

OVERVIEW

In December 2025, the Government published [2025/26 Initial Teacher Training \(ITT\) census figures](#) on recruitment to ITT courses against targets.

For maths, the Government exceeded its postgraduate teacher recruitment target, with 2,588 new entrants against a target of 2,300. However, in April 2025, the Government also lowered its target for maths teachers for 2025/26 by 25%, from 3,065 to 2,300.

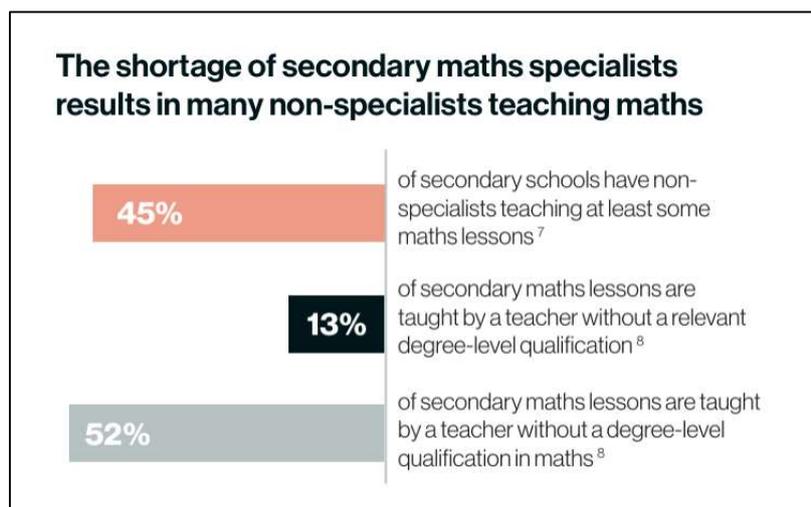
Maths' popularity at A-Level has been growing steadily year-on-year. It is already the most-chosen subject [with 112,138 entries in 2025](#), representing a 4% increase on the year before.

We believe that the Government has underestimated the number of specialist maths teachers required to avoid future shortages, which will lead to a higher proportion of pupils being taught by a non-specialist teacher and larger class sizes at A-Level.

This briefing outlines our concerns in further detail and provides an overview of our research into maths class sizes at A-Level, undertaken in partnership with the polling organisation, Teacher Tapp.

CONTEXT

There is a shortage of secondary maths specialists in England.

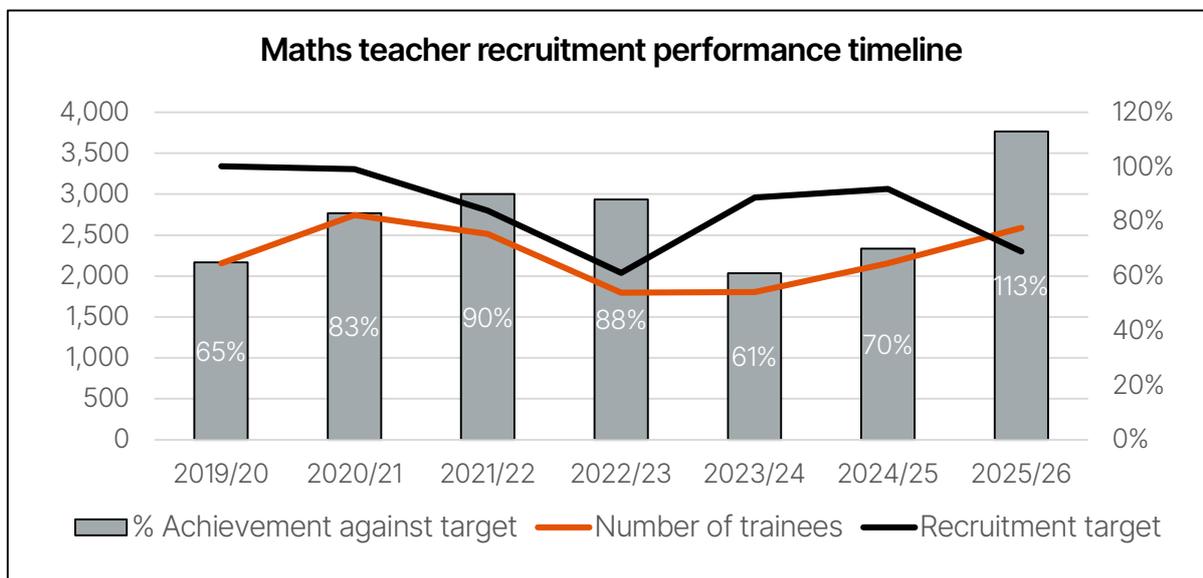


According to the National Foundation for Educational Research, 45% of secondary schools have non-specialists teaching at least some maths lessons, and 13% of secondary maths lessons are taught by a teacher without a relevant degree level qualification. Insufficient recruitment of trainee teachers is [a key reason behind current shortages](#).

