



Department
for Education

International Teacher Recruitment

Research report

June 2025

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Glossary

Term	Description
Rest of the world (ROW)	Countries outside of the European Economic Area.
European Economic Area (EEA)	<p>Members states of the European Union and three countries of the European Free Trade Association.</p> <p>This includes: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.</p>
Multi Academy Trust (MAT)	A trust that runs multiple academies; state funded schools which are directly funded by the Department for Education but are independent of local authority control.
International Relocation Payment (IRP)	A £10,000 payment available to non-UK teachers of languages and physics.
Initial Teacher Training (ITT)	Training courses undertaken by trainee teachers in order to qualify as teachers.
Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Bursary	A bursary offered to students on teacher training courses for languages and physics.
Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)	A certification which is required to become a teacher in most schools in England.
Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	A higher education course which provides training in order to become a teacher in maintained schools.
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	A term used for children and young people who need extra health and education support.
Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)	Languages commonly used across the world, including, Spanish, French and German.

Times Educational Supplement (TES)	Provides a range of resources to support those in the education sector, including providing a selection of teaching job vacancies.
School Workforce Census (SWC)	Statutory data collection submitted by local authorities, local authority-maintained schools and academies. The census collects data on all teaching and support staff in regular employment.

Executive summary

Introduction and methodology

In England, international teacher recruitment has historically helped cover teacher supply shortfalls, particularly within a number of shortage subjects. Recently, the Department for Education (DfE) introduced policies from the 2023/24 academic year which aimed to support and encourage international teachers and trainees to relocate to England. To understand the influence of these policies, as well as the barriers and enablers to international teacher recruitment, DfE commissioned IFF Research to conduct a mixed-methods research study.

DfE ran a survey with overseas trained teachers who had gained qualified teacher status (QTS) in England, and international trainees who had successfully applied to train to teach in England. This DfE survey was issued in March 2024. DfE shared anonymised survey data with IFF Research for analysis. This survey data was used to produce data tables broken down by a range of demographic characteristics and was further analysed.

In-depth interviews with 38 leaders, 30 teachers, 30 trainees, 10 recruitment agencies, and 15 Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers were also conducted. These interviews covered a range of topics including experiences of recruiting international teachers, experiences of teaching and training in England, the influence of DfE policies, as well as views surrounding available support. For the analysis and reporting stage, IFF developed an analysis framework for each interview group. The framework was linked to the research questions which enabled thematic analysis by a range of variables.

Motivations

Leaders noted they had experienced significant challenges with recruiting teachers in recent years. This was felt to be due to the cost of living, high workload, and stress. In response to this shortage, leaders were more likely to consider hiring an international teacher¹. During interviews, leaders expressed a preference for UK-based or UK-trained teachers, because international teacher recruitment was viewed as more challenging. In cases where international teacher recruitment was considered, this was often due to the lack of available and good quality UK-based teachers.

In the DfE survey, international teachers were motivated to apply for a teaching role in England due to there being more opportunities for career progression (54%) and to gain experience working in English schools (52%). During the qualitative interviews, teachers

¹ It is important to note here, that the leaders involved in this research included those who had either experience with recruiting international teachers previously or were currently employing an international teacher.

often emphasised their motivations to relocate to England because they had friends and family living there, and due to the perceived high standard of education in England.²

Trainees reported similar motivations to teachers for applying to train in England. Two thirds (66%) felt England offered more opportunities for career progression and half (51%) were attracted by the quality of the course / reputation of the provider. The favourable reputation of the English school system/teaching courses was a point that came up among both teachers and trainees as a motivation for teaching in England. Trainees included in the qualitative interviews noted that the bursaries offered were their main motivator, as well as being nearby friends and family.

Trainees who did not start their training course most commonly noted in the survey this was due to the cost of the course (57%) and the cost of living (38%).

Recruitment and application processes

Most leaders said they were not specifically looking to fill vacancies with international teachers. Instead, schools recruited international teachers due to the lack of available and good quality UK-based teachers. The most common recruitment channels used were teacher recruitment websites, in particular TES, and DfE's Teaching Vacancies Service T(TVS), social media, local adverts and word of mouth. Leaders were looking for the 'best candidate', which was made up of multiple factors. These included whether their qualifications were equivalent to English QTS standards, relevant teaching experience, degree of subject knowledge, and good soft skills and/or cultural compatibility. The main barrier to recruiting international teachers mentioned by leaders was the cost of sponsoring their visa, followed by being less certain of their skillset due to their overseas qualifications and the online interviews.

Agencies described their screening processes for international teachers as 'rigorous', including extensive background checks, verifying their qualifications, and interviewing the candidate about their motivations, subject knowledge and communication skills.

Leaders had mixed experiences working with recruitment agencies. Some found agencies effectively filled vacancies; others felt agencies provided poor-quality candidates. All felt agencies were very expensive, but many felt they had no other option to find teachers. Generally, teachers who used agencies felt this simplified the application process through the useful guidance and support. They also found they were more likely to get a response, compared with going directly to a school. It is also worth noting that

² Qualitative interviews with teachers only included those who had moved to England to teach, whereas the survey included teachers who did and did not move to England to teach. Survey results indicate there was little variation in the motivations between these two groups, but the additional emphasis placed on certain motives less prominently reflected in the survey may be a result of differences in respondent profiles.

most teachers in the survey (63%) reported starting on temporary contracts, although this was not reflected qualitatively.

As with leaders' recruitment approaches, training providers in England did not usually market courses to international trainees. Instead, they implemented a single marketing strategy which reached both home and overseas applicants. The most common difficulty reported by training providers when recruiting international trainees was the time spent filtering out large numbers of poor-quality applications from overseas.

Trainees were generally positive about the application process. Most found applying for courses straightforward, although occasionally time consuming due to the level of information needed about previous qualifications and experience.

Incentives and support

There are two main types of financial support currently available for international teachers and trainees. These are the International Relocation Payment (IRP), a £10,000 payment for physics and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) teachers (and trainees, prior to the 2024/25 academic year) to go towards the costs of relocating to England to teach, and tax-free bursaries and scholarships in MFL and physics worth up to £29,000 which are now available to international as well as domestic trainees.³ Overall awareness of the available support and the recent changes to policies was limited amongst all research audiences. In some cases, where there was awareness of these incentives and support, there was limited understanding of the detail.

Around one quarter of surveyed teachers (26%) were aware of the IRP when they applied to teach in England. Four in ten (40%) of those surveyed who were actively teaching the eligible subjects for IRP (Physics and Modern Foreign Languages) received the IRP.⁴ During the qualitative interviews it was evident that the IRP was viewed as an effective means of reducing the financial barriers related to moving to England to teach, though most would still have relocated without the IRP. Survey data suggested around one-in-seven teachers (14%) who received the IRP would have taught in a different country if they had not received this payment.

³ Full guidance on eligibility for the IRP and scholarships/bursaries can be found on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-relocation-payments/international-relocation-payments>, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-training-itt-bursary-funding-manual>.

⁴ It is worth noting that the IRP was introduced in March 2023 (midway through the 2023/24 academic year) with payments starting during the 2023/24 academic year; and the research included teachers who were already teaching in England and trainees who were already training in England or had completed their training. As such, these participants might have applied for their teaching and training roles prior to the roll out of the IRP. This would therefore impact upon awareness and receipt.

Almost half of surveyed trainees were aware of the IRP (46%) and around two in ten (18%) of surveyed trainees received the IRP.⁵ As with teachers, there were a small number of surveyed trainees (17%) who would have chosen to train in another country or stayed in the country they were living in if the IRP had been unavailable, although bursaries and/or scholarships were more decisive (24%). The survey found more trainees were aware of bursaries and scholarships (57%) than the IRP (46%). Qualitatively, bursaries and scholarships were more influential in trainees' decision to relocate to England than the IRP⁶.

Most training providers had a good idea of the financial incentives available to trainees. Some raised concerns that the availability of financial incentives can, at times, increase the number of poor-quality applications they receive.

Experiences employing international teachers, teaching in English schools, and teacher training in England

Leaders often emphasised that international teachers brought a wealth of diverse experiences and cultural perspectives that enrich schools, sparking ideas and innovation. However, employing international teachers presented several challenges. These challenges included their ability to adapt to the English school system, the quality of their teaching, and administrative issues with visas. Leaders were able to successfully go some way to overcome these challenges by developing professional development programmes, provide assistance with housing, tailored induction programmes, phased integration and collaborative approaches to recruitment.

Teachers highlighted that the key positive aspects of teaching in England were the flexibility in teaching methods, advanced teaching resources – particularly in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) subjects – and the professional development opportunities.

Of the teachers who left teaching in England, 36% cited stress and high workloads were the reason for deciding to leave the teaching profession, followed by dissatisfaction with pay (34%) and poor pupil behaviour (33%). Teachers (both international and domestic teachers) often give the same reasons for leaving teaching in other studies, such as the latest wave of DfE's Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders Survey (DfE, 2024⁷). The

⁵ Ibid. Further, the DfE survey was very likely to have oversampled recruits receiving IRP. The 18% should not be read as the total take up of IRP amongst international trainees.

⁶ While the bursary was first announced in October 2022, the IRP wasn't announced until the following March, by which point it is possible many of the interviewees had already decided to come to teach in England.

⁷ IFF Research and the Institute of Education (2024), Working lives of teachers and leaders, wave 3. DfE. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67852c953a9388161c5d2335/Wave_3_Summary_Report.pdf. 84% cite high workload as a reason for leaving, 75% cite stress and/or poor wellbeing

qualitative interviews indicated that pupils' behaviour, safeguarding challenges and high workloads consistently presented challenges.

Almost nine in ten (89%) trainees gave a 'very' or 'fairly positive' rating to the content of their training course and their classroom experience. However, trainees that were interviewed also indicated that they had a high workload which proved challenging at times. As well as this, the costs associated with training and relocation put a strain on trainees.

The future of international teacher recruitment and international teacher trainees

Looking ahead, many school leaders anticipated an increase in the number of international teachers. This view was driven by a shortage of UK-trained teachers, an ageing workforce, and negative perceptions of teaching as a profession in the UK. Some leaders were hesitant to increase the number of international teachers due to retention challenges and the additional costs associated with hiring internationally.

DfE's survey results found that 88% of international teachers working in England intended to remain for at least one year, with 46% of them indicating that they intend to remain indefinitely.

During the interviews, many training providers felt uncertain about the future of international teacher training in England, particularly given recent changes to visa policies, and the EU exit.

Nearly two-thirds of trainees completing the survey (63%) said they would definitely apply for teaching roles in English state schools when they qualified, while 34% said they definitely would apply for teaching roles in private independent schools. Only 22% reported that they would definitely apply for teaching positions in another country.

In order to improve the international teacher and trainee recruitment process, multiple suggestions were made. This included clearer guidance and communication, enhancing sector communications, enhancing visa and sponsorship processes, streamlining recruitment processes, managing agencies more effectively, and providing sector level assistance.

Similarly, there were various suggestions for how improvements could be made to employing international teachers and trainees. This included facilitating adjustments to life and work in England and relocation support for teachers and trainees.

1. Introduction and methodology

Background and context

In England, international teacher recruitment has historically helped cover teacher supply shortfalls, particularly within a number of shortage subjects. At the time of commissioning this research, the Department for Education (DfE) had recently introduced recruitment policies which aimed to support and encourage international teachers and trainees to relocate to England. These new policies included:

- A small scale pilot of the International Relocation Payment (IRP) for international teachers and trainees in physics and languages who meet the criteria.⁸
- Expanding physics and languages bursaries to international trainees.⁹
- Changing the way overseas teaching qualifications are recognised.
- Increasing the online guidance available for schools and prospective international teachers and trainees.

To understand the influence of these policies as well as wider contextual factors, such as the EU exit, the Covid-19 pandemic and immigration system changes, DfE commissioned IFF Research to conduct a mixed-methods research study. This report will inform policy relating to international teacher recruitment.

Research aims

This research explores the barriers and enablers to international teacher recruitment, as well as how DfE's policies are currently meeting the needs of schools, MATs, teachers and trainees, and others involved in the process of international recruitment, such as ITT providers and recruitment agencies, as well as how they are impacting on recruitment.

The exact research questions are as follows:

1. What enablers and barriers exist to support candidates to relocate to England to teach or train to teach?
2. What are the motivations and experiences of international teachers and trainees applying for positions in England?

⁸ To be eligible, trainees and teachers must have moved to the UK no more than 3 months prior to starting their job/course; if a trainee, they must be coming to train in the 2023/24 academic year (as funding was discontinued for 2024/25); if a teacher, they must be coming to work in either 2023/24 or 2024/25 academic year.

⁹ These bursaries are granted on the basis of high academic achievement and were previously only open to domestic students.

3. What are the practices and perceptions of schools and MATs in recruiting and supporting international teachers / trainees?
4. What is the role of initial teacher training providers (ITT) in international trainee recruitment?
5. What is the role of recruitment agencies in supporting international teacher recruitment?

A mixed methods research strategy was designed to respond to these research questions.

Methodology

Quantitative research

In March 2024, the DfE issued a survey to individuals who had expressed an interest in teaching or training in England which was open for four weeks. This sample was drawn from the following three audiences:

1. Overseas trained teachers who successfully applied for qualified teacher status (QTS) via the professional recognition service (Apply) ¹⁰, mostly from 2019 onwards
2. Individuals who successfully applied for English teacher training courses for the recruitment cycles between 2021 and 2023, and
3. Teachers and trainees who successfully applied for international relocation payments (IRPs)¹¹

This survey covered motivations for teaching and training in England, the application process, and, where applicable, experiences of teaching and training in England. The samples were obtained using administrative data from the Apply systems and IRP verification data. For the trainee sample, screener questions were used to screen out individuals who had not successfully completed their teacher training course from the majority of the survey. Apart from the teachers who had received the IRP, all of whom would have experience working in an English school in order to receive the incentive, the rest of the teacher sample included a mixture of those who had and did not have experience of teaching in England.

¹⁰ Overseas trained teachers who met the mandatory requirements can apply for qualified teacher status (QTS) via the Department for Education's professional recognition service (Apply for QTS in England). Full details on eligibility can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-qualified-teacher-status-qts-if-you-teach-outside-the-uk/routes-to-qualified-teacher-status-qts-for-teachers-and-those-with-teaching-experience-outside-the-uk#applyservice>

¹¹ This set of participants largely overlapped with the first two audiences.

The survey received 3,971 complete responses, consisting of 3,396 responses from teachers and 575 responses from trainees. The survey received a 35% response rate overall (made up of a 37% response rate from teachers, and 26% response rate from trainees). Anonymised survey data was securely shared with IFF Research and was used to produce data tables broken down by a range of demographic characteristics. This included, but was not limited to, whether they were a teacher or trainee, country of origin, qualifications, gender, age and whether they received IRP. A further breakdown of respondent characteristics and the survey data analysis can be viewed in Annex A, while the full list of survey questions can be found in Annex B.

The survey data was further analysed and the findings are included in this report. No population profile data for the international audiences surveyed exists, so the data cannot be weighted. Statistically significant findings are reported but should not be generalised to the wider population.

Qualitative research

In-depth interviews with leaders, teachers, trainees, recruitment agencies, and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers were conducted by IFF Research. All 123 interviews were completed on Teams, Zoom or over the phone and each lasted approximately 60 minutes. All interviews were completed between May and November 2024. The 2024 General Election led to a pause in fieldwork between late May and early July 2024. Educational professionals were not asked to participate over the summer holidays.

Table 1. Interview numbers of audience

Audience	Number of interviews
Leaders	38
Teachers	30
Trainees	30
Initial teacher training providers	15
Recruitment agencies	10

Further detail regarding the approach to recruitment for all groups can be found in Annex A. The survey used, and the topic guides used for each group can be found in Annex B.

For the analysis and reporting stage, IFF developed an analysis framework for each interview group. The framework was linked to the research questions which enabled

thematic analysis by a range of variables. While the findings from qualitative research provide robust and detailed insight, we took a purposive approach to sampling which maximise the variation each audience's profile. The sampling is not statistically representative and qualitative evidence cannot be generalised to the wider population.

Leaders

DfE provided a list of secondary schools and MAT leaders drawn from the School Workforce Census (SWC). The provided sample included, contact details, demographic information about the schools and MATs, and information about their international teacher recruitment history. We refer to this group as “leaders” in the report, except where there were differences between those representing schools compared to MATs.

A sample was selected of schools which had at least some experience with international teacher recruitment and a screener survey was used to confirm whether schools had recently or previously hired internationally¹². This was to ensure that selected respondents had the knowledge and experience required to answer the interview questions. However, upon screening and interviewing leaders, there were some leaders who noted that they had not recently or previously hired international teachers¹³. Where relevant, the findings from these interviews are used in the report, and any clear distinctions between leaders who have and have not recruited internationally, are drawn out.

The interview topic guide covered leaders' experiences in recruiting international teachers and their barriers to recruiting international teachers. A total of 38 leader interviews were completed between 17 May and 27 November 2024.

Teachers and trainees

Teachers and trainees were asked at the end of the DfE survey if they were willing to be recontacted about taking part in the qualitative interviews. These responses were used to select a sample of those who had taught or trained in England. Again, this was required to ensure they had the knowledge and experience to answer the interview questions.

The teacher interview topic guide covered teacher's experiences of applying to teach and teaching in England, including their motivations for applying, any barriers faced, and their experiences of onboarding and employment. A total of 30 teacher interviews were completed between 11 July and 23 October 2024.

¹² Within the sample of leader's interviews, there was a bias towards urban schools (vs. rural schools), plus there was a low proportion of schools with pupils in the lower FSM category. These limitations are outlined in Annex A.

¹³ Further detail on these numbers is included in Annex A.

The trainee interview topic guide covered trainee's experiences of applying to train and training in England, including their motivations for applying, any barriers faced, and their experience of the training course. A total of 30 trainee interviews were completed between 31 July and 29 August 2024.

Recruitment agencies and ITT providers

DfE provided a list of recruitment agencies, a sample from a previous desk-top review, and ITT providers, drawn from the ITT census. These details were further supplemented with free finding methods by IFF Research which were then used to invite these groups to take part in the research interviews. Further detail regarding the approach to recruitment can be found in Annex A. One point to note was that recruitment agencies were particularly difficult to engage in the research. It is possible that the interviewees represent a biased sample of agencies willing to talk about international recruitment processes which they view as effective.

The recruitment agency interview topic guide covered their experiences in recruiting international teachers, their views on what might make it easier for international teachers to come to England, and anything that prevents them from doing so. A total of 10 interviews were completed with this group between 19 August and 23 October.

The ITT provider interview topic guide covered their experiences in recruiting and training international teachers and trainees, their views on what might make it easier for international teachers to come to England, and anything that prevents them from doing so. A total of 15 interviews were completed with this group between 27 August and 25 October.

2. Motivations

This chapter covers leaders' motivations for recruiting international teachers, the motivations of international teachers to apply for teaching roles in England, and the motivations of trainees to apply to train in England.

Leader's motivations for recruiting international teachers

The qualitative interviews predominantly consisted of leaders who had recruited or considered recruiting international teachers to fill vacancies. A specific definition of "international teacher" was not used in qualitative guides as overseas recruitment concepts and processes differed between schools. Leaders usually self-defined an "international teacher" based on factors like visa requirements, nationality (including those born overseas or holding UK work visas), those who now have indefinite leave to remain in the UK and teachers who are not British citizens.

Some leaders mentioned the shortage of UK applicants meant sourcing teachers to fill gaps was the most challenging it has ever been. This view was consistent amongst both MAT and School leaders.

"This is my 32nd year of teaching. It's never been more difficult in my career." – *School Leader*

Leaders gave multiple reasons why filling teacher vacancies was becoming more difficult. One perception was that relatively low pay has caused teachers to leave the profession, exacerbated in recent years by the cost-of-living crisis. High workloads and stress were also cited as major factors making teaching unappealing. Some leaders also said teaching did not have some benefits available in other industries. For example, several cited home working as an example of a benefit unavailable to most teachers.

Many leaders said they would prefer to recruit UK teachers because recruiting and training international teachers was more complicated and expensive. In circumstances where they did consider international recruitment, their reason for this was often because it widened the pool of potential candidates for a job vacancy, rather than because they were specifically looking for international teachers¹⁴. This was particularly the case for some niche subjects including drama and design technology, as well as STEM subjects.

Most leaders said if hiring international teachers, they preferred those who had trained and had some experience of teaching in the UK, because of their familiarity with

¹⁴ It is important to note that the leaders involved in this research only included those who had experience with considering international teacher recruitment or had employed an international teacher.

England's curriculum and school customs. More information on the challenges of recruiting and employing international teachers can be found in Chapters 3 and 5.

One exception to this was leaders' willingness to recruit international teachers to teach modern foreign languages (MFL). Many leaders felt a native speaker of the language would bring a more valuable linguistic and cultural perspective on the subject.

"Not only is it just learning how to speak a language, but [native speakers] also know the culture in their country. They can speak about it first-hand because they're from that country. I think they add a lot of value.' – *MAT Leader*

Whilst leaders' main motivation for recruiting international teachers was to fill vacancies, there also gave other benefits from recruiting internationally. For example, some leaders were actively increasing the diversity of their school staff. A few leaders wanted to reflect the profile of their student population in their teaching staff¹⁵, particularly among schools in and around London.

"We've got an international student population, kids from all sorts of different backgrounds and different heritage groups. I think it's really important for them to see [and hear] people like them among the teaching community ... I think that is incredibly reassuring for them that there is someone that understands them and that their voice feels represented in the workings of the school." – *School Leader*

A few leaders said international teachers would bring a different cultural perspective to a mostly white British student cohort. These leaders felt international teachers gave their students a broader view of the world.

"Part of our role as a school is to find ways of...being more cosmopolitan and bringing broader international views of the world and different experiences to the school. So international teachers benefit the children beyond just their maths or their English teaching skills" – *School Leader*

Several leaders were also motivated to hire international teachers due to prior positive experiences. For example, a few leaders said visa requirements meant international teachers were in post longer than some UK teachers. Others found international teachers worked harder than their UK counterparts. More detail on leader's experiences of employing international teachers can be found in Chapter 5 of this report.

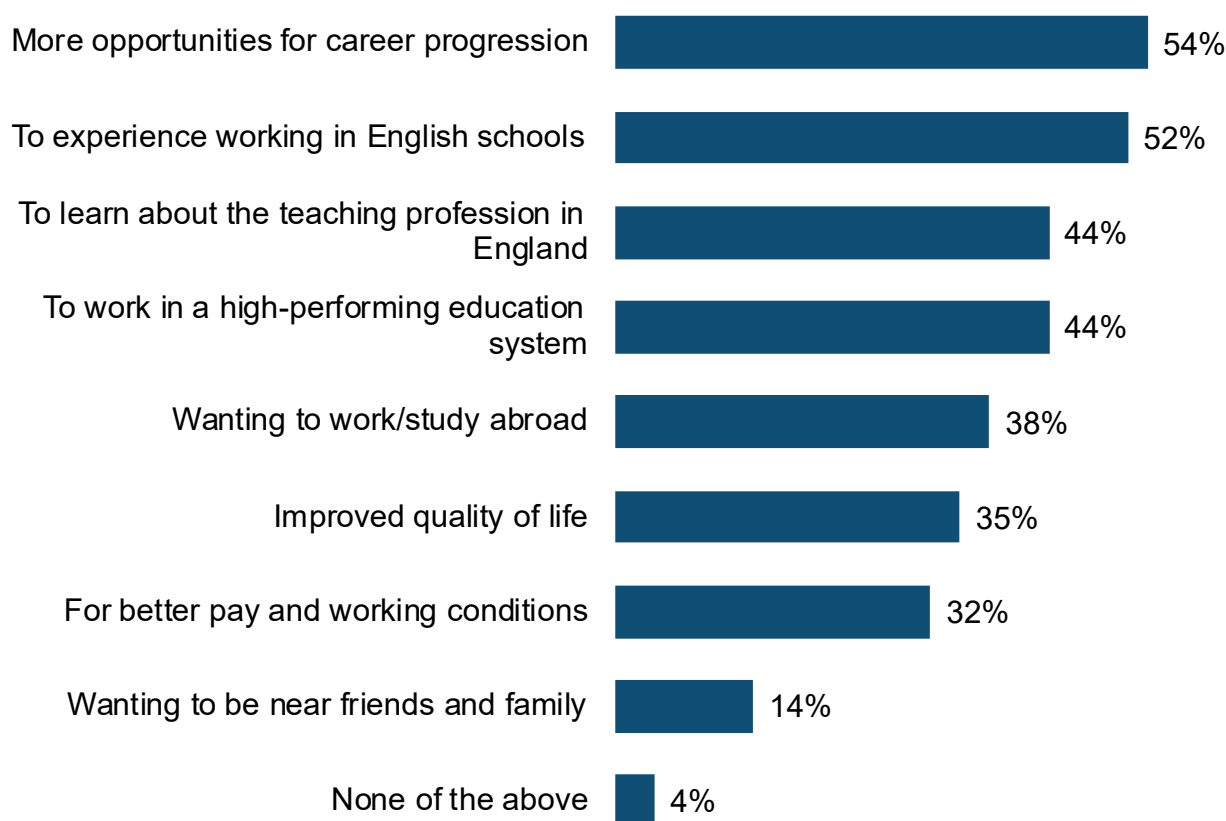
¹⁵ It is important to note that the sample of school leaders was biased to those in urban areas (vs. rural areas).

Motivations for, and barriers to, applying for teaching roles in England

Motivations

The DfE survey of teachers and trainees asked teachers what motivated them to apply for their role in England. Figure 2.1 shows international teachers mostly applied because there were (more) opportunities for career progression (54%)¹⁶. Many teachers were drawn to roles due to the reputation of the English school system. Just over half of teachers (52%) were motivated by an interest to experience working in English schools, 44% were interested to learn about the teaching profession in England, and a further 44% were interested in working in a high-performing education system.

Figure 2.1 Teacher's motivations for applying for a teaching role in England



Source: Q59 Which of the following attracted you to teach or train to teach in England?
Base: All teachers (3,396)

Across the whole survey sample, there were some differences in response between teachers from the European Economic Area (which includes member states of the

¹⁶ The question did not ask respondents to compare to a specific place.

European Union and three countries of the European Free Trade Association) and teachers from the rest of the world (countries outside the European Economic Area). Teachers from the rest of the world (ROW) were more likely than those from the European Economic Area (EEA) to be motivated by:

- working in a high-performing education system (48% vs 29%)
- seeking an improved quality of life (38% vs 26%).

In contrast, more teachers from the EEA wanted to be near friends and family compared to those from the ROW (20% vs 13%).

Friends and family were also stronger motivations for those 50 years and over (25% vs 14% on average), and female teachers (20% vs 7% of male teachers). The motivation to work abroad was stronger for teachers aged 29 or younger (53% vs 38% on average).

In the qualitative interviews teachers were also asked about their motivations for teaching in England. In contrast to the findings from the whole survey sample, the most common motivation mentioned in the interviews was to be near friends and family. Most often this included teachers' having a partner or close family who they wanted to be nearby, or because a friend who was already living in England recommended it to them.

"I didn't come here because I wanted to teach in England. I came here because my family lived here." - *Teacher*

The difference between the survey and interview findings may reflect differences in respondents to each. All teachers interviewed had successfully moved to England to teach, whereas many teachers in the survey sample had never come to or worked in England. In the survey findings, 21% of current teachers in England cited wanting to be near friends and family as a motivating factor, compared with 16% of teachers who had never taught in England. This may suggest that having friends and family in England helped to enable their move or acted as a more powerful incentive for them to move.

As in the survey, the perceived quality of the English education system was a motivator for international teachers. Many teachers believed that England offered a high standard of education, and having the opportunity to teach in England and develop their skills would be a valuable opportunity for their career.

"Everybody knows that a British education is an education! ... British schools are good schools. If you get to go to British university, you've made it." – *Teacher*

Other reasons for applying to teach in England related to challenges faced in their home country. Several teachers cited a lack of teaching opportunities and low pay at home. As

well as this, other teachers experienced economic and political issues in their home country which had made them want to leave. These teachers felt that the opportunities and experiences offered in England would provide them with a better quality of life. Many teachers also wanted a better life for their children and felt England's education system and political stability would provide this. The survey found that around four in ten (41%) teachers who moved to England brought dependents with them.

"I wanted to give my son exposure to a different environment, a more stable environment. My son and my husband are here with me, and we are enjoying a 1st world country experience" – *Teacher*

Several teachers also mentioned the advantages of teaching in an English-speaking country, as they were already fluent in English. As well as this, a handful mentioned similarities between the education system in their home country and England, which made it easier, and more appealing, to migrate here.

A few teachers interviewed, who received the international relocation package (IRP) said this helped encourage them to move to England. These teachers said they would have otherwise struggled to pay for the cost of visas, the immigration health charges and other relocation expenses, which the IRP is designed to cover. However, although teachers were appreciative of this financial support, all who were interviewed would still have moved to England without the package and many were not aware of the IRP before moving to England. A lot of teachers interviewed moved to England before the IRP scheme was introduced, so were not influenced by the scheme. The influence of policies on international teacher recruitment will be explored further in Chapter 4.

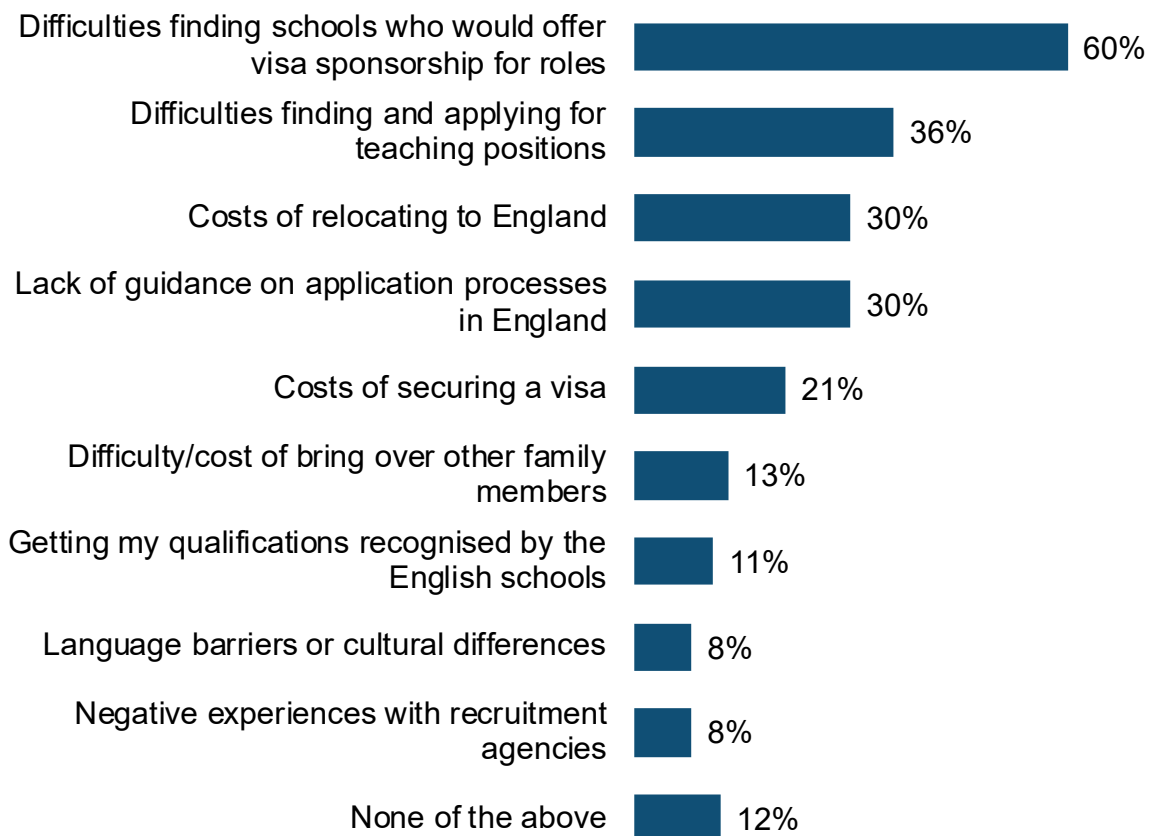
Barriers

In the DfE survey, 68% of teachers and past trainees had never worked as a teacher in England. Of those, almost two-thirds (60%) did not become a teacher in England because they were unable to get a teaching job and 26% because they could not afford to move to England. A minority (9%) chose not to move to England and 4% decided not to teach.

