

Teacher Recruitment and Retention in 2023

Teacher views on coping with shortages, job attachment and flexible working



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Becky Allen
Iain Ford
Timo Hannay

Teachertapp



Executive summary

The Teacher Tapp and SchoolDash annual report on teacher recruitment and retention provides insights into the current state of the teaching profession in England. By monitoring job advertisements and conducting surveys with over 8,000 teachers, the report presents key trends and challenges. Here are the key findings:

1. **Recruitment Challenges in Secondary Schools:** Secondary schools are facing significant difficulties in recruiting an adequate number of teachers to meet the demands of the ongoing baby boom and attrition from the profession. Job advertisements have increased by 12% compared to last year, and a record-breaking 13% of secondary teachers report currently unfilled vacancies within their subject departments.
2. **Primary Schools and Teacher Shortages:** Unlike secondary schools, primary schools find themselves in a relatively less challenging position due to declining pupil rolls, which reduces the demand for teachers. Approximately 9% of primary teachers currently report having unfilled positions in their schools, a figure consistent with the previous year.
3. **Long-Term Concerns in School Recruitment:** We anticipate that the recruitment crisis in secondary schools will persist for several years as pupil rolls continue to rise. Of particular concern is the high level of dissatisfaction among teachers, which may lead to a greater exodus from the profession. Only 59% of teachers now expect to still be teaching in three years' time, a significant decrease from the pre-pandemic figures of 74-77%. Regret about training has also increased, with only 58% of teachers indicating they would choose to become a teacher if given the chance again, compared to 71% when asked in 2019.
4. **Challenges in Headteacher Recruitment:** The Department for Education records indicate a surge in new headteacher appointments, reflecting a high number of retirements following an exceptionally stressful period during the pandemic. We remain concerned about recruiting future heads since the percentage of deputy and assistant heads expressing an aspiration to become a headteacher has fallen to 43%, down from the pre-pandemic figure of 56%.
5. **Coping Strategies for Shortages:** Primary and secondary school headteachers are adopting different approaches to address existing teacher shortages. Primary heads say they will use agency staff and higher-level teaching assistants as class teachers, with some planning to move deputies and heads into class teaching positions. By contrast, secondary heads have a wider range of options, including adjusting student timetables, reducing GCSE options, increasing teaching group sizes, and employing non-subject specialist teachers.
6. **Challenges of Flexible Working:** Whilst the appeal of flexible working practices outside teaching increasingly presents a threat to the profession, teacher shortages

and budget constraints actually make it more difficult to put flexible working into practice since there is little slack to accommodate complex timetabling needs and ad-hoc requests for time-off. Teachers strongly desire minor adaptations to their work conditions, such as the ability to go home during their planning, preparation, and assessment (PPA) time, or occasional time off for special family occasions. But there are currently wide variations in the extent to which schools accommodate these requests.

Key Statistics

- Secondary job advertisements are up by 12%
- Only 59% of teachers expected to be teaching in three years' time, a drop from 72% in 2019
- Fewer senior leaders now aspire to become headteachers (43%, down from 56% pre-pandemic)
- Half of secondary leaders say their school couldn't interview any candidate for a position due to a weak field; 40% (1-in-4) had reluctantly appointed a candidate lacking adequate qualifications or who performed poorly at interview.
- Half of primary teachers said that at least one class in their school was being taught by a temporary agency teacher or a non-qualified teacher (such as a teaching assistant)
- GCSE students are often experiencing disruption in the teaching of their classes. 80% of teachers in the most deprived school said at least one of their subject's GCSE classes faced major disruption this year, compared to 52% in fee-paying schools.
- When asked for solutions on flexible working, 4-in-10 teachers said they would like to have their planning, preparation and assessment time at home
- However, most senior leaders said they found it hard to manage flexible working requests around the demands of school life (70% primary; 67% secondary)

