



The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith

Minister for Skills

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Baroness Wolf of Dulwich DBE
House of Lords
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Tuesday 7th October 2025

Dear Baroness Wolf,

I would like to thank you for the interesting debate on clause 46 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which seeks to expand legislation that requires teachers to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) from local authority-maintained schools and special schools to also include primary and secondary academies.

Having well trained, expert teachers in our schools is critical to children's outcomes. QTS ensures that teachers have the fundamental skills that are essential for great teaching. This government therefore expects teachers to be professionally qualified. However, we recognise there are some circumstances where it might be reasonable for school leaders to recruit a teacher without QTS, and there are existing exemptions set out in secondary legislation that allow for this (Schedule 1 to the Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012).

The department has engaged extensively with the schools' sector, including with the Local Government Association, school unions, the Confederation of School Trusts and leaders of academies, to ensure that the exemptions will work practically for academies and local authority-maintained schools. The department has also spoken to leaders of special schools and other specialist settings to ensure that the exemptions continue to provide them with the flexibility to recruit the specialists that they need.

We have heard from the sector that there is a lack of awareness of the secondary legislation that sets out the exemptions, and that the way the secondary legislation is worded is unclear. We have therefore committed to updating and clarifying the secondary legislation, and to publishing guidance to schools on the exemptions. We will continue to engage with stakeholders as we develop this.

I committed to write to you with details of the exemptions, so I have outlined these below, with some examples of good practice.

Instructors with special qualifications or experience

We expect instructors to be drawing on their expertise to lead particular parts of a curriculum, where their expertise is required, rather than leading teaching and learning for a full curriculum.

Examples of good practice:

- Swimming teachers can deliver swimming lessons or rugby coaches can support in rugby lessons as part of the PE curriculum.
- A local businessperson can deliver particular elements of a business studies curriculum.
- Physiotherapists and occupational therapists delivering activities as part of a lesson, or multiple lessons, in specialist settings.

For vocational courses, particular training and experience may be required. The exemptions mean that these courses can be led by an appropriately qualified or experienced professional without QTS.

Examples of good practice:

- For a vocational course, such as motor mechanics, an instructor with qualifications and experience relating to the vocation would be able to lead the course.
- A travel and tourism course may be led by an instructor with appropriate experience.

Overseas trained teachers, who can work in English schools for up to 4 years without QTS

DfE has a free Apply for QTS service for teachers who trained in some countries and who meet the eligibility criteria. Schools can still recruit teachers who trained in other countries (subject to immigration rules), but they need to undertake a recognised route to QTS. We allow 4 years to give these teachers reasonable time to go through this process, which sometimes includes needing to formally evidence their overseas teaching practice.

Examples of good practice:

- A teacher who was trained in France applies for QTS using the DfE service. They can work in an English school while their application is considered (this can take up to a year).
- A teacher who was trained in Jamaica can work in an English school while they formally evidence the required experience to meet the criteria for the Assessment Only route to QTS.

Teachers on employment-based teacher training schemes that lead to QTS

We will update regulations to make it clear that unqualified teachers have three terms to secure a place on a regulated route to QTS with an accredited ITT provider. This will ensure that the requirement for QTS does not hold up schools' recruitment processes.

Examples of good practice:

- A school has a maths vacancy and wants to recruit a maths graduate without QTS rather than a non-subject expert with QTS. Head teachers can recruit the maths expert without QTS, but they will then need to support that teacher to gain QTS through an employment-based ITT course with an accredited provider.
- A school wants to recruit an experienced teacher from a private school who has a degree but not QTS. They recruit the experienced teacher and support them to get QTS through the Assessment Only route (which typically takes 12 weeks).

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Individuals working under the supervision of a teacher with QTS

Supervision does not necessarily mean that a qualified teacher must be physically in the classroom with an unqualified teacher. However, robust, formalised arrangements must be in place to ensure that a teacher with QTS is overseeing the quality of teaching and learning so that children receive high quality teaching that meets the Teachers' Standards.

Examples of good practice:

- An ex-engineer wants to give back to society by teaching physics for a year or two at the end of their careers. While the expectation is that career changers gain QTS, it may not be appropriate for someone who planned to teach for one or two years to undertake teacher training. We would expect these individuals to be working under supervision arrangements.
- An unqualified teacher teaching individual, or groups of, pupils in a classroom, where a teacher with QTS is overseeing the teaching and learning of the whole class.

We recognise that in extending this legislation to academies, we need to ensure that we do not disrupt academies' current contractual arrangements with unqualified teachers. We will therefore be introducing an additional exemption for **teachers already working in academies**. Teachers who commence their employment with a school or trust before the implementation date will not be subject to the requirements for QTS. This means that they will be able to stay in their current role or move roles with their employer, including within their trust if the trust is their employer. However, if they were to commence employment with a new employer, they would be required to have QTS or meet one of the exemptions to the requirement for QTS.

The government will also specify in secondary legislation the types of academies the requirement for QTS will apply to. QTS is the professional status for primary and secondary teachers and as such 16 – 19 academies and academy nurseries are not subject to the requirement. Other high quality professional training is available for those who wish to teach young children and babies or in further education.

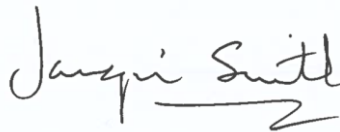
Additionally, University Technical Colleges, City Technical Colleges and Studio Schools offer a curriculum that focuses on technical and vocational education and need the flexibility to employ specialist teachers with a range of expertise, knowledge, and experience to deliver it effectively. These settings will also not be subject to the requirement for teachers to have QTS.

Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) is a professional teaching qualification that is available for further education teachers. Since 1 April 2012, teachers with QTLS status and professional membership to the Education and Training Foundation, have QTS and are able to teach in schools as qualified teachers. This change followed a recommendation from your independent review of vocational education in 2011¹ and was made specifically to give secondary schools greater access to experienced teachers of vocational subjects.

Taken together, the primary and secondary legislation will ensure that new teachers in England, and the children in their classes, benefit from high quality training and a professional induction, while also allowing school leaders reasonable flexibility in circumstances where it may be appropriate to employ a teacher without QTS.

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jacqui Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report>