When asked about the main barriers to teaching in England (Figure 2.2), three in five (60%) said it was difficult to find schools who would offer visa sponsorship, and a third (36%) found it difficult to find and apply for teaching positions.

Cost was also a significant barrier. Three in ten (30%) cited the cost of relocating; one in five (21%) the cost of securing a visa, and 13% the cost to bring over family members. Three in ten (30%) felt the lack of guidance on application processes in England was a barrier to teaching in England.

Figure 2.2 Barriers to teaching in England



Source: A22. Which of the following do you feel are, or have been, barriers to you getting a teaching position in England? Base: All teachers and past trainees who have never worked as a teacher in England (2,403)

The qualitative interviews with teachers exclusively covered those who had relocated and had therefore overcome any barriers they faced to getting a teaching position in England. However, some teachers had reservations before relocating, including perceived hostility towards immigrants and challenges with obtaining a visa; both challenges were exacerbated by the EU exit. Others had concerns about the cost of living in England. Challenges faced during the application stage are explored in further detail in Chapter 3.

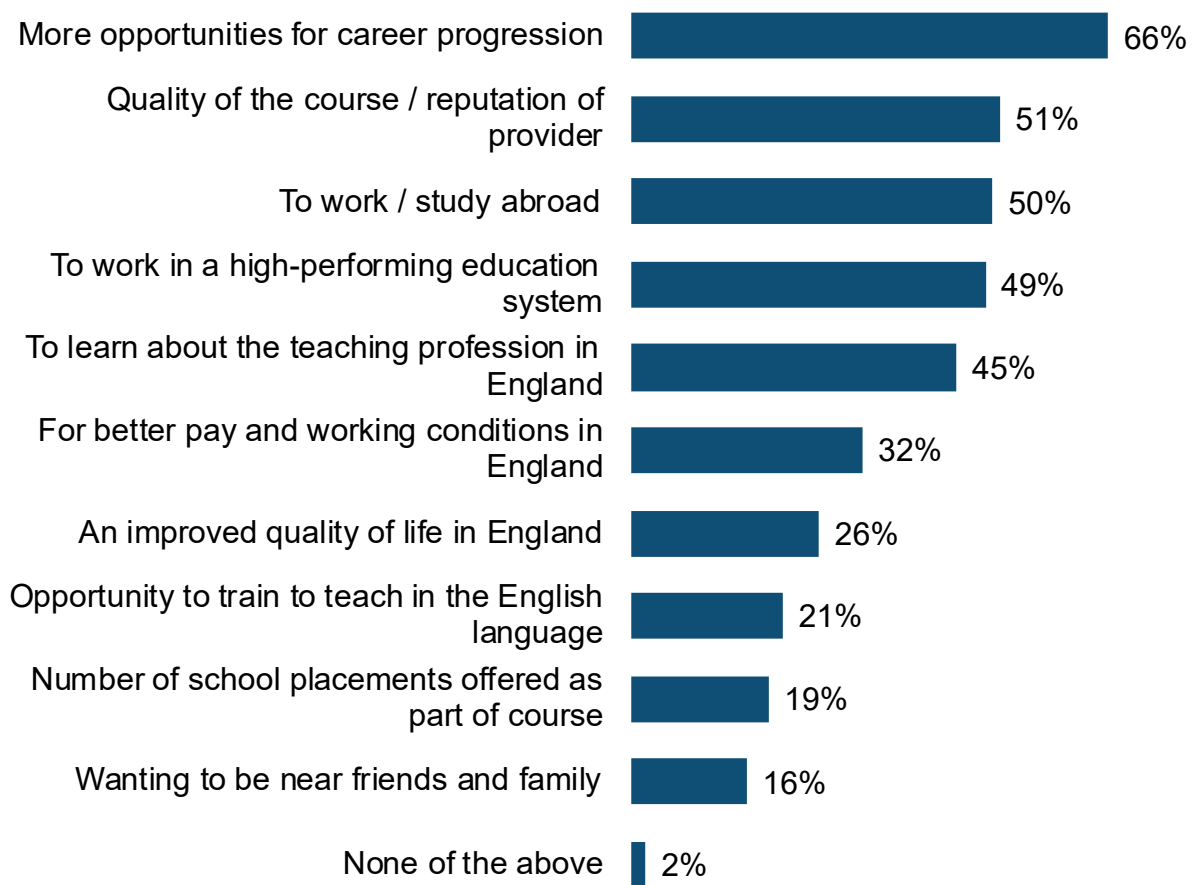
Motivations for training in England

Motivations

In the DfE survey, trainees reported similar motivations to teachers for applying to train in England. Two thirds (66%) felt England offered more opportunities for career progression and a half (51%) were attracted by the quality of the course / reputation of the provider or

wanted to work in a high-performing education system (49%). The same proportion wanted to work or study abroad (50%).

Figure 2.3 Trainee’s motivations for applying to train in England



Source: Q68 the following attracted you to teach or train to teach in England?
Base: All current and past trainees (396)

The motivation of trainees differed depending on where they lived before coming to England. Trainees from the EEA were more likely to be motivated by wanting to train to teach in the English language (33%) compared to those from the rest of the world (ROW; 17%). Some aspects of training and living in England were more important to ROW trainees. They were more likely than those from the EEA to want to work in a high-performing education system (55% vs 25% in the EEA), and to learn about the teaching profession in England (49% vs. 29%). ROW trainees were also more likely to want an improved quality of life (30% vs. 10%).

Those under 30 were more motivated by the opportunity to train to teach in the English Language (27% vs 21% on average), and to work / study abroad (55% vs 29%).

In the qualitative interviews, trainees were also asked about their motivations to train in England. The most common motivation mentioned in the interviews were the government

bursaries for those training to teach shortage subjects such as languages or physics. One trainee said they had always wanted to gain a teaching qualification in England, but felt it was impossible until they heard about the ITT bursary for physics for international trainees. This led them to becoming a teacher in England, and they are now recommending other people in their home country to apply for the course at their university. Trainees said that the bursaries made it financially possible for them to do the course and had increased the appeal of teacher training in England among international candidates.

“The relocation bonus and the bursary was a very good initiative to encourage someone like me to [train in England]. Every immigrant has challenges when they move to a new place, so it was a very good starting point because of how stressful the cost is” – *Trainee*

Another major motivating factor for trainees to move to England was to be nearer to friends and family. A number of trainees also mentioned being recommended their programme by a friend or connection who had already completed the course.

“I heard good things about [the programme], it was recommended to me by people around me” – *Trainee*

Other trainees were motivated to train in England due to the perceived quality of the education system and of the teaching qualifications they could obtain. In particular, they felt that the good reputation of teaching qualifications from England would provide opportunities here and abroad, which made the qualification an attractive choice to support their career development.

“The drive for everyone in Nigeria is to acquire Higher Education in England... The first go-to place is always England.” – *Trainee*

“The PGCE qualification is a very good accreditation, and you can use it in very many different countries.” – *Trainee*

Similarly to teachers, some trainees were influenced by the similarities between the English education system and the education system in their home country. For example, one trainee from Ghana was motivated by similarities between the English and Ghanaian curriculums. Also, trainees mentioned their interest in teaching in an English-speaking country, because of their familiarity with the language.

“I really wanted to become a teacher abroad and especially in an English-speaking country as my English is stronger than other languages” – *Trainee*

The IRP was also offered to trainees to cover the costs of moving to the UK¹⁷. Among trainees who received the IRP, a few trainees said they could not have moved to UK without it, and others said the IRP played an important role in supporting their move. However, there were also many respondents who had not heard about the IRP until after applying for the role, and so the scheme did not influence their decision to train in England. The impact of the IRP is covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

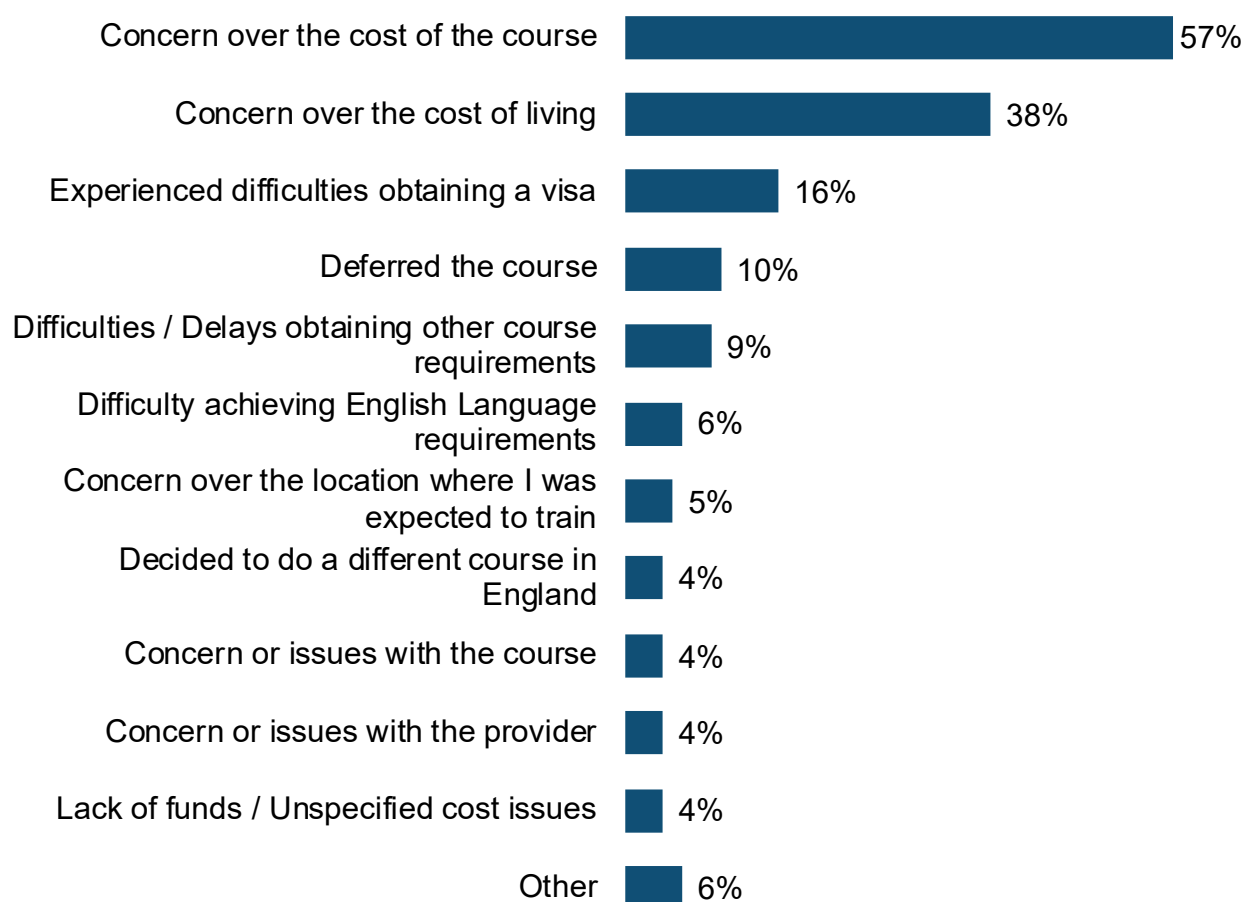
Barriers to teacher training

In the DfE survey, 4% of trainees did not start their training course. The most common reasons cited by this small group for not starting were concerns over the cost of the course (57%) and 38% concerns over the cost of living. One in six (16%) said they had difficulties obtaining a visa.

The interviews were conducted with trainees who had already trained to become a teacher in England. Therefore, they had been able to overcome all, if any, barriers to teacher training in England. However, in the interviews many trainees referred to these barriers, with some mentioning financial difficulties arising from the cost of living when they had arrived in England. A number of trainees also experienced visa issues, including complications in the visa application process and difficulties covering visa costs. European trainees mentioned the challenges of increased visa complications caused by the EU exit. Challenges faced during the application stage are explored in further detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ Recent changes to the IRP policy mean that trainees are no longer eligible for this incentive.

Figure 2.4 Reasons for not starting teacher training course



A3 Which of the following best describes why you did not start your teacher training course in England?
Base: Trainees who did not start their training course (159). Percentages below 4% not shown.

3. Recruitment and application processes

This chapter explores how international teachers were recruited into teaching positions in England, as well as how international trainees were recruited onto teaching courses. It looks into leaders' and training providers' approaches to finding and selecting these international candidates, alongside teacher and trainee experiences of applying to these roles.

Leaders' approaches to recruiting international teachers

Finding candidates

As covered in Chapter 2, most leaders recruited international teachers because they struggled to fill vacancies with UK nationals. As such, most leaders were not targeting international candidates in their recruitment, but instead were employing a wide range of recruitment strategies to attract as much interest as possible, which in many cases ended up reaching an international teacher.

The most common channels used to advertise all teaching vacancies were teacher recruitment websites, in particular the Times Educational Supplement (TES), and DfE's Teacher Vacancies Service (TVS). Most leaders also chose to advertise through channels like social media platforms, or attracting people directly through local adverts or word of mouth. Leaders reported that they were most likely to get interest from international applicants through TES or TVS applications compared to other recruitment routes.

"The ones that have come to us from abroad...have seen the post either on our website or in the TES advert...we don't advertise directly abroad."
– *School leader*

A few MAT leaders gave more structured examples of targeted international recruitment, for example partnering with schools in other countries to attract international teachers. Some also mentioned travelling abroad to recruit candidates directly, although this was more commonly done by recruitment agencies on a school or MAT's behalf.

"We've had several trips...with a view of recruiting several teachers into the MAT quite early on in the year, before they come to us ...The reason we do that is quite straightforward – the same as in the UK, the best go quickest...So if you're recruiting in January and assuring overseas colleagues they will definitely have a role, you've got a better chance of recruiting quality people." – *MAT Leader*

Many leaders also used recruitment agencies, which will be explored later in this chapter. This was generally when their own recruitment approaches failed to fill vacancies. Again, these recruitment agencies did not usually specialise in international recruitment, and leaders did not seek them out with the view to hire an international teacher.

Common countries from which leaders received applications included Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Jamaica and the Caribbean, India, and countries in Africa including Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa. They also frequently recruited teachers from European countries, although the number of recruits has declined since the UK's departure from the EU. Although applications from EU-based teachers fell as a whole, a few schools reduced the number of EU appointments due to the new cost of sponsoring visas.

Leaders recruited international teachers for a range of subjects, although maths, science and modern foreign languages (MFL) were mentioned most frequently. This was generally because these subjects were the most difficult vacancies to fill, rather than because leaders preferred international teachers for these roles. The exception was for MFL, where many leaders preferred teachers from countries which speak the target language (often French or Spanish, but Mandarin was also mentioned). This was due to the benefits of learning a language from a native speaker.

“We'd always look for [international teachers] for the language posts, especially the immersion teaching and the very high-level language that we do. Otherwise... for any other post, it's just open.” – *School leader*

Leaders also commonly mentioned they had recruited teachers to posts in the subjects of English, computing, geography, business, and PE.

Assessing applications

Schools' internal international recruitment process included reviewing applications, interviewing applicants, observing their teaching and completing administration relating to visas and sponsorship if necessary. The leaders interviewed reported that interviews and teaching observations were most likely to take place over Zoom for international teachers, although leaders tended to prefer an in-person assessment if at all possible. However, they were willing to compromise for vacancies that were proving very difficult to fill.

“[If a candidate couldn't come in person], we would hesitate. It depends on what the subject is - you know, physics teachers don't grow on trees, we may just have to do what we can to get that teacher. But if it's I don't know, history, that may not be quite so critical.” – *School leader*

Additionally, several felt their school had improved their online interviewing processes due to the Covid-19 pandemic and were now better equipped to hold good-quality online interviews.

Leaders were looking for the ‘best candidate’, which was made up of multiple factors:

- **Equivalent teaching qualifications:** all leaders were looking for a candidate with suitable teaching qualifications for the role. However, their criteria for establishing equivalency differed, in particular whether they relied on candidates having English QTS or if they assessed the merit of individuals’ teaching qualifications themselves. Most considered English QTS as preferable, but were very open to hiring a candidate without QTS so long as they were qualified in their own country and had presented well at interview. Leaders’ own perspectives on which countries had the highest quality teaching qualifications also affected decisions; some thought that Western countries such as Canada, Ireland or Australia were best matched to English QTS standards. These perspectives were often shaped by successful or unsuccessful prior experiences of hiring teachers from particular countries.
- **Teaching experience:** most leaders favoured those with some experience of teaching and/or training in the UK, and felt these candidates had a greater chance of being a successful teacher in England. Where candidates did not have UK teaching experience, leaders particularly valued experience in schools which they perceived as the most similar to English schools (Irish, North American and Australian schools were all mentioned). Where schools were very different, some leaders felt that hiring international teachers with extensive experience could be more problematic than employing those who were newly qualified, as experienced teachers were more entrenched in the way of teaching in their country.
- **Subject specialism:** most schools required teachers to have a bachelor’s degree (or equivalent) in the subject they teach, while others were willing to be more flexible. All leaders valued subject knowledge highly, but it could be difficult to ascertain the content of different countries’ degree curriculums, which had led some to develop their own competency tests to check candidates’ curriculum knowledge against the English curriculum for their subject.
- **Soft skills and/or cultural compatibility:** many leaders placed value on teachers’ soft skills, such as their abilities to communicate clearly with children and manage behaviour. Gaps in cultural understanding were sometimes pronounced, particularly around behaviour management where expectations of behaviour and management strategies often differed from those in UK schools. However, these differences were often addressed through mentoring or continuing professional development (CPD) during a teacher’s integration into the school, rather than being a key decision-making factor in the recruitment process.

The value leaders placed in each of the factors above varied based on their outlook and experiences of international recruitment. Leaders' willingness to compromise on these criteria depended on the level of interest they had received for the role, and the urgency of the vacancy.

Leaders were most flexible on candidates' achievement for English QTS. Although leaders often preferred to hire those with QTS, most said they were flexible on QTS out of necessity when struggling to fill a vacancy, especially if the candidate had proven very strong in other areas. The key element of equivalency was whether a teacher was qualified to teach in their own country, they had some experience of teaching, and could provide references to attest to their quality of teaching.

"We're not in the position where we can look at that sort of thing. If somebody is qualified in their own country then I'm very happy to have a conversation with them." – *School leader*

"If you want to recruit a native Chinese speaking Chinese teacher, the chance of [them having QTS] are pretty slim." – *School leader*

Where leaders hired those without QTS, they often provided advice and support to help the teacher get QTS, in some cases before starting their role, in others after a few months working as an unqualified teacher.

Leaders were least flexible regarding teachers' subject knowledge and their aptitude for teaching, as assessed at interview. Although candidates with greater cultural familiarity were preferred, leaders often had to address this aspect through professional development or an induction programme, due to limited availability of candidates. These integration efforts were not always successful, and could lead to difficulties with the appointment, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Barriers to recruiting international teachers

Visa costs and administration

Leaders faced multiple barriers when recruiting international teachers. The most commonly mentioned barrier was the cost of sponsoring a visa for an international teacher, as well as the resource needed to complete visa-related admin, and the time taken for visas to be processed. In several interviews, schools had only employed international teachers who did not need sponsorship for this reason (i.e. candidates had settled status, held non-sponsored visas, or held Irish citizenship). Others were willing to sponsor international teachers, if necessary, but would generally prioritise candidates who did not need sponsorship to avoid extra administration. This was slightly less true for leaders who used recruitment agencies, as they typically received some visa assistance from the agency and so were less affected by the additional administrative burden.

“There's just an extra set of administrative hurdles to go through. So, if there are people in the field that have already got the right to work in the UK, we're going to look at them first.” – *School leader*

Assessing the quality of international candidates

In addition to visa complications, many leaders felt international teachers were an unknown quantity compared to UK-based candidates. This uncertainty was two-fold:

- Firstly, many were not confident about determining the quality of an international teacher through an online interviewing process. This was especially true for online lesson/teaching observations.
- Secondly, leaders said they lacked confidence in their knowledge of overseas teaching qualification quality and often could not fully tell whether candidates were sufficiently prepared until teachers began their roles. This resulted in schools either having to put last-minute resources into training for underprepared international teachers, or being unable to provide additional support, which could lead to teachers returning home.

For many, these additional risks increased their reluctance to sponsor international teachers, since they could not be sure they were investing money and resources into a skilled long-term employee.

“That is the biggest thing, I want to see how they are with my children, because I've got quite an unusual catchment and it's a very comprehensive school... I have to take the risk in a sponsorship and I never really know what I'm getting.” – *School leader*

Other administration and cost factors

Some leaders felt overwhelmed by the high number of low-quality international applications they had to assess. They were frustrated about the time spent processing applications they did not deem to be ‘serious’, such as those that did not match the advertised requirements, lacked teaching experience, or showed no evidence of having done any research into the role. The volume of these types of applications could be particularly high if they mentioned visa sponsorship in the job advert.

Several leaders reported difficulties getting DBS checks for the international teachers they wanted to employ, reporting that “some countries won't give them”, or that it was not possible to obtain an equivalent document for certain countries. Sometimes the DBS check took a long time to come through, which could lead to delays in teachers' start dates.

A few leaders felt strongly that the cost of using an agency was the primary difficulty they faced in their international recruitment. These leaders generally felt that they had to use agencies if they were to find any quality candidates, but that the agency fees were excessive and not sustainable for them long-term. These leaders were mostly working in MATs or academies and experiences of working with agencies is covered next.

Leaders' experiences of working with recruitment agencies

Where MAT leaders used recruitment agencies to fill vacancies, these were generally chosen from a 'preferred supplier list' set up by the central MAT administration, which provided a shortlist of suitable agencies. School leaders were more varied in their approach to sourcing recruitment agencies. Some reported long-term relationships with particular agencies, and others shopped around. Often agencies approached schools with candidates directly in response to vacancy adverts. As with their own recruitment, leaders rarely asked agencies for international teachers specifically, but agencies often had larger numbers of international candidate CVs than domestic CVs available to submit to schools due to a larger amount of interest.

Leaders had mixed experiences working with recruitment agencies. Some found agencies effectively filled vacancies; others felt agencies provided poor-quality candidates. All felt agencies were very expensive, but many felt they had no other option to find teachers.

"Do the DfE even realise how much the agencies are in control of this situation? We hardly get anybody apply to us directly anymore [...] it's like a feeding frenzy. They know we've got vacancies; they know what the shortage subjects are. So, they know can drive prices in that area [and] play one school off against another." – *MAT leader*

Generally, leaders chose to use agencies because they had been unsuccessful recruiting teachers themselves directly, while a few who were looking specifically for international teachers also wanted support with the visa process. Some leaders felt that it had recently become impossible to find candidates without recruitment agencies (note the challenges that some international applicants faced with direct applications in the later "Experience of applying without a recruitment agency" section, p.33). This was frustrating as it made it very difficult to source any teacher, domestic or international, without paying for agency fees.

"Most people, they don't seem to want to go through the rigmarole of applying directly to a school...they just drop their CV to an agency, and the agency can then just farm that out to all the schools." – *MAT leader*

“What are we looking for from an agency? A teacher! I mean I know it sounds trivial but it’s the truth. The agencies are my last resort...my agency fees for last year’ll be something like £80,000...but you’re paying because you have to.”¹⁸ – *School leader*

Those who had a positive experience of working with agencies often had a good relationship with one agency in particular. Leaders could then communicate their needs and the type of school to the agency, who often visited the school and could more easily recommend suitable candidates for the environment. These leaders also felt agencies were more likely to recommend quality candidates to avoid damaging their relationship with the school. This effect was particularly strong for MATs, as agencies have a strong incentive to stay on the MAT’s ‘preferred supplier list’ to maintain business across the trust.

Leaders with poor agency experiences reported they were sent large numbers of unsuitable applications from international candidates, and felt that agencies did not have a rigorous enough selection process. In particular, these leaders felt that agencies had not thoroughly examined international candidates’ previous experience nor their familiarity with the English school system.

Many also felt that it was difficult to obtain full details about the candidate as agencies only forwarded on candidate CVs and no further information. Given the premium charged by the agencies, these leaders expected a better service of ‘matching’ candidates to a school’s vacancy. Others reported that teachers had left shortly after being placed in the school, or that they had had to provide them significantly more onboarding than planned to adapt them to the environment. Leaders were frustrated by this as it is something they would have expected agencies to do, especially given their high fees.

“What they’re very good at is putting in front of us candidates who’ve got the specialist subject knowledge, not necessarily candidates who are strong teachers.” – *School leader*

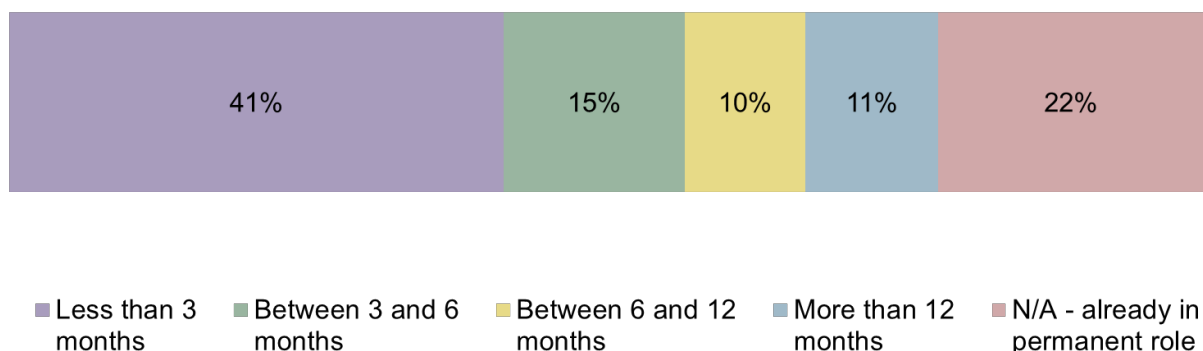
Teacher’s experiences of applying to roles in England

The majority of teachers who responded to the survey had never worked as classroom teachers in an English school (68%). However, among those who had done so, their first teaching role in England was most commonly on a temporary contract (66%), which they had secured either through a supply or recruitment agency (44%) or through recruitment websites (29%). A third (33%) secured a permanent role immediately.

¹⁸ For context, this interviewee was referring to 8-9 vacancies.

Of those surveyed who were qualified and had experience teaching in England, these teachers usually found their first permanent position in the country within 6 months after gaining QTS through recognition (56%), and two fifths (41%) found a role within 3 months. It took longer for the rest; one-in-ten found a permanent position in 6 to 12 months (10%) and more than a year (113%), respectively.

Figure 3.1 Time taken after gaining QTS through recognition¹⁹ to secure first permanent teaching post in England



A16. How long did it take you after gaining qualified teacher status (QTS) to secure your first permanent teaching post in England? Base: All qualified teachers and recent trainees who have ever held a permanent teaching position in England (574).

Teachers from the European Economic Area (EEA) were more likely to take longer than a year to find a permanent position in England (22% vs. 7% Rest of World (ROW)). This may be due to EEA teachers being more likely to be subject to reduced immigration controls²⁰ and thus able to stay in the UK without a sponsored visa, while those from the ROW would be less likely to be able to stay for a year without employment.

Recent trainees were more likely to find a job within the first three months (86%), than already qualified teachers (36%).

How teachers found a role in England

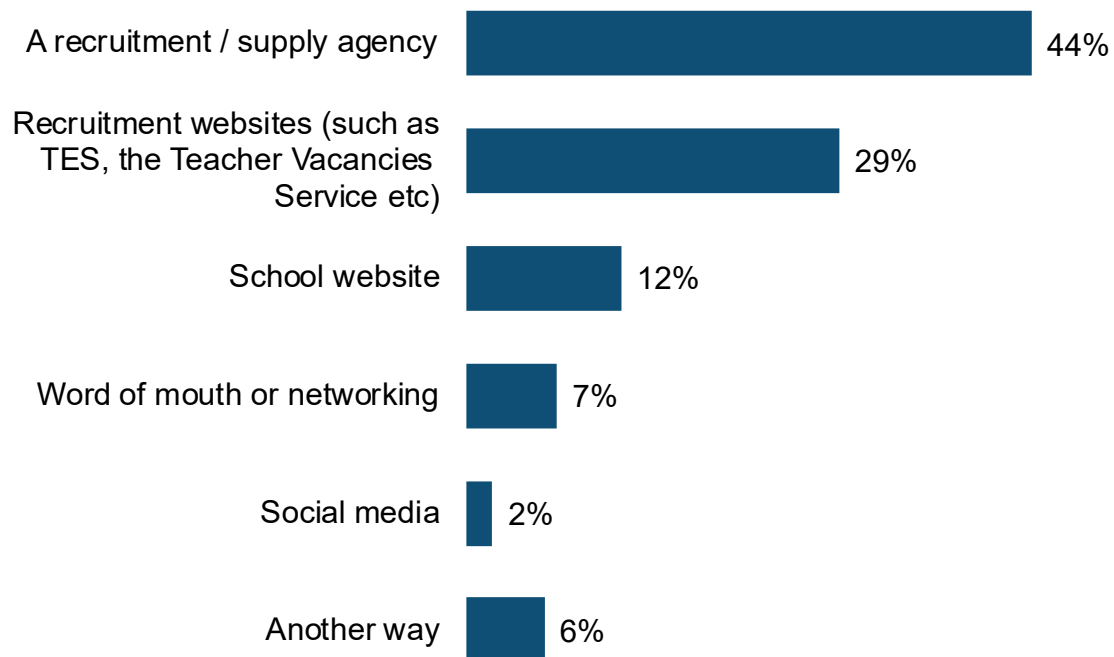
Recruitment agencies were the most common route that teachers used to find their first teaching roles (44%), followed by websites such as TES or TVS (29%). Less common

¹⁹ International teachers were sampled in the survey through the Apply to QTS system, meaning that all qualified teachers in the sample originally qualified outside the UK and achieved recognition of English QTS subsequently.

²⁰ Such as holding settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme, or holding Irish citizenship, which entitles individuals to the right to work in the UK under the Common Travel Area agreement.

ways of finding roles were by applying directly through the school's website (12%), by word of mouth or networks (7%), or on social media (2%).

