

Association of Professional Staffing Companies (Global) Ltd Submission to Education Select Committee inquiry on teacher recruitment, training, and retention.

April 2023

About APSCo Global

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (Global) Ltd (APSCo) is the trade association for the professional recruitment market. APSCo Global comprises APSCo Asia, APSCo Australia, APSCo Deutschland and APSCo United Kingdom as well as APSCo OutSource, the trade body for the resource outsourcing and managed service sectors. Our members place permanent and temporary staff into roles across the public and private sectors in teaching, social work and clinical healthcare, IT, engineering, pharmaceuticals, and general professional.

APSCo UK is a trusted specialist in education recruitment and compliance, with its highly regarded Education Compliance + standards and Compliance + audited membership. APSCo UK works closely with the DfE and CCS on frameworks and education policy initiatives, as well as inputting into skills and talent policy.

Summary of recommendations

- Prioritise Early Years and literacy due to impact on later attainment.
- Allow more school based and localised decision making and reduce focus on external measurement as signifiers of success or failure.
- Finance more teacher training, increase routes into the profession and increase focus on wellbeing support.
- Reduce and clarify DfE and Ofsted guidance on recruitment and compliance – produce clear pathways to recruitment, so headteachers have the confidence to recruit themselves and remove unnecessary administrative processes and compliance steps.

Contact

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The current situation regarding teacher recruitment and retention

APSCo's March 2023 [Education Sector Report](#), produced with Broadbean, shows that:

- Year on year teaching vacancy numbers are significantly higher in 2023 with February up 44% on the same time last year. If we compare vacancies in October/November 2022 with January/February, we see numbers up by 6% in 2023 indicative of rising demand for staff.
- Applications meanwhile were steady and after a peak in January troughed in February and 10% lower than February 2022. This is concerning given the talent shortages.
- Average permanent salaries have decreased across 2022, with a fall of 5.2% comparing February 2022 and 2023, hovering around £30-31,000. With the cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation and strike action this is concerning and signifies more problems ahead for teacher recruitment and retention.

Our members are reporting an international shortage of teachers and could place qualified teachers on their books into permanent or supply roles many times over. The sector has never been busier driven by the increase in temporary staff sought and labour shortages. Teaching assistants (TAs) are more readily available than teachers and schools are balancing their headcount and budgets by employing TAs to meet statutory ratios. Members note that supply teaching has become the preferred option for many qualified professionals, to fit in with their lives, as teachers can no longer rely on long holidays or shorter working hours.

Teacher retention

We have spoken to the Chairs of our Education Sector Group and other education specialist recruiters who have sort input from their headteacher clients. There is a consistent message that a teaching job is now highly pressurised with long hours in a structured and closely monitored system, with little scope for individual flair, leaving teachers feeling undervalued and stressed. The traditional perception of teaching as a profession, with the benefit of long holidays and school hours, is long gone, replaced by long hours and heavy non-teaching administrative burdens.

There are more expectations from parents than ever, and teaching staff need to be available to parents via email or more regular events and the use of WhatsApp amongst the parent body has increased contact.

One experienced managing director of a recruitment business says:

“Innovative, tailor made teaching based around individual needs is no longer possible for teachers due to so many tick box activities that are needed to meet government requirements. The guidance and legislation 10 years ago was half that of today.”

One member says:

“Teachers are leaving in droves” retiring early after 30 years or disenchanted younger teachers, who no longer have role models or mentors in their schools.

One head reports young teachers retraining in areas as diverse as IT tech and counselling, to attain a better balance and less work stress:

“They look at the demands coming from parents and the inspection cycle... and are less keen to aspire to management and leadership roles.”

There is also a lack of consistent wellbeing support or funds for wellbeing.

Teacher recruitment

There is too much guidance, often overlapping, from DfE and Ofsted and prescriptive, judgmental rules. Sometimes, guidance is needed but still in draft for example around online safety checks when recruiting. Most schools are independent and not part of large Trusts, run by ambitious teachers, not business leaders. In one member’s experience headteachers feel overwhelmed by the DfE website, they do not trust themselves to find the right information and therefore want the security of working with a trusted recruiter who takes ownership of the compliance.

There are teacher and support teacher shortages across the country and a fight for talent. The North may be more affected and struggle more with recruitment, particularly in areas with schools with lower Ofsted ratings and more disadvantaged children. A London headteacher reported problems recruiting in the London fringe area as the pay is not keeping up with cost of living in the Southeast.