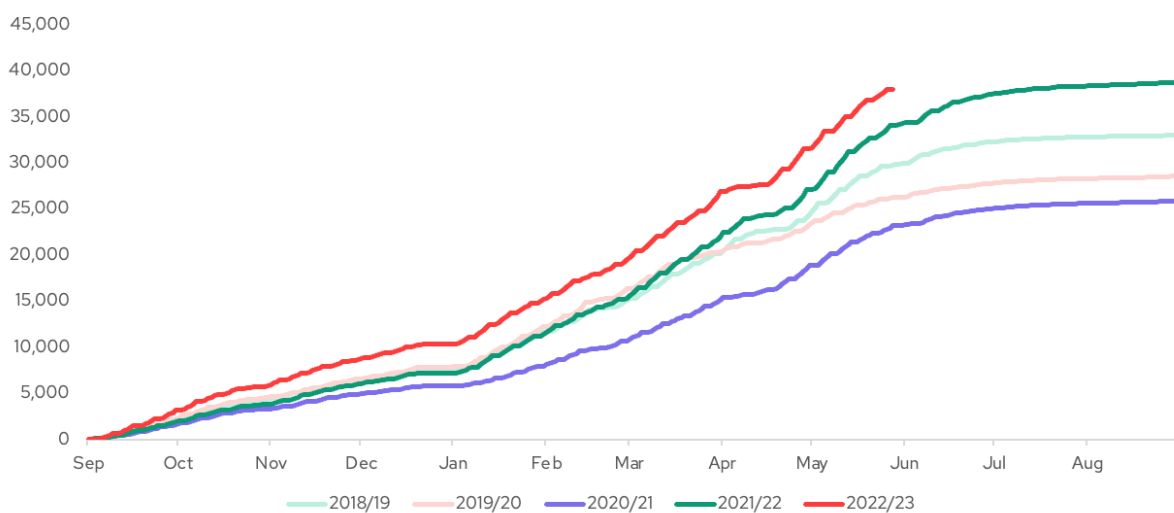
Teacher Recruitment in 2023

Secondary teacher job advertisements reach record levels

We present this report in early June, shortly after the deadline for teachers to submit their notice if they wish to commence a new role in September. This allows us to capture the majority of recruitment activities that take place during the peak recruitment session between March and May. SchoolDash has been monitoring job adverts posted by secondary schools since the 2017/18 academic year.

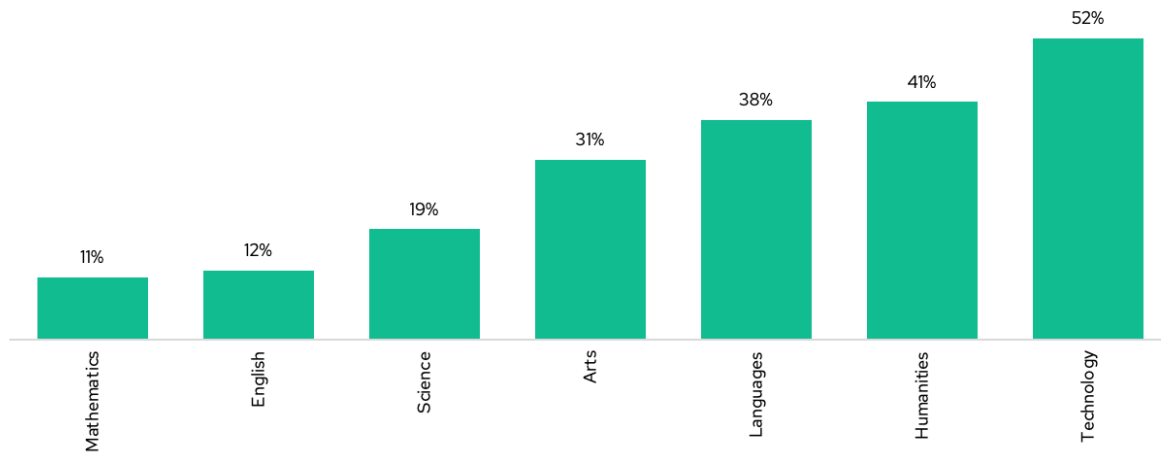
Recruitment activity in secondary schools has reached its highest point in the past five years, according to SchoolDash's data collection. This year, the cumulative number of job advertisements is currently 12% higher than even the previous year, which already had a significant number of adverts. It's important to note that in addition to teacher shortages, the incoming Year 7 cohorts are larger than the departing cohorts, necessitating a greater number of secondary teachers. The impact of changing population size will be further explored in detail later in this report.