Figure 3.2 Discovery methods for teaching roles in England



A17. How did you find your first teaching position in England? Base: All teachers who have ever held a permanent teaching position in England and answered the question (543).

Successful recruitment routes differed slightly according to the teacher's country of origin. Teachers from outside the EEA were more likely to have used a recruitment agency to find their permanent role (52% vs. 33% EEA), while EEA teachers were more likely to have found a role through word of mouth (15% vs. 3% Rest of World).

In the qualitative interviews, there was a mix of those using recruitment agencies to help them find roles, and those applying through other means. Those who used recruitment agencies typically found teaching roles more easily compared to those who navigated the process themselves.

Choosing where in England to work

Teachers chose the location of their role based on the job offers they received, and the benefits associated with each role. Proximity to personal networks in the UK was also a factor, although the merits of the job itself tended to take precedence. Most teachers interviewed were teaching in/near London or the South East, but this was almost always due to family connections rather than a particular preference for the region. Figure 5.6 (p.71) shows the main geographical factors on where to move were proximity to friends and family (38%) and affordability (36%).

Experience of applying without a recruitment agency

Teachers applying to vacancies directly found the process of submitting applications relatively straightforward. However, a few experienced challenges. For example, one found it complicated to apply through TES for the first time due to the number of forms and documents needed, but it became straightforward once they were familiar with the process. Once submitting their application online, schools would then invite applicants to interview, which often took place online and involved a teaching demonstration component.

Several reported that support from an advisor from the Get into Teaching website was valuable. The advisor helped them review their application, and provided advice for interviews.²¹

Many teachers received no response after submitting applications directly to schools, leading them to spend significant energy and time applying for numerous positions, compared to those using agencies, who submitted their details once to the agency who would then apply on their behalf. Many reported that schools immediately disregarded their application if they needed visa sponsorship and provided this as feedback when requested. This indicates that teachers are not always clear as to whether a school have a sponsorship license.

“I did apply for so many schools and it was instant rejection when they knew that they had to employ someone from abroad because of the licenses and permits, all those things.” – *Teacher*

Where teachers applied directly and found a school which would sponsor them relatively easily, this was often due to a prior link with the school. For example, one teacher made a successful application to a school where they previously worked as a supply teacher, while another secured a teaching role in a school where they had been a teaching assistant. There were some teachers that reported that they had more success with sponsorship when applying to private schools.

Once they had been offered a role, many teachers found it difficult to navigate the visa application process, in particular gathering the necessary documentation. Teachers sometimes received support from personal connections in the UK, or from the school if they were familiar with the process, but mostly had to navigate the visa process by themselves.

Those who did not require visa sponsorship were much more likely to find the application process straightforward. Often these were European teachers who had come to the UK

²¹ This advisor service is no longer offered through Get into Teaching.

prior to the EU exit. However, some still found that schools were unwilling to take them on if they did not have experience teaching in English schools.

“I’ve been told despite my vast experience and qualifications that I haven’t been born in this country, or that I don’t have experience teaching in England...I heard the same answers, despite having qualified teacher status, that they’re just not interested in me.” – *Teacher*

Experience applying using a recruitment agency

Teachers often turned to recruitment agencies after unsuccessful direct applications. Others chose to use agencies as they perceived this approach to be a more straightforward way to secure a teaching role, particularly when relocating from overseas. They said the agency provided additional support and guidance agencies throughout the application process. A few were unaware that they were applying to a recruitment agency rather than a school and felt this should have been more clearly advertised.

Generally, those who used agencies felt this simplified the application process through the useful guidance and support. Teachers gave examples of information on the different steps of the application process, support obtaining documentation (such as DBS checks), support obtaining QTS if required, information about teaching in England, support with the visa process, and interview coaching.

"They gave me one person that if there was anything I didn't understand I could go to for help, and she was constantly calling me to find out the progress so far." – *Teacher*

Some teachers reported limited support from agencies, however, they did benefit from their connections with schools which helped them to access opportunities.

“It’s easier to get a job through the agency compared to applying directly to the schools when you’re coming from outside the country...[but] getting someone who has never been in the country before, and just leaving them to find somewhere to live? [The agency] failed in that area.” – *Teacher*

Several who were otherwise happy with their recruitment agency would have nonetheless liked more support after they had started their role. Teachers who did receive support following placement, for example a check-in that the school was a good fit for them, spoke highly of this support and their agency in general.

Recruitment agencies' approaches to placing international teachers

Working with teachers

Recruitment agencies received interest from international teachers through a variety of channels, most commonly, online recruitment websites or adverts on social media. Most agencies recruited both international and UK-based teachers, although they tended to be more proactive than leaders in targeting international candidates. This ranged from arranging international trips to teaching fairs, maintaining relationships with British international schools, to having a branch abroad focussed entirely on international recruitment. They generally considered 'international recruitment' to refer to teachers who were based abroad and looking to relocate.

Most agencies recruited across a broad range of countries. This was due to the high cost associated with targeting specific countries. Several mentioned that they had previously targeted countries that were popular with school leaders who were recruiting, including Australia, New Zealand, and Canada (see "Assessing applications" section below), but that this was no longer profitable due to a scarcity of candidates from these countries. A small number of agencies suggested the pandemic was a key driver of this, hypothesising that individuals were less likely to want to move far, and also that it had led to a larger number of vacancies in their home countries due to older teachers taking early recruitment. One also felt that teacher wages in the UK had not kept pace with pay rises granted in other countries.

Agencies described their screening processes for international teachers as 'rigorous', including extensive background checks, verifying their qualifications, and interviewing the candidate about their motivations, subject knowledge and communication skills. This contrasted with many leaders' experiences, who felt agencies sent them speculative, poor-quality CVs without extensive screening or matching to the role.

"It can take weeks and months to get someone from knocking on our door to being fully cleared and checked." – *Recruitment agency*

Many agencies saw these screening processes as invaluable to maintain their reputation; submitting unsuitable candidates could lead schools to use a different agency in future. Those working with MATs were particularly focussed on this reputational aspect, due to MATs' tendency to limit choice within the trust to agencies on a 'preferred supplier list'.

"The [high] retention is why clients are continuing to use us, which is why we've taken the market, because we only provide quality candidates." – *Recruitment agency*

In terms of support, agencies generally reported providing candidates with multiple services, including information about teaching in England such as the curriculum, school structures, Ofsted ratings, and checking in with them once they were placed in a school.

Several agencies chose to actively inform applicants about the potential challenges of teaching in England to avoid placing teachers who are unprepared for instances of disruptive behaviour they may encounter. Interestingly, this is one of the aspects that teachers would have liked to have been more prepared for prior to starting their role, suggesting that such advice is not standard practice across agencies.

“A lot of the schools that will consider the international recruits are the ones that struggle to recruit because they have the most challenging environment...so it's giving them that reality check of you'll also have to deal with all these things.” – *Recruitment agency*

Other support offered to applicants included facilitating the visa process; providing or signposting to legal advice; assistance with relocation costs and logistics; guidance on preparing for interviews; and information and support with obtaining documents needed for employment (e.g. DBS checks, validated references). A few mentioned providing advice and support to candidates to help them to get QTS, although others required candidates to have this in order to take them on as clients. This support was valuable for applicants and invisible to many of the school leaders interviewed for this research. Such leaders may not factor in these costs when expressing the value they think agencies offer.

Many agencies also had a procedure in place to assess any gaps in candidates' knowledge. They would then recommend training courses to help fill these. For example, one agency had established links with language schools to help teachers improve their everyday communication skills in English before coming to teach.

Working with schools

Agencies generally had established relationships with schools and would keep them up to date with vacancies, and recommend candidates to them. Often agencies focussed on building relationships within their local area, although a few worked across the country.

Most agencies presented candidates to schools based on their teaching qualifications and relevant experience for the role, without focussing on whether candidates had an international background. This was because many felt schools could be resistant to hiring international teachers, even when they were highly qualified, due to the concerns presented in Chapter 2, such as visa administration, sponsorship requirements and uncertainty around their experience and qualifications. Agencies reported spending time

reassuring schools of international candidates' quality, particularly for those from countries perceived as more culturally disparate from the UK.

“We get a bit of that sort of stigma, like ... ‘I had somebody from there before and it didn’t work out’... A big part of our job is working with them on that mindset and their understanding of the market. They need to be open-minded – agencies can’t get you people from countries you used to get people from because the volume of workers just isn’t there anymore.”
– *Recruitment agency*

Training providers’ approaches to recruiting international trainees

Finding candidates

Training providers in England did not usually proactively enrol international trainees. Instead, they implemented a single marketing strategy which reached both home and overseas applicants. This strategy usually involved marketing courses on social media, attending recruitment fairs and conferences, open days, and advertising through the DfE Apply system or the Get into Teaching website. Providers also commonly used local channels to advertise, for example using billboards and posters in the local area (which were therefore unlikely to reach an international audience).

Some providers specified they were open to applications from international students, which they said resulted in an uplift in international trainees that applied. A small number of providers were more targeted in their approach to international recruitment. For example, a couple of higher education institutions had links with universities abroad which they used to help them recruit trainees.

Providers said their applicants came from many countries and trained to teach various subjects. Providers took students from Europe, China, Southeast Asian countries (particularly Malaysia, India and Pakistan), Nigeria and Ghana. Many providers who recruited heavily in Europe emphasised that these numbers had decreased in recent years due to the EU exit.

Modern foreign languages (MFL) attracted high numbers of international trainees, with the countries of origin largely depending on the language being taught. STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) subjects were also a common choice for international applicants. Interest from international applicants for primary education courses was more limited, with some providers linking this to the lack of bursary.

“It's not very fair on people to expect them to go through their training without any real financial support, and that does have an impact on the calibre and number of people that apply.” – *Training provider*

Assessing applications

The main aspect of the application process specific to international trainees was checking the equivalency of their qualifications and their standard of English. Otherwise, the process mirrored that of home applicants.

Providers often wanted candidates holding the equivalent of an English and maths GCSE and an undergraduate degree at 2:1 or above in the subject in which they were training (these requirements are not pre-requisites for training). Some providers relied on European Network of Information Centre (ENIC) comparability statements²² to filter candidate qualifications, while others had international teams who specialised in looking at equivalency. If candidates did not hold equivalent qualifications or there was uncertainty around their equivalency, several providers indicated that they supported applicants to reach the necessary qualifications and sometimes still offered places conditional on achieving them achieving these.

“Depending on what time of year it is, we might still invite to interview with that [GCSE] pending, but one of the conditions would be that they must get that equivalency.” – *Training provider*

Once candidates' qualification equivalency had been confirmed, key considerations for admission for all candidates included the strength of candidates' personal statements, their motivation for teaching, their experience and understanding of teaching as a career, as well as their communication skills. Although training providers valued candidates who had UK teaching experience, or were familiar with the English curriculum, this was less of a deciding factor than it was for leaders recruiting teachers. This was because these attributes were seen as more easily acquired during the course, in contrast to, a passion and skill for teaching.

“Obviously each provider has a tick list of things ... But what it really comes down to is if people are showing the potential to teach, that they're showing that they're committed to supporting children and showing a real interest in teaching and education and understanding at a certain level of teaching and approaches to teaching. I think so long as that was coming across, then that probably would be what we would be looking for.” – *Training provider*

²² Statements issued by the UK European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) regarding the equivalency of overseas qualifications to the UK education system.

Providers then invited promising applicants to interview, which was often online for both overseas and home applicants. Interviews tended to include a teaching component, for example delivering part of a planned lesson, or doing a presentation, as well as answering questions on their motivations and experience. Interviews were also used to check applicants' standard of spoken English.

Barriers to recruiting international trainees

The most common difficulty reported by training providers when recruiting international trainees was processing a large number of poor-quality applications from overseas, which they lacked the resources to sift. This was particularly the case for smaller providers. For example, providers received applications where the individual had the wrong degree or qualification, had not read through the application instructions provided, or where their application had clearly been computer generated. One provider reported receiving as many as 1,500 applications last year that they did not consider 'genuine'.

"That's where it becomes very time consuming, and that's certainly what's been reported back to me from my team, is that they've spent a lot of time looking through applications from overseas applicants which are not going to go any further." – *Training provider*

Aside from the high number of applications, training providers also mentioned applicants' standard of English as a significant barrier to recruitment. Several noted the low standard of English among many of the applicants, which could be difficult to determine before the interview stage. This was felt to be worsened by an increase in candidates using AI to write applications. Other providers raised that whilst international applicants' spoken English was of a good level, they were not accustomed to writing academic English, which could cause them problems later in the course. However, providers were more willing to be flexible with this, often offering additional language support for these trainees rather than rejecting their applications.

In addition, a small number of providers who were able to sponsor visas felt the time-consuming nature of this process could be a barrier. However, in contrast to leaders, most of these providers had a sponsorship licence in place and were accustomed to supporting applicants through that process. The process was also easier as many reported that most of their international trainees did not require sponsorship as they were on graduate visas.

Trainee's experiences of applying to courses in England

Trainees were generally positive about the application process. Most found applying for courses straightforward, if a bit time consuming due to the level of information needed

about previous qualifications and experience. Trainees were similarly positive about the interview stage, reporting that interviewers were patient and well prepared to answer questions.

“It was not a very hectic process... it was a very user-friendly process which I can recommend to anyone.”- *Trainee*

“I did an interview with my (now) mentor, and with my tutor on the University course and another person who was very nice. They made me feel like, at home, you know, like very friendly people. It was perfect.” – *Trainee*

Proving equivalency of qualifications was the main difficulty with applications reported by trainees. They said demonstrating equivalency could be time-consuming and costly. They gave examples of arranging and paying for qualifications to be translated, and sitting GCSEs or English language tests. Some expressed frustration towards the emphasis put on the equivalency of GCSE-level qualifications, especially in cases where they had a high qualification level.

“Even though I had a PhD, my GCSE equivalent in maths and English was still required, which I found very odd given I'd already gone through 4 degrees.” – *Trainee*

One other challenge that trainees faced was difficulties obtaining visas, and for a couple, these challenges resulted in them starting their course late. The most common visa difficulty was the high cost, but trainees also reported difficulties understanding visa guidance, and the visa taking a significant time to process. However, issues with visas were less commonly reported by trainees than by teachers, as most training providers were able to provide suitable guidance and support. Often, training providers had departments who were familiar with the immigration system and frequently provided visa advice to students.

When looking for help with their application, many used the Get into Teaching website in addition to their own research to find resources via sites like NowTeach. All who used the Get into Teaching guidance found it useful for support with their application and information about life as a teacher in England. Moreover, several found the option to request an advisor through Get into Teaching highly valuable. These advisors provided tailored support for writing personal statements, and clarifications where trainees had difficulties understanding their application form. For example, one trainee needed advice about the differences between training options and went to an advisor for help.²³

²³ This advisor service is no longer offered through Get into Teaching.

“I came back to find that there was school-based, SCITT, paid positions, there’s apprenticeships...and then there was the university route. It was really difficult to navigate from an outside perspective... Between [NowTeach] and the [Get into Teaching] advisor, I managed to work out what the best course was. So, the application process was made easier.”

– *Trainee*

Some also accessed support and guidance via the training provider they were applying to. Mostly, trainees went to the training provider for information on visas and bursaries.

4. Incentives and support

This chapter looks at the level of awareness and views on policies which incentivise and support international teachers and trainees, with a focus on the International Relocation Payment (IRP) and bursaries. This chapter also covers how often international teachers and trainees accessed this financial support, and the extent to which it influenced their decision to come to England to train and teach.

Awareness of incentives and support

There are currently a range of incentives and support on offer to international teachers and trainees:

- **The IRP** for non-UK teachers and trainees in physics and modern foreign languages (MFL). This payment is worth £10,000 and is designed to cover the cost of visas, the immigration health surcharge and other relocation expenses. This scheme was launched in March 2023 as a two- year pilot, with payments starting for those taking on teaching and training roles for the 2023/24 academic year. From September 2024, payments to teachers were split into two £5,000 instalments rather than given as a single £10,000 sum. In addition, trainees in physics and MFL who applied to train to teach in the 2024/25 academic year were no longer eligible for the IRP. The IRP is only available to those who move to the UK a maximum of 3 months before starting their job.²⁴
- **Bursaries and scholarships** for those training to teach in languages or physics (previously only available for domestic candidates). Bursaries are tax-free payments from the UK government which are paid out by the trainee's training provider and can be up to £29,000 for physics. Scholarships are tax-free payments from independent organisations which can be up to £31,000 for physics.
- **The approach to recognising overseas teaching qualifications** has recently been updated. Since February 2023, eligible teachers with qualifications from more countries than previous have been able to apply for qualified teacher status (QTS) in England.
- **Apply for QTS in England**, a recently updated digital service which allows eligible overseas trained teachers to apply for QTS.

Overall awareness of the available support and the recent changes to policies was limited amongst all our research audiences. In some cases, where there was awareness

²⁴ It is worth noting that this research included teachers who were already teaching in England and trainees who were already training in England or had completed their training. As a result, there was limited awareness across these audiences of these two changes made to the IRP. Similarly, many had already settled in their role prior to the 2023/24 academic year so were not eligible for the scheme.

of these incentives and support, there was limited understanding of the detail. Primarily, audiences were most knowledgeable about the IRP and the bursaries available through DfE. For this reason, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the awareness and views of these two policies. Details on the suggested improvements which could be made to the support available to international teachers and trainees can be found in Chapter 6.

Leaders' awareness and views on the IRP

Among leaders (especially MATs), there was limited awareness of the IRP. However, MAT leaders typically said they had a dedicated HR team, who were likely to have a greater awareness and understanding of these incentives.

In cases where leaders were aware of the IRP and bursaries, they had limited understanding of how the incentives worked, who they were available to or how teachers could apply. They were also uncertain whether the international teachers at their school had received the IRP.

“None of them are things that they have mentioned certainly, but I think some of them have benefited from them.” – *School leader*

A couple of leaders credited the IRP with their recent success in finding international teachers for the roles they had struggled to recruit for. A few others thought these policies alone might not be very impactful, as they did not think that the costs of relocating played the most important role in their decision to teach in England.

“I think usually the people that we've hired from international countries come because they want a different life or a better life...so I'm not totally convinced that [the IRP] makes a difference.” – *School leader*

Recruiters' awareness and views on the IRP and bursaries

Awareness of the incentives was mixed among recruiters. Most were aware there were financial incentives offered to encourage international teachers to England, but only around half had knowledge of the types of incentives available, including the IRP.

Among those with an awareness of the IRP, some flagged that when they started to advertise the IRP on their website and in job posts, they saw an uplift in international applicants.

“I think that's been really, really welcome, actually... It's given us good messaging, when we marketed that out and put it on our website. We got a stronger reaction from international teachers.” – *Recruitment agency*

Some recruiters with less knowledge of the details surrounding the IRP were unsure of how the funding was distributed. They also recognised that their own lack of awareness was a barrier to the incentives being effective, because they were unable to provide sufficient details to applicants.

While recruiters generally agreed that the incentives helped encourage international teachers to England, all felt that there were significant barriers to placing international teachers in schools that could not be overcome by the current incentive schemes. One of the main barriers that recruiters mentioned was the difficulty candidates faced navigating the UK visa process. Further detail on the recruitment challenges teachers face can be found in Chapter 3.

"I think that they're well meant, you know, and it tells a nice story to the rest of the UK about what the Government's trying to do, and the authorities are trying to do, but actually, it's not easy at all for international people to come to the UK." – *Recruitment agency*

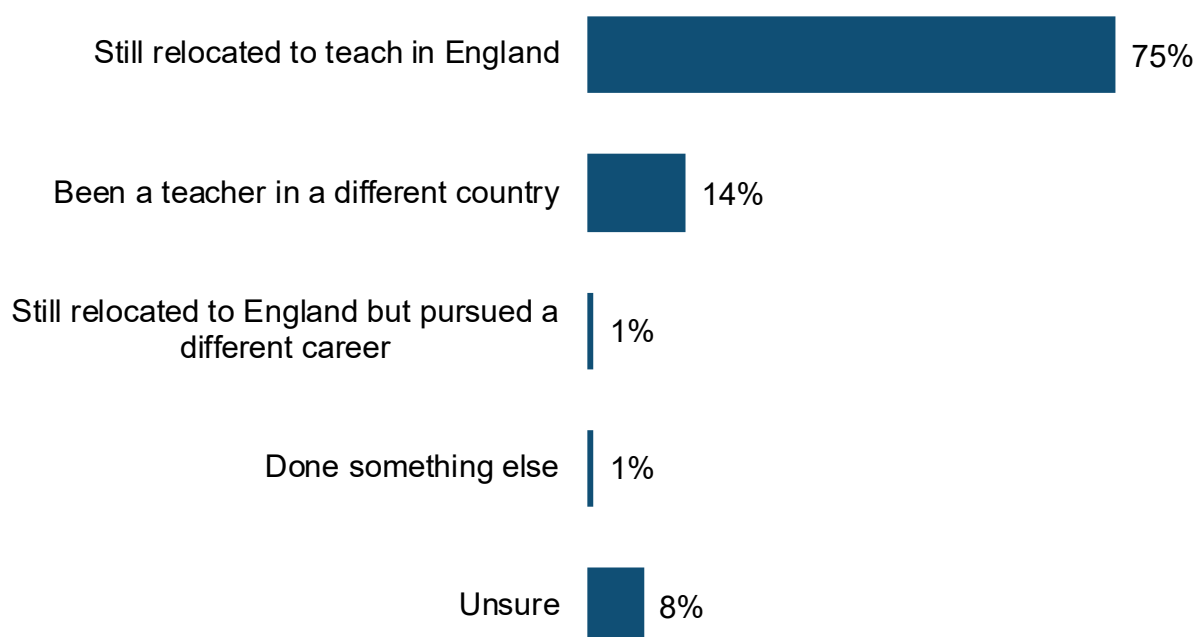
Teachers' awareness and views on the IRP²⁵

Around one quarter of surveyed teachers (26%) were aware of the IRP when they applied to teach in England. A minority (1%) of those who received the IRP chose to teach in a different subject in order to receive this incentive.

For many, the IRP did not determine their decision to relocate to teach in England. Three-quarters of teachers (75%) reported that they would have still relocated to teach in England without it. This was followed by 14% who reported that they would have been a teacher in a different country, and 8% who were unsure.

²⁵ It is worth noting that the IRP was introduced in March 2023 (midway through the 2022/23 academic year) with payments starting during the 2023/24 academic year; and the research included teachers who were already teaching in England and trainees who were already training in England or had completed their training. As such, these participants might have applied for their teaching and training roles prior to the roll out of the IRP. This would therefore impact upon awareness and receipt. The total number of teachers in the survey who had received IRP was 83. This number is too small for any further statistical sub-group analysis specific to IRP recipients.

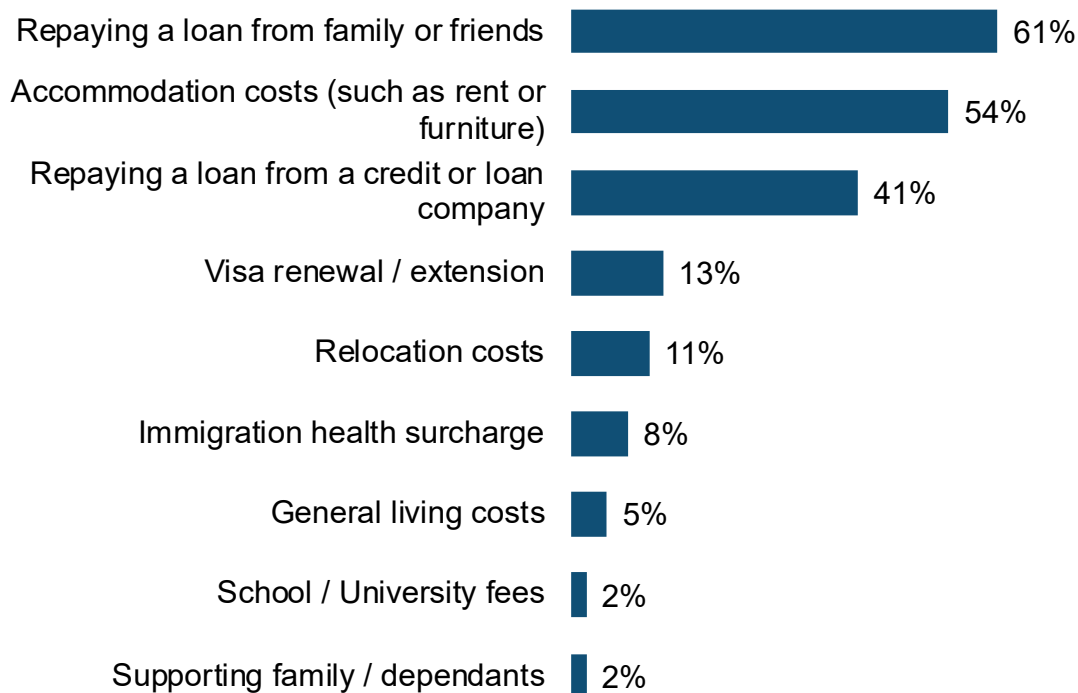
Figure 4.1 Teachers' likely course of action had they not received the IRP



Source: Q104. Without receiving the IRP, would you have...? Teachers that received IRP (83)

Teachers were most likely to spend their IRP on repaying a loan from friends and family (61%). Over half used the IRP for accommodation costs (54%), followed by 41% that used the payment to repay a loan from a credit or loan company.

Figure 4.2 How teachers spent the IRP



Source: A39. What have you, or do you intend to spend the £10,000 from the international relocation payment (IRP) on? Teachers who received the IRP (83)

During the qualitative interviews, most teachers said they were unaware of the IRP when they applied to teach, and less than half received this payment. Many of those receiving the IRP found out about it after they applied for or started their role. These teachers found out about the IRP through a colleague or their recruitment agency once their application was underway.

The extent to which the IRP influenced a decision to teach in England varied. The IRP made it more possible for some teachers to afford the cost of moving to England, by covering the cost of the visas, flights, accommodation deposits and other debts. Without the IRP, this group would have found the move more challenging.

“When I was looking at the costs involved to come to England and teach, I thought there was no hope for me. But the IRP helped with those costs.” – *Teacher*

For some teachers, the IRP was less essential. This group tended to use the IRP to plan and prepare for the next few years, rather than use it for initial costs. For example, there were teachers who used this payment for a future visa extension or to cover the higher-than-expected living costs in England, which were not easily covered by a teachers' salary. These living costs included accommodation and transport costs.

"I didn't use the money yet because a friend of mine says you have to save while you're here because, I'm not sure if it's just [city], but the cost for rent is quite high. So at least half of your salary is going to rent." –
Teacher

Overall, the IRP was viewed as an effective means of reducing the financial barriers related to moving to England to teach, although it was not often the deciding factor (see Figure 4.3). Additionally, given its use by some teachers for future visa costs or to cover the cost of living in England, it may have exerted a little influence on teacher retention. A couple of teachers said IRP might help them address financial difficulties for staying in England.

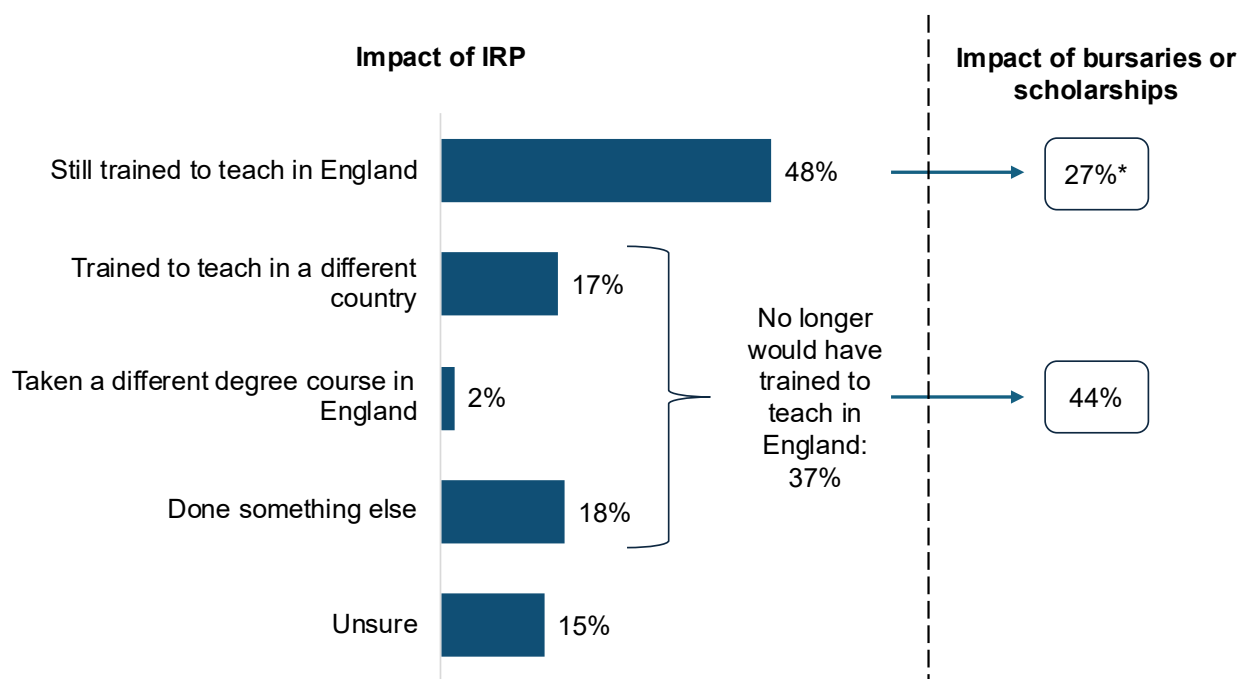
Trainees' awareness and views on the IRP

A minority of trainees (3%) who received the IRP chose to train in a different subject to receive this incentive.²⁶

For around half, the IRP did not determine trainee's decisions to train to teach in England, with 48% stating they would have still done so without the IRP. This was followed by 18% who would have done something else, and a similar proportion (17%) who would have trained to teach in another country.

²⁶ It is worth noting that the IRP is no longer available to international trainees since the start of the 2024/25 academic year.

