

Recruitment and retention of international trainee teachers: a call for coherence in policies and practices

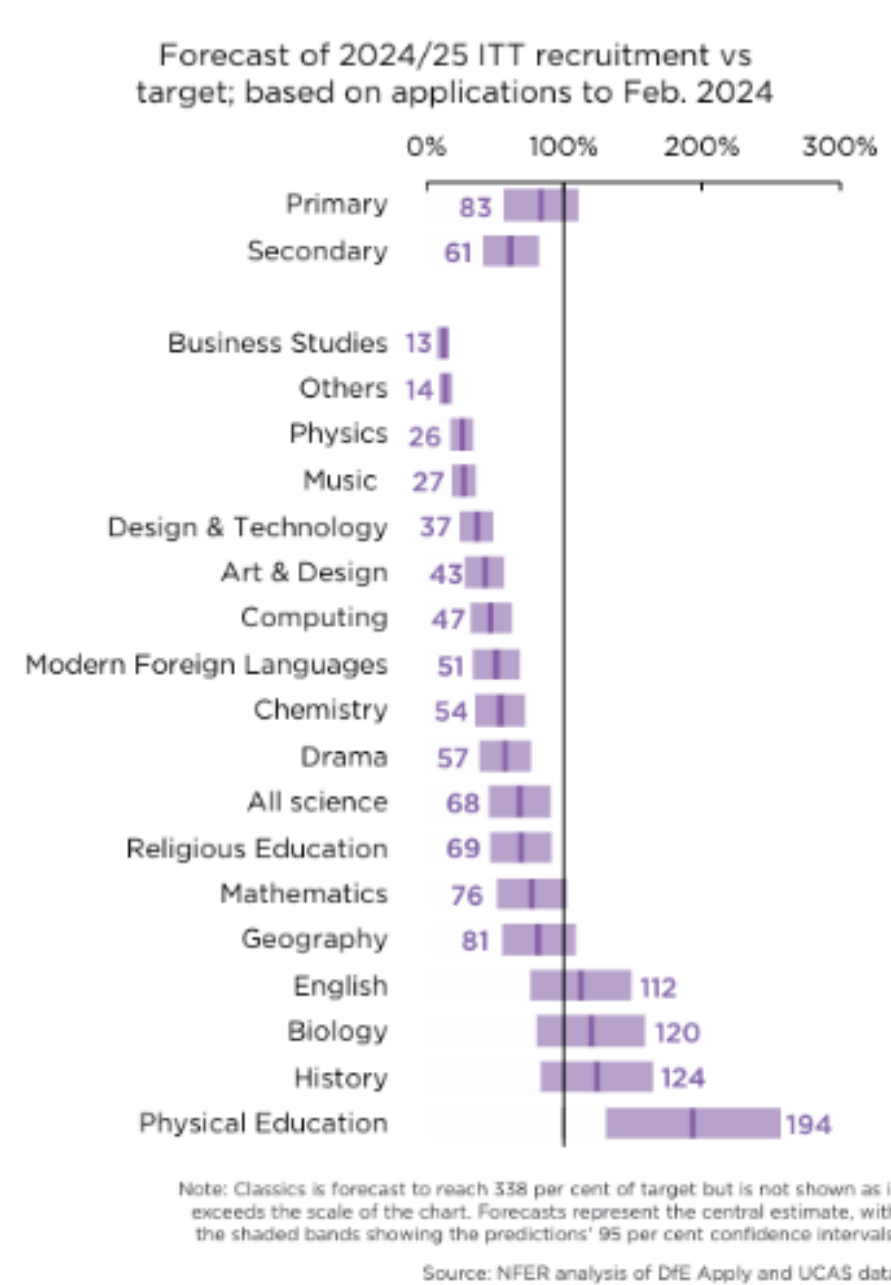


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Teacher recruitment and retention trends