This shortage in trainee teachers is not distributed equally across the education system. Secondary schools with a higher percentage of free-school meal eligible pupils are [more likely to have non-specialists teaching maths](#).

The Department for Education [argued](#) that the lowered post-graduate recruitment target across multiple subjects, including maths, was due to falling pupil numbers as well as an “*earlier boost in recruitment that is expected to deliver greater numbers of qualified teachers in the future*”.

However, the maths ITT recruitment target has been missed consistently prior to 2025/26. In 2024/25 alone, there were just 2,157 new entrants against a target of 3,065 (70%).



A single year of successful recruitment is not enough to reverse the cumulative damage from many years of under-recruitment. It would take sustained recruitment at or above the target to reverse this trend, and to meet growing demand.

Additionally, the target does not appear to take into account class sizes, particularly at A-level, where maths entries are at record levels and classes must be taught by a subject specialist.

Class sizes and attainment: the evidence

The evidence for the effects of reduced class sizes on outcomes is mixed. However, in 2015, the Institute of Labour Economics [noted](#) “the general finding is that smaller classes are associated with increased student achievement”.

Similarly, the Education Endowment Foundation [suggested](#) that any “significant effects of reducing class size” occur in classes of “fewer than 20 or even 15 pupils”. The EEF caveats this point by stating that “a reduction in class size is only likely to be effective if it permits teachers to change their teaching approach to the extent that this changes the learning behaviours of pupils”.

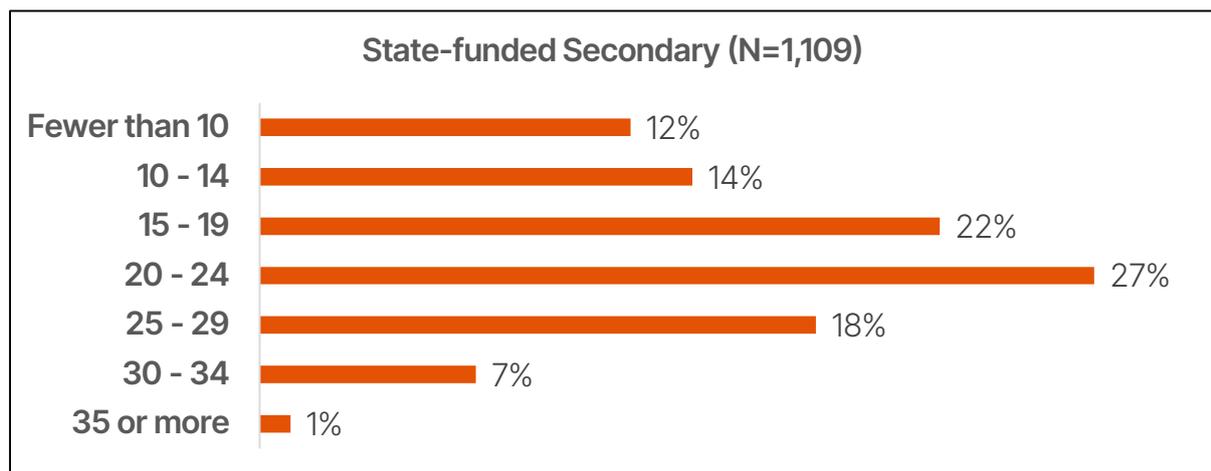
Importantly, the EEF found that the positive effects of reduced class sizes for maths are higher than for other subjects. For example, class size reductions of 8 or more resulted in the equivalent of two additional months of teaching per year for maths, versus one month for reading.