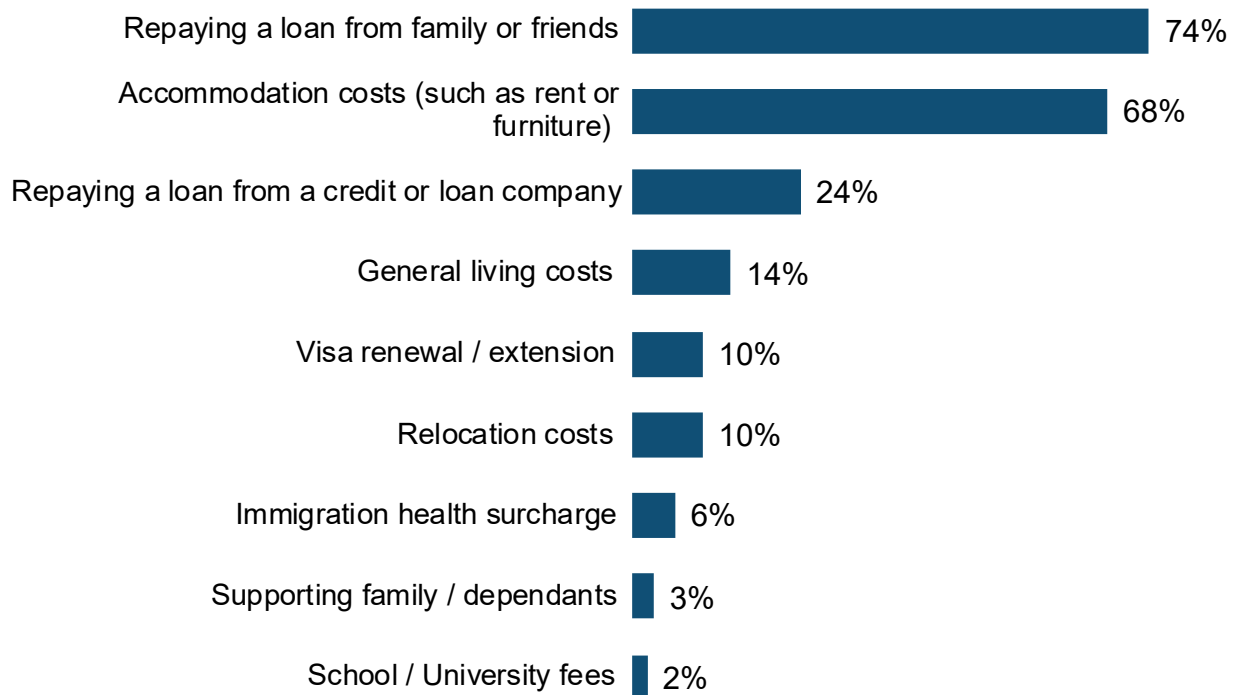
Figure 4.3 Trainees' likely course of action had they not received the IRP



Source: A38. Without receiving the IRP, would you have...? Base: Trainees who received IRP (103). A37. Without receiving a bursary/scholarship, would you have...? Base: Trainees receiving scholarships or bursaries (143). *Indicates significant difference between respondents selecting this answer option for bursaries or scholarships compared to the IRP.

Trainees were most likely to spend their IRP on repaying a loan from friends and family (74%). This was followed by accommodation costs (68%) and repaying a loan from a credit or loan company (24%).

Figure 4.4 How trainees spent the IRP



Source: A39. What have you, or do you intend to spend the £10,000 from the international relocation payment (IRP) on? Trainees who received the IRP (103)

Most trainees participating in an interview had heard of the IRP prior to applying, whilst others learnt about it once they had applied. A few trainees were unaware of the incentive.

The IRP was deemed useful amongst those who had heard of it. A small number of interviewed trainees would have chosen to train in another country or stayed in the country they were living in if the IRP and/or a bursary was unavailable. Most were grateful for the extra support, but the IRP was not a deciding factor.

“The international relocation [payment] I didn't know until the very last minute... I had already applied for the visa and that's when I was told that there is an international relocation fee, which was a good surprise.” -

Trainee

Trainees noted that the IRP helped them to cover the cost of their visa, plus other expenses associated with relocating.

The IRP also encouraged some trainees to remain in the UK after getting their QTS. This was because it helped to alleviate some of the cost barriers of living in England, changing visas, and even relocating within England for a teaching position.

“When it comes to the [IRP] I would have come anyway, but after the course I don't think I would have stayed to teach in England because it is super expensive to get a visa and with the new changes to the health [surcharge], it's even worse.” – *Trainee*

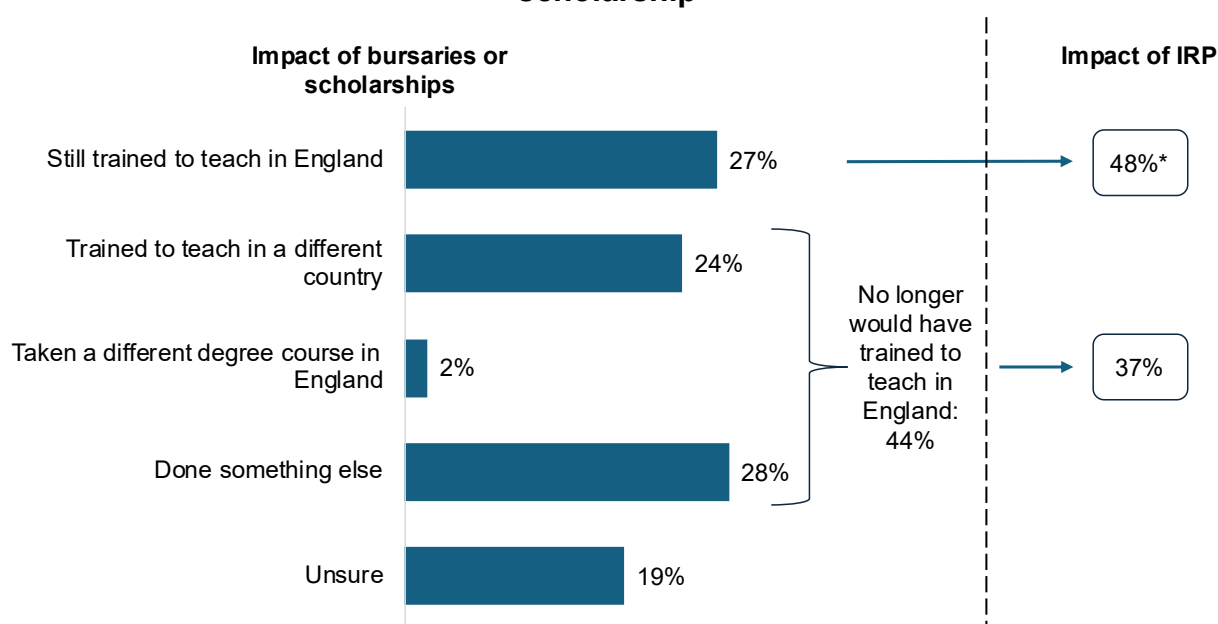
In the DfE survey, trainees who received the IRP reported that they definitely or probably would apply to teach in a state school in England (93% vs. 84% of those who did not receive the IRP), and less likely to report that they would apply to schools outside of England (34% vs. 73%).

Trainees' awareness and views on bursaries

The survey found more trainees were aware of bursaries and scholarships (57%) than the IRP (46%).

The survey also found a quarter (27%) of trainees would have still trained to teach in England without a bursary or scholarship. A similar proportion (28%) would have done something else, and 24% would have trained to teach in a different country.

Figure 4.5 Trainees' likely course of action had they not received a bursary or scholarship



Source: A37. Without receiving a bursary/scholarship, would you have...? Trainees receiving scholarships or bursaries (143)

Most trainees taking part in an interview were aware of the bursary. Some found out about bursaries through the DfE website, or through their training provider, prior to applying. Those interviewed who trained to teach physics or MFL went on to receive the bursary.

The bursary was more influential in trainee's decisions to relocate to England to teach than the IRP. The bursary available for those training in physics and MFL has higher monetary value than the IRP and therefore was viewed as being more valuable overall. Many trainees noted that without the bursary, they would not have been able to cover the costs of their tuition, nor some relocation costs, such as gaining a visa.

"[If the bursary wasn't available] I wouldn't be interested in paying that much money to go and teach into the school...I think that if I would have to pay, I was chosen to do something else." - *Trainee*

The relative importance of the bursary compared to the IRP in trainees' decisions to relocate may also have been impacted by the different announcement dates. While the bursary was first announced in October 2022, the IRP wasn't announced until the following March, by which point it is possible many of the interviewees had already decided to come to teach in England.

Those who did not receive a financial incentive were determined to come to England to train to teach, so self-funded. It is important to note that the qualitative research only included trainees that were currently or had trained to teach in England, therefore had overcome any barriers.

"Since the burden of funding the cost was totally on me and it's something I really found important for me to be able to get into the employment market and also to be able to teach what I am passionate about, I was determined to go through with it." - *Trainee*

Training providers' awareness and views on the IRP and bursaries

Most training providers were aware of the IRP and how it worked. Some training providers acknowledged how effective they felt the IRP had been in encouraging international trainees to apply. Further to this, they felt that the removal of the IRP would have a negative impact on the number of applications. One provider was aware of two trainees who left a course halfway through due to the removal of the IRP.

Training providers had also seen an increase in international applications from offering bursaries. Those interviewed noted that the bursaries had the most significant impact on trainees, in terms of supporting them with the costs of relocating.

Despite recognising that the IRP and bursaries generated an uplift in applicants, many felt that the quality of these candidates was insufficient. There was a consensus among providers that offering financial incentives for certain courses can attract the 'wrong type of candidate', resulting in large numbers of applications to sift. Often the additional applications they received were from candidates with inappropriate qualifications or inadequate English language skills.

"Policies attract people... But they do not always attract the right candidate and so it is important that they come to me first." – *Training provider*

Furthermore, some providers suspected that financial incentives encouraged applications to apply for courses but that this did not translate into them teaching in England.

"Well, [bursaries are] very effective in attracting [candidates], but we're not actually getting... the conversion." – *Training provider*

5. Experiences employing international teachers, teaching in English schools, and teacher training in England

This chapter explores teachers' and trainees' experiences relocating to, training and teaching in England. We consider what factors enable and impede a successful move to England, and the perspectives of school leaders on employing international teachers and training providers training teachers.

Employing international teachers in England

Benefits of employing international teachers

Leaders often emphasised that international teachers brought a wealth of diverse experiences and cultural perspectives that enrich schools, sparking ideas and innovation (see also Chapter 2). They also highlighted the educational and social advantages of this exposure, which helps broaden students' worldviews and fosters cultural awareness.

"They bring in different perspectives to education and ... it's really refreshing to see, and I think our education systems are enriched by that and improved. I would argue that ... they also bring in a cultural experience and shared experiences that our young people need to see and be part of." – *School leader*

Challenges of employing international teachers

Employing international teachers presented several challenges to leaders around the additional time, resources, and support required to ensure their successful integration and retention. Challenges included training new recruits to adapt to the English education system, as well as providing assistance with their adjustment to life in England.

The challenges faced by leaders, as outlined in this section, also reflect the views of a minority of leaders with no direct experience in hiring international teachers. However, the analysis found no significant difference based on whether or not an interviewee hired international teachers.

Teachers' ability to adapt to the English education system

One of the most frequently cited challenges was adapting international teachers to the English education system, particularly in terms of behaviour expectations and classroom management strategies. Leaders highlighted this as an area where substantial support is often required.

"The biggest challenges (for teachers) [is] differences in behaviour expectations and how behaviour is managed [in England compared to their home country]. That's where we have to put in the most support."

MAT leader

Leaders agreed with the view from some new recruits that international teachers could feel overwhelmed by the fast-paced nature of English schools and the high expectations placed upon them.

"You have to get [international teachers] ready for the British system, which is quite challenging. They often say they are initially overwhelmed by the pace of [life in] English schools and high expectations." – *School leader*

To address these challenges, some leaders implemented various support mechanisms, including buddy systems, regular well-being checks, and additional training focused on behavioural management (the support teachers said they received is presented later in Figure 5.3). These leaders said this support was often tailored to individual teacher needs, and/or to subjects.

"It would be a bespoke arrangement, depending on the subject. Depending on the candidate." – *School leader*

Leaders said support directly improved retention because it reduced feelings of isolation and overload from living in a different culture.

"I think the ... transition [is important] ... If you don't get the support package right, then it ends up being a hard experience for both parties." – *School leader*

Quality of teaching and curriculum adaptation

Around half the leaders interviewed had had more extensive experience recruiting internationally. Most of this group felt the quality of teaching among international staff varied and was not always up to expected standards. This issue posed a challenge for school leaders when the teacher was not suited to the role but was reliant on the school for their visa. In such cases, terminating employment proved difficult.

Some leaders also expressed concerns about the subject knowledge among international teachers, particularly in subjects like history and geography, where familiarity with the English curriculum is essential.

"If you asked someone to do long division in France, you wouldn't know what they're doing. The approach to teaching and understanding is so different compared to here. You need to prepare international teachers for these variations and help them adapt." – *School leader*

Some leaders found it hard to assess whether challenges faced by international teachers were due to language barriers or limitations in their subject knowledge.

"Somebody who's been a successful teacher in China, for example, wouldn't be able to teach in the same way in the UK. The context is very different, particularly in terms of the teacher-student dynamic." – *School leader*

Administrative and visa challenges

Leaders described a range of administrative challenges associated with employing international teachers. Safeguarding considerations, paperwork, and administrative requirements were all mentioned, though schools with established processes more often provided examples of addressing these challenges. Schools often assisted international teachers with visa renewals and applications for dependents, although the length of the process caused delays that disrupted the academic year.

"There was a risk that [one teacher] might not be able to get back into the country ... [so she had] an extended October half term [to allow her to] go out and come back in on her new work visa." – *MAT leader*

Addressing employment challenges

Of the leaders with more extensive experience in international recruitment, some took direct actions to support integration. These actions included one or more of the following:

- **Professional development programmes:** Some larger schools and MATs brought together all new international teachers in the summer holidays to help them integrate before they taught. These programmes included weekly study groups, regular meetings with teaching and learning coaches and, in some cases, support from international teachers already teaching in the school.
- **Assistance with housing and relocation:** Temporary housing or grants to cover relocation expenses were provided by some schools (again, larger schools and MATs) to ease the transition for teachers and their families. Examples included schools renting housing for teachers' first weeks in the country, converting onsite facilities into accommodation, and pairing teachers with buddies who could advise on queries on issues like pay and pensions. Other schools provided grants to cover the costs of obtaining QTS via assessment-only routes.

- **Tailored induction programmes:** These focused on key areas such as curriculum differences, English teaching methodologies, safeguarding training and behaviour management strategies.

"We have a bespoke programme for overseas trained teachers. There's a professional mentor and a subject mentor, just very much as you treat a trainee teacher, but in a way which is respectful of their experience." - *Leader*

Many of these leaders emphasised the need for training courses tailored specifically to international teachers. Such training addressed concerns from leaders about variability in the quality of overseas-trained teachers, and their readiness to teach in England. Leaders noted that high-quality training programs improved teaching skills through improved understanding of the English school system.

"We've only had success with international teachers, if they have done some previous teaching or training in the UK." – *MAT Leader*

Some of the leaders spoken to, without the resources to implement tailored induction programmes, noted that it is likely that this training would be beneficial.

- **Phased integration:** Teachers began with peer observations or a reduced teaching load before assuming full timetables. The leaders taking this approach said it allowed more time for teachers to acclimate to the school environment and English teaching practices.
- **Collaborative approaches to recruitment:** A few local or MAT schools joined forces, sharing expertise and resources for recruitment and support.

Leaders with less experience recruiting and employing international teachers were less likely to have these interventions in place.

Retention

A school's experience and support systems influenced retention rates for international teachers. Schools with well-established support systems for international teachers reported higher retention rates; in some cases, international teachers were reportedly more likely to remain in their roles than UK-trained staff:

"My retention for them is better than my retention from UK trained teachers." – *School leader*

Retention was notably strong in schools and MATs with the following features:

- **Schools offering professional development opportunities:** Schools and MATs offering training opportunities reported higher retention rates. CPD was cited as a factor leading to promotions and long-term commitment. Examples of personal development included individualised programmes, including leadership and management training and webinars tailored to teacher needs. Figure 5.3 later shows nearly half (47%) of the teachers who took part in the survey said they received general training or CPD; a quarter (25%) said they had training specifically designed for acclimatisation in England.
- **Prior experience in international recruitment:** Schools and MATs with experience in international recruitment implemented robust systems of induction and support. Moreover, these systems had been tested and adapted based on experience.

Some leaders expressed concerns about the perceived inequality of such support that was not offered to other employed staff.

“Ultimately, it's public money and we also have to ensure equality. So, I don't think that we can treat any group of employees more favourably than another.” – *MAT leader*

Factors influencing international teacher retention

Retention rates were mixed in schools less experienced with international recruitment. These schools often lacked the expertise and systems needed to provide ongoing support, which negatively impacted retention. These leaders wanted more support from DfE to address these gaps, which are further explored in Chapter 6. Common issues in retention encountered by this group included:

- **Shorter-term visas:** For example, teachers from countries like Canada and Australia moved to the UK on short-term visas for the experience rather than long-term settlement. This made it challenging for schools to retain them beyond their initial visa period because teachers either needed to reapply for a visa or were never aiming to stay for long anyway.
- **Supply roles:** International teachers were sometimes employed in supply roles, which inherently offered less stability and lower retention potential. Short-term employment of international recruits was a stopgap measure for these leaders, and did not address problems associated with teacher shortages.

Some international teachers left after a very short period which discouraged some schools from pursuing international recruitment in the future. The teachers survey found that one in eight (12%) of those currently teaching in England want to “leave as soon as possible.”

"One teacher did a week and then said it was not for her. We are almost giving up, even though there's no one else (in UK) applying to the job. The whole process of investing (20 hours of work) in international recruitment and then losing them so quickly." – *School leader*

Leaders confirmed that the cost of living in England, particularly accommodation, was a key driver for some international teachers leaving their roles prematurely. This presented schools with retention challenges and highlighted the need for better support and clearer communication about the reality of living and working in England.

While employing international teachers brings unique challenges, the benefits – including cultural enrichment, innovative teaching practices, and increased diversity – were worth it for many leaders. Positive experiences of employing international teachers encouraged leaders to pursue further international recruitment. However, many leaders reported that they would appreciate additional advice and guidance, which is further explored in Chapter 6.

Teaching in England

Benefits of teaching in England

Teachers highlighted that the key positive aspects of teaching in England were the flexibility in teaching methods, advanced teaching resources – particularly in STEM subjects – and the professional development opportunities. Professional development included learning from experienced teachers, gaining experience in teaching multiple subjects within STEM, and attending conferences and training, some of which were funded by schools.

"Everything ... is more advanced in regards to the lab tech and the equipment that you have access to the classrooms and what the students are provided with." - *Teacher*

Some teachers also appreciated the support schools offered to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). They observed that English schools had advanced systems in place to provide children with the appropriate level of support compared to their home countries. Additionally, some teachers acquired greater confidence in teaching children with SEND during their time teaching in England.

"When I came [to England], I saw how different it was. There are students who struggle with reading, and they get a reading pen. Some struggle with white paper, and their needs are recorded in the system. Teachers print out materials in different formats to support them. These things are really well catered for here. Back home, everyone had to get the same result, regardless of their needs." - *Teacher*

Teachers also identified advanced technology used, the greater autonomy over planning lessons and the focus on practical learning as key benefits of teaching in England. Teachers appreciated that flexibility to design lessons within well-structured curriculum guidelines, allowing them to maintain ownership of lesson planning while still following a clear framework.

Additionally, teachers praised the 'learning by doing' approach in England, where pupils engage in hands-on activities related to the subject matter. For example, if they are learning about plants, they may draw a plant or pick one from the garden, enabling them to learn through experience. Teachers also noted that the English school system was less strict and more nurturing toward both pupils and teaching staff, with a greater emphasis on mental health and wellbeing compared to other countries.

"In [my home country], it's more strict, with a lot of homework. Here, it is more caring for the student and focuses on what the student needs. In [home country], none of the teacher asked me, "how are you?" or "you have a good day." - *Teacher*

Key successes of teaching in England

The experiences of the international teachers taking part in this research were generally positive. Many reported their experiences met or exceeded their expectations in the quality of English education and teaching, and the support available to teachers.

Issues of quality were reflected in the perceived efficiency of the English school system and the high academic standards maintained in schools. These teachers noted that the education in England was structured around a clear framework for both teachers and pupils, fostering an environment conducive to academic success.

In particular, the quality of teaching in STEM subjects was highly commended. International teachers valued the practical emphasis within England's STEM curriculum, which they felt offered richer and more engaging educational experiences compared to the curricula in other countries.

During the interviews, teachers expressed gratitude for the support put in place for international teachers as it made them feel valued by schools.

“My department has been really supportive in particular, but many other teachers have been as well.”- *Teacher*

Positive relationships with school leadership teams (SLT) and peers played a pivotal role in shaping their positive experiences of teaching in England.

Challenges of teaching in England

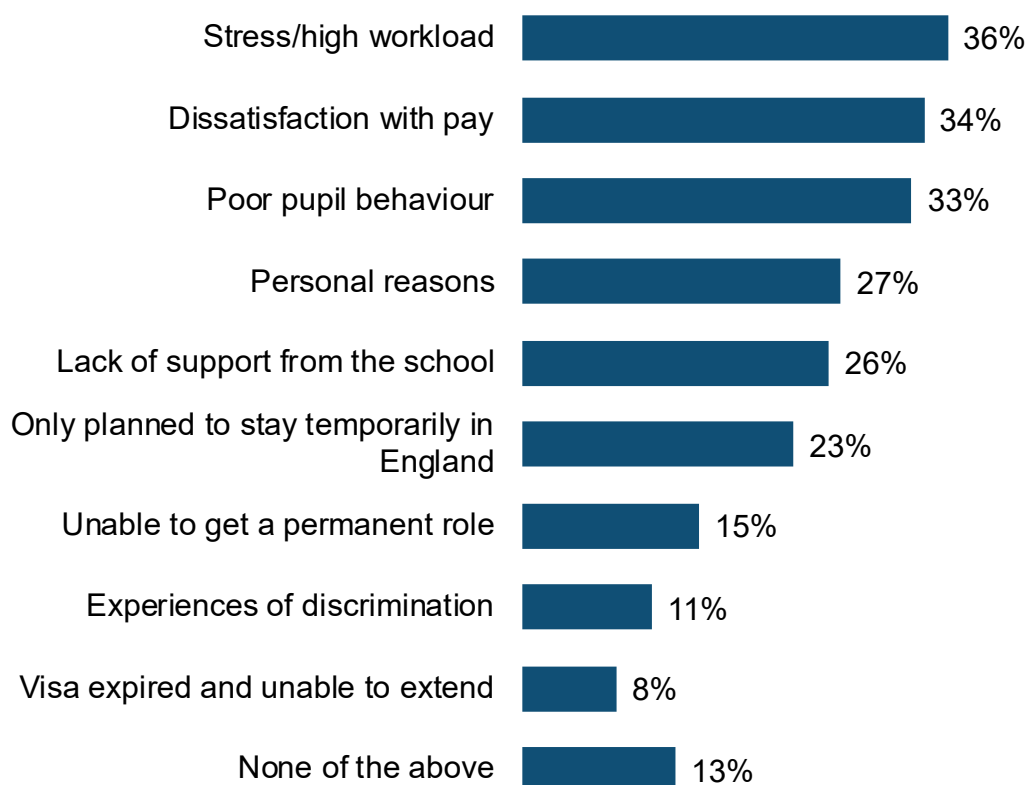
Despite the broadly positive outlook, teachers encountered several barriers during their teaching experience. Survey results indicate that only 12%²⁷ of teachers currently teaching intend to leave their teaching role in England, supporting the positive experiences outlined in the successes section above. However, stress, poor pay, and pupil behaviour were the top reasons why international teachers left a post in England, particularly among younger teachers under 30. Nearly a quarter (23%) of teachers who said they currently or have worked as a classroom teacher in England no longer do so.

Of the teachers who left teaching in England, 36% cited stress and high workloads were the reason for deciding to leave – this reason was cited by nearly six in ten (58%) of leavers aged 30 or younger²⁸. A third (34%) of teachers who left were dissatisfied with their pay (50% of leavers under 30). Another third (33%) left because of poor pupil behavior, rising to 49% of teachers who taught in secondary schools.

²⁷ Question A35. How long would you like to keep teaching in England if possible? Base: All teachers who are currently working in a school in England as a classroom teacher, senior leader or supply teacher (655)

²⁸ Note the base size for 30 or under is low at 48 respondents

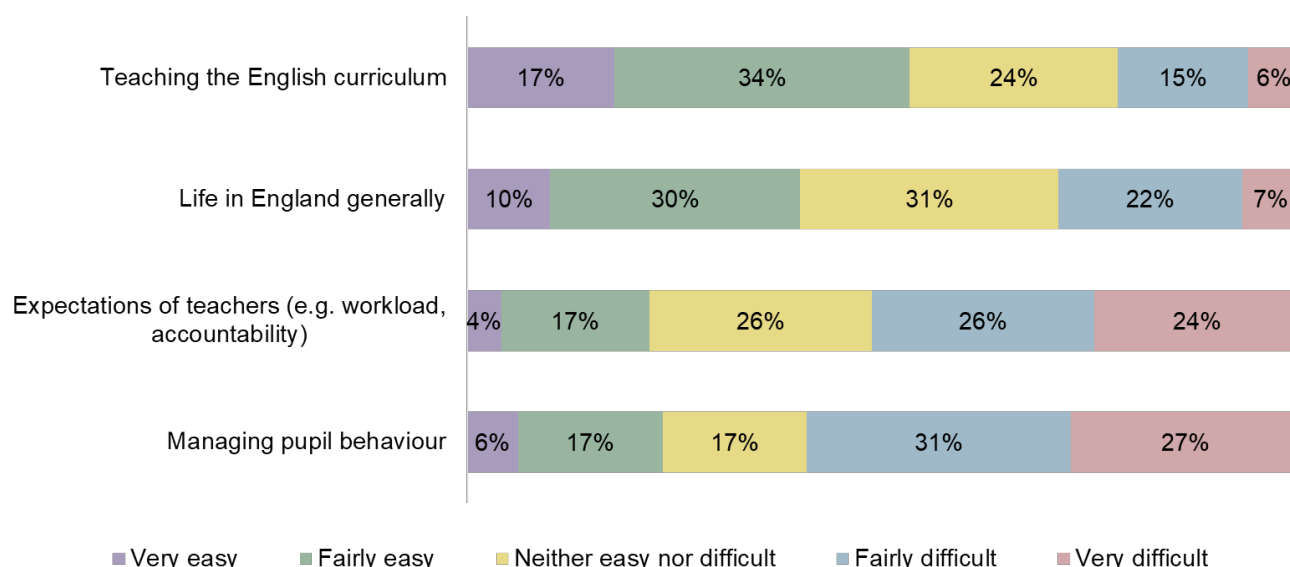
Figure 5.1 Reasons for leaving teaching in England



Source: A19 Why did you decide to leave your teaching role in England? Base: Those who have worked in a school in England before but do not do so now (256)

Managing pupil behaviour was also the most challenging aspect of teaching when teachers and trainees first started teaching in England. Nearly six in ten (58%) said it was difficult to adapt to this, rising to 71% for secondary school teachers. Half (49% of teachers and 63% of recent trainees) found it difficult to adapt to the expectations placed on teachers in England. Few teachers (20%) and recent trainees (22%) found it difficult to adapt to teaching England's curriculum.

Figure 5.2 Ease of adapting to aspects of teaching in England



Source: A32 Thinking about when you first moved to England to teach, how easy or difficult was it adapting to the following? Base: All teachers and recent trainees who have ever worked in England and who answered the question (1,077)

Common issues identified during the interviews with teachers were consistent with the evidence from the survey. Pupil behaviour presented challenges, with some teachers noting a perceived lack of respect and cultural differences affecting classroom management. Many teachers said they had to adapt to manage pupil behaviour. For example, some teachers reported that students in England often demonstrated less respect for education and teaching staff compared to students in their home countries. They needed to learn different strategies to manage behaviour. This challenge was more persistent among secondary school teachers and sometimes led to teachers transitioning to primary schools, where they found behaviour less of a challenge.

"For me, the most challenging thing was getting to know the English students, [who] are different to the [my home country] students." –
Teacher

Some teachers were surprised by their level of professional accountability for the students they taught. Some teachers found the stringent safeguarding protocols challenging to navigate, as they were unprepared for the level of detail and compliance required. While safeguarding information was consistent across schools, individual schools had unique policies that teachers needed to learn and adapt to. This proved particularly challenging for teachers who moved between schools, as they had to familiarise themselves with new policies, teaching styles, and methods in each setting.

Teachers with experience in international schools felt better prepared for the transition to teaching in England. However, differences in curriculum, teaching methods, information technology, and class sizes compared to past experience created additional challenges.

The high workload was a recurring concern, with several teachers feeling overwhelmed by job demands. Teachers noted that workloads in England were higher than in some other countries, such as Spain and Poland. In some cases, these high workloads negatively impacted teachers' mental health.

"I never worked [such] long hours back [home] because I taught for four or five hours at school, and then came back home and did whatever I needed to prepare." - *Teacher*

Some teachers were motivated to work in England due to the reputation of its SEND provision. However, a few believed insufficient funding for SEND significantly increased their workload.

Finally, several teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the low salaries in England, particularly those who started in entry-level positions. Remuneration in England was perceived to be lower compared to some teachers' home countries, such as the US and Spain. Conversely, teachers from countries like Jamaica found salaries in England to be higher but still insufficient due to cost of living, rent, and NHS related expenses. Recent high inflation further exacerbated these financial challenges.

A few teachers also felt that their salaries were not proportionate to their high workloads. However, a minority said they were content with their pay and valued the opportunity for salary progression as they advanced in their careers.

Living in England

Living in England presented significant challenges to teachers, particularly regarding finances. Many teachers often struggled with the costs associated with moving to and living in England. To manage these expenses, many sought financial assistance from family and friends, took on secondary employment, or sold personal possessions such as cars.

The high cost and limited availability of housing were persistent barriers. Some teachers reported living in house-shares or staying with friends due to prohibitive accommodation costs. For teachers relocating with families, finding suitable housing proved even more challenging, adding additional stress to their relocation.

"I think the cost of living is so expensive, and I don't know how single mothers who are teachers are running their household because I struggle straight... it's not easy at all." - *Teacher*

The financial strain extended to day-to-day living expenses, compounded by lower-than-expected disposable income after pension deductions and other costs. For some teachers, these financial pressures led to early resignations (as highlighted in Figure 5.1 earlier).

"And the money looks good on paper. When you converted to dollars, it looks good. But then when you come, and you've got to live here and spend it here... It is not good money." – *Teacher*

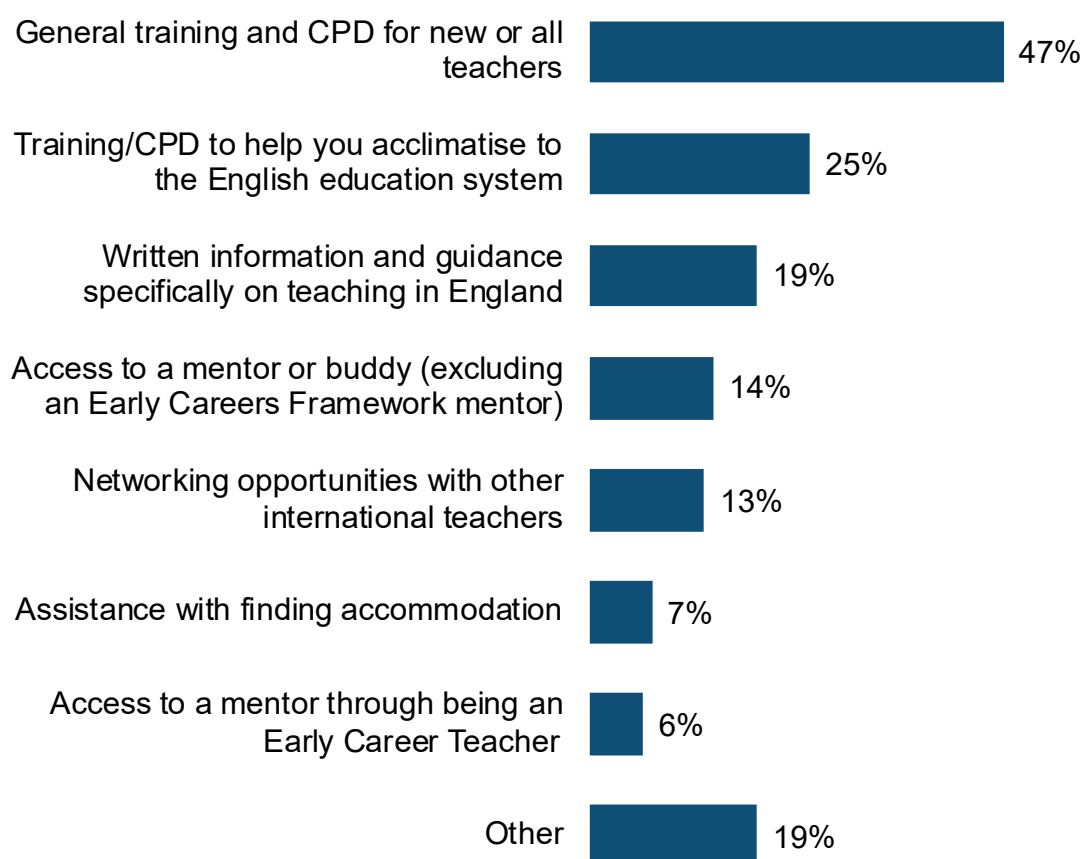
Some teachers and trainees viewed raising salaries, improving awareness of the international teaching community, and reducing pupil-to-teacher ratios as critical steps to improve working conditions and retain talent. These measures were seen as ways to reduce stress and create a more supportive environment for both teachers and students.

