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Ms Georgia Gould OBE MP
Minister of State for School Standards
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
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9 October 2025

Dear Ms Gould,

This week, along with thousands of art and design educator members, we learned that the 2026-27 cohort of future art and design trainee teachers will not receive a bursary for their PGCE. We understand that every department is looking for savings but at the cost of art and design teachers, we ask, is the allocation of future bursaries fair?

Drawing on your own [Department for Education data](#), we have identified the following teacher vacancy rates for 2024-25:

- Chemistry has a 0.2% teacher vacancy rate; Computing has a 0.8% rate. Both subjects retain their entire bursary of £29K
- Geography has a 0.8% teacher vacancy rate, the same as art and design, and they will be awarded a £5K bursary
- Music has a 0.9% teacher vacancy rate, with a 10K bursary
- Art and design has a teacher vacancy rate of 0.7% with a 10K bursary: an improvement of 0.1% from 0.8% (2023-24). Music and Art and Design will have their bursaries cut.

We are not asking you to remove the bursaries of other subjects; instead, we ask if it is fair to cut the bursary of those subjects who – despite having a bursary until now – have similar or worse vacancy rates to subjects who will retain a bursary.

Furthermore, the teacher supply target for art and design in 2023-24 was 824, just 369 teachers were recruited. The target for 2024/25 was 1095, just 721 were recruited. Whilst the number of trainees recruited for art and design did increase last year, only 44% of the

target for 2023/24 was met, rising to only 62% of the target reached last year. We have yet to see how well the subject has recruited to ITE courses this year.

But, even with an improvement in the art and design teacher supply targets (from 44% to just 62%), we know that some of our member schools are finding it hard, indeed impossible, to recruit subject specialists. Art and design posts are not being filled, and classes are being taught by those who do not have subject-specific expertise.

Evidence also shows that those schools who cannot appoint and are more likely to rely on non-specialists or supply teachers, are in areas of high social disadvantage. The Gatsby Foundation, report, [*Teacher recruitment and retention in 2025: Social Disadvantage and teacher labour market dynamics*](#), published April 2025, says:

'Schools serving areas of high social disadvantage face distinct recruitment challenges compared with those in more affluent communities. Schools with higher proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals are more likely to rely on non-specialist or supply teachers and tend to experience higher staff turnover and a greater proportion of early-career teachers.'

It is one thing to inherit a system that falls short of recruitment targets, but it is another thing to add to it. The gaps in recruitment which lead to academic and social disadvantages will undoubtedly lead to gaps in achievement and in turn to a decrease in school standards.

Not only do we believe this will have an immediate impact on recruitment, but we must also speak on behalf of those teachers who trained in the past without a bursary, and those that currently stand to train in 2026-27. We have documented in the past the impact of the previous government's policies – when art and design trainees did *not* have a bursary: Our members described 'sofa-surfing' during their intensive PGCE year, and even with a loan working every weekend to pay rent and bills. With the cost-of-living worsening, we believe that this policy will have catastrophic consequences – not only on recruitment and retention, but it will also lead to economic hardship for our trainees.

With widening gaps in standards, continued very poor recruitment and retention, and a policy that will impact economically on our trainees, we ask that you reconsider this announcement. We believe the combination of failure to fill art and design teacher vacancies is compounded by the failure to meet ITE targets. We also believe that the situation will be even worse if the bursary is withdrawn, creating glaring gaps in teacher supply that will be felt by a generation of learners to come.

Yours sincerely

Andy Ash and President of NSEAD
(2024-26)



Michele Gregson, General Secretary of
NSEAD

