



NEW DEAL
FOR **TEACHERS**

Securing Opportunity:
A National Workforce Plan

The crisis in teacher supply is one of the biggest threats to the Government's mission to improve opportunities and outcomes for children and young people.

Today, teaching is struggling to compete against other graduate professions, with training targets missed year on year, as more graduates vote with their feet. More teachers than ever are leaving the profession prematurely as escalating workload pressures continue to impact adversely and as teachers see the value of their pay fall further and further behind comparable professions in real terms.

NASUWT welcomes the Government's ambition to recruit 6,500 additional teachers and to take action to resolve the teacher supply crisis. However, this work must go hand in hand with securing a national workforce plan that will create the conditions needed to recruit, retain and develop the potential of our teachers and incentivise teaching as a career.

A national workforce plan developed together with unions and employers would, for the first time, help provide a national response to the challenges affecting the sector and deliver measures that will benefit the range of state-funded school and college employers. It would ensure that our schools and colleges are once again able to compete for and retain the very best. It would provide the basis for ensuring that every school and college can secure the workforce they need to guarantee the educational entitlements of pupils.

CURRENT PIECEMEAL APPROACHES ARE SIMPLY NOT WORKING

In its 34th Report, published in July 2024, the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) agreed with us, saying:

'There are systemic and persistent shortages of teachers, especially in some secondary subjects. In some locations it is particularly difficult for schools to recruit and retain the teachers they need. Our view, supported by the evidence we received from consultees, is that the profession lacks a coordinated long-term strategic workforce plan aimed at ensuring staffing levels are sufficient and sustainable.

'Such a plan would improve the ability to make best use of the school workforce, to reliably forecast future need, to act on those forecasts, and to better match staffing and funding to educational need.

'In addition to enabling sufficient staffing in the right places, the plan should set out coherent action to support recruitment, retention and professional development. Currently, there is a range of initiatives in place to support recruitment. However, supply remains insufficient, and more action is required.

'To ensure broad confidence in such a workforce plan we think that this approach and model should be as transparent as possible with stakeholders having access to the methodology and assumptions. We think more can be done to ensure that the Department's workforce planning is widely trusted.

'STRB observation: Work on a strategic and transparent workforce plan for the teaching profession should commence as soon as practicable.'

We believe that a national workforce plan, designed, developed and delivered jointly by the Government and social partners, would contribute to delivering world-class conditions and opportunities for the workforce in our schools and colleges, and foster the conditions that will enable all schools to deliver world-class educational opportunities for learners.

RAISING THE STATUS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The previous government failed to address the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention, presiding over more than a decade of missed targets, record numbers of unfilled teacher vacancies and the exodus of teachers from the profession. Moreover, they had no plan to develop the wider workforce in schools and colleges, and over the course of their time in office, working hours continued to increase in the absence of a contractual working time limit for teachers and the failure to enforce existing working conditions and rights.

A National Workforce Plan

Securing a professional contract which recognises teachers as highly skilled professionals is now needed to tackle unsustainable workload pressures, end the recruitment and retention crisis, and restore the morale and wellbeing of the workforce.

In particular, a national workforce plan should aim to establish the conditions to make teaching the profession of first choice for graduates by:

- building the education team around the child;
- creating the conditions that support, develop and enrich the education workforce and let teachers teach;
- providing fair, sustainable and effective working practices that contribute to building a diverse and inclusive workforce;
- boosting workforce morale;
- establishing fundamental workforce employment rights and conditions for all teachers, including supply teachers, across all state-funded schools;
- securing national workforce standards, career pathways and access to high-quality professional development; and
- securing improvements in workforce productivity.

A national workforce plan must also address the devastating impact of more than a decade of real-terms cuts to teachers' pay.

There is compelling evidence that teachers today are significantly poorer in real terms than they were in 2010. In the 2023-24 year, we calculate that the value of classroom teachers' pay is currently between 21% and 33% lower than it would have been had it kept pace with RPI inflation since 2010. In terms of leadership pay, the gap is a 35% real-terms shortfall. Furthermore, the introduction in September 2023 of the £30,000 minimum starting salary did not restore pay competitiveness as teachers' starting pay remains around £3,500 lower than median starting salaries offered by the UK's leading graduate employers.

For supply teachers, the situation is much starker, with many supply teachers reporting that it is no longer financially viable for them to remain in teaching.

The STRB also agreed with us on this. In their 34th Report, the pay review body concluded that:

‘The relative value of teachers’ earnings reduced throughout the early 2010s and has reduced further than earnings across the economy, the public sector and other professional occupations since then.

‘On a range of comparisons, the competitiveness of teachers’ average pay has reduced markedly over a number of years.’

A national commission on teachers’ pay should be established, on a time-limited basis, tasked with examining the question of pay restoration and the mechanism for determining future pay awards.

SECURING OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURES IS TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO CHANCE

We want our education system to give every child the opportunity to progress, achieve success and live a happy and fulfilled life.

Teachers don’t want quick fixes; they want lasting solutions that are designed, developed and delivered in partnership, in the interests of our teachers and the pupils they teach.

A national workforce plan will ensure that our schools and colleges have the skilled and motivated workforce they need to deliver the world-class opportunities that our children and young people deserve.

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union