

Training new teachers

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

- 1 ASCL notes that you have opened an inquiry into the training of new teachers, which it strongly welcomes as a key factor in addressing the current severe shortage of teachers.
- 2 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents more than 18,000 heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of maintained and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL has members in more than 90 per cent of secondary schools and colleges of all types, responsible for the education of more than four million young people. This places the association in a unique position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of secondary schools and of colleges.
- 3 ASCL has been warning for some time that a crisis in teacher supply was imminent, a crisis that has now arrived. Clearly, there are issues of retention as well as recruitment but for some time too few new teachers have been trained, especially teachers of some shortage subjects.
- 4 In response to ASCL's recent surveys, which were undertaken at the autumn regional conferences, 83.4% school leaders said that they were experiencing unprecedented challenges in recruiting teachers. Furthermore, in response to the question, 'how did this year's teacher recruitment compare to last?' 44.6% of leaders stated that it was *much more* difficult than in previous years, 38.8% *more* difficult than in previous years and 15.3% the same as last year. Qualitative data, collated in response to a call for examples from headteachers, illustrated the depth of concern, with several respondents who have been in education for a number of years comparing the current situation to that of the 1980s when recruitment was at crisis point. Teacher supply is now one of the most significant issues affecting schools and their communities.
- 5 Despite regional variation and each region's specific challenges, for example in coastal areas, teacher recruitment is now a concern throughout the country, including London, with its high teacher mobility. Schools that are isolated geographically or isolated from teacher training networks are less likely to have a regular supply of NQTs and early stage teachers.
- 6 School leaders report that in addition to the longstanding shortage of teachers in STEM subjects there is now a shortage of teachers in all English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects. This has been made worse since 2014 when the unexpected announcement of compulsory EBacc led to schools having to make last minute changes to their curriculum and school timetables whilst recruiting additional teachers in EBacc subjects.
- 7 Teacher shortage makes deploying teachers with suitable qualifications and higher level subject specialism a challenge, which is having a negative impact for the quality of teaching at KS3: a point made in Ofsted's latest report on KS3, 'KS3: The Wasted

Years?¹, which refers to schools prioritising specialist teachers at KS4 and KS5 in order to prioritise examination outcomes. Some sixth forms are unable to staff retake courses for those students who did not achieve a grade C in English or mathematics, and post-16 colleges have also had a great deal of difficulty in finding sufficient teachers for such students.

- 8 Senior leaders' concerns about current teacher shortage are compounded by the feeling that the supply of new teachers is inadequate. This is supported by evidence arising from a range of sources, including UCAS, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and the DfE which has indicated, for the last two years, that target numbers for recruiting to initial teacher education (ITE) have been missed. There will also be a decline in the population of 21 year olds from 2016 through to 2022. This means the pool of graduates could continually fall, leading in turn to fewer teacher trainees. At the same time the number of 11 year olds will rise, with the current 'bulge' in primary-aged children moving into the secondary sector, meaning that more teachers will be needed. The supply of trainee teachers does not meet future demand.
- 9 Supply teaching agencies have taken on a greater significance during this time of teacher shortage and appear to have benefitted from the situation by charging high introductory fees for matching teachers to vacancies, brokering posts of responsibility for candidates and matching them with schools. These fees are payable by schools, which has increased staffing costs. Similarly, trade papers are in a position to charge large sums to place an advert for a teacher, with increasing costs as a teacher resignation deadline approaches.
- 10 The DfE has been slow to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem. DfE statistics on teacher supply are gathered from a range of sources at different points in the year but rely heavily on lagged data from the annual school workforce census which is gathered from schools in November. The census does not gather data on school staff vacancies at the start of the academic year and, by November, school leaders have resolved staffing issues by, for example, reducing the curriculum offer, putting unqualified staff in the classroom or paying large fees to teacher supply agencies for temporary staff. In addition, the DfE's Teacher Supply Model (TSM) does not provide an accurate projection of teacher supply, in part because it fails to analyse by geographical region. In order to gather more accurate data on teacher vacancies the DfE needs to revise its methodology.

