18 million); Teaching Regulation Agency (£9 million); Teacher Pensions (exceptions) (£11 million); and DfE programme staffing costs (£13 million)	Schools	Both	Non-financial	n/a	51.0

- Notes**
- 1 DfE budget in 2024-25 relates to the financial year (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025). Years referred to in the ‘Description’ column are school academic years and run from 1 September to 31 August.
  - 2 Financial initiatives are those where a financial incentive is available to a trainee, teacher or provider.
  - 3 DfE has not renewed the contract for delivering the career changers programme beyond the 2024 cohort.
  - 4 We have not audited DfE’s budget figures.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Department for Education information





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