ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Making teaching an attractive profession: What are the challenges and opportunities for minority ethnic teachers in England?

Antonina Tereshchenko[1] | Feyisa Demie[2] | Stephen Gorard[2] |
Yiyang Gao[2] | Beng Huat See[2] | Nadia Siddiqui[2]

[1]Department of Education, Brunel University of London, Uxbridge, UK

[2]Evidence Centre for Education, School of Education, Durham University, Durham, UK

Correspondence
Antonina Tereshchenko, Department of Education, Brunel University of London, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UK.
Email: antonina.tereshchenko@brunel.ac.uk

Funding information
Economic and Social Research Council, Grant/Award Number: ES/X00208X/1

Abstract
This paper explores the challenges and opportunities surrounding the recruitment and retention of minority ethnic teachers in England. Drawing on interview data from 33 teachers and school leaders of diverse ethnic backgrounds, it investigates whether racialised barriers identified in earlier research have shifted in the current context of teacher shortages and workforce diversification efforts. The findings suggest that participants generally did not face obstacles in securing classroom teaching roles, attributing this to staff shortages and, in some cases, schools' diversity goals. However, systemic barriers to career progression persist, with experienced teachers—particularly Black teachers—reporting racism and discrimination more frequently than their other ethnicity colleagues. Opportunities for improvement were identified by the presence of school diversity, especially in leadership, which was a promising factor in supporting the retention of minority ethnic teachers. The paper argues for structural change to ensure that recruitment efforts are matched by meaningful pathways to progression.

KEYWORDS
England, ethnicity, recrutment, retention, teachers

Key insights

What is the main issue that the paper addresses?

There is a persistent concern about the underrepresentation of minority ethnic teachers in the teaching profession in England. This paper examines the issue of the recruitment and retention of minority ethnic teachers through the lens of 'interest convergence'. It uses data from interviews with teachers of different ethnicities and career stages to investigate their experiences.

What are the main insights that the paper provides?

This paper shows that although participants generally did not face obstacles in securing classroom teaching roles, attributing this to teacher shortages and, in some cases, schools' diversity goals, the long-term success such as progression remains a challenge. This was particularly the case for Black teachers.

BACKGROUND

This paper examines the recruitment and retention of minority ethnic teachers as a critical dimension within the broader context of England's ongoing teacher supply challenges. The Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2025 (McLean & Worth, 2025) shows that teacher vacancies have more than doubled since the COVID-19 pandemic, and over six posts per 1000 remained unfilled last year—double the pre-pandemic rate. Contributing factors include under-recruitment into initial teacher training programmes by around 40% and high attrition rates, with 9.6% of teachers leaving state-funded schools in 2023. These shortages disproportionately affect schools in more deprived areas, leading to increased reliance on unqualified or non-specialist teachers (see also Allen, 2025). Historic evidence suggests that minority ethnic teachers are less likely to enter (Gorard et al., 2023) and more likely to leave teaching earlier than their White British counterparts (Allen et al., 2016, 2018; DfE, 2018b; Worth et al., 2022).

Amid these challenges, teachers in England are educating an increasingly diverse student population: 37% of pupils in state-funded schools are recorded as belonging to a minority ethnic group (Gov.UK, 2024a), compared to 23% of the general population in the 2021 Census (ONS, 2022). With the demographic shift, there is a growing concern about the persistent underrepresentation of minority ethnic teachers (Tereshchenko et al., 2020; Worth et al., 2022). Although their proportion has risen from 11.2% in 2010/2011 to 16.2% in 2023 (Gov.UK, 2024b), this increase lags behind pupil demographics. The ethnic diversity gap has actually widened over the last decade, with a 75% increase in minority ethnic pupils (Demie & See, 2023). Gorard et al.'s (2023) analysis found that nearly all ethnic minority teacher groups—apart from Black Caribbean—are underrepresented in comparison with pupils of the same background, while White British teachers and school leaders are significantly overrepresented.

Calls to address this ethnic diversity gap have grown, including from government sources (DfE, 2018a). Successive Education Secretaries have framed the recruitment of minority ethnic teachers as a way to both tackle workforce shortages (Whittaker, 2019) and ensure the profession reflects England's diverse communities and pupils (Adams, 2021). Initiatives across multiple teacher education and development providers—such as Teach First, Teach

London, KMT, Now Teach, National Institute of Teaching, Ambition Institute—are responding to these challenges. In Wales, for example, the government has introduced grant schemes offering substantial financial incentives to minority ethnic student teachers to address the underrepresentation in the profession (Welsh Government, 2023).

These initiatives are grounded in the social justice implications of a representative teacher workforce. Greater diversity is seen as a promising strategy for addressing racial and ethnic disparities in student attainment (Harbatkin, 2021; Lindsay et al., 2021), school attendance (Gottfried et al., 2021), exclusionary disciplinary practices (Shirrell et al., 2021), the likelihood of taking advanced courses (Grissom et al., 2020), as well as social–emotional development and cognitive function (Blazar, 2021; Cleveland & Scherer, 2024; Gottfried et al., 2022; Partika, 2023). Although less consistent evidence is found for attainment (Gorard et al., 2023; Gorard et al., 2025a; Redding, 2019), our systematic review found compelling evidence regarding the positive effects of racial matching on student attendance, teacher expectations and relationships between minority students and staff (Gorard et al., 2025b). Minority ethnic teachers overall tend to place a higher value on the opportunity to serve vulnerable and low-income students, and also view minoritised communities less negatively (Achinstein et al., 2010; Callender, 2018; Quiocho & Rios, 2000). They disproportionately work in urban 'hard-to-staff' schools (Ingersoll et al., 2019), and schools with a higher proportion of students who use English as an additional language (Tereshchenko et al., 2020).

Representation in teaching is not only about serving students—it is also about addressing structural barriers and ensuring fairness in career opportunities and pathways for minority ethnic individuals. Prior scholarship has highlighted through the lens of race that these teachers felt undervalued, stereotyped, isolated or excluded (Bradbury et al., 2022; Callender, 2018, 2020; Hargreaves, 2011) and experienced barriers in progression (Bush et al., 2006; Miller, 2020) and setbacks in leadership roles (Showunmi et al., 2015). The emotional toll of navigating overt and covert racism sometimes amounted to 'hidden workload' (Tereshchenko et al., 2020). Lack of promotion opportunities appeared to be one of the key attrition factors for mid-career teachers (ibid.). This aligns with a substantial body of literature from the United States demonstrating that teachers of colour are often devalued, marginalised, and made to feel invisible or like outsiders within their own schools and communities (e.g., Bristol, 2020; Kohli, 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020), which negatively impacts their well-being, professional growth and retention (Frank et al., 2021). Some of these issues become apparent to student teachers at the very beginning of their careers on school training placements (e.g., Cushing, 2023; Tereshchenko et al., 2024; Warner, 2022).

