

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Addysg a Dysgu Proffesiynol Athrawon | Inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education

TT 08

Ymateb gan : Teach First Cymru

Response from : Teach First Cymru

## About Teach First

Teach First is an independent charity with the vision that no child's educational success is limited by their socioeconomic background. We work in partnership with local schools and universities to train and support passionate, committed people to become inspirational teachers in schools in low-income communities, whilst also developing a network of future leaders who strive to bring an end to educational disadvantage. Since 2013, 158 teachers have supported over 19,000 Welsh pupils.

## Overview

Teach First provides an alternative, employment-based route into teaching that, attracts talented people into the profession and add value to the Welsh education workforce (Arad Consulting, 2015). The Donaldson proposals explicitly state that the reforms can only be delivered by a stronger and more talented workforce.

In order to attract a diverse range of high-quality new entrants, there needs to be a variety of routes into the profession with cater for the different needs and motivations of potential trainees. For instance, employment-based routes, such as Teach First, are often more attractive for career-changers, who enrich the profession through their prior experiences.

All four UK nations face a growing strain to attract sufficient new teachers into the classroom. In the decade since 2005/6, there has been a 38% reduction in the number of secondary school trainees in Wales<sup>1</sup>.

While this has most been acute in England to date, an increasingly competitive graduate recruitment market will make it harder for the teaching workforce to be sufficient in size. When combined with a growing school pupil population, it will become increasingly harder for schools to meet statutory class size obligations. This could have a detrimental effect on pupil outcomes. For schools serving poorer communities, teacher recruitment faces an additional challenge as these schools find it more difficult to attract and retain teachers. Research by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission has shown that only 15% of teachers would look for a future role at a school more challenging than their own<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Welsh Government: Statistics for Wales. "Initial Teacher Training in Wales, 2014/152 - 27 October 2016.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Cracking the code: how schools can improve social mobility, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, October 2014](#)

It is therefore imperative that the Welsh Government develops a strong workforce strategy which meets the needs of learners and education professionals, particularly in the context of the new curriculum.

## Arrangements for continuing professional development for the current workforce

- A strong, vibrant and diverse Continuing professional development offer to the workforce is critical if the Welsh Government's vision for the workforce is to be fully recognised.
- Schools and teacher training providers should impress upon all new trainees that they have a duty to undertake ongoing professional development opportunities throughout their career, and that "teacher training" does not end with the award of a professional qualification.
- There are some very good programmes and opportunities emerging which allow teachers to enhance their skills as classroom practitioners. Good practice also exists to give teachers the opportunity to acquire the necessary competencies to progress into middle and senior leadership.
- Schools tell us that CPD seems to vary in quality and breadth between consortia, local authorities, schools, and even between departments within schools. There should be more planning on an all Wales basis to ensure that all teachers can access a standard suite of CPD opportunities, in order to ensure consistency for the whole workforce. The Committee may want to consider ways that the sector could pool best practice which is easy for teachers to access. This could be taken forward by the new Wales Academy of Leadership.
- The introduction of the Professional Learning Passport (PLP) is very welcome and we use a similar, bespoke tool ourselves with our first year trainee teachers, in order to align with the PLP practices for the NQT year. However, the PLP is not mandatory, resulting in variability of engagement across the workforce. The Committee may want to consider whether the PLP should be made compulsory for teachers.
- Schools tell us that as budget settlements have been increasingly challenging in some local authorities, pressure on budgets in some schools has meant there are fewer opportunities to engage with external CPD. This has detrimental impact on schools' ability to absorb and implement innovative practice. A solution could be more school-to-school working which is working well in some areas but limited in others.
- From 2019, the post-Furlong ITE system will provide much greater focus on school-to-school collaboration around ITE, with lead schools working closely with other placement schools. Steps should be taken to capitalise on these new partnerships, to ensure deeper collaboration between schools around wider teacher CPD.
- The Wales Academy of Leadership provides an opportunity to develop the skills of senior leaders. The detail released by the Welsh Government to date indicates that the Academy is focused on developing headteachers. We are wary of initial indication that leadership is mainly the responsibility of headteachers. We believe that all teachers need strong leadership skills in order to be effective, reflective classroom practitioners.
- Teach First takes a more holistic view of leadership. Leadership is a critical competency for all teachers. From day one, they are leading learning in the classroom but also leading their own CPD, planning and leading other staff such as teaching assistants.

