

UNQUALIFIED TEACHER PAY AND THE NATIONAL LIVING WAGE BULLETIN

Unqualified Teacher Pay and the National Living Wage, England & Wales Briefing October 2025

Employers could be in breach of National Living Wage (NLW) legislation if they direct those on the unqualified teacher pay scales to work more than 36 hours per week in England, or 36.5 hours in Wales in any given week of the school year.

The NLW – Introduced 1 April 2016

Workers aged 21 and over receive the NLW – the minimum wage for workers.

From April 2025, the rates are £12.21 per hour for workers aged 21 and over.

This equates to an annual salary of £22,222 for a worker who works 35 hours each week over a 12-month period.

Source: National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates –

<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates#>

The Unqualified Teacher Pay Range in England:

The NLW has increased by almost 70% over the last nine years, compared to the 30% increase by which the unqualified teacher pay scales have increased.

National Living Wage and Unqualified Teacher Pay Levels (England), 2016 and 2025

Year	National Living Wage	UQ1	UQ2	UQ3	UQ4	UQ5	UQ6
1 April 2016	£7.20	£16,461	£18,376	£20,289	£22,204	£24,120	£26,034
1 April 2025	£12.21	£21,731	£24,224	£26,716	£28,914	£31,410	£33,902
Percentage increase	70	32	32	32	30	30	30

The pay range for unqualified teachers in England (excluding London and The Fringe) for 2025-26 is reproduced in the table below, together with NASUWT analysis, which shows the equivalent hourly pay rate for unqualified teachers on each pay point based on the number of potential hours worked in a week – set at 35 hours, 35.5 hours, 36 hours, 37.5 hours, 40 hours and 50 hours.

Unqualified Teacher Pay Range England (excluding London and The Fringe)							
1 Sept 2025 to 31 Aug 2026		Hourly rate (£) annual salary divided by hours worked per week					
	Annual	35	35.5	36	37.5	40	50
1 (Minimum)	£22,601	£12.42	£12.24	£12.07	£11.59	£10.87	£8.69
2	£25,193	£13.84	£13.65	£13.46	£12.92	£12.11	£9.69
3	£27,785	£15.27	£15.05	£14.84	£14.25	£13.36	£10.69
4	£30,071	£16.52	£16.29	£16.06	£15.42	£14.46	£11.57
5	£32,667	£17.95	£17.70	£17.45	£16.75	£15.71	£12.56
6 (Maximum)	£35,259	£19.37	£19.10	£18.83	£18.08	£16.95	£13.56

The figures highlighted in red demonstrate circumstances in which an unqualified teacher would be receiving less than the NLW of £12.21 per hour.

The table shows that an unqualified teacher on U1, who is directed to work 36 hours or more per week, would only receive an hourly rate of £12.07 per hour.

The figures above demonstrate how easy it would be for schools to inadvertently breach the NLW provisions.

NASUWT – Unqualified teacher numbers

NASUWT currently has 595 members who have specifically told us they are an unqualified teacher, of which 520 are based in England, 64 in Scotland, ten in Wales, and one in Northern Ireland. This is likely to be much higher and is simply down to the data that members supply when they join NASUWT.

The School Workforce Census – Unqualified teachers

ENGLAND

The School Workforce Census (England) records there being a headcount of 17,918 teachers without Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in total state-funded schools in 2024-25.

This equates to 15,675 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers without QTS in total state-funded schools in 2024-25, or 2.74% of the teacher workforce.

WALES

The FTE Unqualified Teachers in Wales for 2024/25 was 235 (full person equivalent = 275).

Source: StatsWales 2024/25: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/teachers-and-support-staff/school-workforce-annual-census/teachers/teachingstaff-by-measure-staffcategory>

The proportion of unqualified teachers has remained constant since 2010.

Source: SWC 2024: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/a0d7d5c3-fb85-49d6-a8e0-08ddb31391cd>

Who are the unqualified teachers?

Salaried teachers

Unqualified teachers include those on a salaried teacher training course (e.g. Teach First), or teachers who have worked outside the UK who do not have a teaching qualification but meet the eligibility requirements for assessment-only QTS, circa 1,800 this academic year.

Overseas teachers

There are two main categories of overseas teachers, circa 1,200 this academic year.

(1) QTS equivalent: Those who have their teaching qualification recognised as comparable and receive automatic QTS recognition. This group is paid on the Main Pay Range/Upper Pay Range.

(2) Assessed route: Those who have a teaching qualification that is not recognised as equivalent by the UK. They are working towards gaining QTS and are appointed to the unqualified teacher pay scales.

Longstanding unqualified teachers

This group is the largest one, which comprises the unqualified teacher group of almost 16,000 teachers. They include peripatetic music teachers, performing arts teachers, sports coaches and swimming teachers. This group also consists of long-term unqualified teachers who are NOT on a journey to gain QTS.

Wales

The situation in Wales is similar, although the pay rates in Wales are marginally higher, which means that workers on U1 on the Unqualified Teacher Pay Range in Wales would have to work 36.5 hours a week before falling foul of the NLW provisions.

Next steps:

- Schools will need to ensure that unqualified teachers on U1 work less than 36 hours per week in England, and less than 36.5 hours per week in Wales.
- Implement a higher pay award increase for the Unqualified Teacher Pay Range in subsequent years to pre-empt a situation in which U1 falls below the NLW, or to abolish U1 on the Unqualified Teacher Pay Range. This forms part of our evidence to the 36th School Teachers' Review Body Written Evidence for England for 2026/27 and beyond.

We have also requested that the Department include guidance within the STPCD to ensure that U1 unqualified teachers are not required to work more than 35 hours per week, and similar representations are being made to the Welsh Government.

We have raised the issue and shared the details with the Local Government Association (LGA), urging them to issue guidance to employers.

If you want further advice please contact [02920 546080](tel:02920 546080) and ask to speak to our employment adviser.