The recently changed policy context in England is shaping the minority ethnic teacher workforce in several ways. The Labour Government prioritised the teacher recruitment and retention crisis in the party pledge to recruit '6,500 new expert teachers in key subjects' by 2029, with a focus on 'areas facing recruitment challenges' (Labour Manifesto, 2024). As part of this commitment, the Department for Education (DfE) allocated around £700 million in 2024–25 to a range of initiatives aimed at improving teacher recruitment and retention (National Audit Office, 2025). In response to the decline in qualified teacher status (QTS) recognitions following Brexit, the Government broadened eligibility for recognising international teaching qualifications to previously excluded countries such as Ghana, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Singapore and South Africa (DfE, 2025a). This policy benefits teachers in shortage subjects including mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. Skilled worker visas for foreign teachers are also on the rise (McLean & Worth, 2025), and 24% of secondary schools reported international recruitment in the DfE's school omnibus survey (IFF Research, 2023). The profile of teacher trainees is increasingly international: in 2024/2025, 10% were non-UK nationals (Gov.UK, 2024c). Subject-specific trends show particularly high international recruitment in physics, where only 57% of trainees were UK nationals—down from 72% the previous year—and in modern foreign languages, where UK

nationals made up 62%. These secondary subjects receive targeted Government support, including bursaries of up to £30,000, as well as the international relocation payments worth £10,000 (DfE, 2025c).

In light of the shifting policy landscape and ongoing teacher supply challenges, it is worth asking whether the longstanding racialised barriers to employment and progression for minority ethnic teachers are beginning to shift—and if so, how and whose interests the changes serve. The principle of interest convergence that argues that advances in racial equity occur when they align with the political and economic interests of the dominant group (Bell, 1980) is a useful lens for considering the opportunities and changing experiences of minority ethnic teachers within the context of employment, recruitment and retention in England. By critically analysing the interviews with teachers from a range of minority ethnic groups, this paper explores how institutional commitments to staff diversity may be conditional, advancing primarily when they align with broader workforce imperatives, such as addressing classroom teacher shortages. However, despite the persuasiveness of the interest convergence theory and its influence in education studies (Ladson-Billings, 1998), the assumption of a clear-cut distinction between minority and majority interests may be overly simplistic. Our findings suggest that teachers from different minority ethnic groups can have varied experiences and perspectives, complicating the notion of a singular minority ethnic 'interest' or 'agenda'. As critics have noted (Driver, 2011), such homogeneity cannot be assumed. Moreover, the scale of England's teacher recruitment and retention challenges may at times obscure or override the salience of racial and ethnic differences in shaping teachers' experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This paper draws on the data collected as part of the large-scale multi-method project funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council. After surveying 3646 teachers across England about factors that attract teachers to a school or encourage them to leave (see for details Gorard et al., 2025c), we sought to speak with teachers who expressed interest in the follow-up interview. Selective purposive sampling was used to primarily recruit participants who self-identified in the survey as non-White British. Several former teachers (e.g., retired or left the classroom for other reasons) were recruited by snowballing from one interviewee. The teachers were contacted by the research team to participate in a 30-minute semi-structured online interview, but many interviews lasted longer than that. All the interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed. A common protocol was used as much as possible during the interviews to maintain consistency of questions asked of the participants and were conducted with one or two members of our multi-ethnic research team. The main topics covered included the following: entry into teaching, experiences with getting teaching jobs, retention challenges and drivers, views on ethnic diversity in teaching, impact of own ethnicity on career opportunities and strategies for improving (ethnic minority) teacher retention. The interviews employed open-ended questioning, allowing participants to frame the discussion in ways that reflected their own priorities.

Participant overview

As the interviews took place during the summer term, the interview period was constrained by the end of the school year. The achieved interview sample included 33 teachers[i] predominantly from London, Midlands and South East, including 11 (33%) who were in the senior leadership team (SLT). Twenty-seven identified as female (82%), and 6 participants

were male (18%). In addition to 11 South Asian (33%) and 12 Black (36%) participants from different ethnicities, two White Other and six mixed-race and other ethnicity teachers were interviewed. Notably, a third of the sample had a migration background, which we did not specifically seek but highlight where relevant. There was a range of teaching experience within the sample, yet skewed substantially towards more experienced teachers from secondary schools. At the time of data collection, 12% ($N=4$) were early-career teachers (0–5 years of teaching), 33% ($N=11$) were midcareer teachers (6–15 years of teaching) and 65% ($N=18$) were experienced teachers (16 or more years of teaching). Most interviewees ($N=28$; 85%) were still currently teaching, while the rest of the participants were former teachers or senior leaders. See Appendix 1 for a complete list of participants.

Data analysis

To analyse interview transcripts, we first uploaded the data to NVivo 12 Qualitative Analysis Software (QDA) and applied attributes and index codes that were aligned to our interview protocol and research questions. These deductive codes were agreed upon by the research team and included codes such as 'motivation to teach', 'recruitment experiences', 'recruitment factors' and 'retention factors'. The first author then conducted inductive thematic coding on the interview data. For instance, examples of recurring themes located in the 'motivation to teach' overarching category with their pertinence included 'passion or interest in teaching' (15), 'desire to make a difference' (13), 'accidental path' (4), 'switching from a dull career' (2); and the 'recruitment experiences' category included themes such as 'straightforward' (11), 'high vacancy rate' (11), 'ethnic background' (15), 'favoured outsider' (1), 'connections' (1) and so on.

Having arranged our data into thematic groupings, we explored with the help of matrix coding queries in NVivo whether and how themes were associated with particular background characteristics among participants (e.g., ethnicity, phase they taught, subject). The analysis for this paper primarily followed the variable-oriented approach (Miles et al., 2014), where 'the details of any specific case recede behind the broad patterns found across a wide variety of cases' (p. 102). As we show, this approach highlighted how teachers of different backgrounds tended to describe their experiences in the school system. While little explicit case-to-case comparison was done, we used some case-oriented strategies, where we identified multiple cases that fell into certain patterns and groups. These multiple exemplars were then interpreted and synthesized along emerging analytic dimensions in an effort to incorporate individual experiences within certain configurations (Denzin, 2001). For example, the role of subject taught, such as sciences or mathematics, was identified as shaping and cross-cutting the experiences of minority ethnic teachers of finding a teaching job. These cases at hand were then examined for comparability in combination with other variables such as ethnic background and systematically synthesized within themes. Although the sample of 33 is modest, it was sufficient for us to identify meaningful subgroup patterns.

This article focuses on the codes most relevant to understanding the experiences of minority ethnic teachers, with the aim of enriching insights from our earlier survey and evidence synthesis work (see Gorard et al., 2025c, See et al., 2024). A selective, in-depth analysis was undertaken on a subset of themes that appeared to reflect distinctive dimensions of their professional experiences, including barriers and facilitators in recruitment and retention, perceptions of institutional inclusivity and diversity and the role of racialised identity in shaping career trajectories. This cross-theme exploration sought to identify the specific challenges and opportunities that may inform more equitable strategies for attracting and sustaining a diverse teaching workforce. However, while the primary analytic lens is attuned to themes directly connected to race and ethnicity, the paper engages, where relevant,

with intersecting or broader themes that contribute to a fuller understanding of teachers' experiences.