The root causes of the current problem of an insufficient supply of teachers

- 11 A range of factors have added to an already fragmented system of teacher supply which has been compounded by;
 - (a) failure to recognise the once emerging problem of teacher supply which is now a crisis,
 - (b) the lack of a national strategy using secure and reliable data to spot trends and inform long-term strategic planning,
 - (c) a plethora of routes into teaching with an overly complex application process,
 - (d) the lack of a central body² coordinating a coherent strategy, in partnership with an emerging 'middle tier' (multi-academy trusts (MATs), local authorities, regional schools commissioners (RSCs), teaching schools and SCITTs) to address teacher recruitment and retention issues.

¹ Ofsted, 'KS3: The Wasted Years?', Sept 2015; p.14

² The Teacher Development Agency and its predecessors had responsibility for the strategic planning of teacher supply, training and retention over time.

- 12 A request to ASCL school leaders to identify the root causes of the teacher supply crisis resulted in a common list, including the following:
- 13 The economic upturn means that there are more vacancies in the jobs market generally, and more graduate level job vacancies than there have been since 2008, means that the career of teaching is competing with careers that offer better financial incentives, greater flexibility, more opportunities for creativity, and shorter working hours. Teaching as a career has received negative publicity, over time, from a range of media sources including documentaries on young teachers which emphasise crises, stresses and long working hours; media reporting on the high stakes accountability culture in schools and changes in behaviour and expectations for a younger generation of teachers and school leaders who are more mobile, both nationally and internationally.
- 14 The plethora of routes into teaching has caused confusion for applicants, school staff and school leaders. Confusion about routes into teaching and an unwieldy, over-complicated UCAS application process could in itself be a disincentive to potential candidates as well as to school leaders³ who are in a position to promote teaching as a career.
- 15 The allocation of teacher training places by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) to schools and universities has been unresponsive to schools' needs. The School Direct Programme is variable and places have not been responsive to regional need.
- 16 The diversification of ITE provision has meant that several universities have had to reduce or close their programmes. In November 2014 a report into the impact of initial teacher education reforms on English higher education institutions stated that between 2012 and the academic year 2014/15 there has been a 23 percent reduction in university initial teacher education departments. The impact of this is to reduce the capacity of higher education to adequately train teachers, leading to subject disciplines being combined, thereby diluting expertise in subject knowledge and pedagogy.
- 17 A high stakes accountability system means that school leaders and their teachers are under constant pressure to ensure that performance indicators are met, which sometimes leads to excessive workload both for teachers and school leaders. ASCL awaits any recommendations of the recently initiated teacher workload task group on this.
- 18 The supply of school leaders is also of concern, but this is not the focus of your current inquiry.

Recommendations and actions for government to tackle teacher shortages.

- 19 The most immediate task is for government to accept that there is a teacher supply crisis. Its current methodology of data gathering on teacher vacancies needs to be developed if it genuinely wants to understand the issue in order to work with the

³ To help address this ASCL has produced a simple 'Routes into Teaching' guide.

http://plscitt.org.uk/uploads/Documents/Our%20Programme%20Files/routes_into_teaching_map_final.pdf

profession to resolve it. Until that time the prognosis for teacher recruitment, retention and supply remains poor.