OUR FINDINGS

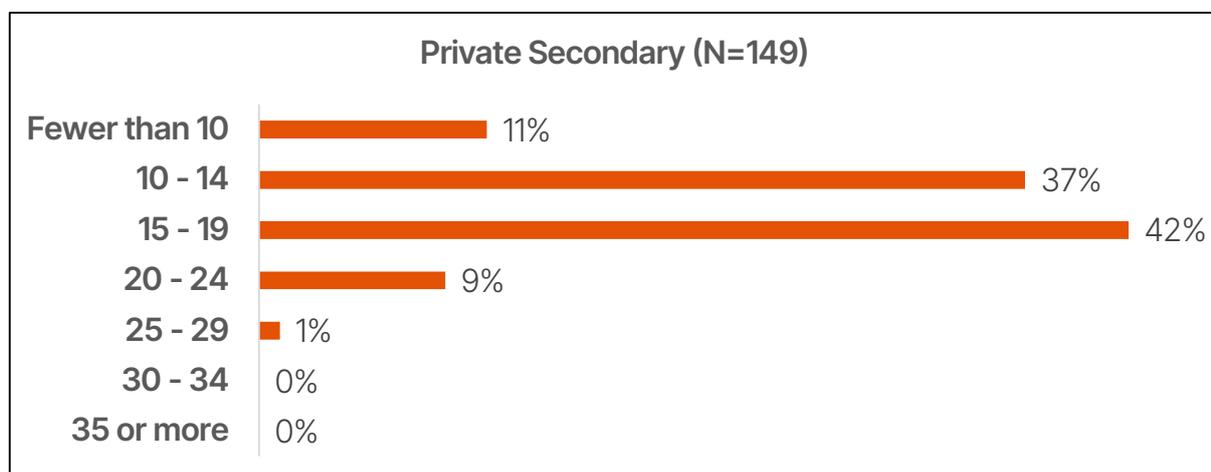
CaMS commissioned research from Teacher Tapp to gain a clearer understanding of A-Level maths class sizes in English schools.

We polled 1,258 teachers, asking them how many students are in their largest A-level maths class in this academic year.

More than half (53%) of state-funded schools teaching A-Levels maths have a class with 20 or more pupils, with a quarter (26%) having classes of 25 or more:



There is a marked difference in class sizes compared with private schools. Only a tenth of private schools have class sizes of 20 or more, and just 1% have a class of 25 or more pupils:



NEXT STEPS

Targets for the 2026/27 intake for post-graduate initial teacher training courses will be set in April.

CaMS will be urging the Government to take a longer-term approach to mathematics recruitment, correcting for more than a decade of under-recruitment and raising future recruitment targets to support maths' growing popularity.

We would be grateful for your assistance in raising this issue, both in Parliament and through your conversations with ministerial colleagues. We are happy to provide drafts of correspondence and additional briefing.

Please find below draft parliamentary questions for your consideration.

Education Oral Questions (Education, Monday 2 March):

1. Substantive: Will the government increase the target for the recruitment of maths teachers for 2026/27?

Supplementary: Can the Secretary of State please explain why the Department has lowered the target for recruiting maths teachers when the numbers of students studying maths at A level is increasing.

2. Substantive: What steps she is taking the improve the recruitment of maths teachers?

Supplementary: Maths' popularity at A-Level is growing year-on-year. It is already the most popular subject with 112,138 entries in 2025, representing a 4% increase on the year before. However, research from the Campaign for Mathematical Sciences has found that teacher-pupil ratios remain too large: more than half of state schools (53%) have an A-Level maths class with more than 20 pupils, and a quarter (26%) having classes of 25 pupils or more. Smaller class sizes in mathematics are associated with an equivalent of two months' additional learning. Will the Secretary of State increase the maths teacher recruitment targets for postgraduate initial teacher training (PGITT) courses to meet this increased demand and ensure pupils are equipped with the maths skills that will enable them to thrive in the digital economy.

3. Substantive: What assessment has her Department made of the size of maths classes at GCSE and A level?

Supplementary: One in seven secondary maths lessons is currently taught by a teacher without a relevant degree. Given the Department slashed the maths teacher recruitment target by 25%, how can the Secretary of State claim to be addressing this specialist gap when she is narrowing the pipeline of qualified talent?

Written Parliamentary Questions:

1. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will outline (a) the reasons for the downwards revision in maths teacher recruitment targets for postgraduate initial teacher training (PGITT) courses, and (b) the process for how these targets are determined year-on-year to meet projected demand.
2. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the maths teacher recruitment target for postgraduate initial teacher training (PGITT) course entries in 2025/26, in light of maths' continued growth in popularity as an A-Level subject.
3. To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to address (a) the disparity in A-Level maths class sizes between the most and least deprived schools, and (b) the 13% of secondary school maths lessons being taught by a teacher with no relevant degree-level qualification.