FINDINGS

Recruitment: Interest convergence?

There was a high level of consistency between most participants' accounts of securing classroom teacher jobs. They described this process as 'straightforward', often linking it to high vacancy rates. Twenty-two interviewees shared these experiences, for example: 'it was a relatively straightforward process' (Nicole); 'I always found it very easy to get work' (Miriam); 'it's not been too problematic' (Meera); 'I always got jobs very, very quickly' (Daniela); 'it's so easy because we're short of teachers' (Michael); 'there always seem to be jobs out there' (Jamie); 'the agency just gets your CV, gets you in an interview, and it's like zero to no effort' (Florence).

Being a teacher of shortage subjects emerged as an additional facilitating factor in recruitment. Eight of the 11 mathematics and science teachers in the sample found job security in STEM subject areas:

> I think finding jobs as a maths and a science teacher probably I think is, I mean in my head it is easier.
>
> (Rina)

> I think, as a physics teacher, there's not many of them. […] So, I feel confident that it would be easy to find a job if I ever wanted to move to a different job.
>
> (Hannah)

Interestingly, Amal, Christine, Omar and Devi felt that their science and maths departments were predominantly staffed by minority ethnic teachers, including teachers with a migrant background who, according to Christine, 'had the best maths results'. As Amal noted, 'If you are good at what you are doing, you always get the best jobs. I never had a problem to find a job as a science teacher'. The fact that minority ethnic teachers were 'the majority' in science departments where she worked made Amal feel 'that England needs us'. While they were apparently welcomed in shortage subjects, the progression of minority ethnic teachers into senior leadership appeared limited: 'the perception we have is that we probably will get a job for a headteacher when they won't have any other choice' (Omar).

Former senior leaders in our sample spoke in the interviews about how their careers were also shaped by the high demand for teachers in shortage subjects in the 1980s and 1990s. A former science teacher Christine noted, 'Sciences and maths were classed as shortage subjects, so they were offering golden hellos and whatnot to encourage people across to teach'. This demand reportedly facilitated their promotions into leadership roles, as for example in this account:

> There was a shortage of good maths teachers at the time. So, promotion, you know, in inner city schools was, you know, okay to get. It wasn't too bad.
>
> (David).

This point about careers conditioned on 'inner city schools' illustrates a tension—while teacher shortages can create opportunities for minority ethnic groups, this does not always lead to

broad structural change or sustained equity. The careers of underrepresented teachers may be temporary and conditional, as we discuss next. Our focus in the following section is predominantly on Black teachers because all 12 had a set of unique observations to the rest of the sample. Most Black teachers themselves raised the issue of race in recruitment and progression before the interviewers had asked any direct questions.

Career opportunities and barriers: Short-term access versus long-term success

The recruitment of some minority ethnic teachers in our sample appeared to be shaped by race in a contingent way. This was exemplified by a number of Black teachers who argued that they secured employment thanks to the schools' diversity goals. Hazel described how 'very easy' it was to get her two initial teaching jobs, explaining that 'at both schools it was a predominantly White staff' and 'part of it was like having some diversity in the school'. Florence claimed that her race was a resource for advancement onto a senior leadership team, stating, 'it had a lot to do with me getting that job', as 'it was a White SLT team and they needed a Black face'. Likewise, being viewed 'as an opportunity' (as a result of the multiculturalism agenda, underachievement of Black children) helped now-retired primary school leaders Jade and Karen secure their promotions. For Jade, securing a deputy headship at a suburban school in the West Midlands represented a departure from the prevailing trend. As she observed, 'the [Black] teachers that I knew at the time tended to focus on the inner ring rather than the outer ring'. She described in detail how she thought the headteacher was 'ready' for her because of the commitment to diversify staff:

> And I think the headteacher maybe looked around her school and thought 'Not in this day and age', you know. 'We just can't be an island', if you like. We've got to have, you know, this is a time of embracing different cultures, 'What are we doing?'
>
> (Jade)

However, Jade questioned the result of this decision because of how unwelcome she felt in that school as the only Black member of staff, describing other teachers' support as 'no other word for it but appalling'. Having made a successful deputy headteacher, she chose to go back to the inner city to obtain her first headteacher post. The challenge of going against the grain of racialised hiring patterns was also highlighted by another retired headteacher Patricia: '…it would be very difficult for me even now to get into a school in the leafy suburbs. My face does not fit. It's as simple as that'. Notably, following her success with obtaining a leadership role, Florence, quoted at the start of the section, subsequently experienced a demotion, although she attributed this to personal circumstances rather than her race.

Highlighting the temporality of the Black teacher's career success, Jade observed that in her time as a teacher, 'The problem came when you wanted to move [up] or you wanted to apply to another school'. The experiences of current teachers in our sample chime with Jade's remark, suggesting that barriers in progression are not a problem of the past. Those who claimed they had not faced challenges in their careers had yet to apply for promotion. For instance, Nicole stated, 'I've never felt it in a holding back way, but I haven't gone for much promotion yet'. Similarly, Jordan, who had been in his first teaching post for 4 years, noted, 'I haven't really got any experience of changing', though he was set to become a head of department in his school the following year. In contrast, a Black teacher who had progressed into a leadership role described encountering racial microaggressions: 'I did not experience any discrimination until I got a middle leader role. That's where I faced most of

my difficulties and challenges in terms of my role and race' (Diane). Specifically, the micro-aggressions took the form of tone, language, and unsupportive and uncooperative treatment by a senior colleague. Diane recalled being unexpectedly called into a meeting without an agenda, only to face accusations, despite following the same practices as another head of year who was praised for the same actions. Additionally, her contributions were ignored or dismissed, while a White male colleague was acknowledged for repeating her points. These experiences led Diane to question whether race played a role in how she was treated as a middle leader. Additionally, she observed, 'there seems to be a slightly higher turnaround in Black and Brown members of staff', possibly, Diane believed, due to these teachers 'being blocked when they do show interest in promotions', despite 'taking on extra responsibilities for free'.

