

20 October 2023

**TO: PARENTS AND CARERS
BRIGHTER FUTURES LEARNING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

Dear Parent/Carer

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING CRISIS IN SCHOOLS - WE NEED YOUR HELP!

I am writing to give you an update on the national teacher recruitment crisis and how this may impact on your child's education. Without wishing to be alarmist, we are currently witnessing a perfect storm, as schools across the country are struggling to recruit due to a lack of good candidates. The chronic teacher shortage, combined with an unusually tight labour market, is putting additional pressure on school leaders and staff to manage classes without subject teachers.

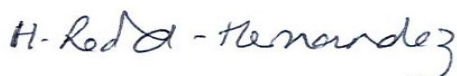
We have been lucky thus far in that we have so many fantastic colleagues in our Trust who have been prepared to 'go beyond the extra mile', many of whom have covered classes to avoid students not having a teacher. We are aware that in some schools, students do not have teachers in essential core subjects such as Maths, English and Science. In others, classes of 60 are being taught to avoid school closures. We are not at that point yet, but unless the government can recruit more teachers, the problem will increase as the pupil population increases.

So why am I writing to you?

As the CEO of our Trust, I see the everyday pressures our staff are under. I am sure that although we cannot resolve the teacher crisis, there may be parents and relatives in our local community who would wish to support our schools with volunteering to hear children read in our primary schools. Equally, they may be thinking of a career change and would like to work in schools with the benefits of schools holidays and a very good pension. We have several vacancies in our Trust at the moment which range from teaching assistants, administrators and finance posts. We offer great learning and training opportunities as well as the support of experienced colleagues. If you are thinking about a career change and want to make a real difference to the children and young people in your community, then why not be brave? We will help you to make a difference!

If you are interested in any of the above posts please contact Mrs Tracy Duncan by email: duncan.t@brighterfutureslpt.com.

Yours sincerely



Helen Redford-Hernandez

CEO BFLPT

Teacher shortages**'Year 10 was a write-off': the pupils at the sharp end of England's teacher recruitment crisis**

Parents tell of combined classes, non-specialists and self-teaching as rising vacancies take a toll



📷 A teacher marking a pupil's homework. A record 40,000 teachers quit state education in England last year. Photograph: PA

Clea Skopeliti

Thu 13 Jul 2023 14:00 BST

In the run-up to her GCSEs this year, Ruby*, 16, from south London, turned to YouTube for learning because of staff shortages at her school. "We spent a lot of time going [online] and trying to find the person who most knew what they were talking about," says her mother, Helen.

The teenager was left to teach herself some of the material for a final exam after a turbulent year of teachers quitting, non-specialists covering lessons, and classes being combined in a hall with a single teacher in charge of up to 60 pupils.

Students fared better in combined classes than with non-specialist cover teachers, her mother says. But the situation was far from ideal. "She appreciated the fact there was a specialist in the room, but the problem was you couldn't ask any questions because of the sheer number of students."

Still, Helen reckons her daughter is one of the lucky ones. "Her grade profile is 8s and 9s [equivalent to A* under the old grading system]. She's smart and can just get on with it. But most can't. Some of her friends have given up - they say there's no point as long as we just pass. These are students who are bright and should be aiming higher."

Helen, 48, does not blame the school. "They're always trying to do their best with what seems like a rubbish situation."

A **record 40,000 teachers** in England - almost 9% of the total - resigned from state education last year, the latest **workforce survey** by the Department for Education (DfE) shows, while about 4,000 retired. Dozens of parents told the Guardian that their children's education was suffering because of teachers being forced by vacancies to teach outside their specialism, and some said certain subjects were no longer offered at their school.

Teacher vacancies in England **doubled in two years**, from 1,100 in November 2020 to 2,300 in November 2022. **Recruitment** is especially an issue in secondary schools. Meanwhile, **staff sickness is up**, with the average number of sick days taken increasing from 4.1 in 2018-19 to 6.3 in 2021-22.

Alex*, 15, recently failed his first ICT BTec coursework module. "He wasn't surprised - he's consistently said he's confused and that nobody knows what they're doing," says his mother, Jane, 52, who works in digital skills in Bristol. For several months last year, the class was taught by supply teachers. "He no longer sees the value of education; it's a massive struggle to get him to do homework as many of the others don't do it," Jane says.

A teacher with training has recently taken over the class, which Jane is more hopeful about. Alex will have a chance to resubmit his coursework, Jane says, but there will be a lot of catching up to do. Before this, they had been working independently from online materials and handouts. Classroom behaviour suffered, Jane says. "Particularly if you have supply teachers, children will play up. They call them babysitters."

As a maths teacher, David, 56, from the West Midlands, knows just how acute the staff retention crisis is. **Like many others**, his daughter Jess's* school has been unable to recruit maths teachers and the bottom sets have been taught by non-specialists for large parts of the last two years.

In year 10, Jess was taught maths by a non-specialist - predominantly, David understands, by a PE teacher. "The lower sets get anyone who can fill the gap," he says.

Having a maths teacher for a father meant Jess benefited from teaching outside school hours. "Some of her friends were getting tutors, those that were lucky enough to afford it. Year 10 was a write-off. She said the class was

a waste of time." **Teaching** improved in year 11, he says, with a specialist teaching some lessons.

David says the social problems exacerbated by pandemic and the cost of living crisis have played a role in the staffing crisis, as well as the long-term problem of unsustainable workloads.

"Particularly in key areas like sciences and maths, there's no quick fix unless you can get more graduates to train and stay in the profession. If you're a graduate, you're being recruited by banks and financial institutions straight out of university. There's no obvious plan to solve this."

He worries that the staffing crisis is affecting students' futures. "There's a whole slice of kids who will come out below grade 4 [equivalent to a C], who if they had been given proper teaching by qualified staff would have got a grade 4 or higher. No doubt about it."

**Names have been changed.*

● This article was amended on 14 July 2023. Owing to an editing error, an earlier version said grade 8 and 9 results at GCSE are equivalent to A* and A grades. They are in fact equivalent to A* only

