

Education and Gaelic committee: pre-budget scrutiny

Submission by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland)

1. Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's pre-budget scrutiny on the planned reduction in class contact time, particularly its implications for local authority teacher supply and deployment.

2. About us

GTC Scotland is the independent regulator for teachers. We set and uphold professional standards through teacher education accreditation, registration and investigation of serious concerns. Teachers in Scottish schools must be registered with us, as must college lecturers under the 2018 national agreement.

Under the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011, we use Register data to advise Ministers on teacher supply. Teachers' remuneration and conditions of service are outside our remit; our focus is maintaining high standards and quality learning.

3. Our Register

Our annual registration report [not reproduced] supports national decisions on teacher supply, retention and workforce planning.

At 31 March 2026, the Register contained 80,560 registrants holding 92,419 registrations—down 0.72% and 0.91% respectively in one year, and 1.64% and 2.44% since March 2023. The data highlights a number of pressure points. These include reduced applications from Scotland-qualified teachers; fewer teachers moving from provisional to full registration; declining secondary registrations in some subjects; and very small, broadly static Gaelic registration.

Retirement remains the main reason for leaving, but responses also identify early-career retention, support, workload, access to posts and workplace culture—including harassment and discrimination—as national priorities.

4. Our recommendations

We continue to call for a national teacher supply strategy: a coherent, evidence-led plan to anticipate which teachers Scotland needs, where and when, and how they will be recruited, supported and retained.

This must form part of wider education reform, be developed in partnership and combine complementary strands: there is no single solution to teacher supply.

Together, our five recommendations remove barriers to teaching as an attractive career while directing action to areas of greatest workforce need.

1. Focus on teacher retention. Strengthen induction, early-career support, career-long learning and workplace culture to retain existing teachers and improve the profession's attractiveness.
2. Increase teacher mobility. Promote and fund additional registration, initially in priority secondary subjects, to widen teachers' deployment and career options while meeting curriculum needs.
3. Hold firm on high teaching standards. Avoid quick fixes that lower entry requirements or diminish the profession's status; ensure system partners understand and embed Scotland's professional standards.
4. Understand workforce gaps. Improve the quality, integration and use of national data so decisions are timely and targeted, and teachers can see where opportunities exist.
5. Consider system structures. Commission practical work on flexible and part-time working, professional learning, career progression and wellbeing to improve the profession's attractiveness and diversity.

Our current areas of focus

Three priorities require government investment and system collaboration.

Teacher induction. Renew induction so it nurtures provisionally registered teachers rather than primarily filling vacancies. Any employment guarantee needs redesigned arrangements, government leadership and aligned funding.

[We published a report in March this year](#), which sets out our views on teacher induction as it is experienced by provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) today, how removed it has become from its original purpose, and what our recommendations for change are. Early feedback from partner organisations suggests that it reflects concerns shared across the system. However, it would require a government-led acknowledgement of the need for change and commitment to detailed design of a new approach with aligned funding.

Career-long development. Initial teacher education alone cannot resolve system pressures. The emerging national framework should support sustained, practical and contextual learning across teachers' careers and form an explicit strand of the teacher supply strategy. It's a central feature of quality education delivery that teachers are employed to teach according to their registration category. It is also a longstanding requirement that teachers in specialist subjects should have a certain level of degree level study in the subject they teach, as well as hold a teaching qualification that matches their subject.

We are aware that current attention is being given to better support teachers to achieve registration in ASN. Consideration of funding to support unemployed, and potentially provisionally registered, primary teachers to gain ASN registration is in our view the wrong area of focus as the first priority for government support.

Additional registration. Prioritise support for experienced, fully registered primary teachers who already have relevant qualifications to gain registration in shortage secondary subjects. This would increase mobility, maintain standards and create suitable opportunities for beginning teachers.

By contrast, a priority focus on supporting new teachers to gain ASN registration risks creating an unhelpful narrative that issues around national workforce planning should be addressed through individual teacher 'retraining'. We are also unclear about the level of available employment in ASN roles and are concerned that this approach may create further dissatisfaction and uncertainty about career prospects for those teachers.

5. Conclusion

Evidence on reducing class contact time quickly exposes wider, connected issues: teacher supply and mobility, initial teacher education and induction, national workforce data and the maintenance of professional standards. A coordinated national strategy is therefore essential.