While another Black teacher Hazel left the profession by the time we interviewed her, primarily due to being 'undervalued' and 'overworked', she also reflected throughout the interview on how 'it was really, really difficult' to progress:

> It wasn't my experience [being less successful in getting job] until I hit the top of the pay scale, and then I was looking for promotions within the school that I'd worked at for 5 years at this point, and then it became really difficult to be seen to get hired, like get a promotion.
>
> (Hazel)

Naomi, who was at the time of the interview on the top of the upper pay range scale in Inner London, shared 'stressful' and 'demotivating' experiences of getting promoted or recruited for the head of science role she had been trying to get for years after her old inner-city school where she was an assistant headteacher had been closed. She unambiguously attributed all her challenges to racial discrimination and specifically anti-Blackness (e.g., 'I think it's easier for Asians, but for Black Africans and Caribbeans, it's very difficult'):

> This Asian colleague went off, did several interviews and was successful in all. And so, you know, she was in a position to choose which best suited her. We don't get that sort of opportunities which is really sad.
>
> (Naomi)

Another mid-career Black secondary teacher in Outer London reflected on the challenges she faced in securing a middle leadership role—a position that, framed as a valuable opportunity for her professional development, did not come with additional pay. She suggested that promotion decisions were not necessarily made to benefit minority ethnic teachers but rather served the interests of the school leadership:

> The only reason why I think I've got it is because there was a survey that was carried out in our school about race. The senior leadership team were actually surprised about the findings of the survey, which I wasn't surprised with because most people are feeling that way, so that makes any sense in terms of ethnic minorities not being recognised for their hard work, and only white members of staff promoted really quickly. So, the senior leadership team, I think they then probably to make themselves look better, feel better, approached certain ethnic minorities. And it's funny how since that survey was done, I think it's called a flare survey, since the survey was done every time there's a promotion now it's all minorities that are getting it.
>
> (Zara)

Zara's account underscores the limits of interest convergence. While school leadership responded to concerns about racial inequities by promoting more minority ethnic teachers, this shift appeared to be driven by institutional self-protection rather than a commitment to structural change. In these circumstances, the London-based teachers believed that Black teachers' advancement into senior leadership was only possible in specific boroughs where ethnically diverse school leadership did not make appointment decisions in the interest of White people. As Zara put it, 'Everybody knows [that] you have to go to either Hackney or Islington or Haringey, because they will accept you in senior leadership compared to the borough that you work in, which is really sad'. She further spoke about feeling 'stuck' because once a certain pay scale is reached in teaching, it becomes difficult to leave for other jobs or fields where the pay is comparatively lower. Nonetheless, Zara and other participants attributed minority ethnic teacher attrition to this factor. The 'lack of promotion opportunities' code within the attrition category captured similar perceptions and concerns by nine participants. These experiences may help explain a finding by Small et al. (2018), which showed that improved opportunities for progression were the top retention factor for minority ethnic teachers in London schools—cited by 57% compared to just 25% of majority teachers. Concerns among Black teachers about lack of promotion opportunities and lack of minority ethnic leaders were also highlighted in our recent survey (Gorard et al., 2025c).

Whereas Black teachers articulated racism more explicitly, Asian teachers were surprisingly less forthcoming; nevertheless, two South Asian senior leaders reflected on their racialised experiences, drawing attention to the interplay of ethnicity, institutional contexts and senior recruitment. Similar to Black teachers, Meera and Anita perceived their leadership appointments as contingent upon their race. While encouraged and supported by the outgoing White headteacher at her school, Anita 'unfortunately wasn't successful in applying to schools that didn't have a diverse community'. Only after serving as an acting head and going through three rounds of recruitment in her own school was she finally appointed ('I was able to prove myself because the other candidate wasn't an ethnic minority'). Meera explained that getting to middle leadership (i.e., a head of department) was 'easy enough' (recalling, 'I was doing that within the first 7 years'), but 'it's then moving into senior leadership and the expectations of senior leadership' that took her well over 10 years to achieve. Despite describing the perceived attitude at her current Multi Academy Trust 'that a little brown woman is not going to be able to do what a tall White man can', she felt that her ethnic background and understanding around the diversity goals in the curriculum (see DfE, 2025b) helped her to secure a curriculum director role where 'I have 14 schools under my care, and developing the English curriculum':

> And again, it was because I work for a Trust that's not very diverse, not just in terms of its body, but also in terms of the curriculum. And one of the key questions I was asked at interview was how I would make the curriculum more diverse and representative of the community that it serves.
>
> (Meera)

While this section reflects the sense of pessimism conveyed elsewhere (Bradbury et al., 2022; Wallace, 2020), it is important not to overlook the agency expressed in the interviews. Indeed, reducing minoritised individuals to passive bystanders—a critique often levelled at interest convergence theory (Driver, 2011)—risks oversimplifying their active roles and responses. There were examples provided specifically by our Black participants of grassroots support for recruitment, progression and retention. They highlighted the significance of informal and formal networks in 'maintaining ambition', 'providing role models' and fostering 'camaraderie'. Former school leaders Patricia, Jade and Karen reflected on how a Black teacher network in the Midlands provided mentorship, interview preparation

and solidarity, arguing that such spaces allowed Black educators to navigate challenges together. Additionally, a current early-career teacher Diane explained that Black colleagues created their own support systems within her academy chain, running events and building communities despite a lack of institutional backing. The following section explores the importance of community and representation in benefitting minority ethnic teachers—an issue captured by Hazel when she noted, 'it's easier for a White teacher to continue because they're with their peers'.

Diversity in schools—Sustaining minority ethnic teachers

Our prior national survey found that minority ethnic teachers were attracted to schools by the ethnic diversity of students, staff and school leaders more so than White British teachers, and Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi teachers rated this factor especially highly (Gorard et al., 2025c). The ethnic mix of schools was also found to be important for minority ethnic teachers in the model to predict leaving the teaching profession, although workplace stress appeared to be the strongest predictor overall. To build on these survey findings, we turned to interview data to explore how minority ethnic teachers described the role of school diversity in shaping their career trajectories.

Looking across the data, the interviewees most frequently named location or convenience as elements or conditions that primarily attracted them to schools. Only a minority of participants named ethnic diversity as a key attraction (other recruitment factors including 'non-academy schools', 'promotion', 'opportunity to teach specific subject', 'availability of CPD', 'academic excellence'). The theme 'rewarding job' topped the list of the retention factors, while 'workload' and 'behaviour' were discussed most frequently as potential reasons for attrition. Yet, the overwhelming majority of minority ethnic teachers (and one of the two White British teachers) reflected on the significance of ethnic diversity when prompted during the interviews. Many may relate to Hannah's experience below—while she personally valued working in diverse environments, she accepted a position in a predominantly monocultural area due to practical considerations and the overall appeal of the school:

> In London I was in a very multicultural school, like almost everybody was an ethnic minority. Where I'm from in LA that's kind of what it's like as well. […] I didn't grow up around any White people. So, it's very weird to go to the school that I'm in now, which is in a fairly rural part of Hertfordshire and it's like, I don't know, 90 percent White. And it's just, it's very strange for me. So, I guess, I've been there for three years, I'm kind of used to that now. But yeah, that wasn't ideal for me. I would have liked more ethnic diversity, but so it happened, it seemed like a pretty nice school and sort of the right location, and they were hiring, so.
>
> (Hannah)

Several, mostly secondary, teachers reflected on student demographics they felt more aligned with in terms of cultural affinity, values or behavioural expectations. For instance, for Sara, what 'solidified' her decision to join the school was the sense of connection she felt upon arrival, recalling how 'one of the students greeted me as soon as I walked in through the door' and how she could 'identify with these students', having grown up in a similar ethnically diverse and impoverished area in London. Despite a long commute, relationships with students kept Sara in the school for 8 years and were cited as the main retention factor: 'I don't think it's the school or the system or the government that has kept me in teaching, it's literally those students'. Another teacher linked student ethnicity in her school to shared norms of respect and discipline, stating, 'behaviour wise I think it's heaven for me':