- 20 A national strategy is necessary to develop a coordinated strategic plan which aims to solve the long-term issue of teacher shortage and bring cohesion to a fractured system. The right organisations and individuals need to be involved, recruited because of their skills and professional expertise. Teaching schools, SCITTs, school alliances, as well as the 'middle tier' (RSCs, LAs, MATs and others) need to be at the table.
- 21 A national strategy should be research-informed and evidence-led. It should review and draw on models of teacher capacity-building used nationally and internationally. For example, it is worth understanding the strategy of 'over-recruitment' employed in Canada and Finland, even if these are not ultimately adopted. Other models need to be considered.
- 22 In the absence of a coordinated task force to address this issue ASCL has developed a policy on ITE⁴ and is working with its own council to identify solutions to the supply crisis. This work was developed further at a recent policy forum led by ASCL and Policy Exchange, entitled 'The Future of the Teaching Workforce' which recommended long-term as well as short-term solutions. Some of these solutions are being crafted into recommendations and are divided into teacher-focused solutions and system-led solutions, some solutions overlapping.

Individual (teacher-centred) solutions

- 23 There is support for a profession-led campaign to attract people into teaching or back into teaching. The campaign would promote teaching as a competitive, high status profession, made up of the best graduates with a sense of social responsibility. It would have corporate backing, building on Teach First's origins, be supported by a public relations campaign that provides the media with positive stories about successful young teachers and would use social media to recruit.
- 24 The quality of training and professional development is key. A professional learning ladder, of which ITE is the first rung, led and quality assured by the profession should be developed. The recommendations on Initial Teacher Education from the Carter review need to be implemented by developing a core curriculum with a strong foundation in subject knowledge and subject specific pedagogy, behaviour management, assessment and preparation for teaching students with special educational needs and disabilities. Training for subject mentors with agreed standards is essential. Attention needs to be given to better support for the transition from NQT year to early stage teaching.
- 25 Strong leaders prioritise continuous profession development and learning (CPDL). All CPDL leaders would benefit from an understanding of the CPDL curriculum pedagogy, including how to plan and deliver effective CPDL.⁵
- 26 It would be helpful to minimise employment risks, pay off student loans for those teaching in a challenging schools, and abandon PGCE fees.

⁴ <http://www.ascl.org.uk/help-and-advice/ascl-policy-papers/ascl-policy-teacher-supply-and-initial-teacher-education.html>

⁵ <http://www.ascl.org.uk/help-and-advice/guidance-papers/ascl-guidance-paper-leadership-of-professional-development-and-learning.html>

- 27 Existing research findings on teacher employment and behaviours can be used to identify factors that would attract people into teaching and retain them. Factors might include the call to a moral purpose, promoting the benefits of teachers' pensions and choice of employment locations, and opportunities to be more creative in teaching itself. Research on teacher retention suggests that initial teaching experience in a strong department with excellent leadership has long-term benefits to teacher retention. Therefore, the allocation of teachers in their early careers is key: a factor that government needs to consider in developing The National Teaching Service.

System wide and structural solutions

- 28 Greater cohesion could be brought to a fractured and diverse system of teacher supply by simplifying the routes into teaching and modifying the Teacher Supply Model (TSM) and the allocation of ITE places. It would be worth considering the possibility of 'over-recruiting' to teaching.
- 29 Though the majority of teachers are in maintained schools and academies there is a need for a strategy that allows for cognate sectors, such as incorporated colleges and independent schools.
- 30 Teaching school eligibility needs to be reviewed and revised to ensure that accreditation is based on the ability to train teachers, not on an Ofsted judgement alone. The Teaching School Council, SCITTs and HE providers need to develop partnerships of strategic co-ordination of ITE.
- 31 For areas where there is the greatest difficulty in recruitment a recruitment and retention offer would help to address particular shortfalls, as could a National Teaching Service that can deploy teachers more strategically. Consideration could be given to regional deployment of teachers via RSCs, MATs, teaching schools, SCITTs, and Ofsted Regional Directors.
- 32 The creation of a national supply teaching pool as an alternative to private supply agencies could cut costs for schools and ensure professional and ethical codes of conduct.
- 33 The profession should lead on its own development via the College of Teaching for teachers and the Leadership Foundation for senior leaders. These bodies should work in partnership to create an accredited, professional development framework and safeguard and nurture teaching as a noble profession.
- 34 I hope that this is of value to your inquiry, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

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