Introduction and background

The government is aware of a need to increase the recruitment of more high-calibre teachers, particularly in the secondary sector where pupil numbers are forecast to rise in the next few years. Last March, the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, committed to developing a teacher recruitment and retention strategy. Following consultation with experts and professionals across the sector, the strategy document sets out the government’s priorities for ensuring that a career in teaching remains attractive, sustainable and rewarding. At the heart of the strategy is the Early Career Framework (ECF), which will provide a funded entitlement to a structured 2-year package of high-quality teacher development.

Key points

Creating the right climate for leaders

- The government aims to establish a climate in which school leaders can develop supportive school cultures. It recognises that there are barriers which currently hinder the creation of such a positive culture. The strategy therefore sets out ways of tackling this.
- Firstly, school accountability can create unintended challenges which increase teacher workload. School accountability needs to be simpler, clearer and more supportive. The government has therefore made it clear that from now on only Ofsted will inspect and that the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner is solely to commission.
- Performance data is important, but it should only be a starting point for understanding a school’s needs, informing a more rounded judgement. In the future, formal intervention will only result from an Ofsted ‘inadequate’ judgement. In addition, the government is to launch a consultation on whether an Ofsted ‘requires improvement’ judgement should be the sole trigger for an offer of support from September 2019 onwards. This measure would replace the floor and coasting standards.
- In order to ensure that the system of school improvement support is as strong as possible, there will be a review of the role of teaching schools.
- Over the past 30 years, Ofsted has had a vital role in driving school improvement. However, perceptions of ‘what Ofsted wants’ have led to behaviours which can distract school leaders and staff from their core purpose. The new inspection framework will have a specific focus on teacher workload; under the Leadership and Management judgement, Ofsted will consider whether workload is unnecessarily high.
- In line with Professor Becky Allen’s Making Data Work report, no arm of government will ask schools for: data tracking systems; specific evidence of lesson planning and marking; and pupil targets and predictions.
- The government acknowledges the need to maintain a period of stability in curriculum, qualifications and assessment. Whereas recent reforms have raised standards, the scale and pace of change has created additional burdens for teachers. Therefore, beyond those already announced, there will be: no additional statutory tests or assessment for primary schools; no further changes to the national curriculum; and no further reform of GCSEs or A levels.
- The government recognises that pupil misbehaviour is a key contributor to teacher workload and stress. The Early Career Framework includes an entitlement for all new teachers to enhanced training in this area. A total of £10 million has been invested in the creation of hubs to facilitate sharing on classroom management and effective whole school systems. Behaviour will be more prominent in the new Ofsted framework; one of the 4 categories will be dedicated to an assessment of how schools create a culture in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn.
- Although there is more money going into schools than ever before, they still face budgetary challenges. Pledges made in order to meet these challenges include: the introduction of a nationwide Teacher Vacancies Service enabling all schools to advertise posts free of charge; partnerships with local authorities and multi-academy trusts (MATs) to develop ‘local offers’ which would offer a range of benefits; and exploring the possibility of building new homes for teachers on school land.

Transforming support for early career teachers

- Too many teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years. It is therefore essential to create a package of support and incentives for early career teachers. A number of challenges must be overcome in order to achieve this. Too few teachers receive the support they need at the point when they are facing the steepest learning curve. Financial incentives are focussed on recruitment rather than retention. Early career teachers are often burdened by an expectation that they will plan lessons and create resources from scratch.
- The Early Career Framework (ECF), which was launched alongside this strategy document, aims to address these challenges. Following pilots, it will be rolled out in phases from September 2020 to September 2021. Key features of the ECF are: 5 per cent off timetable in the second year of teaching; the provision of high-quality training materials
and training programmes; funding time for the mentoring of early career teachers; and fully-funded mentor training.

- The government will provide further financial incentives for teachers to stay in teaching. There is already a student loan reimbursement scheme for early career teachers working in challenging areas. The government has also piloted a change to the bursary scheme, whereby maths teachers have a lower initial bursary and are then given additional payments after their 3rd and 5th years in teaching; these payments are higher if they are working in disadvantaged areas. This phased bursary model will be extended so that around 40 per cent of bursary spend will be on retention; payments will be higher for those working in more challenging schools.