'Teacher supply is in a critical state, which risks the quality of education that children and young people receive. Ambitious, radical and cost-effective policy actions to address teacher recruitment and retention are urgently needed.' (Worth 2024 p3)

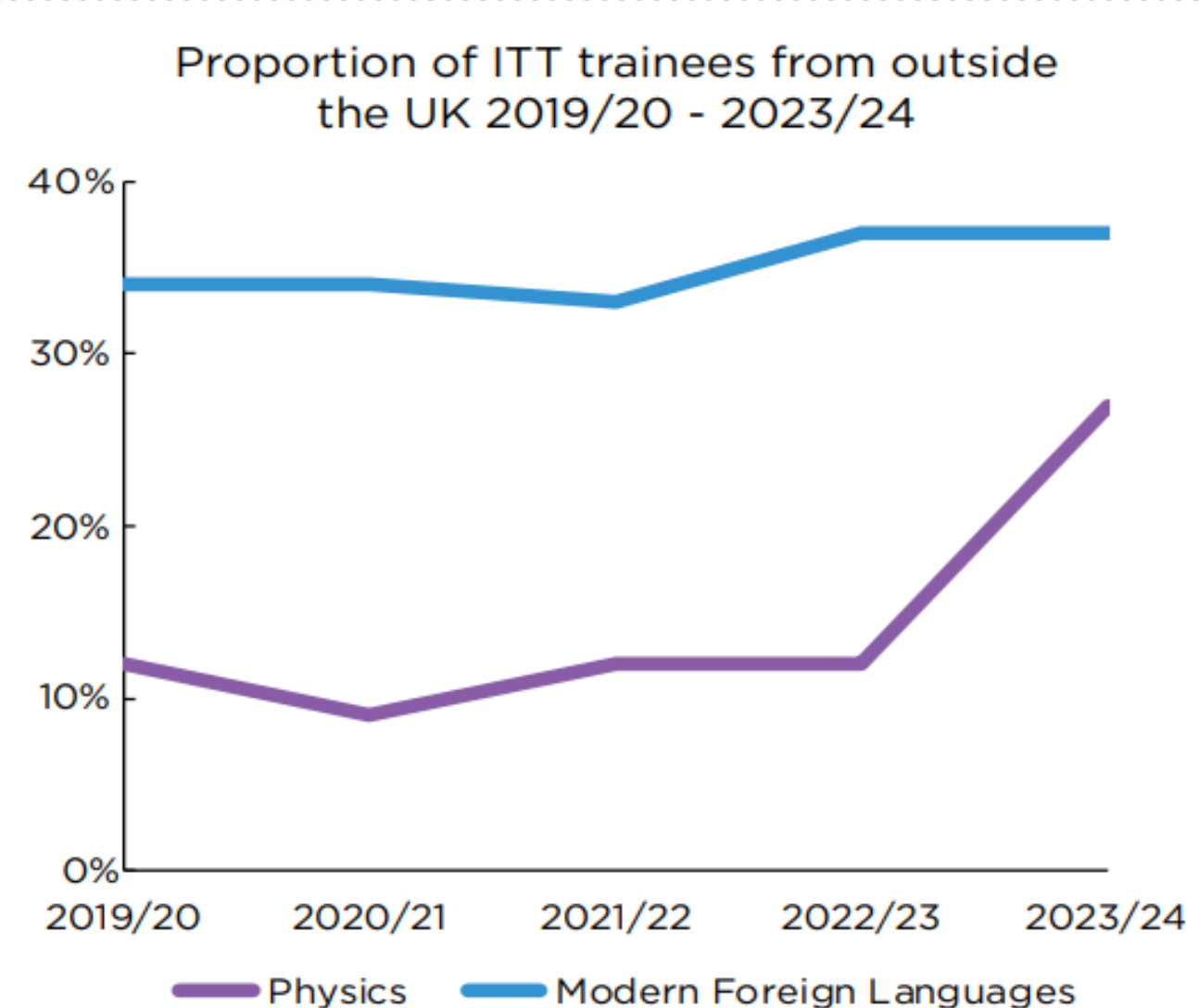
- On average teacher recruitment at Initial Teacher Training reaches half of its target year on year,
- teachers leaving rates increase year on year (NFER 2024) resulting in a crisis fulfilling teaching posts:



The case for international teacher recruitment

The Government incentives promoting bursaries for shortage scheme subjects resulted in an increase of international trainee teachers coming to England to gain Qualified Teacher Status in the United Kingdom with a particular increase in:

- STEM subjects (Science, Maths, Computing)
- Modern Foreign Languages



- International trainee teachers bring their own expertise, skills and a breadth of knowledge to the profession,
- they shine in resilience and adaptability facing the challenges of relocation to a new country and adapting their teaching skills to new curricula or pedagogical approaches.
- They face challenges that can be addressed through a more coherent and cohesive approach from policy makers
- In 2024 -2025, 26% of St Mary's University Postgraduate General Certificate of Education candidates in Secondary are international candidates
- Trainees come mainly from Europe, and West Africa for Modern Foreign Languages, and Physics. The data align with National data on the same year (DfE ITT applications for courses 2024-2025)
- 61% of the MFL cohorts 2024-2025 at St Mary's University is International

Opportunities for all

International trainee teachers:

- Bring new expertise to their subject specialism
- Engage and inspire young people through their experiences and cultural capital
- Driving force for decolonising the curriculum and showcase British Values on a day- to -day basis in the classroom
- Inspire with resilience and adaptability
- Ensure sustainability in teacher recruitment in key subject areas.
- Serve as role models for young people (UNESCO 2023)

Challenges

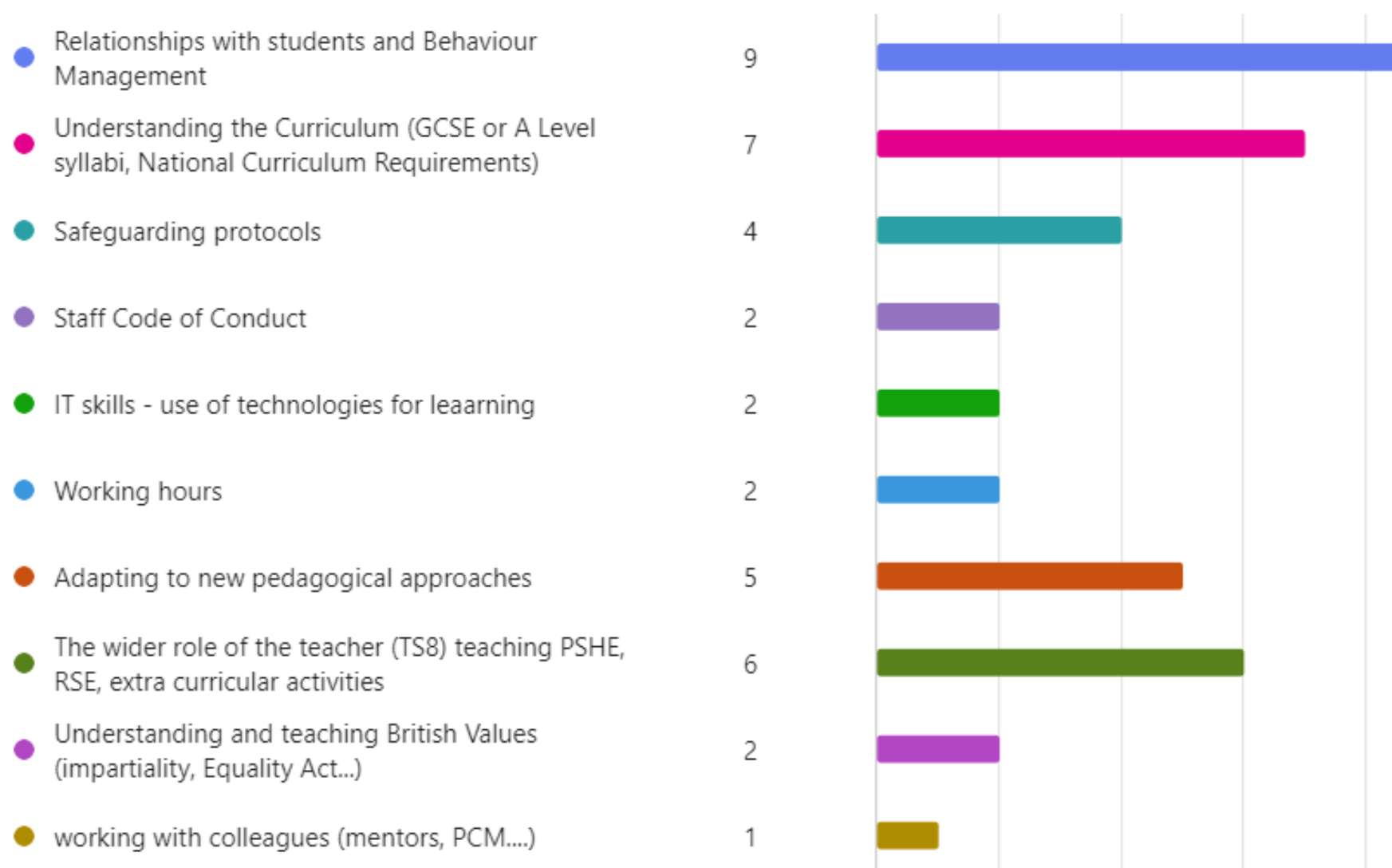
International trainee teachers face extreme challenges:

- Navigating settlement in England without appropriate relocation packages
- Precarity and cost of living in England
- Isolation and loneliness
- Adjusting to new systems, curricula, exam specifications, accountability measures and pedagogical approaches
- Adjusting to different approaches to behaviour management and safeguarding
- Unconscious Bias and micro-aggression from students and staff on school placement resulting in lower completion rate in Black, Asian, and Global Majority student teachers (Lander & Smith 2023)
- Linguistic adjustments (accents, academic writing)
- Difficulty in securing a job as Early Career Teachers as schools shy away from sponsorship and visa fees.

Which of the following factors may have affected your well-being during the course (tick all or any that apply)



Did you find any of these aspects of UK education challenging?



International trainee exit survey July 2024 St Mary's University.



St Mary's University International trainee teachers of Physics and Modern Foreign Languages from West Africa and Europe

Our support for integration of international trainee teachers:

To support our international trainee teachers in their PGCE courses, universities and ITE providers collaborate to address the challenges. St Mary's University has developed an international student expert body offering:

- pre-course module to introduce education systems, curricula, and framework for education in England.
- Support with visas, administration and settlement
- Support with hardship: food bank, second-hand clothes for school, household needs
- Support with academic writing, elocution, IT skills
- Support with well-being and mental health
- Support with micro-aggression and unconscious bias via our support network and training package for partner schools
- School based mentor and leaders training, support page and booklets
- Visas and sponsoring training for schools for future employment



Recommendations

To support the integration and development of the growing numbers of international trainee teachers coming to join the teaching profession in England we would invite policy makers to explore:

1. **Coherence in policies in recruitment from the Department for Education and immigration laws and quotas. Waiving visa requirements for trainee teachers and early career teachers in shortage. This would reduce administration and cost burden for candidates, Initial Teacher Training providers and schools trying to recruit teachers.**
2. **Re-evaluate relocation packages and bursaries to reduce precarity and support with the cost of living in the UK during training**
3. **Explore best practice from UNESCO Education 2030 and other countries who have developed robust international teacher recruitment such as New Zealand who offer relocation packages, and curriculum adjustment programmes before training starts reducing burden for schools and providers.**

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