"It changes a pleasurable profession into a very big challenge. It's not just the money... it's the stress of dealing with so many pupils and wanting to do a proper job... It takes so much out of you. " - *Trainee*

Support

In the DfE survey, general training and CPD were the most common forms of support received, reported by 47% of surveyed teachers. Teachers receiving the IRP were more likely to receive general training and CPD (87%), written information and guidance (35%), access to a mentor or buddy (25%), networking opportunities (20%) and assistance on finding accommodation (14%).

Figure 5.3 Support received by new international teachers in England

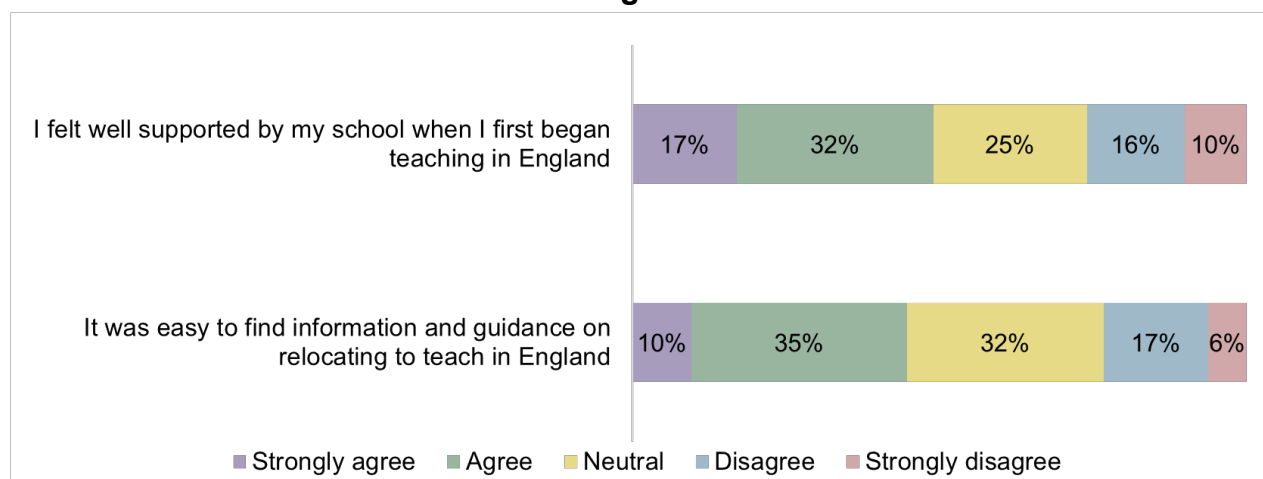


A30 Which of the following forms of support did you receive when you first became a teacher in England?

Base: All teachers who have ever worked as a teacher in England (996)

However, mixed views emerged about the accessibility and relevance of support. Under half (49%) of survey respondents agreed they were well supported, and 45% found it easy to locate relevant information. Those receiving IRP were more likely to report ease in finding guidance on relocating to teach in England (61% vs. 43% without IRP).

Figure 5.4 Support and guidance for international teachers when relocating to England



Source: A31 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: All teachers who have ever worked as a teacher in England (996)

Training in England

Trainee's course and classroom experiences

Almost nine in ten (89%) trainees gave a 'very' or 'fairly positive' rating to the content of their training course and their classroom experience²⁹. During depth interviews, most trainees praised the quality of training. Many reported that the course exceeded their expectations, particularly the quality of university lectures.

"The university sessions were absolutely fantastic. Everyone got a lot out of them, and really enjoyed the sessions...We were collaborating among ourselves and sharing ideas about maths teaching in general....and they [staff at the training provider] were facilitating this." - *Trainee*

However, trainees had varying expectations regarding theory-based and practice-oriented courses. A few found the courses demanding, struggling with the volume of coursework, including essays, and lesson planning. The amount of coursework and length of assignments meant a few trainees had less time for tasks like lesson planning, making it difficult to strike the right balance between training and teaching responsibilities. This challenge was exacerbated by trainees' perceptions of high classroom expectations in schools, an issue that also emerged in interviews with

²⁹ A43 How would you describe your experiences of the following aspects of your course? Base: Current trainees (279)

teachers. Trainees were particularly concerned about the extensive lesson preparation and classroom materials required.

"If the assignment could be reduced, I think there should be more emphasis on the training and maybe 10% on paperwork." - *Trainee*

While some trainees would have preferred more theory-based courses, leaders identified common benefits of UK-based training in its current form. Leaders found that international teachers who trained in England were better prepared for teaching in England compared to their colleagues who had not. Some leaders suggested that it would be ideal for international teachers to first undergo training in England before starting employment, as this would assist with quality control and better preparation for working in schools. This perspective was supported by trainees, who considered training through a more structured course more beneficial than applying directly for QTS through the recognition service, as it allowed them to better acclimate to the English education system.

Trainees reported varied views about their experiences with placements in schools. Positive placements allowed integrated trainees within the school's teaching environment, which helped them gain applied teaching experience. However, some trainees felt they had limited teaching autonomy on the content and materials they could teach or flexibility in their teaching approaches.

"So I integrated in the department. It was nice to ... feel part of the workplace and actually get the support from everyone. They all knew me, and they supported me." - *Trainee*

Many training providers had high retention rates from international trainees. These interviewees felt the high fees were part of the reason as the trainees had invested a large amount to train in England. Other providers said retention rates are about the same for international and home students.

Providers also raised that some trainees, particularly physics trainees, were dissatisfied with teaching salaries in England compared to salaries of other countries. Their concern was echoed by trainees and teachers interviewed, who identified salaries as a key challenge.

"I had to explain to them how the salaries work, for example, [in comparison to their home country] they thought that physics teachers get paid more and that they could challenge the salary, I had to explain it's the same pay scales across the country" – *Training provider*

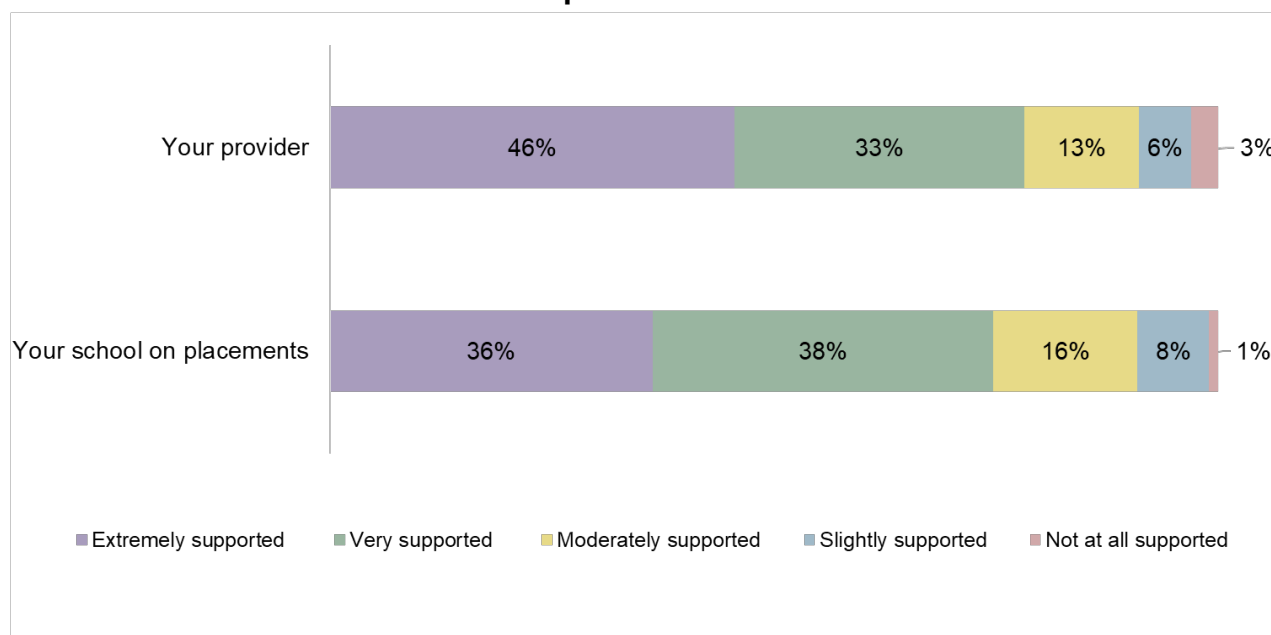
Support

Training providers said they invested considerable resources in supporting international trainees. They typically offered a range of support, including access to subject mentoring, professional mentoring and a wellbeing officer during the course. Many providers described how support extended to the schools into which trainees were placed. The purpose was to ensure trainees had the right amount of information to feel secure in their course, and know where to get any help they needed.

"I think the biggest thing we do is make sure that the communication and the partnership with our schools and colleagues in school is incredibly strong...and all relevant information is shared between school and central teams to make sure any needs or anything everybody is aware of and how to support that." – *Training provider*

The survey found that most trainees thought they were supported well during their course. Four in five (79%) said they were 'extremely' or 'very' supported by their training providers, and three quarters (74%) felt 'extremely' or 'very' supported during their school placements.

Figure 5.5 Trainees' perceptions of support from providers and schools during placement



Source: A44 How well supported have you felt by your provider? How well supported have you felt by your school on placements? Base: Current trainees (279)

Most of the trainees taking part in depth interviews said they knew where to seek for support from providers on different matters. Many trainees said providers established clear expectations which helped them acclimatise to their course, especially when taking PGCEs. Some trainees praised personalised support provided by training providers.

Other trainees praised the mentoring system their providers and schools used to support them throughout the course and placements. Mentors were supportive and provided valuable feedback and advocacy during placements. However, a few trainees said school mentors displayed limited time and patience to work with international trainees, and lacked experience working with international teachers. This reduced the value of the mentoring process for these trainees.

Support available to trainees in securing employment

Many training providers offered aftercare support to assist trainees in securing employment. Support came in the form of visa assistance to mock interviews, providing testimonials and arranging interviews for students and sector leaders. Providers supported trainees when they applied for jobs in schools. Examples of support included bespoke sessions about job applications and how to write personal statements. Other providers hosted job fairs enabling trainees with greater access to opportunities.

"I had 20 trainees last year and on average they applied for three jobs (each), so I did 60 references." *Training provider*

Providers were also involved in supporting trainees in finding jobs. Some trainees received formal training around employment, employment clinics, offered interview practice and application writing. This was considered important as overseas trainees may need more support going into employment.

"Because we're part of a trust as well, we're able to facilitate meeting with head teachers... So we're incredibly involved in employment."

Training provider

Strong collaboration with local schools and teacher supply agencies helped trainees secure jobs, often in the schools where they trained. This included collaboration with the Star Teaching School Hub Network³⁰ or other local training providers across the region.

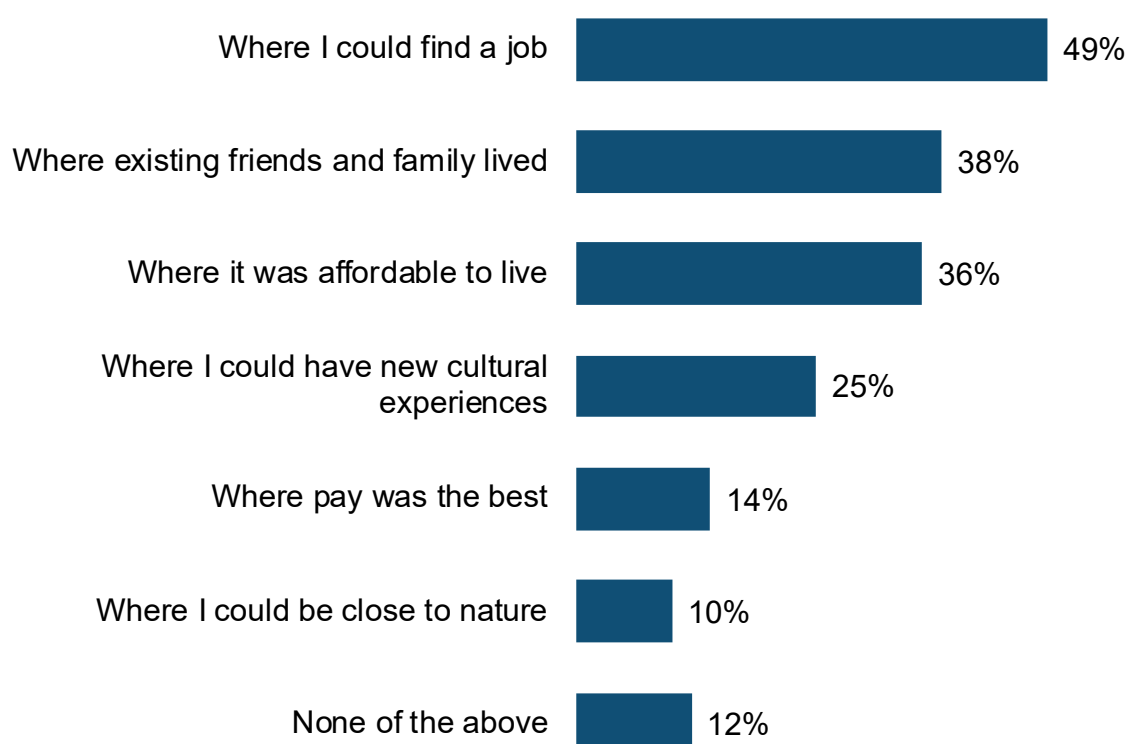
Relocating to England

International teachers relocating experience

When deciding where to move to in England nearly half (49%) of international teachers said they moved to a part of England where they could find a job. More than a third were influenced by living close to family or friends (38%) or finding somewhere affordable to live (36%).

³⁰ A group of school-led centres of excellence for teacher and leadership training and development.

Figure 5.6 Teachers' considerations on where to move in England



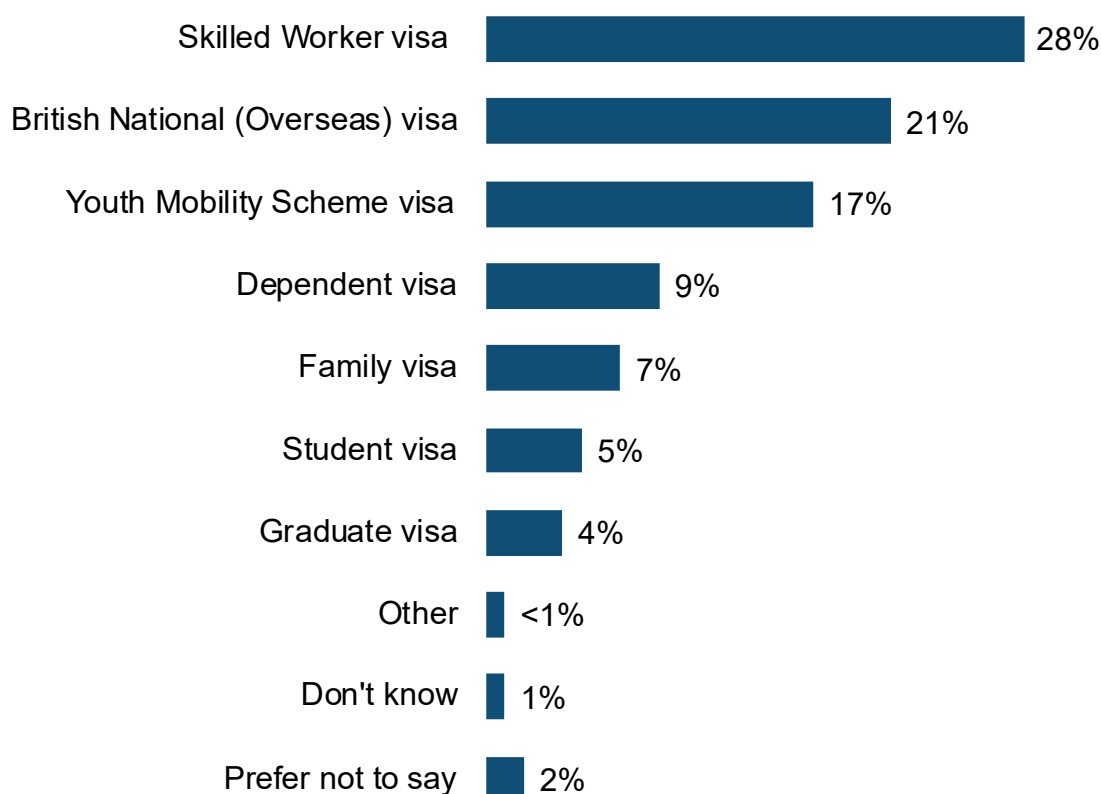
Source: A25 Which of the following, if any, did you consider when choosing where to live in England?
Base: All teachers who have ever worked as a teacher in England or who are currently working in a school in England (1,108).

Six in ten (58%) teachers needed a visa, but this varied depending on where in the world they lived before arriving³¹. One in five (19%) EEA respondents needed a visa compared to four in five (82%) arriving from the rest of the world. STEM teachers (84%) and teachers with dependents (73%) were more likely than average to need a visa.

Of the teachers requiring a visa, the Skilled Worker visa was the most commonly held (28%). Followed by British National (Overseas) visa (21%) and Youth Mobility Scheme visa (17%).

³¹ Q64. Did you need a visa to relocate to England? Base: All teachers who have ever worked in a school in England (including currently working) = 1,107

Figure 5.7 Visas held by teachers when first relocating to England



Source: A26 What visa did you hold when first relocating to England to teach? Base: All teachers who needed a visa when relocating to England (647). Percentages less than 4% not shown, aside from other, DK and prefer not to say

Trainees relocating experience

Financial factors were identified as the most significant challenge faced by international trainees relocating to England. Trainees reported difficulties in managing the costs associated with training and relocation, often compounded by debts incurred during the process. Limited finances deterred potential applicants and constrained those who chose to relocate. While bursaries and IRP were considered helpful in addressing this issue, some trainees felt they were insufficient. Trainees generally appreciated the financial support available, but many noted that tuition fees consumed much of the bursary. Combined with the rising cost of living and inflation, this support was too little.

Training providers echoed these concerns, emphasising that financial incentives could encourage more international trainees to pursue teacher training in England. Suggestions included increasing bursaries and providing additional financial support during the training period to reduce the burden on trainees. On balance, as noted previously in the report, some training providers also felt that financial incentives can attract poor quality

candidates. A few providers noted the withdrawal of IRP caused some problems in recruitment and confused applicants on what they could or could not claim.

“The withdrawal of the relocation payment part way through a recruitment cycle was problematic and led to confusion and misunderstandings about entitlement.” - *Training provider*

Another issue raised by a few training providers was the impact of some perceived social challenges in England. Providers mentioned increasing crime rates, incidents of racism, and broader social disruptions as factors that dissuaded some applicants, leading them to withdraw their applications due to concerns about their personal safety and potential discrimination.

The perception of England as a safe and inclusive destination was seen as critical for maintaining a robust pipeline of international trainees. Addressing such concerns through targeted initiatives and ensuring that prospective trainees feel supported and welcomed were suggested as ways to mitigate these challenges.

6. The future of international teacher recruitment and international teacher trainees

Anticipating trends in international teacher recruitment

Looking ahead, many school leaders anticipated an increase in the number of international teachers. This projection is driven by several key factors, including a shortage of UK-trained teachers, an ageing workforce, and negative perceptions of teaching as a profession in the UK. More detail on this is included in Chapter 2.

“Fundamentally, I don't think the teaching profession is particularly attractive to Brits, or people who have been in Britain for a few years.” – *School leader*

Leaders' expectations for future international recruitment vary based on several factors. Firstly, some leaders observed changes in recruitment pipelines from different regions. For example, they anticipated no future increase in applications from EU countries due to the perceived complexities of visa-systems post EU exit.

"The whole visa process has hit that market (EU market) ... so much less likely to be able to take them on." – *School leader*

Similarly, there was little expectation of a quick resumption in pipelines from Australia and New Zealand, though some leaders expressed hope for future improvements. During the pandemic, most of these pipelines dried up, and the anticipated time required for resumption was lengthy.

Other leaders were hesitant to increase the number of international teachers due to retention challenges and the additional costs associated with hiring internationally. For example, relocation expenses and visa costs were cited as significant concerns. These challenges were explored further in Chapter 5.

"All things being equal, as a headteacher, you're going to go for the route with the least risk, right? Because if you make a bad appointment, undoing that is really difficult." – *School leader*

Perceived frequent changes to visa policies were another cause of concern for some leaders. They said changes created uncertainty and administrative challenges. Leaders emphasised the need for stable and clear policies to enable effective long-term planning for recruiting and retaining international teachers.

Some schools identified geographic factors as barriers to international recruitment. Leaders perceived that international teachers were less inclined to accept roles in more

remote isolated areas. Some leaders noted the challenges in recruiting international teachers for rural areas. Additionally, teachers who initially accepted roles in a rural location later relocated elsewhere in England, making it difficult for schools to retain staff in these regions.

"People who are coming from overseas will not immediately jump at coastal semi-rural location, and that actually needs to be contextualised and presented to them." – *School leader*

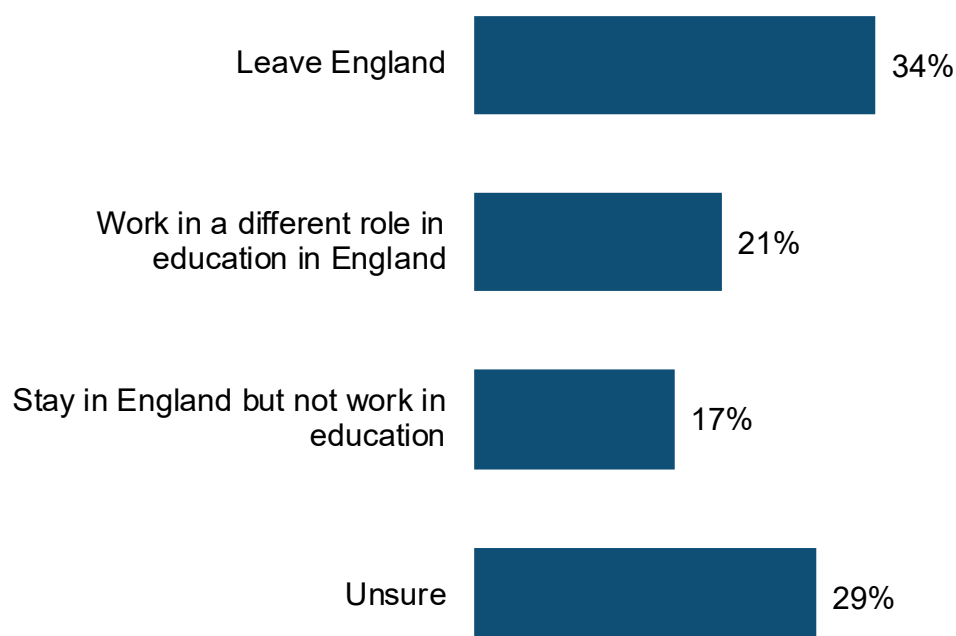
Other leaders expected the number of international teachers at their schools to remain stable. This was particularly true for schools with an established international teaching team and a strong international ethos or culture. In several cases, schools had already reached the maximum number of visas they could sponsor.

Finally, a minority of leaders, who had previously recruited internationally, indicated that they were not planning to hire international teachers in visa-sponsored specialist subjects and did not anticipate needing to recruit international teachers in the near future. This view was shared by leaders who felt there was little need to advertise full-time positions as they retained staff and anticipated low future demand for full-time recruitment.

Future intentions of international teachers

DfE's survey results found that 88% of international teachers working in England intended to remain for at least one year; nearly half 46% wanted to remain indefinitely. Among those not planning to teach in England indefinitely, 38% expressed intentions to remain in the country. Of these, 21% wanted to work in a different role within education, while 17% were considering staying in England but not work in education.

Figure 6.1 Intentions after leaving teaching



Source: Q67 What do you intend to do after working as a teacher in England? Base: Teachers not planning on teaching in England indefinitely (356)

During the interviews, most teachers stated their future intentions were closely tied to their personal circumstances. The evidence indicates that international teachers typically followed one of three paths:

1. **Staying in England.** Many teachers planned to stay in England for a few years before reassessing their situation, typically staying in England for 2 to 5 years, depending on visa requirements (e.g. dependent on partner visa, visa costs). A few had ambitions to remain in England longer at the time of their interview. These views may of course change over time.

Teachers on sponsorship visas often stayed at their school for a minimum of two years. Teachers with EU settled status or short-term employment visas had greater flexibility to move schools. Reasons for moving included better school fit, proximity, professional development, or visa sponsorship.

“For the sake of my (child), we are planning on staying as long as we can... My contract [with current school] runs out in September, but I have already attained employment at another school after.” - *Teacher*

2. **Return to their home country.** A smaller number of teachers intended to return to their home country due to the high cost of living in England, the low salaries for

teachers, particularly at entry level, and concerns around work life balance. More about this can be found in Chapter 5 under the “Teaching in England” section (pp.66-69).

3. **Relocating to another country.** Several teachers expressed interest in moving to another country after their experience in England, with popular destinations including the United Arab Emirates and Spain. This decision was often influenced by personal factors, such as following a partner to a new country or higher salaries and tax breaks (especially in the Middle East).

The experiences of international teachers in England reflect a blend of positive outcomes and challenges. While many teachers valued the opportunities and professional development available in English schools, they felt addressing key barriers including workload, cultural adaptation, and living costs is essential for enhancing their experiences and retaining their contributions to the education system. Schools with prior experience employing international staff and offering robust support systems reported successes in integrating and retaining these recruits.

Training providers perspective on the future of teacher training

During the interviews, many training providers felt uncertain about the future of international teacher training in England, highlighting several factors affecting their ability to plan and adapt. Many providers emphasised that changes to visas policies had the most significant impact. The frequent shifts in these policies created uncertainty, making it difficult to predict the future intake of international students and presenting substantial challenges to long-term planning. This uncertainty also extended to the IRP, given recent changes to eligibility criteria.

Some providers said England was less attractive as a destination following the EU exit. MFL subject courses, which previously benefited from consistent enrolments of European trainees who often remained in England to teach, now face greater recruitment challenges. These challenges were expected to persist in the near future.

Furthermore, some providers identified a broader decline in England’s appeal across all subject areas since the Covid-19 pandemic. They said changes in student mobility, shifting trainee motivations and expectations about studying abroad, and a perception of UK visa policy as unpredictable were the causes. For instance, these providers said trainees increasingly expect opportunities to attend courses online rather than in person. Providers were uncertain about how long these effects would persist or how quickly the sector could adapt to these changes.

Economic pressures and disparities in teacher pay were also highlighted by providers as key challenges affecting the future of international teacher training. Providers observed

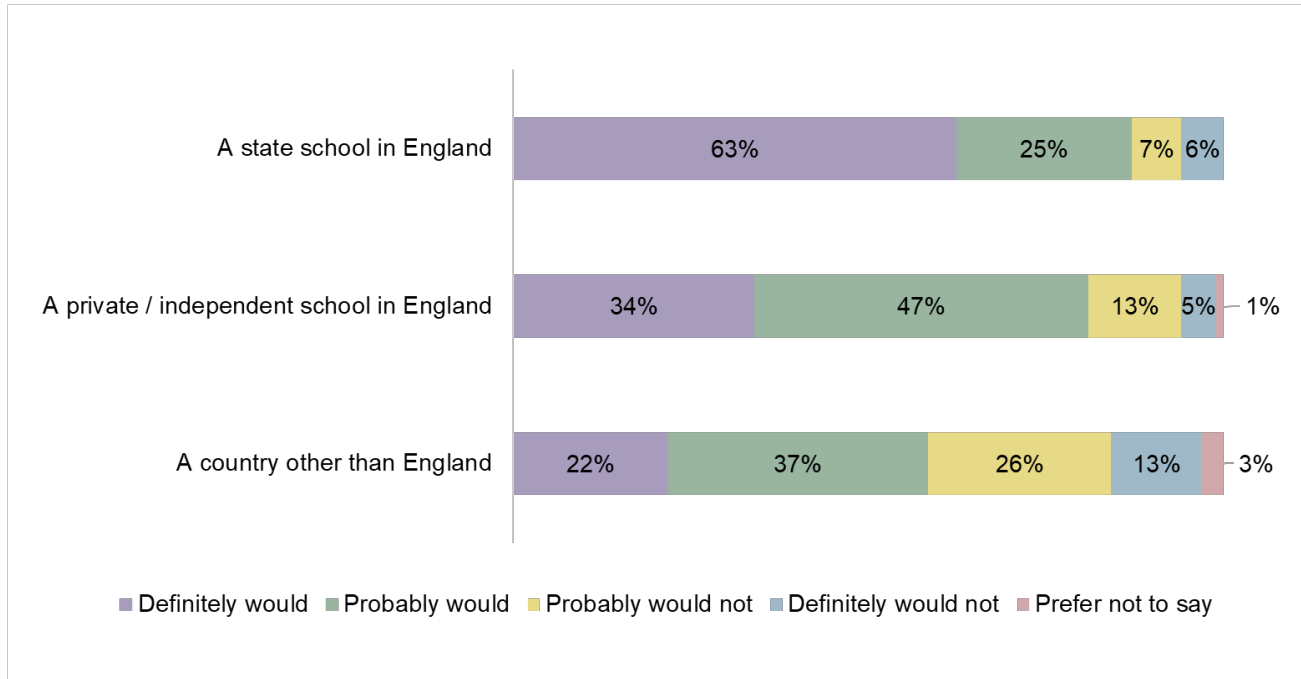
that England cannot currently compete with the earnings or disposable income available in countries such as Australia, although they noted this disparity has not always existed.