Early years

There is now a critical need to recruit Early Years teachers and support staff as the learning which does not take place in the Early Years cannot be postponed until a later date. The effects of not intervening early enough in a pupil's life has a huge impact for schools and society, resulting in the gap in attainment and progress getting even bigger and ultimately leading to pupils leaving school unable to read or write to the required standard.

One member reports that literacy has been most affected and literacy is the essential element leading to attainment in other subjects, whether at primary school or beyond. The literacy attainment gap is widening particularly in the Midlands and the North where they are based. Another deputy head teacher reports difficulties recruiting in the Southwest, particularly maths and language specialists.

What impact do retention issues have on pupils particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND?

One headteacher reports:

"It has a huge impact. For example, if I can't get a permanent teacher, I have to get a supply one which isn't guaranteed. Then supply teachers often do not work a full week or do the extra work like planning. We have three times the national average of SEND children and consistency of staff is needed for their benefit."

Children are taught by unqualified support staff or in combined class groups so neither those falling behind nor the gifted children get the one-to-one support they deserve to thrive. In particular, the long-term economic importance of developing gifted students is undervalued.

These children can very quickly fall behind or lose interest, leading to absence and possibly exclusion, putting pressures on other parts of the system. The delay in processing and funding means SEN pupils do not get the additional support they are entitled to.

What action should the Department take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment and retention?

A business owner member says:

"Listen to teachers, understand the pressures. Stop relying on goodwill. Have a robust wellbeing system".

A headteacher told us:

"They should tell us more often we're doing a good job! They should give us a funded pay rise."

A number of members state that teachers need access to mentoring and a structured framework of support to provide a healthy work life balance and protect them from burnout. It should be recognised that local schools need local solutions to their specific issues – there is too much centralised support from DfE and large trusts and academies.

Ofsted must reposition its role – it produces a level of fear, and we are told leads to a school managed to fulfil the "view of Ofsted" rather than what is good for the children, staff or community. The education process needs to create trust rather than continually reverting to an emphasis on measurable results and move to creating a climate of innovation that is relevant to society's needs, now and in the future, this direction of travel will attract talent into education who otherwise would

not have considered education as a viable career. Outstanding and failing schools are both hard to recruit for, as no one wants to be labelled as being part of a team failing or losing its outstanding status.

Our members are not sure of the impact of new bursaries and scholarships as only very recently introduced.

Government should continue to heavily subsidise post covid tutoring in literacy and numeracy to raise the general standards of pupils, to free time to deliver teaching. One member partnered with the Fisher Family Trust on the NTP and delivered very bespoke reading tutoring which was successful. The NTP programme or a similar programme should be funded they think beyond 2023/2024 although they say some schools are put off as it is overly bureaucratic and centralised.

How well does the current teacher training framework work to prepare new teachers and how could it be improved?

A headteacher says it is too centralised and administrative. They report that the Early Career Framework is repetitive and prescriptive and doesn't take into account the skills of the teacher. It does not improve ECT teaching. In teacher training there should be a focus on mental health with "buddy groups" and collaboration between individuals and schools. Young teachers report to members of being afraid of failing, unable to show vulnerabilities.

Some members and teachers say there should be more diverse routes into teaching. For example, highly experienced training assistants transitioning into teachers. There should be more use of School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITTs) and potentially degree apprenticeships; this encourages loyalty between the school and the teacher, and one member is offering to find roles for graduates of SCITT that are unable to be placed at the training school. Like other careers there needs to be more diverse routes into teaching.

How do challenges in teacher recruitment, training and retention compare to those being faced in other professions/ sectors of the economy, and is there anything that can be learned from other professions/ sectors of the economy?

We see similar challenges in recruitment, training and retention across the public sector in our social worker and clinical healthcare sectors – overly prescriptive guidance and programmes, top-down control, poor morale amongst staff and a push from staff and leaders for better pay and working conditions. After Covid more professionals are choosing a better work life balance if they can afford it. One member says:

"Teachers used to be held in far higher regard than they are today . Fix that(by funding properly) and we would encourage more people into the profession."

What particular challenges exist in teacher recruitment, training and retention for teachers from different demographic backgrounds?

Not enough teachers full stop are recruited in schools and universities and increasingly teaching is not seen as an attractive first career option, compared with other professions such as law or accountancy. So, this means proportionally recruitment across demographic backgrounds is low. Members report there is not a focus on supporting young teachers from different demographic backgrounds in work.