> I'd rather have the minority kids because they come from a similar background like me. Then we have the same principle and if I say to an Indian boy, 'I will call your parents', it'll have more effect.
>
> (Amal)

This point is also implicitly articulated by Daniela, who was leaving teaching at the time of the interview. She recounted her 'only very nice experience I had in England as a teacher' in a super diverse 'allegedly a very rough area of Birmingham'. She taught Arabic alongside some French to students of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Indian backgrounds who were, she noted, 'keen to learn'. In contrast, her subsequent experience in the South East—where there was no diversity—was marred by stressful tensions with students: 'I was called a bloody foreigner on a few occasions', she recalled, 'This behaviour was absolutely appalling. It wasn't teaching. It was just a constant struggle'. An early-career Black teacher Diane suggested that lack of respect would deter her from seeking a position in non-diverse schools, citing strained relationships with students during the training placement in 'a White area': 'my mentors acknowledged that there was a difference in how students perceived me versus how they perceived the teachers in the department'.

The centrality of belonging was apparent within minority ethnic teachers' liking of staff diversity. For example, teachers reflected: 'compared to the other schools in the area, a school that I work at is very diverse and I do like it, I like that about the school' (Sunita), 'you've got to be able to see yourself in spaces' (Chantelle); 'I wasn't just going to be the only [minority] person' (Nicole). A retired primary leader recounted how being among individuals who shared her cultural background in an inner-city school (after a period of work in 'an outer ring') brought about a sense of freedom and authenticity that sustained her 12-year-long headship:

> …if you're placed in in a monoculture you just recognise that so much, but if you're with your own community, your own culture, you're free, you're free to just go ahead […] to carry on and just let loose and just do it
>
> (Jade).

Yet, while the majority of teachers in our sample appeared to work in schools with relatively diverse staff—though not in direct proportion to the student body—around a third reported a near complete lack of diversity in leadership. Multiple examples of observations on this topic include the following: 'when you look at the schools and the makeup of our schools within the Trust, the higher up you go, the less diversity you see' (Meera); 'SLT tends to be once again White, British and mainly males, which is not good' (Sunita); 'on the STL no, it's all sort of White and very much English, middle management is the same, but then the actual teaching staff there is quite a wide diversity' (Miriam), 'if you look on the Trust's website […] you'll see I'm the only one who is Asian obviously, wears a scarf looks slightly different, the only one that is not White' (Sonia), 'so the senior leadership is a hundred percent White' (Zara); 'the teaching body is diverse, not a lot of Blacks, but a lot of Asians […] the SLT is all White but kids is a beautiful mixture' (Florence), 'it is diverse, but I will say as you travel further and further up the ranks there's a little bit less diversity' (Sara).

Some teachers, like Diane, expressed concerns about how the lack of diversity in leadership can 'be a deterrence' for young minority ethnic teachers' sustainability in the profession. Having 'spent my whole career observing people get promoted around me who didn't do half the stuff that I did, or have the outcomes that I did in the classroom', Christine, for example, spoke about leadership opportunities she received from minority ethnic headteachers who, first, 'understood the plight, difficulties, obstacles and barriers,' and second, wanted 'to engage with children' from minority ethnic backgrounds. As part of her inclusive

leadership approach, Anita, a serving headteacher in our sample, recognised the limitations of relying solely on local recruitment in 'an insular community'. While support staff remained largely community-based, she strategically diversified her teaching and leadership team to include individuals from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, reflecting a deliberate effort to broaden representation and perspectives within the school. But a larger number of research participants spoke about how the growing ethnic diversity of the student intake makes diverse senior leadership vital in promoting equality and diversity. For instance, it signals to students, especially in ethnically diverse schools, that leadership and authority are not exclusive to the majority group. For example, David pointed out that when an all-White leadership team oversees an ethnically diverse student body, it risks sending a harmful message: that minority communities are not seen as capable of managing themselves or leading. Additionally, achieving meaningful change in the education of minoritised students was easier when there was greater diversity in senior leadership. As a former headteacher Karen reflected, her position in senior leadership, though not without difficulty, enabled her to advocate for minority ethnic students more effectively, emphasising that ultimately, 'it's about the children and their education'. For Black primary leader Chantelle, using cultural understanding was key to identifying the issues her students faced—a process she described as 'threading the unlinkable' in conversations with parents. Naomi observed that students quickly recognised when minority ethnic staff lacked power or influence within the school, undermining trust and limiting their ability to act on students' concerns. Incidents of racism and cultural misunderstanding in schools where leadership was not diverse were reportedly poorly handled, leaving minority ethnic teachers feeling unsupported. Nicole described feeling like a 'lone ranger' when dealing with rising racist incidents in school, implying the lack of institutional capacity to respond effectively. Similarly, a secondary teacher Ryan described the challenges he faced working in a diverse school where there were only five minority ethnic teachers and the senior leadership team was entirely White British. He highlighted issues around recognising and addressing unconscious bias, giving an example of the casual mispronunciation of students' names as evidence of a persistent lack of cultural sensitivity that to him seemed offensive: 'off-the-cuff comments in assembly like, this person who won this award is … oh, I can't pronounce the name, but he knows who he is' (Ryan). In contrast, Michael described how diverse leadership effectively dealt with incidents of poor student behaviour within his super diverse London school:

> I'm going to say a few things that aren't going to be politically correct. If you've got a Black kid who's going to be told off by a White SLT, they may not take it as well, and they will use excuses, and I've seen it for myself […] whereas if they've got a Black leader they'll shut them up immediately, and they'll say, you know you wouldn't get away with that at home, don't give me all that rubbish. So, it's very, very important that you have a wide diversity with regard to SLT.

Being among a handful of minority ethnic leaders in 'the city, which is extremely diverse', Anita urged the headteachers to invest time in understanding the community to 'tackle challenges in a right way'. For example, understanding student cultural behaviours rather than labelling them, explaining, 'for example, eye contact can be seen as disrespectful in some cultures, so it's not that children don't want to look at you, they feel they shouldn't'.

The issues related to senior promotional opportunities, as discussed in the previous section, highlighted broader challenges concerning the representation of minority ethnic groups in leadership. Elaborating on this challenge, four former secondary school leaders identified academisation as a further barrier to diversifying school leadership, citing its detrimental impact on the career advancement of minority ethnic teachers. Christine contrasted 'the transparency that existed when you had LEAs' with the recruitment practices of 'essentially

a limited company' that are unlikely to support minoritised careers in equitable ways. Participants described how recruitment within Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) often bypasses open competition (for example, Christine argued, 'people get in because of who they know'). Despite formal advertising, roles are frequently filled internally, disadvantaging external candidates, particularly those from minority backgrounds because of the racial homogeneity of MAT leadership and its influence on hiring practices. As one former leader explained:

> Multi Academy Trusts have grown and they do not necessarily keep a track on ethnic monitoring, but, worse still, many of them are led by White men and they will appoint people who look just like themselves. And for me that is the biggest problem for us. We have not literally got a chance of getting through those White, dominant males who want to replicate the status quo with people who look like themselves.
>
> (Patricia)

Additionally, as discussed earlier and highlighted by David below, minority ethnic teachers tend to progress more slowly than their White counterparts, which can result in them appearing 'expensive' to employ by the time they are eligible for leadership roles:

> And if you remember, what I said earlier was that it takes ethnic minorities a longer period of time to get to positions and therefore by definition, they're more prone to attack or more prone to discrimination by age.
>
> (David)

This slow progression, combined with economic pressures in the increasingly privatised education system, was seen as further disadvantaging minority ethnic teachers, as well as explaining their mid-career attrition.