Despite these challenges, providers noted that the number of trainees moving to England remained steady for some subjects. They anticipated that many trainees would choose to remain in England upon completion. Providers attributed this to the strong preparation offered through coursework, placements, and additional training. A few providers referenced strong employment rates, with 90% of their international trainees securing jobs after completing their courses. They felt the small proportion of trainees who remained unemployed intended to return to their home countries or take a gap year before applying for a job.

Trainees' future intentions

Nearly two-thirds of trainees completing the survey (63%) said they would definitely apply for teaching roles in English state schools when they qualified, while 34% said they would definitely apply to teach in a private or independent school in England. Only 22% reported that they would definitely apply for teaching positions in another country.

Figure 6.2 Trainees' future teaching intentions³²



Source: A46 After completing your initial teacher training course, how likely is it that you would apply to teach in...? Base: Current trainees providing a value for each row (279)

During the interviews, trainees frequently reported that their positive training and placement experiences influenced their decision to apply to teaching roles in England.

In addition to the quality of training, factors such as the high standard of education and developing a sense of belonging to a place also played a crucial role in influencing trainee's decisions to remain in England to teach.

"I have developed a social group and I have developed a real knowing of this area and a knowing of [English city]. It really ticks a lot of boxes for me. I am not sure what other direction I would go, but I know that there is a big need for MFL, maths and the other STEM subjects." - *Trainee*

Trainees were more likely to stay in England if they could easily secure a job, meet the cost of living and obtain a visa sponsorship. Many trainees preferred looking for employment opportunities in their provider's local area, while others sought positions in regions with lower living costs (e.g. where accommodation was cheaper) and a short commute. Trainees commonly sought roles in mainstream primary or secondary schools.

³² Note this chart covers intention to apply for a role. The "definitely" option sums to 121%, which implies some trainees will make applications to more than one option presented. This finding could indicate that trainees wanted to keep their options open.

While some trainees secured permanent positions with sponsorship, others initially accepted temporary roles, such as teaching assistants or supply teaching, until they could find a more stable position. This availability of visa sponsorship often influenced their decisions.

Most trainees intended to remain in England for the foreseeable future. However, some planned to teach in England for a few years before moving to other countries to gain international teaching experience.

A few trainees intended to return to their home countries after a few years of teaching in England. Leaders voiced concerns about this trend, noting the potential loss of investment when international trainees leave after completing their training.

"We're investing in teacher training because we want it to pay off, which is that we get teachers at the end of it. So when an overseas trainee completes the course then off they go...that's wasted money for us." -
MAT leader

Improvements to recruitment processes

Clearer guidance and communication

Leaders, providers and teachers underscored the importance of raising awareness, improving communication, and providing clearer guidance concerning international recruitment, visa requirements, and related policies outlined in Chapter 4. These improvements were deemed essential to address barriers and streamline recruitment processes to effectively support the recruitment of international teachers.

Enhancing sector awareness and providing clearer guidance

To facilitate international teacher recruitment, several leaders suggested targeted efforts to raise awareness and provide clear guidance within the English education sector and among international candidates of how to recruit / apply. Interviewees agreed that domestic stakeholders lacked awareness of existing policies related to international teacher recruitment, as outlined in Chapter 4. Additional guidance on these policies, including visa and sponsorship processes, was requested to address knowledge gaps and reduce confusion.

Leaders felt existing guidance was unclear and/or hard to navigate. While some government resources were acknowledged as helpful by leaders, some teachers said could not always interpret Home Office guidance. This discrepancy highlighted the need for more accessible and user-friendly information tailored specifically to international teachers. Chapter 3 (sections under “Experience of applying using a recruitment agency,

pp.30-31 and 35) notes that some leaders and teachers valued the administrative support provided by recruitment agencies on application processes.

Developing simpler guidance on visa and sponsorship details

School leaders with less experience in international recruitment frequently requested additional guidance on navigating visa and sponsorship processes such as overseas police checks and safeguarding protocols. Many of these leaders were also confused about the equivalency of international qualifications and QTS. Training providers echoed these concerns, calling for greater clarity and consistency in communications regarding transferable qualifications and recruitment processes.

"There are messages to do with the level of qualification expected in the profession, which I think are ... somewhat ambiguous at the moment." -
Training provider

Some leaders suggested clearer guidance on obtaining and utilising sponsorship³³ licenses and legal advice would improve confidence in sponsorship practices³⁴. Addressing confusion around salary thresholds, skilled worker definitions, and other legal aspects of the process was seen as a priority. Participants noted that clearer communication could increase uptake of sponsorship licenses among schools, particularly those new to international recruitment.

Creating realistic expectations on teaching and training in England

Several school leaders said international teachers had unrealistic expectations about teaching in England. To address this, leaders, teachers and providers called for targeted international DfE marketing campaigns to promote the benefits of teaching in England. The campaign should highlight professional development opportunities, school term structures and holiday allowances. Importantly, leaders wanted to attract qualified and skilled candidates and felt an honest campaign which conveyed the opportunities and the challenges associated with teaching in England would work.

"It's all about marketing, and you know, bells and whistles to make people think it's going to transform my life if I become a teacher. Well yes, but it comes at a price, and you have to go through a process to get to that point and it's not easy." - *Leader*

³³ A school sponsorship license enables sponsors to employ teachers from overseas. Schools in England must hold a valid sponsor licence, which permits them to sponsor non-UK citizens under the Skilled Worker visa route. The sponsor can be a UK independent school, private provider, or publicly funded college.

³⁴ Further insight into barriers to visa sponsorship is available in Chapter 3, with guidance on addressing these barriers provided in the 'Enhancing visa and sponsorship processes' section of Chapter 6.

International trainees also reported limited awareness of PGCE courses in England among prospective international trainees. Many said their peers from their home countries were unaware of the programme and its offerings, and suggested stronger collaborations between English universities and overseas counterparts, as well as greater engagement by the DfE with international institutions to promote PGCE courses. Clearer communication about the cultural and professional differences between trainees' countries of origin and England was also deemed essential to set realistic expectations.

"I think that there should be good information about what to expect as a non-British citizen." - *Trainee*

Learning about good recruitment practice

Finally, many leaders and providers felt clearer guidance was needed on best practice in international teacher recruitment. Some school leaders wanted more information about international teacher training overseas qualifications, including details about the structure and content of such training. They emphasised that such information would support schools in effectively assessing the suitability of prospective candidates.

Providers sought additional guidance on international recruitment through the Get into Teaching resources, gov.uk, and the DfE website. While some praised these platforms as reliable sources of support, they noted that clearer signposting and messaging were necessary to make the information more accessible.

"I've always found that the DfE are fairly responsive when we've had queries about particular aspects, this generally tends to be an e-mail address, and I've generally had a response if I've emailed people." –
Training provider

In summary, interviewees identified enhanced awareness and clearer guidance as critical elements for improving recruitment processes for international teachers. Efforts to raise awareness, streamline information, and provide targeted support would address existing barriers, improve understanding among stakeholders, and ensure successful outcomes for schools and international candidates.

Simplifying visa and sponsorship processes

Leaders, teachers, trainees, agencies and providers all wanted a simpler visa application process. Trainees appreciated existing support but found the process burdensome due to extensive documentation requirements and translation costs.

"The biggest barriers for overseas trainees [are] funding and the ability to live and study in the country. So if something could be done so they could have a study visa and then a specific trainee teacher visa which would allow for the time of year we start compared to when they finish their undergrad, that would make a difference." - *Training provider*

Leaders wanted a simpler administrative process for visa applications to reduce administrative burden on schools. A few leaders thought temporary sponsorship options could mitigate financial risks for schools by allowing both schools and teachers to trial roles before committing to longer contracts.

Leaders with more experience in international recruitment recommended creating a dedicated government portal for schools to navigate immigration requirements. This resource could provide enhanced communication and support, particularly in cases where visas are delayed. It could also offer comprehensive support to teachers and schools to understand which visas are most suitable for different circumstances. Assistance in navigating various visa routes would be especially beneficial, as some teachers opted for alternative visa options to reduce costs.

Some teachers felt their chances of remaining in England were hampered by a lack of sponsorship opportunities and limited pathways to permanent residency. These teachers wanted a visa process that ensures greater job security and aligns with the skilled worker visa framework.

A few leaders proposed a dedicated visa category for teachers, similar to those available for doctors and nurses. They argued that such a system would simplify the recruitment process while enhancing the attractiveness of teaching in England.

"If the government wants to change policies, they must have a special category visa for teachers because they need to have their future secured and know how much they are going to be paying." – *school leader*

In summary, enhancing visa and sponsorship processes requires a multifaceted approach, including clearer guidance, streamlined procedures and targeted support for schools and trainees. These measures were considered as vital to ensuring that international recruitment processes are effective, equitable, and accessible.

Streamlining recruitment processes

Several leaders more experienced in international recruitment said a centralised recruitment system would reduce the administrative burden and associated costs of recruiting international teachers. Further details on these challenges are included in

Chapter 3. They felt centralisation would reduce inefficiencies. In their view, the competitive nature of international teacher recruitment in England often resulted in schools, agencies and providers undertaking the same tasks, thereby increasing costs and reducing overall efficiency.

"We should all be working towards the same goals of recruiting as many suitable people as possible. It's a highly competitive marketplace, which is really counterproductive. We spend a lot of time shortlisting people, offering them a place, and then they say actually I'm going somewhere else. So having a system that isn't about promoting competition, it's about promoting recruitment would be helpful." – *MAT leader*

A more collaborative approach was proposed to address these inefficiencies. Leaders suggested that a centrally managed recruitment system could streamline processes, reduce competition, and foster sector-wide cooperation toward the shared goal of recruiting suitable candidates. Leaders suggested several key initiatives to improve recruitment process:

- Introducing a DfE-managed recruitment portal was proposed to centralise efforts and reduce the workload on schools. This portal could feature pre-vetted candidates with background checks (e.g., DBS clearance), detailed profiles, and an accessible database of suitable applicants, allowing schools to connect with vetted candidates more effectively.

"Something like a centralised recruitment thing, you know, if you're interested in coming to the UK, you submit your CV to the DfE, who create register of people who might be interested, and then schools can go on it to see who's out there and invite people for interview." – *School leader*

- Implementing a "pre-approval stage" was recommended to confirm candidates' eligibility and qualifications before their application submission. This would help ensure that checks and certificates were completed in advance, for teachers that do not hold QTS, reducing onboarding delays and alleviating administrative burdens for schools.

"If the government could create a platform that we could all draw into, which we knew the platform was vetting and doing all of that kind of behind the scenes, including the DBS which can take a long time, and we just don't have the manpower to do ourselves." – *School leader*

- Developing a kite marking system or scale for teachers' expertise was proposed to assist schools in assessing candidates by providing a solution to evaluate teachers' expertise based on qualifications, experience, and familiarity with curriculums.

This system could help schools gauge the level of additional training required for candidates.

- Developing induction programmes to help international recruits understand and adapt to the English education system before taking on full teaching roles. These programmes could include opportunities to visit schools and gain firsthand experience, helping to manage expectations and reduce potential mismatches. For example, one school collaborated with an agency to place Australian trainees on six-week secondments to England.

"Making it easier generally for internationally trained teachers to work in a school, potentially in a non-Teacher capacity" – *School leader*

Managing agencies more effectively

A lot of leaders thought a government-run accreditation system for recruitment agencies would improve the quality of recruitment practices and ensure fair treatment of international teachers. This system would prevent the exploitation of workers, particularly trainees, while ensuring that agencies provided adequate aftercare for international recruits who relocated to England. Leaders emphasised that accreditation could also help monitor and regulate agency fees, reducing excessive costs for schools and safeguarding public funds.

"I think the fees need monitoring ... [an] £8k [fee] for a main scale point teacher is outrageous ... it's 20% of their salary." – *school leader*

In addition to better agency regulation, several leaders suggested promoting direct applications from trainees to schools, eliminating the need for agencies in the recruitment process. This approach was seen as a way to reduce reliance on agencies and their associated costs while improving the recruitment process for schools. By enabling schools to directly connect with potential candidates, leaders believed they could streamline recruitment and allocate resources more effectively. Earlier evidence (see "Recruitment agencies' approaches to placing international teachers", pp.36-38) notes the work some agencies do to minimise the administrative burden that schools can face in the recruitment and visa application process. This report also notes that visa and application administration is a barrier to recruiting international teachers. Managing direct applications could increase this burden.

Providing sector level assistance

A few school leaders and providers believed regular dialogue between government bodies, schools, training providers and recruitment agencies was essential for improving international recruitment processes. Roundtable discussions and sharing of best practices were recommended to encourage learning and sector wide improvement.

"The problems that have arisen have partly been to do with the lack of dialogue with the sector." - *Training provider*

Additionally, leaders called for direct and consistent support for schools and MATs. While existing policies and schemes were acknowledged, leaders emphasised the need for initiatives specifically targeted to support recruitment. Such policies could particularly aid those unfamiliar with international recruitment. Leaders often felt overwhelmed by the complex landscape and its requirements, especially regarding sponsorship licences. Webinars, workshops, and tailored guidance on processes like sponsorship licences were suggested to improve confidence and ease the administrative burden. Leaders also suggested training school staff on immigration and visa processes to facilitate long-term planning and improve confidence in managing international recruitment.

"More regular support for schools... there could be webinars. I think for many schools, navigating how to become a sponsor is really difficult. I think that would help [additional support] because it's not expensive and schools are petrified, absolutely petrified. I've actually helped schools through it." – *School leader*

Leaders emphasised the need for financial assistance to support recruitment activities, including the costs of interviewing candidates abroad and retaining international teachers. Subsidies were identified as a potential solution to alleviate financial pressures on schools and MATs, particularly for smaller institutions.

"If there was some subsidy from the government because it's very expensive and every post is very expensive, especially if it goes wrong."
– *MAT leader*

The proposals, including a centralised recruitment system, enhanced sector-level collaboration, financial and logistical support, and improved agency management, aim to streamline recruitment processes and address barriers to international teacher recruitment. Together, these initiatives would help schools navigate the complex landscape of international recruitment, improve efficiency, and ensure high-quality outcomes.

Improvements to employing international teachers and trainees

Facilitating adjustments to life and work in England

Leaders, providers, teachers and trainees recommended several measures to help international teachers and trainees adapt to England's school system. While many

leaders proposed transition programmes, a few also suggested combining school experience with pedagogical training, tailored for first-time international recruits. These programmes were seen as an effective way to bridge cultural and professional gaps.

Additionally, leaders stressed the importance of mental health support and preparatory guidance to address recurring concerns about international teachers' emotional and psychological well-being associated with the challenges of relocating.

“They've travelled a long way away from their families and they can feel quite isolated when they're here.” – *MAT leader*

To improve integration into England and its education system, leaders recommended creating downloadable packs and online training modules. These resources could familiarise international teachers with key aspects of the English school system, such as behaviour management practices, curriculum standards and cultural differences. Certifications from these modules could also demonstrate readiness and help schools ensure recruits are prepared for long-term roles.

“The DfE could do more to support getting ready to teach in England. If I was a teacher in Ghana, looking to move to England, is there a pack that I can download which tells me all about what teaching in England is like and some online modules I could work through? If I've done that, I get a certificate, which shows schools that I am more prepared.” – *School leader*

Relocation support for teachers and trainees

School leaders and teachers wanted clear information about the cost of living, accommodation, and lifestyle changes to better prepare recruits for life in England. Providing guidance and clarity on taxes, health insurance, and NHS-related costs was identified as critical. Reducing financial burdens, such as contributions to the NHS surcharge, was also advocated.

Leaders wanted obstacles such as medical surcharges removed, and increased financial incentives to mitigate relocation costs, particularly in the more expensive London and the South East. Suggestions included allocating resources for relocation assistance, such as temporary housing grants or a well-structured accommodation system, particularly for teachers with families. Leaders stressed the importance of support in securing housing prior to the teachers' arrival at schools, especially in cases where schools lack their own international recruitment systems.

"Ideally being able to support people with accommodation.... if there was some sort of additional grant, they could access to help with accommodation." – *School leader*

"I don't think they've always done their research into the area they're moving to. It took us about seven months to actually get [one teacher] over here. She started [after] the May half term and resigned at the end of August with immediate effect because she said it was just so expensive to live here. It wasn't what she expected ... I think this was to do with the agencies trying to play down some of these things." – *School leader*

Similarly, trainees felt the IRP should be maintained, and additional money should be allocated to relocation costs. Reducing the cost of the training and expanding bursaries to cover living costs was seen as an important measure to attract more international trainees. Financial incentives were seen as a way to encourage international candidates to complete their training and remain in the teaching profession.

Trainees emphasised the need for greater support in settling into England. This included helping with obtaining bank accounts, navigating housing, and understanding local systems. The DfE or other government bodies were urged to provide clearer guidance and resources to ease these transitions.

"For international teachers coming over, I think it's really about DfE or the government or someone with a bit of influence to be able to help, help guide them into the country, like physically and practically as well...it's not just as simple as applying for a course and being a teacher..." -
Trainee

Finally, leaders stressed the importance of establishing networking systems to foster a sense of belonging among international recruits. LAs often organise networks for new teachers, and a similar approach tailored for international recruits could improve retention and integration.

By addressing financial, logistical, and professional challenges, schools and policymakers can create a more supportive environment for international teachers and trainees. Initiatives such as induction programmes, financial incentives, better relocation support, and networking opportunities would not only improve recruitment but also enhance retention, ultimately strengthening the quality of education in England.

7. Views from the research

International teachers played a key role in helping schools fill vacancies, but schools faced barriers recruiting them

The evidence from leaders showed they found it increasingly difficult to fill teaching vacancies with British nationals. Recruiting international teachers was one option leaders in this study valued, although they faced recruitment challenges. Two major concerns were qualification equivalency and how to integrate international teachers.

Many school and training provider leaders were unsure which qualifications were equivalent to those needed by British nationals to train or teach in England. This made decisions on who to recruit or enrol difficult. Information that clearly maps equivalency at a subject level across all key countries would help.

External factors (EU exit, cost of living, political/economic countries in home countries) influence decisions about teaching and training in England. The DfE cannot influence those factors, but it could mitigate. Leaders and training providers said realistic, honest information on life in England (e.g., updated data on the cost of living such as average rents, living costs, etc.,) could help teachers and trainees make informed decisions about migration. Leaders could also use such information as part of the interview and selection process to ensure applicants hold realistic expectations before accepting a role. Many teachers are drawn to England by the good international reputation of the education system. This reputation could be used in marketing materials.

Financial support and incentives were effective to a point. Many trainees could not come to England without a bursary. The international relocation payment (IRP) was often less important than a bursary on a decision to train in England and the IRP is no longer open to trainees. The IRP was less influential on many teachers' decisions to come to England, evidenced by the number of applications made for IRP after teachers had applied or arrived in the country³⁵. A genuine impact analysis would be necessary to measure additionality, but the qualitative evidence suggests in year 1 that IRP exerts weak influence on the choice to teach in England.

³⁵ However, bursaries for shortage courses have been open to international applicants from October 2023. The IRP has only been available from March 2024, so some recency effect could have influenced interviewees.

All audiences said the visa application process is too complicated

Many interviewees said a specific teacher visa could help streamline the application and selection process. Some interviewees felt this could operate similarly to the health and care worker visa which was viewed as less complex and cheaper than the skilled worker visa route. The general consensus from leaders and teachers was information currently provided on sites like gov.uk is hard to understand.

Trainees and teachers both experienced challenges with the cost of visas, and the cost of relocating. Bursaries and, to a lesser extent, the IRP were used to address these costs.

International teachers and trainees can be unprepared for life in England and its schools

Teachers and trainees held a strong, positive perception about the quality of England's education system before they arrive. This perception was the strongest stated attraction to teaching or training in England. However, some leaders said many international recruits were unprepared to manage behaviour in English schools; many teachers and trainees also expressed difficulties adjusting to the culture and behaviour in English schools. Professional development before starting a teaching role was used successfully by some schools, and some recruitment agencies, to manage this transition. Training providers also provide support and guidance to help trainees integrate. Creating realistic expectations could help teachers and trainees effectively adjust and do so more quickly.

Training providers played a key role in supporting trainees to come to England to train to teach. Their help with visa applications and incentives was invaluable to some trainees.

All audiences thought there are benefits to holding clear information in one place

Centralised systems were popular amongst all audiences. Existing hubs and websites (TES; Teachers Vacancy Service) are useful because they place curated information in one place. Leaders would like an in-one-place system for international recruitment advice and recruitment. All audiences reported that some teachers and trainees were unprepared for life in England and that current support is variable. Simplified advice in one, easy-to-navigate place could improve valuable help for prospective teachers or trainees. A trusted, central place for information could also hold information on qualification equivalency, simple guidance on visa application (for schools and applicants) and up-to-date information on the costs of living in England. A centralised

service also has the potential to reduce the administrative burden on visa applications expressed by some leaders and teachers.

Easily sharable communication on teaching opportunities in England (online, social media, imagery, GIFs) could leverage word of mouth communications between teachers working here and their peers/friendship networks at home.

School leaders would welcome regulation for recruitment agencies

Leaders said they spend a lot of taxpayers' money of recruitment agencies. They wanted agencies regulated to ensure value for money and reduce perceived sharp practices, including forwarding unreviewed CVs and ineffective candidate screening. Leaders felt regulation is required to ensure a high standard of quality amongst recruiters. Recruiters and providers acted as the gateway to England for many teachers and trainees and both use international recruitment as part of their business model. Leaders reasoned that agencies were the right bodies to regulate to ensure value for the taxpayer.

However, teachers and agency representatives described a range of agency support for visa applications and providing wider information on moving to England. The agencies participating in this research described effective working practices. In best cases, recruiters provide training/upskilling to teachers and undertake thorough checks in advance of sharing CVs with leaders and placing them in schools. Many leaders noted they worked with agencies that they felt operated (more) ethically. Agencies already providing support and acting ethically may be better placed to react to regulatory requirements.

8. Annex A – Technical annex

Annex A cover further information on the sampling and methodology approaches taken throughout the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research project.

Quantitative methodology

Sampling and survey distribution

As noted in the main body of the report, in March 2024, the DfE issued an online survey to individuals who had expressed an interest in teaching or training in England which was open for four weeks. The survey was hosted on the survey platform Qualtrics and participants were contacted via email and invited to take part. The sample was drawn from the following three audiences:

1. All overseas teachers who successfully applied for qualified teacher status (QTS) via the professional recognition service, mostly from 2019 onwards
2. All individuals who successfully applied for English teacher training courses for the recruitment cycles between 2021 and 2023, and
3. All teachers and trainees who successfully applied for international relocation payments (IRPs)

This survey covered motivations for teaching and training in England, the application process, and, where applicable, experiences of teaching and training in England. The samples were obtained using administrative data from the Apply systems and IRP verification data. This data included names, contact email address, some personal data (e.g. age, gender, nationality) and where relevant where their original teaching qualifications were obtained. Survey participants were asked for permission to use the additional administrative data as part of the analysis. For the trainee sample, screener questions were used to screen out individuals who had not successfully completed their teacher training course from the majority of the survey. Apart from the teachers who had received the IRP, all of whom would have experience working in an English school in order to receive the incentive, the rest of the teacher sample included a mixture of those who had and did not have experience of teaching in England.

Survey responses

The survey received 3,971 complete responses, consisting of 3,396 responses from teachers and 575 responses from trainees. The survey received a 35% response rate overall (made up of a 37% response rate from teachers, and 26% response rate from trainees). The breakdown of the survey respondent characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Table 2. Survey respondent characteristics

	Teachers	Trainees
Total	3396	575
Age		
Under 30	9%	36%
30 to 39	42%	42%
40 to 49	25%	17%
50 and over	9%	3%
Unknown	14%	1%
Gender		
Female	48%	57%
Male	46%	42%
Prefer not to say/Not available	6%	2%
EEA vs RoW		
EEA	21%	15%
Rest of the world	71%	83%

Survey analysis

Anonymised survey data was securely shared with IFF Research and was used to produce data tables broken down by a range of demographic characteristics. The analysis breaks most commonly used for the report were:

- Teacher vs trainee
- Region (EEA vs ROW)
- Received IRP and/or received bursary
- Age band
- School type

Analysis of the survey data consisted of significance testing. This significance testing used independent sample t-tests for means and z-tests for percentages. All significant differences included in the report are at the 95% confidence level. For analysis of significant differences, two types of testing were used: a) between each set of cross-break headings (e.g. comparing between different age categories within the age band cross-break header) and b) comparing data within each subgroup break to the total, minus the data for category in question – this refers to analysis against the ‘overall’ figure.

Qualitative methodology

The qualitative strand of the research consisted of 123 in-depth interviews with leaders, teachers, trainees, recruitment agencies, and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers. All interviews were conducted between May and November 2024 on Teams, Zoom or over the phone. As shown in Table 3-7, the number of interviews achieved is less than the original quotas (for all groups except teachers and trainees), this was due to budgetary re-allocations whilst the research was ongoing, time limitations, and a challenging recruitment landscape.

Table 3. Interview numbers by audience

Audience	Number of interviews
Leaders	38
Teachers	30
Trainees	30
Initial teacher training providers	15
Recruitment agencies	10

Sampling and recruitment

Leaders

DfE provided a list of secondary school and MAT leaders drawn from the School Workforce Census (SWC). The provided sample included contact details, demographic information about the schools and MATs, and information about their international teacher recruitment history.

DfE circulated warm-up communications to this list in order to let leaders know in advance that IFF Research might be in contact with them to ask them to participate in this research.

A sample was then selected from the list of secondary school and MAT leaders which included those who had at least some experience with international teacher recruitment. This was to ensure that selected respondents had the knowledge and experience required to answer the interview questions. However, upon screening leaders, two noted that their school did not have experience with recruiting teachers internationally. These figures are included in Table 3. It is also worth noting that upon interviewing leaders, four noted that they themselves did not have experience of recruiting internationally. Where relevant, the findings from these interviews are used in the report, and any clear distinctions between leaders who have and have not recruited internationally, are drawn out.

An email was then sent to this sample in May 2024, from IFF Research, which requested they get in touch via email if they were interested in taking part in the research. Following this, the 2024 General Election led to a pause in fieldwork between late May and early July 2024, which meant that all recruitment activities were paused.

This pause due to the pre-election period in combination with the quality of the contact information available, take up among leaders was initially very low. As a result, DfE set up a recruitment portal which could be shared with the selected sample directly in September to improve legitimacy of the communications. The recruitment portal asked questions relating to their suitability to participate in the research, their availability and their contact information. DfE compiled all responses from leaders and sent these securely across to IFF Research. Following this, leaders were contacted to participate in interviews which took place between 17 May and 27 November 2024.

As a thank you for taking part, leaders were offered the opportunity to have £25 donated to a charity of their choice.

Table 3 and Table 4 contain information on the quotas which were used to recruit School and MAT leaders by variable type, as well as the numbers which were achieved. It is worth noting that the school leaders spoken to were biased towards those in urban settings and schools with a lower proportion of pupils that were eligible for free school meals (FSM).

Teachers and trainees

Teachers and trainees were asked at the end of the DfE survey if they were willing to be recontacted about taking part in the qualitative interviews. These responses were used to select a sample of those who had taught or trained in England. This was required to ensure they had the knowledge and experience to answer the interview questions.

As with leaders, an email was then sent to this sample in May 2024, from IFF Research, which requested they get in touch via email if they were interested in taking part in the research. Following this, the 2024 General Election led to a pause in fieldwork between late May and early July 2024, which meant that all recruitment activities were paused.

Recruitment for trainees restarted in July, whilst recruitment for teachers restarted in September. As well as the email communications, teachers and trainees were contacted via phone to screen individuals and agree an interview date and time.

A total of 30 teacher interviews were completed between 11 July and 23 October 2024. A total of 30 trainee interviews were completed between 31 July and 29 August 2024. As a thank you for taking part, teachers and trainees were offered £25.

Table 5 and Table 6 contain information on the quotas which were used to recruit teachers and trainees by variable type, as well as the numbers which were achieved. It is worth noting that the teachers spoken to were biased towards those working in schools with a higher proportion of pupils that were eligible for free school meals (FSM), and academies. As well as this, the trainees interviewed were biased towards those who did not use a recruitment nor training agency, and those who trained through an institute of higher education or a university.

Training providers and recruitment agencies

DfE provided a list of recruitment agencies, a sample compiled from a previous desk-top review, and ITT providers, drawn from the ITT census. These details were further supplemented with free finding methods by IFF Research which were then used to invite these groups to take part in the research interviews.

An initial email was sent to these groups in May 2024, which requested they get in touch via email if they were interested in taking part in the research. Again, due to the 2024 General Election, this recruitment activity was put on pause. Recruitment for both of these groups restarted in August when the samples were emailed again. Where a telephone number was available, contacts were also contacted by phone. Recruiters and providers that were interested in taking part were screened, and a date and time was agreed for them to take part in the interview.

A total of 10 interviews were completed with this group between 19 August and 23 October. A total of 15 interviews were completed with this group between 27 August and 25 October.

Table 7 and Table 8 contain information on the quotas which were used to recruit teachers and trainees by variable type, as well as the numbers which were achieved. It is worth noting that the recruitment agencies interviewed were slightly more biased towards those that specialised in recruiting teachers for certain subjects.

Quotas and responses

The tables below illustrate the quotas that we aimed to achieve for each group, and the number of completes we achieved for each variable.

Table 4. School leader quota table

Key variables	Quota	Completed/ Interviewed
Total	32	28
Currently employs overseas teachers	20	15
Have employed overseas teachers in the past, but not currently	6	11
Have never employed overseas teachers	2	2
European Economic Area	12	16
Rest of World	12	15
Overseas teachers receive(d) incentives	12	9
LA maintained	10	7
Part of MAT / Academy	10	10
Other	6	11
% pupils eligible for FSM Upper	10	1
% pupils eligible for FSM Middle	10	6
% pupils eligible for FSM Lower	10	21
Urban	12	26
Rural	12	2

Table 5. MAT leader quota table

Key variables	Quota	Completed/ Interviewed
Total	8	10
Currently employs overseas teachers	4	8
Have employed overseas teachers in the past, but not currently	2	2
Have never employed overseas teachers	1	0
European Economic Area	3	7
Rest of World	3	7
Overseas teachers receive(d) incentives	3	1

Table 6. Teacher quota table

Key variables	Quotas	Completes
Total	30	30
Physics	6	7
Other STEM	6	14
MFL	10	12
Other subjects	4	9
Receive(d) financial incentive to teach	12	13
Did not receive financial incentive to teach or train	12	16
Used recruitment / training agent	10	17
Did not use recruitment / training agent	10	13
European Economic Area	12	11
Rest of the World	12	19
Work in LA Maintained	6	10
Work in Academy	6	17
Work in Other	6	2
No longer in England	6	2
Upper third % pupils eligible for FSM	8	12
Middle third % pupils eligible for FSM	8	3
Lower third % pupils eligible for FSM	8	1

Table 7. Trainee quota table

Trainees	Quota	Completed
Total	30	30
Physics	6	11
Other STEM	6	13
MFL	10	12
Other subjects	4	5
Receive(d) financial incentive to teach or train	12	15
Did not receive financial incentive to teach or train	12	15
Used recruitment / training agent	10	1
Did not use recruitment / training agent	10	29
European Economic Area	8	10
Rest of the World	8	20
HE / university trainee	14	28
SCITT / other	10	2

Table 8. Recruitment agency quota table

Recruitment agencies	Quota	Completed
Total	15	10
International specialists	6	4
General recruitment	6	6
Subject specialist (STEM OR MFL)	6	8
No subject specialism	6	2
European recruitment	4	2
Rest of the World recruitment	4	5

Table 9. Training provider quota table – HE providers

	Quota	Completed
Total	14	10
Recruit overseas trainees	9	9
Do not recruit overseas trainees	3	1
Physics	3	9
STEM overseas teachers	3	9
MFL overseas teachers	3	6
Other subjects	3	5
European recruitment	5	2
Rest of the World recruitment	5	7

Table 10. Training provider quota table - School centred and other

	Quota	Completed
Total	6	5
Recruit overseas trainees	4	2
Do not recruit overseas trainees	2	3
Physics	2	5
STEM overseas teachers	2	5
MFL overseas teachers	2	5
Other subjects	2	4
European recruitment	3	1
Rest of the World recruitment	3	3

9. Annex B – Research materials

Annex B includes the research materials used throughout both the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research project.