A career offer which remains attractive

- As teachers move through the teaching profession, they should be able to pursue different pathways and adopt different working patterns. A number of key challenges must be addressed, namely: a lack of career opportunities for those who wish to remain in the classroom; a lack of incentives to encourage teachers to work where they are most needed; and the large number of teachers currently leaving the profession because of a lack of part-time or flexible working opportunities.

- There is already a suite of NPQ qualifications supporting teachers who wish to progress to leadership positions. The government will now develop specialist qualifications for a number of other roles, including that of Teacher Developer which will support the mentoring to be provided within the ECF. Schools will also be able to use their apprenticeship levy to enable staff to train for and take on new roles.

- High-quality teaching has the biggest impact for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, there are too few incentives to encourage quality graduate teachers to work in disadvantaged schools. The desire to shift these incentives lies at the heart of this strategy document. There will be weighted retention payments for teachers in challenging schools and specific efforts to ensure that more good teachers are working in challenging schools after completing their training.

- The above-mentioned creation of new professional qualifications will create enhanced opportunities for teachers working in challenging areas. The £42 million Teacher Development Premium which will fund take-up of the new qualifications, will first be rolled out in the North East, Bradford, Doncaster and Greater Manchester.

- The government recognises the need for teachers to have better access to flexible and part-time working. It will take steps to address this including: creating a new high profile ‘find your jobshare’ website; launching a competition for EdTech providers to create part-time and flexible working solutions including timetabling tools; and providing a range of best practice resources. The government is also working to develop a sabbatical pilot for more established teachers where they can gain further relevant experience, e.g. in a related industry setting.

Make it easy for great people to become teachers

- The process of becoming a teacher is currently too complex. Despite high levels of interest, not enough people progress to making an application. The ITT market is overly complex, causing inefficiencies and incentives which can prevent good teachers from working where they are most needed.

- In order to enable more potential applicants to experience teaching, there will be a new Discover Teaching initiative which will include the introduction of a virtual reality classroom, expansion of the Teaching Internship Programme and increasing the number of teacher taster days.

- In 2017-18, over 150,000 people registered on the Get into Teaching website, but only 45,000 applied for mainstream postgraduate teacher training. Applicants currently have to navigate 3 separate systems to register interest, find and apply for a course.

- Some measures have already been introduced to mitigate the complexity of the current system including support by teacher training advisers and the new Find Teacher Training Service which was launched in October 2018. Building on these initiatives, the government plans to design a new one-stop application system to work in tandem with the Get into Teaching website and the Find Teacher Training Service.

- The government will invest over £6 million in a range of measures to attract those over the age of 25. These include: supporting Teach First to develop a bespoke route for career changers; expanding the Now Teach programme; and supporting a new Transition to Teaching initiative.

- The government will review the Shortage Occupations list which determines which skills migrants need in order to enter the country. It will explore whether the list should include teachers of other subjects apart from maths, physics, general science, computing and Mandarin. Where suitably skilled teachers are not available domestically, the government will explore opportunities to develop partnerships, focussing particularly on language teachers.

- The government wishes to review the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) market so that it can operate more efficiently. It will therefore: support new providers to enter the market where they have a compelling plan for growth; continue with unlimited ITT recruitment to all postgraduate primary and secondary ITT courses (with the exception of PE fee-funded courses) for the next 2 recruitment cycles; and expand and develop more undergraduate ITT.

- A review of the ITT market will be undertaken to examine how costs can be reduced for providers and to enable high-quality providers to extend their reach.

- The government recognises the contribution of Teach First particularly in working with schools in challenging areas. It will therefore consider supporting Teach First to gain QTS recognising power, encouraging them to work with small school-based providers.

- The government wishes to provide a pathway for teaching assistants to study part-time for a BEd, BA or BSc degree with qualified teacher status (QTS), whilst continuing to work. It will work closely with universities and schools to explore how they can support more teaching assistants to choose to teach.