DISCUSSION

We set out to explore how recent efforts to diversify the teacher workforce, alongside general supply challenges, shape the experiences of minority ethnic teachers. The principle of interest convergence offered a compelling framework. It suggests that progress in racial equity often occurs only when it aligns with the interests of dominant groups. We showed that our interviewees generally did not face difficulties securing classroom teaching roles. Our research findings also indicate that, amid ongoing teacher shortages (particularly in certain subjects) the recruitment of minority ethnic teachers may be motivated more by a need to fill vacancies than by a genuine commitment to transforming school culture or addressing systemic barriers. This dynamic was evident in discussions around recruitment into leadership positions, where equity efforts often stalled or depended on the ethnicity of teachers within the school diversity agenda or otherwise. This tension is echoed in Callender's (2018) study of Black male primary teachers in England, who are described as being 'in demand', particularly in ethnically diverse schools. Yet, as Callender highlights, their recruitment is often based less on a recognition of their professional skills and more on racialised expectations tied to their perceived value in managing diversity. True racial equity would require not just recruiting but also retaining, empowering and promoting minority ethnic teachers.

Intersectional patterns of discrimination and privilege (e.g., by gender, ethnicity, social class) among different minority ethnic teacher groups have to be accounted for (Bradbury et al., 2022). In our interviews, Black teachers were identified as being the most vocal and

upfront about racial discrimination, challenges in school experiences and career progression—echoing the indicative findings of the widely cited NUT survey (Haque & Elliott, 2017), which highlighted stark disparities faced by Black Caribbean and Black African teachers. This suggests that we cannot assume uniformity in the experiences of minority ethnic groups. It is also important to acknowledge that ethnic minority teachers have their own distinct interests, histories of disadvantage and internalised frameworks for understanding discrimination. For example, having been raised by immigrant parents with the mindset to 'just be grateful', one of our Asian participants rarely questioned whether mistreatment in her career was racially motivated, admitting that the realisation only emerged amidst her school focus on anti-racism. Such awakening arguably depends on institutional permission or climates that legitimise such questioning—a convergence in itself.

Most teachers we interviewed discussed factors influencing recruitment, retention and attrition in ways broadly consistent with the wider teaching population, citing workload, pupil behaviour and the intrinsic rewards of the teaching job. However, we exemplified how they often situated these factors within the context of ethnic diversity, drawing attention to the role of respect, representation and the ethnic composition of the student body. The reflections of teachers in this article on their preferences for an ethnically diverse leadership align with findings that English schools with senior leadership team members from more than one ethnic minority group have significantly higher retention rates among teachers from Asian, Black and mixed ethnic backgrounds than among White teachers (Worth et al., 2022). Our systematic, structured review of international evidence on factors that enhance the recruitment and retention of minority ethnic teachers found that schools with ethnically diverse leadership teams were most effective at attracting and retaining minority ethnic teachers (See et al., 2024). Improving this alignment presents an opportunity to foster a sense of belonging and provides role models for both staff and students, contributing to a more inclusive and attractive environment for underrepresented teachers. To explain the role and practices of diverse leadership, case study research on successful recruitment and retention practices of teachers in specific schools, as well as academy chains, is needed to fill in the gap in knowledge. An existing brief guide with advice from minority ethnic leaders highlighted actions discussed by one of the headteachers in this research with regard to intentionality—such as creating deliberate spaces for open dialogue about race and equity, and embedding racial literacy and anti-racist practices into recruitment processes, professional development and leadership training (Tereshchenko et al., 2022). How academisation has reshaped the professional landscape for minority ethnic teachers and leaders is yet unclear and needs further research. The varied responses uncovered by a small-scale longitudinal study (Johnson, 2021) highlighted that some existing leaders have leveraged the academy system to create spaces that reflected their leadership values, while others have encountered environments that undermined their autonomy and professional identity with a negative impact on their retention.

Finally, as a word of caution, Davila's (2024) analysis highlights a troubling paradox: efforts to increase the number of minority ethnic teachers are unfolding at a time when teaching is becoming an increasingly unattractive profession due to pay erosion, high workload, burnout, performance and accountability targets, diminished professional status, etc. In England, the National Foundation for Educational Research found that teacher pay growth has lagged behind pay growth in the wider labour force, particularly for more experienced teachers (McLean & Worth, 2025). The RAND's earlier study found that better working conditions, such as work in a supportive environment with fewer challenges from pupil behaviour, drove teacher retention choices more so than pay (Burge et al., 2021). Yet pupil behaviour worsened considerably after the pandemic, compounded by mental health and SEND provision crises, further increasing teacher workload and stress (McLean & Worth, 2025). The three waves of working lives of teachers and leaders study consistently found that personal

wellbeing measures such as happiness and life satisfaction were lower for teachers and school leaders than for the wider population in England (IFF Research and IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, 2024). Progression into headship is a less desirable option now than in 2018 for all teachers (26% vs. 16%), and tellingly for current deputy and assistant headteachers (56% vs. 42%) (Allen, 2025). These systemic challenges might disproportionately impact minority ethnic teachers working in urban disadvantaged schools, who already face additional barriers. Government action is needed to address these broader structural issues if sustainable diversity gains in the teaching workforce are to be achieved.

FUNDING INFORMATION

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association and ethical approval for data collection and management was granted by the Durham University Research Ethics Committee.

ORCID

Beng Huat See https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7500-379X
Nadia Siddiqui https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4381-033X

Endnote

[i]Two White British teachers who are listed in the Appendix were largely exclude from the analysis in this paper due to its focus on minority ethnicities. Two people were deemed to be a small comparison group to base our comparative claims upon.

REFERENCES

Achinstein, B., Ogawa, R., Sexton, D., & Freitas, C. (2010). Retaining teachers of color: A pressing problem and a potential strategy for "hard-to-staff" schools. *Review of Educational Research*, *80*(1), 71–107.

Adams, R. (2021). Not enough black headteachers in England, says Nadhim Zahawi. *The Guardian*, 9 Oct. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/oct/09/not-enough-black-headteachers-in-england-says-nadhim-zahawi

Allen, B. (2025). *Teacher recruitment and retention in 2025: Social disadvantage and teacher labour market dynamics*. Teacher Tapp. https://teachertapp.com/app/uploads/2025/04/RELEASED_Teacher-Recruitment-and-Retention-in-2025.pdf

Allen, R., Bibby, D., Parameshwaran, M., & Nye, P. (2016). *Linking ITT and workforce data: Initial teacher training performance profiles and school workforce census*. NCTL/DfE.