DfE Survey, as distributed in March 2024.

Start of Block: About the survey

The Department for Education (DfE) is carrying out a survey to better understand the experiences and motivation of overseas trained teachers and international trainees who look to qualify as a teacher in England. This will help us understand how to support you and schools recruiting internationally.

We are inviting all overseas trained teachers who has successfully applied for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in England and all current and former overseas teachers who have completed their teaching training in England.

You do not need to be teaching or training in England currently to fill in this survey.

Completing the survey should take you no longer than 15 minutes. Simply click the button below to start the survey.

If you have any questions about this survey or the research more generally, please email us on TeacherSupport.RESEARCH@education.gov.uk. You can review the Department's privacy notice for research [here](#).

End of Block: About the survey

Start of Block: Your teacher training course

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = trainee

1 You have been invited to take part in this survey as our records indicate that you have previously accepted a place on a teacher training course in England.

Did you start a teacher training course in England?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If You have been invited to take part in this survey as our records indicate that you have previousl... = Yes

And recruitment_cycle_year < 2023

2 Have you completed your teacher training course?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If You have been invited to take part in this survey as our records indicate that you have previously... = Yes

And recruitment_cycle_year = 2023

Or Have you completed your teacher training course? = No

Q56 Are you still on a teacher training course in England?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

End of Block: Your teacher training course

Start of Block: Reasons for not starting/completing ITT

Display This Question:

If You have been invited to take part in this survey as our records indicate that you have previousl... = No



3 Which of the following best describes why you did not start your teacher training course in England?

- ☐ Concern over the cost of living (1)
 - ☐ Concern over the cost of the course (2)
 - ☐ Decided to train as a teacher in another country (3)
 - ☐ Decided not to train as a teacher (4)
 - ☐ Decided to do a different course in England (5)
 - ☐ Experienced difficulties obtaining a VISA (6)
 - ☐ Concern over the location where I was expected to train (7)
 - ☐ Concern or issues with the course (8)
 - ☐ Concern or issues with the provider (9)
 - ☐ Other (please specify) (10)
-

Display This Question:

If You have been invited to take part in this survey as our records indicate that you have previousl... = Yes



Q77 Which of the following best describes why you did not complete your teacher training course in England?

- ☐ Decided to move back home (1)
 - ☐ Decided not to train as a teacher anymore (11)
 - ☐ Cost of living was too high (12)
 - ☐ Decided to change to a different course in England (not teacher training) (13)
 - ☐ Did not like the location where I was training (14)
 - ☐ Disliked the content of the course (15)
 - ☐ Did not enjoy school placements (16)
 - ☐ Difficulty adapting to the English teaching system (17)
 - ☐ Decided to train as a teacher in another country (18)
 - ☐ I was asked to leave my course by my provider (19)
 - ☐ Other (please specify) (20)
-

Display This Question:

If Which of the following best describes why you did not complete your teacher training course in En... = Decided to train as a teacher in another country

Or Which of the following best describes why you did not start your teacher training course in England? = Decided to train as a teacher in another country

Q78 What country are you, or are you considering, training to teach in?

If you are considering training in more than one country, please select your top preference.

Display This Question:

If You have been invited to take part in this survey as our records indicate that you have previousl... = No

Or Have you completed your teacher training course? = No

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = No

Q57 The rest of the survey asks questions about experiences of obtaining qualified teacher status in England so we do not need to ask you any further questions. Thank you for taking part in this survey.

End of Block: Reasons for not starting/completing ITT

Start of Block: Your teaching experience

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

Q96 We first want to ask you some questions to understand more about your experience working in schools.

6 Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classroom teacher in a school? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Yes in England (1)
- ☐ Yes in a country other than England (2)
- ☐ ☒ No (3)

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in a country other than England

Q73 What was the last country, aside from England, that you worked as a teacher in?

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

And irp = y

Q95 Do you hold qualified teacher status (QTS) in England?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ Unsure (3)

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = trainee

Or teacher_trainee = teacher

And irp = y

Q75 Are you qualified to teach in a country other than England?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

☐ Not sure (4)

Display This Question:

If Have you completed your teacher training course? = Yes

Or teacher_trainee = teacher

8 Are you currently working in school?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently working in school? = Yes

Q65 Which of the following best describes the position you hold in your school-based role?

- ☐ Classroom teacher (1)
- ☐ Senior leader (2)
- ☐ Teaching assistant / classroom aide (3)
- ☐ Supply teacher (4)
- ☐ Tutor (5)
- ☐ Administrative or facilities role (6)
- ☐ Other role (7)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently working in school? = No

Q66 Which of the following best describes what you are currently doing?

- ☐ Working in a public sector role (1)
- ☐ Working in a private sector role (2)
- ☐ Studying (3)
- ☐ Career break (4)
- ☐ Retired (6)
- ☐ Other (5)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If Have you completed your teacher training course? = Yes

Or teacher_trainee = teacher

9 Are you currently living in England?

☐ Yes (2)

☐ No (3)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently living in England? = No

Q83 What country are you currently living in?

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

Or Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in a country other than England

10 How many years of experience do you have working as a classroom teacher?

Please include all time spent working as a teacher, even before gaining qualified teacher status in or outside of England.

- ☐ Up to 1 year (1)
 - ☐ More than 1 year, up to 2 (2)
 - ☐ More than 2 years, up to 3 (3)
 - ☐ More than 3 years, up to 5 (4)
 - ☐ More than 5 years, up to 10 (5)
 - ☐ More than 10 years (6)
 - ☐ Prefer not to say (7)
-

11 Aside from your teaching qualification(s), which of the following is your highest level of qualification?

- ☐ PhD (doctoral degree) or equivalent (1)
- ☐ Postgraduate degree (masters) or equivalent (not including teacher training qualifications) (2)
- ☐ Undergraduate degree or equivalent (3)
- ☐ None of the above (4)
- ☐ Unsure (5)

End of Block: Your teaching experience

Start of Block: Qualifying as a teacher in England - Feb 20, 2024

Q97 We now wanted to ask you some questions about what motivated you to teach/train to teach in England.



12 Why did you want to train or qualify as a teacher in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ To enhance my career prospects in England (4)
- ☐ To enhance my career prospects in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland (12)
- ☐ To enhance my career prospects in other countries (6)
- ☐ ☒None of the above (14)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher



Q59 Which of the following attracted you to teach or train to teach in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Improved quality of life (4)
 - ☐ More opportunities for career progression (5)
 - ☐ To work in a high-performing education system (6)
 - ☐ To experience working in English schools (7)
 - ☐ To learn about the teaching profession in England (14)
 - ☐ For better pay and working conditions (8)
 - ☐ Wanting to work/study abroad (9)
 - ☐ Wanting to be near friends and family (10)
 - ☐ ⊗None of the above (12)
-

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

Q81 How useful do you think getting qualified teacher status (QTS) in England is in helping teachers get permanent teaching positions in...?

	Very useful (1)	Somewhat useful (2)	Slightly useful (3)	Not at all useful (4)	Not sure (15)
In England (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In other countries (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = trainee

Q82 How useful do you think training to teach in England is in helping teachers get permanent teaching positions in...?

	Very useful (1)	Somewhat useful (2)	Slightly useful (3)	Not at all useful (4)	Not sure (15)
In England (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In other countries (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Qualifying as a teacher in England - Feb 20, 2024

Start of Block: Becoming a teacher in England - Feb 20, 2024

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

Q98 This section is about your experience working as a teacher in England

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

Or Are you currently working in school? = Yes

And Which of the following best describes the position you hold in your school-based role? = Classroom teacher

And Are you currently living in England? = Yes

14 Thinking about your first teaching job in England, was your employment contract...?

Even if you only have a visa set for a certain period, please refer to the length of contract you hold or held.

- ☐ Temporary / fixed-term through a supply or recruitment agency (1)
 - ☐ Temporary / fixed-term directly through the school (2)
 - ☐ Permanent (4)
 - ☐ Unsure (5)
-

Display This Question:

If Thinking about your first teaching job in England, was your employment contract...? Even if you o... = Temporary / fixed-term through a supply or recruitment agency

Or Thinking about your first teaching job in England, was your employment contract...? Even if you o... = Temporary / fixed-term directly through the school

Or Thinking about your first teaching job in England, was your employment contract...? Even if you o... = Unsure

15 Since your first job, have you held a permanent teaching job in England?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No, I have only worked in temporary teaching roles (2)
- ☐ Unsure (3)

Skip To: 18 If Since your first job, have you held a permanent teaching job in England? = No, I have only worked in temporary teaching roles

Skip To: 18 If Since your first job, have you held a permanent teaching job in England? = Unsure

Page Break

Display This Question:

If Are you still on a teacher training course in England? != Yes

And Do you hold qualified teacher status (QTS) in England? != No

And Do you hold qualified teacher status (QTS) in England? != Unsure

16 How long did it take you after gaining qualified teacher status (QTS) to secure your first permanent teaching post in England?

- ☐ Less than 3 months (1)
- ☐ Between 3 months and 6 months (2)
- ☐ More than 6 months, less than 12 months (3)
- ☐ More than 12 months (4)
- ☐ NA - I was already working in a permanent teaching post (5)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

And Thinking about your first teaching job in England, was your employment contract...? Even if you o... = Permanent

Or Since your first job, have you held a permanent teaching job in England? = Yes

17 How did you find your first teaching position in England?

- ☐ A recruitment / supply agency (1)
- ☐ Recruitment websites (such as TES, the Teacher Vacancies Service etc) (2)
- ☐ School website (3)
- ☐ Social media (4)
- ☐ Word of mouth or networking (5)
- ☐ Another way (6)

Display This Question:

If How did you find your first teaching position in England? = A recruitment / supply agency

Or Thinking about your first teaching job in England, was your employment contract...? Even if you o... = Temporary / fixed-term through a supply or recruitment agency

18 What recruitment agency, or agencies, did you use to help you find your first temporary or permanent position? If you do not remember or did not use any recruitment agencies, please skip this question.

Display This Question:

If Are you currently working in school? = Yes

And Are you currently living in England? = Yes

Q63 What type of school are you currently working in?

- ☐ A primary state-school (1)
 - ☐ A secondary state-school (2)
 - ☐ A special or alternative provisions school (4)
 - ☐ A further education (FE) institute e.g. sixth form / college (10)
 - ☐ An independent / private school (a fee paying school) (3)
 - ☐ Other (7)
-

Display This Question:

If Are you currently living in England? = Yes

And Are you currently working in school? = No

And Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

Or Are you currently living in England? = No

And Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

Q89 What type of school did you work at when working as teacher in England?

- ☐ A primary state-school (1)
 - ☐ A secondary state-school (2)
 - ☐ A special or alternative provisions school (4)
 - ☐ A further education (FE) institute e.g. sixth form / college (10)
 - ☐ An independent / private school (a fee paying school) (3)
 - ☐ Other (7)
 - ☐ NA - I did not work as a teacher in England (11)
-

Display This Question:

If Are you currently working in school? = Yes

And Are you currently living in England? = Yes

Q79 What school are you currently working at?

Please begin typing the name of your school and ensure the address that appears up is correct. If you do not want to share this data, you can skip this question.

Page Break

Display This Question:

If What type of school are you currently working in? = A secondary state-school

Or What type of school are you currently working in? = A further education (FE) institute e.g. sixth form / college

Q87 What subject(s) do you teach at your school? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Art & Design (1)
- ☐ Biology (4)
- ☐ Business Studies (5)
- ☐ Chemistry (6)
- ☐ Classics (7)
- ☐ Computing (8)
- ☐ Design & Technology (9)
- ☐ Drama (10)
- ☐ English (11)
- ☐ Geography (12)
- ☐ History (13)
- ☐ Mathematics (14)
- ☐ Modern Foreign Languages (15)
- ☐ Music (16)

- ☐ Physical Education (18)
- ☐ Physics (19)
- ☐ Religious Education (21)
- ☐ Other (17)

Display This Question:

If What type of school did you work at when working as teacher in England? = A secondary state-school

And What type of school did you work at when working as teacher in England? = A further education (FE) institute e.g. sixth form / college

Display This Question:

If Are you currently living in England? = No

And Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

Or Are you currently living in England? = Yes

And Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in England

And Are you currently working in school? = No



19 Why did you decide to leave your teaching role in England?

- ☐ Stress/high workload (1)
- ☐ Visa expired and unable to extend (2)
- ☐ Unable to get a permanent role (3)
- ☐ Dissatisfaction with pay (4)
- ☐ Lack of support from the school (7)
- ☐ Experiences of discrimination (8)
- ☐ Personal reasons (9)
- ☐ Only planned to stay temporarily in England (10)
- ☐ Poor pupil behaviour (11)
- ☐ ☒None of the above (12)

End of Block: Becoming a teacher in England - Feb 20, 2024

Start of Block: Relocating to England

Q99 In this section, we wanted to understand more about your experiences of relocating to England.

24 Which of the following best describes the area you relocated when you first moved to England?

- ☐ City/town (1)
 - ☐ Rural area (e.g. village, hamlet) (2)
-

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher



25 Which of the following, if any, did you consider when choosing where to live in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Where existing friends and family lived (1)
 - ☐ Where it was affordable to live (2)
 - ☐ Where I could find a job (3)
 - ☐ Where I could have new cultural experiences (4)
 - ☐ Where pay was the best (5)
 - ☐ Where I could be close to nature (6)
 - ☐ ☒None of the above (7)
-

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = trainee



Q71 Which of the following, if any, did you consider when choosing where to study and live in England? Please select all that apply.

☐

Where existing friends and family lived (1)

☐

Where it was affordable to live (2)

☐

Where I could do a course with a specific provider (3)

☐

Where I could have new cultural experiences (4)

☐

Where I could be close to nature (6)

☐

⊗None of the above (7)

Page Break



Q64 Did you need a visa to relocate to England?

☐

Yes (1)

☐

No (2)

☐

Unsure (8)

☐

Prefer not to say (9)

Display This Question:

If Did you need a visa to relocate to England? = Yes

And teacher_trainee = teacher

26 What visa did you hold when first relocating to England to teach?

- ☐ Skilled Worker visa (previously a Tier 2 visa) (1)
 - ☐ British National (Overseas) visa (3)
 - ☐ Dependent visa (16)
 - ☐ Family visa (4)
 - ☐ Graduate visa (5)
 - ☐ High Potential Individual visa (6)
 - ☐ India Young Professionals Scheme visa (7)
 - ☐ UK Ancestry visa (8)
 - ☐ Youth Mobility Scheme visa (9)
 - ☐ Don't know (11)
 - ☐ Prefer not to say (12)
 - ☐ Other (please specify) (14)
-

Page Break

28 Did you bring any dependents, such as children or partners, with you when relocating to England?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Did you bring any dependents, such as children or partners, with you when relocating to England? = Yes

29 How many adult or child dependents did you bring with you when relocating to England?

You can skip this question if you would prefer not to say.

☐ Number of adults (1)

☐ Number of children (2)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher



30 Which of the following forms of support did you receive when you first became a teacher in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Access to a mentor or buddy (excluding an Early Careers Framework mentor) (1)
 - ☐ Access to a mentor through being an Early Career Teacher (8)
 - ☐ Written information and guidance specifically on teaching in England (2)
 - ☐ Networking opportunities with other international teachers (3)
 - ☐ Training/CPD to help you acclimatise to the English education system (4)
 - ☐ General training and CPD for new or all teachers (5)
 - ☐ Assistance with finding accommodation (6)
 - ☐ Other (please specify) (7)
-

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

31 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
It was easy to find information and guidance on relocating to teach in England (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt well supported by my school when I first began teaching in England (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

32 Thinking about when you first moved to England to teach, how easy or difficult was it adapting to the following?

	Very easy (1)	Fairly easy (2)	Neither easy nor difficult (3)	Fairly difficult (4)	Very difficult (5)	Not applicable (6)
Teaching the English curriculum (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing pupil behaviour (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations of teachers (e.g. workload, accountability) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life in England generally (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

33 Approximately, how much did the following cost for you when you relocated to England? Please exclude any costs relating to obtaining a visa or the NHS surcharge as we have data on this cost.

Please provide your answer in British pounds (£). An approximate number is fine but if you are unsure you can skip this question.

☐ Upfront costs for accommodation (such as rental deposit) £ (1)

☐ Travel costs (such as flights/other forms of transport) £ (2)

☐ Cost of moving furniture or buying new furniture £ (5)

☐ Any other costs £ (3)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher



34 Which of the following do you feel were barriers when you first relocated or were looking to relocate to England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Finding schools that offered visa sponsorships (1)
- ☐ Applying / interviewing for teaching positions remotely (2)
- ☐ Applying for a visa from the Home Office (3)
- ☐ Gathering proof of my qualifications and references (4)
- ☐ Funding the costs of relocation (including visa costs) (5)
- ☐ Adjusting to a new culture/language (6)
- ☐ ☒None of the above (7)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

35 How long would you like to keep teaching in England if possible?

- ☐ I want to leave as soon as possible (1)
- ☐ At least one year (2)
- ☐ At least two years (3)
- ☐ At least five years (4)
- ☐ Indefinitely (5)

Display This Question:

If How long would you like to keep teaching in England if possible? != Indefinitely

And How long would you like to keep teaching in England if possible? , Indefinitely Is Displayed

Q67 What do you intend to do after working as a teacher in England?

- ☐ Work in a different role in education in England (1)
- ☐ Stay in England but not work in education (2)
- ☐ Leave England (3)
- ☐ Unsure (4)

End of Block: Relocating to England

Start of Block: Finding teaching positions - Feb 20, 2024

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... != Yes in England

And Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... = Yes in a country other than England

Q94 What subject(s) do you, or have you, taught?

- ☐ Early years education (22)
- ☐ Primary education (21)
- ☐ Art and Design (1)
- ☐ Biology (4)
- ☐ Business Studies (5)
- ☐ Chemistry (6)
- ☐ Classics (7)
- ☐ Computing (8)
- ☐ Design & Technology (9)
- ☐ Drama (10)
- ☐ English (11)
- ☐ Geography (12)
- ☐ History (13)
- ☐ Mathematics (14)

- ☐ Modern Foreign Languages (15)
 - ☐ Music (16)
 - ☐ Physical education (17)
 - ☐ Physics (18)
 - ☐ Religious Education (19)
 - ☐ Other (20)
-

Display This Question:

If Outside of any teacher training placements, are you currently or have you ever worked as a classr... != Yes in England

And Are you still on a teacher training course in England? != Yes



20 Which of the following, if any, describe why you have not yet taken up a teaching role in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Decided not to teach (1)
- ☐ Decided not to move to England (2)
- ☐ Unable to get a teaching job in England (3)
- ☐ Unable to afford to move to England (8)
- ☐ Never intended to teach in England (4)
- ☐ ⊗None of the above (6)
- ☐ NA - I am working as a teacher in England (10)

Skip To: End of Block If Which of the following, if any, describe why you have not yet taken up a teaching role in England... = NA - I am working as a teacher in England

Display This Question:

If Are you still on a teacher training course in England? != Yes

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? != Yes

21 Are you currently actively looking for a teaching position in England?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you currently actively looking for a teaching position in England? = Yes

Or Are you currently actively looking for a teaching position in England? = No

And teacher_trainee = teacher

Or Are you currently actively looking for a teaching position in England? = Yes

Or Are you currently actively looking for a teaching position in England? = No

And Have you completed your teacher training course? = Yes



22 Which of the following do you feel are, or have been, barriers to you getting a teaching position in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Difficulties finding schools who would offer visa sponsorship for roles (1)
 - ☐ Difficulties finding and applying for teaching positions (2)
 - ☐ Costs of relocating to England (3)
 - ☐ Costs of securing a visa (4)
 - ☐ Lack of guidance on application processes in England (5)
 - ☐ Language barriers or cultural differences (6)
 - ☐ Difficulty/cost of bring over other family members (7)
 - ☐ Getting my qualifications recognised by the English schools (8)
 - ☐ Negative experiences with recruitment agencies (11)
 - ☐ ☒None of the above (9)
-

Display This Question:

If Are you currently actively looking for a teaching position in England? = No

23 Would you consider teaching in a state-school in England in the future?

- ☐ Definitely (4)
- ☐ Probably (5)
- ☐ Probably not (7)
- ☐ Definitely not (8)

End of Block: Finding teaching positions - Feb 20, 2024

Start of Block: Training to teach in England - Feb 20, 2024

Q100 We now want to understand more about your experiences of training in England.



Q68 Which of the following attracted you to teach or train to teach in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ An improved quality of life in England (4)
- ☐ More opportunities for career progression (5)
- ☐ To work in a high-performing education system (6)
- ☐ Number of school placements offered as part of course (7)
- ☐ To learn about the teaching profession in England (14)
- ☐ For better pay and working conditions in England (8)
- ☐ To work / study abroad (9)
- ☐ Opportunity to train to teach in the English language (15)
- ☐ Quality of the course / reputation of provider (16)
- ☐ Wanting to be near friends and family (10)
- ☐ ☒None of the above (12)

Page Break

Display This Question:
If recruitment_cycle_year = 2023
Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = Yes

43 How would you describe your experiences of the following aspects of your course?

	Very positive (1)	Fairly positive (2)	Neither positive nor negative (3)	Fairly negative (4)	Very negative (5)
The course content (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The experience in the classroom (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If recruitment_cycle_year = 2023

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = Yes

44 How well support have you felt by...?

	Extremely supported (4)	Very supported (5)	Moderately supported (6)	Slightly supported (7)	Not at all supported (8)
Your provider (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your school on placements (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Display This Question:

If recruitment_cycle_year = 2023

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = Yes

46 After completing your initial teacher training course, how likely is it that you would apply to teach in...?

	Definitely would (1)	Probably would (2)	Probably would not (4)	Definitely would not (6)
A state-school school in England (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A private / independent school in England (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A country other than England (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If After completing your initial teacher training course, how likely is it that you would apply to t... = A state-school school in England [Probably would not]

Or After completing your initial teacher training course, how likely is it that you would apply to t... = A state-school school in England [Definitely would not]



47 Why is your preference not to teach in a state-school in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Better pay and conditions elsewhere (1)
- ☐ Bad experiences in English schools (2)
- ☐ Concerned about finding a job that will sponsor a visa (3)
- ☐ Personal reasons (4)
- ☐ Concern over difficulty getting a teaching role (5)
- ☐ Never intended to teach in England (7)
- ☐ ⊗None of the above (10)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If recruitment_cycle_year = 2023

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = Yes

48 Aside from England, after you finish finishing your teacher training degree, what other country would you consider a teaching career in?

Please select your top reference aside from England and you can skip this question if you do not have another country you want to teach in.

Page Break



Q72 Which of the following do think are barriers for individuals looking to train to teach in England? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ The process for getting a student visa (6)
- ☐ The cost of relocating (7)
- ☐ The cost of the course (8)
- ☐ Potential cultural / language barriers (9)
- ☐ Language barriers or cultural differences (10)
- ☐ Difficulty/cost of bring over other family members (11)
- ☐ Getting my qualifications recognised by providers (12)
- ☐ ☒None of the above (15)

Display This Question:

If recruitment_cycle_year = 2023

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = Yes

41 How are you funding your teacher training course fees?

Please note this should exclude your living costs while studying.

- ☐ Loan from England's Student Loans Company (3)
 - ☐ Loan from my home country (4)
 - ☐ Scholarship or bursary / international relocation payment (5)
 - ☐ Self-funding (including saving, support from family) (6)
 - ☐ Working part-time (7)
 - ☐ Other (8)
 - ☐ ☒ Prefer not to say (9)
-

Display This Question:

If recruitment_cycle_year = 2023

Or Are you still on a teacher training course in England? = Yes

Q69 How are you funding your living costs while training?

Please note this should exclude your course fees.

- ☐ Loan from England's Student Loans Company (3)
- ☐ Loan from my home country (4)
- ☐ Scholarship or bursary / international relocation payment (5)
- ☐ Self-funding (including saving, support from family) (6)
- ☐ Working part-time (7)
- ☐ Other (8)
- ☐ ☒ Prefer not to say (9)

Page Break

Q70 Approximately, how much did the following cost for you when you relocated to England? Please exclude any costs relating to obtaining a visa or the NHS surcharge as we have data on this cost.

Please provide your answer in British pounds (£). An approximate number is fine but if you are unsure you can skip this question.

☐ Total cost of course fees (£) (7)

☐ Upfront costs for accommodation (such as rental deposit) (£) (1)

☐ Travel costs (such as flights/other forms of transport) (£) (2)

☐ Cost of moving furniture or buying new furniture (£) (5)

☐ Any other costs (£) (3)

End of Block: Training to teach in England - Feb 20, 2024

Start of Block: Services from the Department for Education - Feb 20, 2024

36 When applying to teach or train to teach in England, were you aware of the international relocation payment (IRP) for physics and modern foreign languages (MFL) teachers/trainees?

☐ Yes - I was aware (1)

☐ No - I wasn't aware (3)

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = trainee

Q61 When applying to train to teach in England, were you aware of the scholarships and bursaries available for international students in physics and languages?

- ☐ Yes - I was aware (2)
- ☐ No - I was not aware (3)
-

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = trainee

Q84 Did you receive a scholarship and/or bursary available for international students in physics and languages?

- ☐ Yes (2)
- ☐ No (5)
-

Display This Question:

If Did you receive a scholarship and/or bursary available for international students in physics and... = Yes

37 Without receiving a bursary/scholarship, would you have...?

- ☐ Still trained to teach in England (1)
- ☐ Taken a different degree course in England (2)
- ☐ Trained to teach in a different country (3)
- ☐ Done something else (4)
- ☐ Unsure (6)

Display This Question:

If irp = y

And teacher_trainee = trainee

38 Our records indicate that you have received the international relocation payment (IRP).

Without receiving the IRP, would you have...?

- ☐ Still trained to teach in England (1)
 - ☐ Taken a different degree course in England (2)
 - ☐ Trained to teach in a different country (3)
 - ☐ Done something else (5)
 - ☐ Unsure (4)
-

Display This Question:

If irp = y

And teacher_trainee = teacher

Q104 Our records indicate that you have received the international relocation payment (IRP).

Without receiving the IRP, would you have...?

- ☐ Still relocated to teach in England (1)
- ☐ Still relocated to England but pursued a different career (2)
- ☐ Been a teacher in a different country (3)
- ☐ Done something else (5)
- ☐ Unsure (4)

Page Break

Display This Question:

If irp = y

39 What have you, or do you intend to spend the £10,000 from the international relocation payment (IRP) on?

- ☐ Repaying a loan from family or friends (1)
 - ☐ Repaying a loan from a credit or loan company (2)
 - ☐ Accommodation costs (such as rent or furniture) (3)
 - ☐ Other (please specify) (4)
-

Display This Question:

If irp = y

40 In order to apply for the international relocation payment (IRP), did you choose to teach or train to teach in a different subject to the one you had originally wanted to?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

End of Block: Services from the Department for Education - Feb 20, 2024

Start of Block: Your characteristics

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

49 What is your nationality?

Here, nationality is being defined as a legal status which gives a person a particular set

of rights relating to a country.

If you hold dual or multiple nationality, please enter this into the additional boxes and leave these blank if you hold a single nationality.

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

Q102 Second nationality (if applicable)

Display This Question:

If teacher_trainee = teacher

Q103 Third nationality (if applicable)

Page Break

50 Do you consent for us to use administrative data, such as from the School Workforce Census, including about your age and other demographic data?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If gender_sex = NA

Or gender_sex = Not available

Q91 What is your sex? This does not need to be the same as on your birth certificate.

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (3)

Display This Question:

If gender_sex = NA

Or gender_sex = Not available

Q92 Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No - please specify (2)

- ☐ Prefer not to say (3)

Page Break

51 With assistance from a contractor, DfE will also be conducting some follow-up interviews to help us further explore some topics covered in this survey. We anticipate conducting these interviews online from May onwards at a time that is convenient for the individual.

Would you be willing to be involved in further research?

- ☐ Yes (1)
 - ☐ No (2)
-

Display This Question:

If With assistance from a contractor, DfE will also be conducting some follow-up interviews to help... = Yes

52 Thank you for volunteering to take part in follow-up interviews. We or our contractor will be in touch if you are selected and you can change your mind at any point.

So that we can get in touch directly, please fill in the details below.

☐ Name: (2) _____

☐ Email address: (3) _____

☐ Telephone number: (4)

End of Block: Your characteristics

Topic Guide A: Leaders

International Teacher Recruitment: School Leaders topic guide (Strand 2a)

A Your school/MAT and teacher recruitment

Note to interviewer: This section helps us to understand the wider recruitment context of the school/MAT, how they recruit teachers and their experiences of teacher shortages.

A1 Could you start by telling me a bit about your role(s) at [school/MAT]? Make sure to cover:

- How long have you been doing the role(s)?
- What responsibilities do you have for recruiting teachers?
- How many teaching staff do you employ?

A2 In general, how easy or difficult do you find it to fill teacher vacancies at your school/MAT?

- Which subjects are easier to recruit, and which are more difficult? *Probe for: Maths/Sciences (especially Physics), MFL (Modern Foreign Languages), any others*
- What strategies do you use to fill teacher vacancies? (i.e. other than international recruitment)
- How does your school/MAT compare to others?

B Recruiting international teachers

Note to interviewer: This section is about your recent experiences of recruiting international teachers and motivations for doing so.

The next questions are about recruiting international teachers.

B1 How do you think the quality of international teaching qualifications compares to those of the UK? Why do you think this?

- What are the key elements of equivalency that you'd look for between UK and international teaching qualifications?
- Would you recruit an international overseas teacher who had not obtained QTS through England's recognition system? If not, what do you do to ensure quality?
- Would you favour an international teacher who had gained a teaching qualification in the UK over one with an overseas qualification? Why do you think this?
- Do qualifications from any specific countries stand out as good? Which qualifications and why?
- Do you consider an international teacher who has trained in the UK as an 'international teacher'?

For these questions we are thinking specifically about recruiting international staff who are not already working as teachers in the UK. This includes international teachers with UK and overseas teaching qualifications.

B2 Have you recruited any international teachers in your school/MAT?

- IF NO: Have you considered it or looked into it?
IF NOT CONSIDERED: What would you say are the main reasons why you haven't looked into recruiting international teachers? What concerns do you have? *INTERVIEWER NOTE: We have a section on barriers later – keep answers here top-level, or expand on any detail using questions/prompts in Section D if the flow of the interview dictates.*
- IF YES: How recently have you recruited international teachers? How many international teachers have you recruited?
- IF YES: Were you seeking international teachers specifically, or teachers in general?