- Teach First believes that the whole sector should discuss leadership more widely as a concept that needs to be honed for all practitioners and not just seen as the purview of senior and middle managers.
- The Welsh Government's desire to implement the Donaldson curriculum will necessitate the need for new rigorous CPD courses to be designed, implemented and quality assured. The new curriculum not only overhauls requirements for subject knowledge but also will require teachers to facilitate learning in a new way. The Welsh Government needs to work in partnership with consortia, local authorities, schools and professional associations to roll out this new scheme of training courses. If the quality of training needed is not forthcoming, the ambition of the Donaldson curriculum will not be met.
- The teaching and leadership standards are career long, and with practice constantly evolving - it's important that there is a CPD programme to ensure that these standards are met at the highest level. Often senior leaders will teach a small selection of classes and it's critical that they are able to undertake subject knowledge and pedagogy CPD opportunities in order to keep their teaching practice at the very highest level. This is not only important to ensure that the children they teach are taught in the very best way, but also it will allow senior leaders to act as role models for junior members of staff.

## The role of initial teacher education

- Teach First focuses on developing leadership skills as a core component of our initial teacher education. The Teach First route appeals to those who want an immersive experience and are committed to working in a school which serves a low-income community.
- We work exclusively in collaboration with schools with high-eFSM populations. This is important for creating a workforce which is committed to these schools, and is equipped with the skills to address the effects of poverty on educational attainment.
- Teach First shares the Welsh Government's aim of eradicating the attainment gap between eFSM pupils and their peers. Recent data indicates that progress is being made in closing the attainment gap, which is to be welcomed. However, if the current rate of progress continues, it will take over 28 years to fully close the Level 2+ attainment gap at KS4. This indicates the need for sustained, focused action across the sector.
- Teach First welcomes Prof John Furlong's proposals for the future of ITE in Wales. We believe there is strong alignment between the vision of Prof Furlong and the foundations of the Teach First programme.
- The Furlong proposals provide significant opportunities for greater collaboration between schools and universities. The proposals will result in stronger partnerships between schools and universities, enabling the development of a stronger, Wales-orientated, research base, which will underpin training. Research-led practice must be at the centre of effective ITE and we welcome this development. Furthermore, the increased role for schools in shaping teacher development within the school-context will provide a significant opportunity for enhancing the practical skills which trainees require in order to become excellent practitioners.
- We note that Wales has stricter entry requirements to ITE courses than other parts of the UK, requiring all entrants to have achieved a Grade B at GCSE English/Welsh and Maths. This will naturally have an impact on the size of the talent-pool of

potential entrants. The Committee may wish to consider the impact of this policy. We feel there should be an additional alternative assessment of the level of required competency in literacy and numeracy, reflecting the fact that entrants may have significantly developed their skills since they were assessed at the age of 16.

- With greater competition emerging across the UK for the recruitment of potential teachers, it is vital that Wales is not left behind as the result of policy decisions which have unintended consequences.

## The sufficiency of the future workforce

- Sufficiency of the workforce varies across Wales. This has depended on a variety of factors, including:
  - Availability of new teachers.
  - Quality of leadership at individual schools.
  - Availability of CPD and opportunities for career progression.
- The reforms proposed by the Welsh Government are ambitious and will take significant planning to implement properly. The Committee may wish to consider whether in areas where teacher recruitment is already a significant challenge (ie. in the Welsh medium sector and in schools serving low income communities) there is sufficient capacity to do so.
- Many partner schools tell us that they struggle to attract applicants to many roles, especially in Maths and Science.
- Today's classroom teachers are the senior and middle leaders of tomorrow. With growing evidence that schools are struggling to attract the relevant senior staff, it's critical that a leadership pipeline is available to the sector.
- Teach First's emphasis on leadership can make a real difference to ensuring that there is leadership capacity within the system. Research by Dr Rebecca Allen (University College London) found that in England those recruited and developed through Teach First are:
  - Seven times more likely to be in senior school leadership positions
  - More likely to be taking on more additional responsibilities and middle leadership positions, demonstrated by them earning, on average, £3,000 and £6,000 more by years 3 and 5 in teaching, respectively
  - Three times more likely to be teaching in schools serving low income communities three years after starting teaching
  - Working in schools in challenging circumstances; the majority teach in schools rated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Unsatisfactory.<sup>3</sup>

The Welsh Government should ensure that the education sector is inclusive and responsive to the needs of a whole variety of teachers and potential entrants to the profession. For example, salaried routes into teaching open up the profession to groups who might otherwise find it difficult to enter the profession (e.g. career changers, parents, trainees with caring responsibilities).

For further information on this consultation response, please contact Teach First Cymru's Director, Jennifer Owen Adams ([jowen-adams@teachfirst.org.uk](mailto:jowen-adams@teachfirst.org.uk))

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<sup>3</sup> [Allen, Rebecca. The careers of Teach First: Ambassadors who remain in teaching: job choices, promotion and school quality. \(2016\)](#)