Allen, R., Burgess, S., & Mayo, J. (2018). The teacher labour market, teacher turnover and disadvantaged schools: New evidence for England. *Education Economics*, *26*(1), 4–23.

Bell, D. A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 518–533.

Blazar, D. (2021). *Teachers of color, culturally responsive teaching, and student outcomes: Experimental evidence from the random assignment of teachers to classes (EdWorkingPaper: 21–501)*. Annenberg Institute at Brown University. https://doi.org/10.26300/jym0-wz02

Bradbury, A., Tereshchenko, A., & Mills, M. (2022). Minoritised teachers' experiences of multiple, intersectional racisms in the school system in England: 'Carrying the weight of racism'. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *26*(3), 335–351.

Bristol, T. J. (2020). A tale of two types of schools: An exploration of how school working conditions influence black male teacher turnover. *Teachers College Record*, *122*(3), 1–41.

Burge, P., Lu, H., & Phillips, W. D. (2021). *Understanding Teaching Retention: Using a discrete choice experiment to measure teacher retention in England*. Rand Europe.

Bush, T., Glover, D., & Sood, K. (2006). Black and minority ethnic leaders in England: A portrait. *School Leadership & Management*, *26*(3), 289–305.

Callender, C. (2018). Needles in a haystack: An exploratory study of black male teachers in England. *Management in Education*, *32*(4), 167–175.

Callender, C. (2020). Black male teachers, white education spaces: Troubling school practices of othering and surveillance. *British Educational Research Journal*, *46*(5), 1081–1098.

Cleveland, C., & Scherer, E. (2024). *The effects of teacher-student demographic matching on social-emotional learning (EdWorkingPaper: 21–399)*. Annenberg Institute at Brown University. https://doi.org/10.26300/3xq6-4k05

Cushing, I. (2023). "Miss, can you speak English?": Raciolinguistic ideologies and language oppression in initial teacher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *44*(5), 896–911.

Davila, O. (2024). Teacher diversity as interest convergence? A cautionary note. *Labor Studies Journal*, *49*(2), 135–155.

Demie, F., & See, B. H. (2023). Ethnic disproportionality in the school teaching workforce in England. *Equity in Education & Society*, *2*(1), 3–27.

Denzin, N. K. (2001). *Interpretive interactionism* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Department for Education (DfE). (2018a). Diversity of the teaching workforce: Statement of intent. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/diversity-of-the-teaching-workforcestatement-of-intent (accessed 3 May 2025).

Department for Education (DfE). (2018b). *Analysis of teacher supply, retention and mobility*. DfE.

Department for Education (DfE). (2025a). Policy paper. A fairer approach to awarding QTS to overseas teachers. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualified-teacher-status-to-overseas-teachers/a-fairer-approach-to-awarding-qts-to-overseas-teachers--2?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Department for Education (DfE). (2025b). Curriculum and Assessment Review: interim report. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-and-assessment-review-interim-report

Department for Education (DfE). (2025c). Guidance International relocation payments. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-relocation-payments/international-relocation-payments

Driver, J. (2011). Rethinking the interest-convergence thesis. *Northwestern University Law Review*, *105*(1), 149–198.

Frank, T. J., Powell, M. G., View, J. L., Lee, C., Bradley, J. A., & Williams, A. (2021). Exploring racialized factors to understand why black mathematics teachers consider leaving the profession. *Educational Researcher*, *50*(6), 381–391.

Gorard, S., Chen, W., Tan, Y., et al. (2023). The disproportionality of ethnic minority teachers in England: Trends, patterns, and problems [version 2; peer review: 3 approved, 1 approved with reservations]. *Routledge Open Research*, *2*, 13. https://doi.org/10.12688/routledgeopenres.17798.2

Gorard, S., Gao, Y., See, B. H., Tereshchenko, A., Siddiqui, N., & Demie, F. (2025c). What helps to attract minority ethnic teachers in England?: Results from a national survey. *Review of Education Studies*, *5*(1), 50–75.

Gorard, S., Gao, Y., Tereshchenko, A., Beng Huat, S., Siddiqui, N., & Demie, F. (2025b). The impact of student: Teacher ethnic congruence on student treatment and relationships at school: An international review of evidence. *Review of Education Studies*, *5*(1), 9–31.

Gorard, S., Gao, Y., Tereshchenko, A., Siddiqui, N., See, B. H., & Demie, F. (2025a). Investigating the impact of student: Teacher ethnic congruence on school attainment outcomes: An international review of evidence. *Cogent Education*, *12*, 2567735. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2567735

Gottfried, M., Kirksey, J. J., & Fletcher, T. L. (2021). Do high school students with a same-race teacher attend class more often? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *44*(1), 149–169.

Gottfried, M., Little, M., & Ansari, A. (2022). *Student-teacher Ethnoracial matching in the earliest grades: Benefits for executive function skills (EdWorkingPaper: 22–511)*. Annenberg Institute at Brown University. https://doi.org/10.26300/42eb-rw67

Gov.UK. (2024a). Academic year 2023/24: Schools, pupils and their characteristics. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2023-24

Gov.UK. (2024b). Reporting year 2023: School workforce in England. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england/2023

Gov.UK. (2024c). Academic year 2024/25: Initial Teacher Training Census. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census/2024-25

Grissom, J. A., Kabourek, S. E., & Kramer, J. W. (2020). Exposure to same-race or same-ethnicity teachers and advanced math course-taking in high school: Evidence from a diverse urban district. *Teachers College Record*, *122*(7), 1–42.

Haque, Z., & Elliott, S. (2017). *Visible and invisible barriers: The impact of racism on BME teachers*. NUT.

Harbatkin, E. (2021). Does student-teacher race match affect course grades? *Economics of Education Review*, *81*, 102081.

Hargreaves, L. M. (2011). The status of minority ethnic teachers in England: Institutional racism in the staffroom. *DEDiCA Revista de Educação e Humanidades (Dreh)*, (1), 37–52.

IFF Research. (2023). *School and college panel – June 2023*. Department for Education. https://assets.publi shing.service.gov.uk/media/6537e3e65e47a5000d989912/School_and_College_Panel_June_2023.pdf

IFF Research, & IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society. (2024). *Working lives of teachers and leaders: Wave 3*. Department for Education.

Ingersoll, R., May, H., & Collins, G. (2019). Recruitment, employment, retention and the minority teacher shortage. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *27*(37). https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.3714

Johnson, L. (2021). Portraits of UK black and south Asian headteachers five years on: Leadership retention in the age of academization. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *49*(4), 662–684.

Kohli, R. (2018). Behind school doors: The impact of hostile racial climates on urban teachers of color. *Urban Education*, *53*(3), 307–333.

Labour Manifesto. (2024). Change: Labour Party Manifesto 2024. https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and What's it doing in a Nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7–24.