IF RECRUITED OR CONSIDERED RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS:

B3 For which subjects have you [recruited / considered recruiting] international teachers, if any?

- *Probe for: Physics, MFL (Modern Foreign Languages)*
- Why have you considered international recruitment for these subjects?
- Have any been easier or more difficult to recruit?

IF RECRUITED INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS (AT C3):

B4 What methods have you used to recruit international teachers?

- *Probe:* Have you used agencies (which ones?)
 - Why have you used recruitment agencies? *Probe: Did they reach out to you or vice versa?*
 - How did you come across them? *Probe: What motivated you to choose them?*
 - What services did they provide?
 - What was the cost?
 - What are the benefits and drawbacks of working with teacher recruitment agencies for overseas teachers/trainees? What are the implications for your school/MAT?
- What are/would be your expectations when working with recruiters for international teachers?
- *Probe:* Have you advertised through the Teacher Vacancies Service (where you can now specify if the school will sponsor a visa for the role)?
- FOR MATs: Have any staff travelled internationally to interview candidates?
- How are the methods used similar to or different from how you would recruit UK-based teachers?
Probe: Interview process? Online vs. face-to-face?

B5 From which countries have you recruited teachers?

- *Probe: Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Jamaica, West Africa, South Africa elsewhere*
- Why have you recruited from these countries?
- Have the countries you recruit from changed over time? If so, how?

B6 Is the number of international teachers recruited in your school / MAT going up or down? Why? Probe: Have the benefits outweighed the challenges?

B7 Do you tend to recruit experienced international teachers, or international teachers at the start of their career? Why?

INTERVIEWER: USE THIS QUESTION IF THE BENEFITS DO NOT ARISE EARLIER

B8 What are any (additional) benefits for your school in being able to recruit international teachers?

IF CONSIDERED RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS (AT C3):

B9 How far have you got in exploring how to recruit international teachers? Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe as necessary for:

- Contacted agencies, probe: what are/would be your expectations when working with recruiters for international teachers?
- Advertised roles internationally / registered vacancies on TVS
- Interviewed international candidates
- Made an offer to an international teacher
- Registered to become a licensed worker sponsor to be able to sponsor UK visas

B10 Could you talk me through why you didn't ultimately recruit an international teacher?

- Did you decide not to recruit internationally? At what point were you in the process?
- What additional support could have been helpful at this point?

B11 From which countries have you considered recruiting teachers?

- *Probe: Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Jamaica, West Africa, South Africa elsewhere*
- Why these countries?

B12 **What do you imagine would be the benefits for your school in being able to recruit international teachers?**

ASK ALL

B13 **In the next few years, do you expect the number of international teachers you recruit to go up, down or stay the same? Why?**

C Barriers

Note to interviewer: The next section is about things that prevent schools from recruiting international teachers or make it more difficult to do so.

ASK ALL, UNLESS BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT ALREADY DISCUSSED

C1 **Are there any drawbacks to recruiting international teachers? What are the main things that might put you off recruiting international teachers?** *Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers:*

- Difficult recruitment process
- Lack of face-to-face contact in recruitment
- Cost of international recruitment / visa sponsorship
- Difficulties in arranging visas / sponsorship
- Confusion over visa and immigration rules / QTS
- Extra work/onboarding required for international teachers (including pastoral support)
- How well international teachers fit in / fit with the teaching culture

ASK ALL

C2 **What is the one main thing that might put you off recruiting international teachers? Why?**

- How could this issue be addressed? What resources are needed to solve this issue?

C3 **What is retention like for international teachers, in your experience?**

- What could be done to improve retention?
- How do your views/experiences of retention influence your views/approach to international teacher recruitment?
- What support does your school/MAT provide for international teachers? How does your school / MAT provide this? Is it needed?

C4 **How do you think changes or events in the past few years have affected your ability/interest in recruiting an international teacher?** *Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers:*

- Changes to immigration policy, including EU exit? How?
- Any impact of Covid / the global pandemic?
- Cost of Living / inflation?
- Changes to sponsorship requirements (student/skilled worker visa holders require sponsorship)?
- Changes to the way overseas trainees can access/are taught in the English teacher training system?
- Government financial support (*Probe for those that have had teachers who have received them if known*)

D Incentives & Support

Note to interviewer: The next section explores things that help encourage international teachers to work in English schools or help make it easier for schools to recruit them. Be sure to allow enough time to cover these questions.

D1 Are you aware of any particular schemes or policies designed to support international teachers to come and work in English secondary schools?

Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers:

- **International relocation payment (IRP)** for teachers and trainees in Physics and MFL – a payment of £10,000 from DfE which does not need to be paid back.
- **Bursaries and scholarships** for trainees in shortage subjects – up to £30,000 depending on subject.
- Updated approach to **recognising overseas qualifications** - since February 2023, eligible teachers with qualifications from more countries have been able to apply for QTS in England.
- Updates to the **Apply system**
- **Visiting Teachers Programmes**
- Introduction of **International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS)**
- Do you think any of these policies/schemes have been useful in helping international teachers to come and work in English secondary schools? **Which of these do you think has had the most impact?**

D2 Thinking about when you have recruited international teachers (or explored recruiting), where have you gone for support or guidance with recruitment? *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe as necessary for:*

- Online guidance for schools from DfE
- Online guidance for employers from Home Office
- [If school] Guidance from local authority or MAT

D3 What areas of recruitment have you sought guidance on?

- How useful was the guidance? (*Probe in particular about online guidance from DfE*)

D4 What more could be done to make it easier for English schools to hire international teachers? Why do you think your suggestions would work? *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe if required for:*

- More/adapted financial incentives for teachers – how should these work? How are the costs associated with this met?
- Financial assistance for schools in sponsoring candidates – what issues would this assistance address? How are the costs associated with this met?
- Changes to visa requirements – what specific changes would increase recruitment?
- Better marketing of the benefits of working as a teacher in England – which benefits are attractive to overseas teachers or trainees?
- Better support once here and more focus on retention e.g. acclimatisation courses. Why would this support work?
- Better guidance on how schools can recruit international teachers (from DfE)
- A regulatory system that monitors recruitment agencies

E Wrap up

Thank you for taking part in the session today.

E1 Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't covered?

E2 Would you be happy for us to recontact you if there's anything we needed to clarify?

E3 Any questions for us?

Topic Guide B: International Teachers

International Teacher Recruitment: Teachers topic guide (Strand 2c)

A Background / about you

Note to interviewer: This section helps us to get to know the teacher/trainee and understand where they are on their journey.

We'd like to know about your experiences of teaching in England.

- A1 **Can I just check that you [are currently teaching / are no longer teaching] in England?** *Probe for:*
- IF CURRENTLY TEACHING: How long have you been teaching in England? When did you start your current role?
 - IF NO LONGER TEACHING IN ENGLAND: For how long were you a teacher in England? When did you start/finish teaching in England? What are you currently doing?
 - ALL: Whereabouts [are you / were you] based in England?
 - Confirm: Which subject are you teaching / did you teach? What type of school?
 - Did you move to England for this job? Where were you previously living?
 - Had you worked as a teacher elsewhere before teaching in England? IF YES: For how long?
 - What kind of contract do you have with the current school you work at? Probe: Fixed term, permanent, temporary?

B Motivations & experiences of applying

- B1 **Thinking back to when you applied to teach in England, what were the main reasons why you wanted to teach in England?** *Listen for, Probe for:*
- Wanted to move to England – What was it that attracted them to England?
 - Wanted to teach in English schools (why?)
 - Better teacher pay/working conditions – how does it differ?
 - Opens up career opportunities within England or elsewhere
 - Financial incentives
 - Family / friends that live in England

B2 Could you talk through your experience of applying for your teaching role in England? *Probe for:*

- What influenced your choice of school / area within England? How open were you to different types of school / different areas?
- How did you come across your role? *Probe:* Did they use any particular job sites?
- How easy or difficult was it to find suitable roles? How easy was it to find schools that offer visa sponsorship (if applicable)?
- How easy or difficult was the application process? What was difficult about the application process, if anything?
- **KEY:** (If applicable) Could you talk me through the process you went through to obtain your visa / how you were able to fund this?
- What were your experiences of the interview process for teaching in England? Were your interview(s) conducted in person or remote?

B3 What support did you need when applying for a teaching role in England?

- *Probe:* support with navigating the English school system / understanding types of schools, visas / immigration, sponsorship, qualifications / QTS, relocating to England?
- And were you able to access this support? Which?
- Did you find this support useful / not useful? *Probe:* Which support was most useful?
- And where did you receive this support from? *Probe:* schools, recruitment agencies, training providers/universities, government guidance / websites from Home Office or DfE, guidance from LA or MAT, peer support?

B4 Did you apply through a recruitment agency, or directly to the school/MAT (e.g. through the Teacher Vacancies Service)?

- If yes: Why did you use a recruitment agency? What services did they provide? How useful did you find their experience and advice?

FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVED A FINANCIAL INCENTIVE, ASK:

B5 To what extent did the International Relocation Payment influence your decision to come to England?

- *Probe:* Were you already considering teaching in England / applying for jobs before you became aware of this payment? Or after?
- How did you use the payment?
- Was the financial support sufficient?
- Would you have come to teach in England without receiving the IRP?

C Experiences of training/teaching

Now please think about your experiences after being offered a teaching job in England.

C1 Thinking back to when you were offered your teaching job, how certain were you that you would take up the offer?

- Did you have any concerns about the teaching job? If so, what were your concerns?
- Did these turn out to be valid concerns?

C2 How easy did you find adapting to living and working in your new teaching role in England? Why? Probe for:

- What elements of the process were harder or easier? Why? *Probe:* obtaining a visa, moving, settling in, starting the new job.
- What support did you need in moving to the area (if relevant)? Where did you go for support?
- How easy or difficult was it to adapt to the English school system?
- Have you undertaken any qualifications since you started your new role?
- [IF DOES NOT HAVE QTS] Have you needed to apply for QTS status? If so, how have you found this process?

C3 Overall, how has your experience of living and teaching in England compared to your expectations?

- Is it overall a better or worse experience than you expected, or about the same?
- What has been better? Worse? Or as you expected?
- Since living and teaching in England, what support have you received? Where from? *Probe:* their school, charities, other staff, other international staff, international teacher networks/groups

C4 What do you like and / or dislike about teaching in an English secondary school (compared to in another country)? Probe for:

- Living in England / want to stay
- The English school system
- **KEY:** Workload, *probe:* how does this compare to other roles they've had / countries they've lived in?
- Improves career prospects internationally
- Higher pay / financial incentives
- School/other staff members

D Future intentions

D1 Thinking about your future plans, for how long do you expect to be teaching in England? Why is that? Probe for:

- Do you intend to stay / settle in England? Why?
- Do you intend to move elsewhere? Why?

D2 What factors might persuade or enable you to stay teaching in England for longer?

- Probe: Suitable vacancies in a particular type of school / areas, financial support
- Why would this persuade / enable you to stay?

E Govt policy / incentives

ASK ALL:

E1 How do you think changes or events in the past few years have changed the appeal or feasibility of teaching in England, either positively or negatively? Note to interviewer: Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers. Also, it is important to understand whether anything has made them more or less inclined to teach in England.

- Changes to immigration policy, including the EU exit? How?
- Any impact of Covid / the global pandemic?
- Changes to QTS/qualification recognition?
- Cost of Living / inflation?
- Changes to sponsorship requirements (student/skilled worker visa holders require sponsorship)?
- Changes to the way overseas trainees can access/are taught in the English teacher training system? [Only if relevant]
- Government financial support (*Probe for those that have received support*)

E2 Which one policy or societal change do you think has had the biggest impact on the appeal or feasibility of teaching or training in England? Why?

- INTERVIEWER: This can be a UK or overseas change.

E3 What more could be done to make it easier for international teachers and trainees to come to England? What might make this change/suggestion work? Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe if required for:

- More/adapted financial incentives for teachers – how should these work?

- Changes to visa requirements – what specific changes would increase recruitment?
- Making it easier for international teachers to get QTS? Or improving pay for international teachers without QTS?
- Better marketing of the benefits of working as a teacher in England – which benefits are attractive to overseas teachers or trainees?
- Better support once here and more focus on retention e.g. support with setting into England. Why would this support work?
- **KEY:** Better management or regulation of recruitment agencies

F Wrap up

Thank you for taking part in the session today.

- F1 **Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't covered?**
- F2 **Would you be happy for us to recontact you if there's anything we needed to clarify?**
- F3 **Any questions for us?**

Topic Guide C: International Trainees

International Teacher Recruitment: Teachers & Trainees topic guide (Strand 2c)

A Background / about you

Note to interviewer: This section helps us to get to know the teacher/trainee and understand where they are on their journey.

We'd like to know about your experiences of training to be a teacher in England.

A1 Can I just check that you are [still training / have completed your training] to be a teacher in England?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- When [do you / did you] complete your training?
- Whereabouts [are you / were you] based in England?
- Confirm: Which subject(s) are/were you training to teach?
- Did you move to England specifically for this course?
- How long have you / were you living in England? Where were you living before this?
- Have you taught before? Where?
- Have you completed or applied to any other teacher training courses and/or qualifications in England? And elsewhere? What were the outcomes of this?

B Motivations & experiences of applying

B1 Thinking back to when you applied for teacher training, what were the main reasons why you applied for teacher training in England? Allow respondent to answer, then probe for the following if necessary:

- Quality of qualifications / course
- Wanted to teach in England / move to England (why?)
- Opens up career opportunities (in England / elsewhere - where?)
- Financial incentives

B2 Could you talk through your experience of applying for teacher training in England? Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- Why did you choose the area in England / college (or training organisation) where you studied?
- Was it easy to make an application? What was difficult about the application process, if anything?
- Did you apply through an agency or direct to a college (or training organisation)?
- IF AGENCY: Why did you use an agency? How did you find out about them? What services did they provide? How useful did you find their experience and advice?
- What were your experiences of the interview process for teacher training in England? Was it an easy or difficult process? Why?

B3 What support did you need when applying for teacher training in England?

- *Probe:* support with understanding different types of courses / training providers, support with equivalency of qualifications for teacher training, support with visas / immigration, support with relocating to England?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- And were you able to access this support? Which?
- Did you find this support useful / not useful? And which support was most useful?
- And where did you receive this support from? *Probe:* schools, recruitment agencies, training providers/universities, government guidance / websites from Home Office or DfE, guidance from LA or MAT, peer support?

B4 What financial incentives were you aware of when you were applying for your training course? *Probe:* International Relocation Payment, bursary – both or just one?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- Did you receive any of these?
- When did you become aware of them? How?
- Did they influence you to apply for your training course?

FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVED THE INTERNATIONAL RELOCATION PAYMENT, ASK:

B5 How important was the International Relocation Payment in influencing your decision to come to England?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- Were you already considering training in England before you became aware of this payment? Or after?
- How did you use the payment?
- Was the financial support sufficient?
- Would you have come to teach in England without receiving the IRP? Or considered training in a different subject area?
- [IF ALSO RECEIVED BURSARY] Would you have come to England, if you have only received the bursary?

C Experiences of training/teaching

Now please think about your experiences after being accepted onto a teacher training course.

C1 Thinking back to when you were accepted onto the teacher training course, how certain were you that you would take up the place?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- Had you applied to any other training course or jobs that you were deciding between?
- Any concerns?

C2 How easy did you find the process of moving to England for the course? Why?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- What support did you need in moving to England? Where did you go for support?
- What support did you receive? What support was most / least helpful?

C3 How has your experience of teacher training in England compared to your expectations?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- Is it overall a better or worse experience that you expected, or about the same?
- What has been better? Worse? Or as you expected?
- Support?
- What informed your expectations? *Probe:* Peers, online searches, information from HEIs/providers, online forums?

D Future intentions

D1 What are your plans for the future [now that you have completed your teacher training course / once you have completed your teacher training course]?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- Why are you going to stay to teach in England? / Why are you not intending to teach in England?
- If you are going to teach in another country, what are the attractions of teaching there compared to England?
- Was this what you had originally intended to do? If not, why did your plans change?

D2 Have you applied for teaching jobs in England? Have you secured a teaching job?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- How many have you applied for?
- How have you found the application process?
- Have you experienced any challenges? *Probe:* issues relating to visas / sponsorship – if so, what is it that they need?

IF ALREADY TEACHING IN ENGLAND:

- What do you like/dislike about teaching in an English school?
PROBE: Compared to other countries you have taught in?

D3 What type of school / area [are you looking to teach in once you have finished your training / will you be teaching in]?

Note to interviewer: If not covered by initial response, ask the below questions.

- How likely are you to work in a state secondary school in England? Why / Why not?
- Which area(s) would you consider working in?

D4 [THOSE WHO WANT TO STAY BUT CAN'T / ARE UNABLE] What would persuade you to stay and teach in England? *Probe:*

- Suitable vacancies in a particular type of school / areas
- Financial support
- Support with visas
- Other factors

E Govt policy / incentives

ASK ALL:

E1 How do you think changes or events in the past few years have changed the appeal or feasibility of teaching or training to teach in England, either positively or negatively?

Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers:

- Changes to immigration policy, including the EU exit? How?
- Any impact of Covid / the global pandemic?
- Cost of Living / inflation?
- Changes to sponsorship requirements (student/skilled worker visa holders require sponsorship)?

- Government financial support
- Anything relevant to the country they were living in before?

E2 Which one policy or societal change do you think has had the biggest impact on the appeal or feasibility of teaching or training in England? Why? *Note to interviewer: This can be a UK or overseas change.*

E3 What more could be done to make it easier for international teacher trainees to come to England? What might make this change / suggestion work?

Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe if required for:

- More/adapted financial incentives for teachers – how should these work?
- Changes to visa requirements – what specific changes would increase recruitment?
- Better marketing of the benefits of working as a teacher in England – which benefits are attractive to overseas teachers or trainees?
- Better support once here and more focus on retention e.g. acclimatisation courses. Why would this support work?

F Wrap up

Thank you for taking part in the session today.

F1 Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't covered?

F2 Would you be happy for us to re-contact you if there's anything we needed to clarify?

F3 Any questions for us?

Topic Guide D: Initial teacher training providers

International Teacher Recruitment: Training Providers topic guide (Strand 2b)

A Your Role / Organisation

Note to interviewer: This section helps us to understand the wider context of the recruitment agency or training provider and the respondent's role within the organisation.

ASK ALL:

A1 Could you start by telling me a bit about the organisation where you work?

- What is the local area like?
- How many teacher trainees do you have? Which qualifications are they studying for?
- What proportion of teaching students are from overseas? Has this changed over time?
- Which countries are they typically from? Has this changed over time? If so, how?
 - *Probe: Ireland, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe (which countries?), India, China, Jamaica, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, elsewhere*

A2 What is your role at [ITT PROVIDER]? Make sure to cover:

- How long have you been doing the role(s)?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- What involvement do you have in assessing applications from overseas candidates?

B International Applicants

B1 Does your organisation proactively recruit international applicants?

- IF NOT: How do they hear about your courses?

IF YES:

- How do you attract international applicants?
- Which methods do you use to advertise your provision? (online, other ways?)
- Which countries (if any) do you target for international applicants? Why these countries?
 - *Probe: Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe (which countries?), India, China, Jamaica, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, elsewhere*

- Are you specifically marketing initial teacher training, or marketing more generally for all your courses?
- Do you work with any other organisations/agencies to attract international applicants? If yes, which?

B2 Could you talk me through the decision-making process when assessing applications from international candidates?

- How do you assess the quality of international candidates?
- How does this process differ from domestic applicants? What are the key points of difference?

B3 Overall, how do you find the quality of international versus UK candidates?

- Are there areas where international candidates tend to be weaker / stronger?
- Does this differ for applicants from different countries? In what way?
- How do you ensure that where possible only eligible/qualified candidates will apply?
- Which existing qualifications do international applicants possess? Does this differ by subject?
Probe for: Maths/Sciences (especially Physics), MFL (Modern Foreign Languages), any others?
- Has the overall quality of international candidates improved or declined in recent years?

B4 What additional support or information do international applicants need during the application process, if any?

- How do you offer support to applicants?
- Where else can they go for support or information?
- What are your experiences of the immigration system? How involved are you in helping students navigate this? IF NOT INVOLVED: Who is responsible for this within your organisation?

B5 Once international trainees have been accepted onto a course, what additional support might they need (e.g. helping with moving to the UK, settling in, visas and immigration)?

- What additional support is available to international students from your organisation? From elsewhere?

B6 What are the course completion rates for international students? Are they more or less likely to drop out than UK students? If so, why?

- What additional challenges do international teacher trainees face during their training? E.g. acclimatisation?
- What support is available to them during their course?

B7 How involved are you in supporting students in finding jobs after their training?

- Does the support differ for UK and international students?

- Do you have relationships with particular local authorities, MATs or recruitment agencies? How do these work?

B8 Overall, roughly what proportion of all your trainee teachers go into teaching jobs in English state schools after completing their course?

- Does this differ for UK and international trainees?
- Are there any additional challenges faced by international trainees in securing a teaching role after their training? If so, what? *(Note: also explored in Barriers section E below)*
- Why do you think some teachers with QTS choose not to teach in state schools in England?

C Barriers

ASK ALL

The next few questions are about the barriers or things that might prevent international students from coming to England for teacher training.

C1 What concerns might some training providers have about recruiting international students, if any? *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe if required for the following. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers:*

- Relevance of qualifications / equivalency
- Confusion / difficulties with visas and immigration rules
- Language barriers / standard of English
- Cultural differences / How well international trainees fit in
- Extra work/onboarding required (including pastoral support)
- SCITTs : Inability to 'sponsor' international trainees
- SCITTs: Inability to advise on student finance
- *INTERVIEWER NOTE: SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) providers are training providers that receive DfE funded for (at least part of) their initial teacher training provision. They are accredited by the Secretary of state of Education and have a grant funding agreement with the DfE.*

C2 How do you think changes or events in the past few years have affected interest in international candidates wanting to train in England, either positively or negatively? *Note to interviewer: Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers. Also, it is important to understand whether anything has made them more or less inclined to teach in England.*

- Changes to immigration policy, including the EU exit? How?
- Any impact of Covid / the global pandemic?
- Changes to QTS/qualification recognition?

- Cost of Living / inflation?
- Changes to sponsorship requirements (student/skilled worker visa holders require sponsorship)?
- Changes to the way overseas trainees can access/are taught in the English teacher training system? [Only if relevant]
- Government financial support (*Probe for those that have received support*)

C3 **Which one policy or societal change do you think has had the biggest impact? Why?**

- INTERVIEWER: This can be a UK or overseas change.

D Incentives and Support

ASK ALL

We'd like to hear your views on some government policies designed to attract international trainees to come and train to teach in England. Just to confirm, are you familiar with:

- **International relocation payment (IRP)** for teachers and trainees in Physics and MFL – a payment of £10,000 from DfE which does not need to be paid back.
- **Bursaries** and **scholarships** for trainees in shortage subjects for teacher trainees for Physics and MFL – up to £30,000 depending on subject.
- Updates to the **Apply system** (*INTERVIEWER NOTE: The apply system - full name "Apply for teacher training" – is an online service/platform offered by DfE, on the gov.uk website, for aspiring teachers to apply for teacher training that replaced the old UCAS system for teacher training applications in 2021. The platform puts them in contact with accredited teacher training providers that they can apply for through this platform.*)

D1 **How effective do you think these policies are in attracting international trainees to come and train to teach in England? Probe for:**

- Which policy or incentive do you think has had the most impact?
- Have you noticed any positive or negative change in the quality or number of international teacher applicants following the introduction of any of these policies?
- Have they impacted any other subjects outside the eligible subjects?
- Have any of these policies changed the type of trainees applying, e.g. by characteristics, and the reasons why they train?
- Do you think the policies encourage international trainees who don't intend to stay and teach in England?

D2 **What has been, or do you think might be, the impact of withdrawing IRP? Probe for:**

- Have you seen 2024-25 candidates withdraw applications as a result of this policy change?

Now thinking about information and guidance that you might need regarding international trainees:

D3 Where have you sought additional information or guidance when recruiting international trainees? *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe as necessary for:*

- Online guidance for providers from DfE (on international recruitment and safeguarding)
- Online guidance for higher education institutes (HEIs) from Home Office
- Recruitment agencies
- ENIC (enic.org.uk – agency for recognition of international quals)
- Other

D4 How did this additional information or guidance help you? How useful was the guidance? *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe as necessary for:*

- Addressing legal issues (including immigration)
- Provided more information on Safeguarding
- Helped with questions on the equivalency of qualifications
- Advising on student finance
- Other

D5 What else could make it easier to recruit international teacher trainees in England? *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe if required for*

- More/adapted financial incentives – how should these work? How are the costs associated with this met?
- Better marketing of the benefits of working as a teacher in England – which benefits are attractive to overseas teachers or trainees?
- Better support once here and more focus on retention e.g. acclimatisation courses. Why would this support work?

E Wrap up

Thank you for taking part in the session today.

E1 Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't covered?

E2 Any questions for us?

Topic Guide E: Teacher recruitment agencies

International Teacher Recruitment: Agencies topic guide (Strand 2b)

A Your role / organisation

Note to interviewer: This section helps us to understand the wider context of the recruitment agency or training provider and the respondent's role within the organisation.

ASK ALL:

A1 Could you start by telling me a bit about the organisation where you work?

- Does your agency focus on recruiting teachers, or also other roles in schools? Which roles?
- Do you focus solely on international recruitment? IF NO: What proportion of your recruitment is international?
- Is there a regional/country focus to your international recruitment?
 - *Probe: Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Jamaica, India, China, Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, elsewhere*
- Have the countries you recruit from changed over time? If so, how? Why?
- Has the amount of work your agency does in international recruitment changed over time? If so, how?
 - *Probe: Are you seeing more or fewer international candidates than previously?*

A2 What is your role at [RECRUITMENT AGENCY]? Make sure to cover:

- How long have you been doing the role(s)?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- What proportion of your role is recruiting international teachers?

B International recruitment

For these questions we are thinking specifically about recruiting international teaching staff who are not already working as teachers in the UK. This includes international teachers with UK and overseas teaching qualifications.

B1 Could you take me through the recruitment journey or strategy for your agency? Please talk through how you recruit international teachers (*Interviewer: aim to build a picture of the full recruitment journey*)

- Are your candidates usually already based in the UK or living overseas?
- Do you approach candidates or do candidates come to you?
- How do you attract people from overseas who could teach in England?
 - In which countries/regions do you conduct marketing or outreach?
- How do you select candidates – what screening processes do you use to identify suitable candidates?
 - What qualifications do you look for?
- How do you match candidates to schools – do you do this based on what the school asks for, or look for schools based on the candidates?

B2 How easy is it to place an international teacher with a UK teaching qualification compared to one with an overseas qualification? Why do you think this?

- Do qualifications from any specific countries stand out as good? Which qualifications and why?
- In general, how well do you think international teaching qualifications prepare overseas teachers for working in the UK? Why do you think this?

B3 How do you support international teachers with their applications to English schools?

- What support do international applicants need? E.g. with Visas and immigration, practical information?
 - Is it just guidance or actual help with securing visas?
 - Do you help candidates through the process of getting QTS in England?
 - Do candidates pay for any of these services?
- What kinds of visas do international candidates usually have (e.g. Youth & Mobility, Skilled Worker, other)?
 - How does the type of visa affect the support you provide?
- Who, if anyone, at the agency provides immigration advice? Is it an in-house team or outsourced? What does this entail?

B4 How do you work with schools in England?

- Which types of school do you work with (primary/secondary, independent/state schools)? Why?
- Do you have longstanding relationships with particular schools or areas?
- What services do you provide to schools (e.g. matching, placing, safeguarding checks)?
- What factors influence any differential fees you charge for teacher recruitment? What teacher or subject characteristics influence your fees?
- Do you 'market' international candidates to schools as international candidates, or just as a teacher?

B5 What are English state schools looking for when recruiting international teachers via an agency? What do they want to get through an agency that they can't get themselves?

- Do schools come to you specifically looking for international candidates, or are they looking for any teacher?
- How do schools react when presented with an international candidate if they haven't explicitly asked for one?

B6 Which UK teaching roles are easier to fill with international recruits, and which are harder to fill? Why?

- Do you help with getting international teachers supply work as well as permanent employment?
 - Are schools more willing or more likely to place international candidates in short-term or temporary-to-permanent placements?
- Do qualified international teachers fill other roles in schools (for example, teaching assistant positions)? Why do schools use qualified international teachers for these roles?
- What concerns, if any, do schools express about recruiting an international teacher?

C Barriers and guidance

ASK ALL

The next few questions are about the barriers or things that might prevent international teachers from working in English schools.

C1 How do you think changes or events in the past few years have affected international teacher recruitment, either positively or negatively? *Note to interviewer: Allow interviewee to answer. No need to cover every probe – use these to ensure interviewees expand on their own answers..*

- Changes to immigration policy, including the EU exit? How?
- Any impact of Covid / the global pandemic?
- Changes to QTS/qualification recognition?
- Cost of Living / inflation?
- Changes to sponsorship requirements (student/skilled worker visa holders require sponsorship)?
- Changes to the way overseas trainees can access/are taught in the English teacher training system? [Only if relevant]
- Government financial support (*Probe for those that have received support*)

C2 Which one policy or societal change do you think has had the biggest impact? Why?

- INTERVIEWER: This can be a UK or overseas change.

- C3 **What sort of additional information or guidance have you sought when you met challenges recruiting international teachers into English schools?** *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe as necessary for:*
- Online guidance from DfE
 - Online guidance from Home Office
 - Specific professional legal or immigration advice (i.e. that is paid for)
- C4 **How did this additional information or guidance help you?** *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe as necessary for:*
- Addressing legal issues (including immigration)
 - Provided more information on Safeguarding
 - Helped with questions on the equivalency of qualifications

D Incentives

ASK ALL

The next section is about incentives and things that might encourage international teachers to work in English schools.

- D1 **Which government policies designed to encourage international teachers to come and work in English secondary schools are you aware of?**

Allow interviewee to answer first - No need to cover every probe.

- **International relocation payment (IRP)** for teachers in Physics and MFL – a payment of £10,000 from DfE which does not need to be paid back.
- Updated approach to **recognising overseas qualifications** - since February 2023, eligible teachers with qualifications from more countries have been able to apply for QTS in England.
- Previous DfE recruitment programmes e.g. **Visiting Teachers Programmes**

- D2 **How effective do you think these policies are in encouraging international teachers to come and work in English secondary schools?**

- Do you signpost any of the policies to recruits? Help them make use of the incentives?

- D3 **What else could make it easier to recruit international teachers in England?** *Allow interviewee to answer first, then probe if required for*

- Greater financial assistance for teachers and schools? What costs might be covered?
- Changes to visa requirements – what specific changes would increase recruitment?

- Better marketing of the benefits of working as a teacher in England – which benefits are attractive to overseas teachers?
- Better support once here and more focus on retention e.g. acclimatisation courses. Why would this support work?
- Is there anything else that would specifically help agencies recruit international teachers?

E Wrap up

Thank you for taking part in the session today.

E1 Is there anything else you'd like to mention that we haven't covered?

E2 Any questions for us?



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Reference: RR1520

ISBN: 978-1-83870-653-1

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This document is available for download at www.gov.uk/government/publications.