Lindsay, C., Monarrez, T., & Luetmer, G. (2021). *The effects of teacher diversity on Hispanic student achievement in Texas*. Urban Institute. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/effects-teacher-diversity-hispa nic-student-achievement-texas

McLean, D., & Worth, J. (2025). *Teacher labour market in England: Annual report 2025*. NFER.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldanha, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Miller, P. W. (2020). 'Tackling' race inequality in school leadership: Positive actions in BAME teacher progression–evidence from three English schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *48*(6), 986–1006.

National Audit Office. (2025). Teacher workforce: secondary and further education. https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/teacher-workforce-secondary-and-further-education.pdf

Office for National Statistics. (2022). Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/popul ationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland

Partika, A. (2023). The intersection of teacher-child language & ethnic match for Hispanic/Latine dual language learners in early elementary school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *62*, 347–359.

Pizarro, M., & Kohli, R. (2020). "I stopped sleeping": Teachers of color and the impact of racial battle fatigue. *Urban Education*, *55*(7), 967–991.

Quiocho, A., & Rios, F. (2000). The power of their presence: Minority group teachers and schooling. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(4), 485–528. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070004485

Redding, C. (2019). A teacher like me: A review of the effect of student–teacher racial/ethnic matching on teacher perceptions of students and student academic and behavioral outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, *89*(4), 499–535.

See, B. H., Gorard, S., Gao, Y., Hitt, L., Siddiqui, N., Demie, F., Tereshchenko, A., & El Soufi, N. (2024). Factors related to the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority teachers: What are the barriers and facilitators? *Review of Education*, *12*(3), e70005.

Shirrell, M., Bristol, T. J., & Britton, T. (2021). *The effects of student-teacher Ethnoracial matching on exclusionary discipline for Asian American, black, and Latinx students: Evidence from new York City (EdWorkingPaper: 21–475)*. Annenberg Institute at Brown University. https://doi.org/10.26300/3jqw-5x05

Showunmi, V., Atewologun, D., & Bebbington, D. (2015). Ethnic, gender and class intersections in British women's leadership experiences. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *44*(6), 917–935.

Small, I., Trethewey, A., Menzies, L., Bowen-Viner, K., & Shaw, B. (2018). *Teacher recruitment and retention in London*. LKMco. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.30847.28329

Tereshchenko, A., Bei, Z., Bradbury, A., Forde, E., & Mullings, G. (2022). Supporting the retention of minority ethnic teachers: A research and practice based guide for school leaders. IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, London, UK. https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10143370/

Tereshchenko, A., Kaur, B., Cara, O., Wiggins, A., & Pillinger, C. (2024). Racial microaggressions on the initial teacher education programmes: Implications for minority ethnic teacher retention. *Teachers and Teaching*, *31*(7), 1065–1083. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2024.2397583

Tereshchenko, A., Mills, M., & Bradbury, A. (2020). Making progress? Employment and retention of BAME teachers in England. UCL Institute of Education, London, UK.

Wallace, D. (2020). The diversity trap? Critical explorations of black male teachers' negotiations of leadership and learning in London state schools. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *23*(3), 345–366.

Warner, D. (2022). Black and minority ethnic student teachers' stories as empirical documents of hidden oppressions: Using the personal to turn towards the structural. *British Educational Research Journal*, *48*(6), 1145–1160.

Welsh Government. (2023). Launch of incentive to attract a more diverse teaching workforce. Available on: https://www.gov.wales/launch-incentive-attract-more-diverse-teaching-workforce?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Whittaker, F. (2019). Teacher shortage won't be addressed without more BAME teachers, warns hinds. *School Week*, 9 March. Available at: https://schoolsweek.co.uk/teacher-shortagewont-be-addressed-without-more-bameteachers-warns-hinds.

Worth, J., McLean, D., & Sharp, C. (2022). *Racial equality in the teacher workforce: An analysis of representation and progression opportunities from initial teacher training to headship*. National Foundation for Educational Research.

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Participant	School role	Years teaching	Ethnicity	UK born	Phase	Gender	Teaching status	Economic region
Anita	SLT	16 +	Indian	No	Primary	Female	Current	East Midlands
Daniela	Teacher	6–15	White Other	No	Secondary	Female	Current	South East
Jamie	Teacher	6–15	White British	Yes	Secondary	Male	Current	South East
Anne	Teacher	16 +	White British	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	North East
Miriam	Teacher	16 +	White Irish	No	Secondary	Female	Current	South East
Sofia	PGCE student	0–5	Chinese	No	Secondary	Female	Current	West Midlands
Amal	Teacher	16 +	Arab	No	Secondary	Female	Current	West Midlands
Meera	SLT	16 +	Pakistani	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	East Midlands
Isabel	SLT	16+	Mixed Asian	Yes	Primary	Female	Current	South East
Chantelle	SLT	6–15	Black African	Yes	Primary	Female	Current	Outer London
Sara	Teacher	0–5	Bangladeshi	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	South East
Rina	Teacher	6–15	Indian	No	Secondary	Female	Current	South East
Omar	Teacher	6–15	Pakistani	No	Secondary	Male	Current	North East
Sonia	SLT	6–15	Indian	Yes	Primary	Female	Current	East Midlands
Ryan	Teacher	16 +	Indian	Yes	Secondary	Male	Current	Outer London
Michael	Teacher	16 +	Indian	Yes	Secondary	Male	Current	Inner London
Sunita	Teacher	16 +	Indian	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	East of England
Devi	Teacher	16 +	Indian	No	Secondary	Female	Current	Outer London
Zara	Teacher	6–15	Black African	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	Outer London
Melissa	SLT	6–15	Mixed White and Asian	Yes	Primary	Female	Current	West Midlands
Raisa	Teacher	16 +	Bangladeshi	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	Inner London
Hannah	Teacher	16 +	Mixed White and Asian	No	Secondary	Female	Current	East of England

(Continues)

APPENDIX 1 (Continued)

Participant	School role	Years teaching	Ethnicity	UK born	Phase	Gender	Teaching status	Economic region
Naomi	Teacher	16 +	Black Caribbean	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	Inner London
Nicole	Teacher	6–15	Mixed White and Black	Yes	Primary	Female	Current	South East
David	SLT	16 +	Black	Yes	Secondary	Male	Former	West Midlands
Hazel	Teacher	6–15	Black	Yes	Primary	Female	Former	West Midlands
Jade	SLT	16 +	Black Caribbean	No	Primary	Female	Former	West Midlands
Jordan	Teacher	0–5	Black	Yes	Secondary	Male	Current	West Midlands
Diane	Teacher	0–5	Black	Yes	Secondary	Female	Current	West Midlands
Patricia	SLT	16 +	Black Caribbean	Yes	Secondary	Female	Former	West Midlands
Florence	Teacher	6–15	Black Caribbean	No	Secondary	Female	Current	South East
Christine	SLT	16 +	Black	Yes	Secondary	Female	Former	West Midlands
Karen	SLT	16 +	Black	Yes	Primary	Female	Former	West Midlands