Secondary school teacher job adverts, cumulative over academic year



The SchoolDash advertisement data also includes information about the specific subjects that were advertised, revealing an increase in adverts for all subjects compared to a similar period in 2019. However, it is worth noting that the number of job advertisements for Maths and Science, which have been experiencing a persistent shortage of teachers for several years, has only seen a relatively modest increase. On the other hand, subjects such as Technology and Humanities have witnessed significant growth, with a remarkable 52% and 41% increase, respectively, compared to the 2018/19 academic year.

**Percentage increase in secondary school teaching adverts by subject,
Sept 2022-May 2023 versus same period in 2018/19**

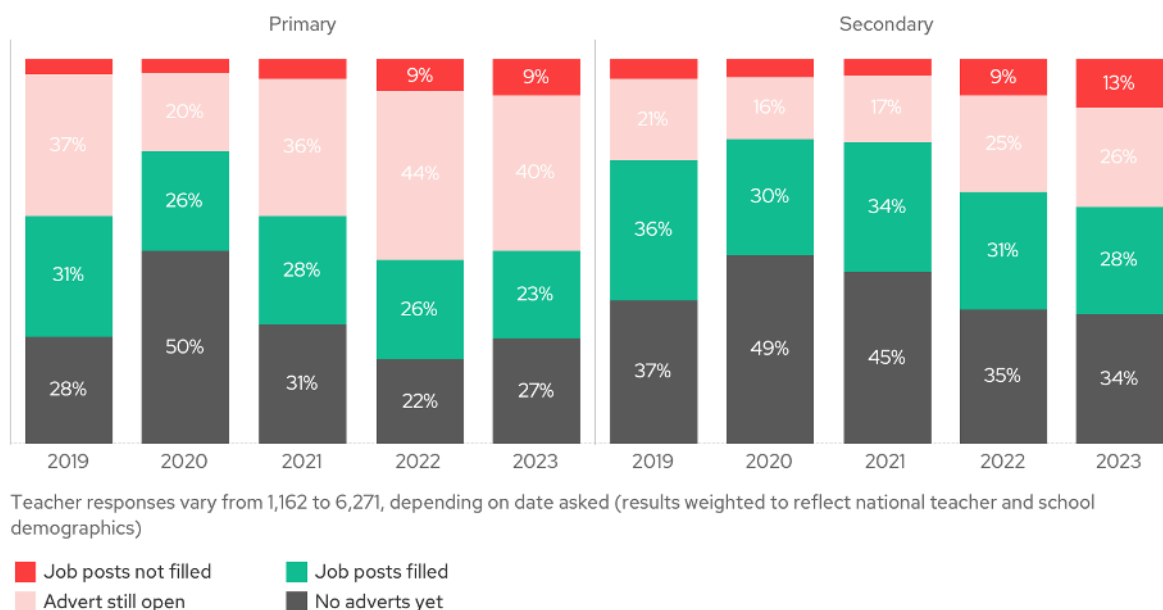


Little change in primary recruitment activity

We use Teacher Tapp's representative survey of teachers to examine activity within the primary sector. Due to the smaller size of primary schools, it is feasible to inquire about resignations across the entire school. This year there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of primary teachers reporting schools advertising teaching roles. 73% of primary teachers this year are in schools that have advertised job openings, compared to 78% last year. This reduction in advertisements likely reflects the reduction in primary pupil rolls as the last years of the baby boom moves to the secondary phase, as we explore later.

The number of unfilled positions has remained relatively unchanged compared to the previous year, among the primary schools that have advertised vacancies this season. According to the survey, 13% of primary teachers reported that some vacancies had not been filled, slightly higher than the 11% reported last year.

Has your school (primary) or department (secondary) already advertised for any jobs this season?



Secondary schools are too large for teachers to know about recruitment and retention across the entire school so we ask about their subject department or faculty. This year has shown minimal variation in the percentage of secondary teachers reporting that their subject department has advertised for a position during the recruitment season compared to that of last year. That being said, almost every subject department has reported an increase in job advertisements compared to 2019, mirroring the findings shown by SchoolDash.

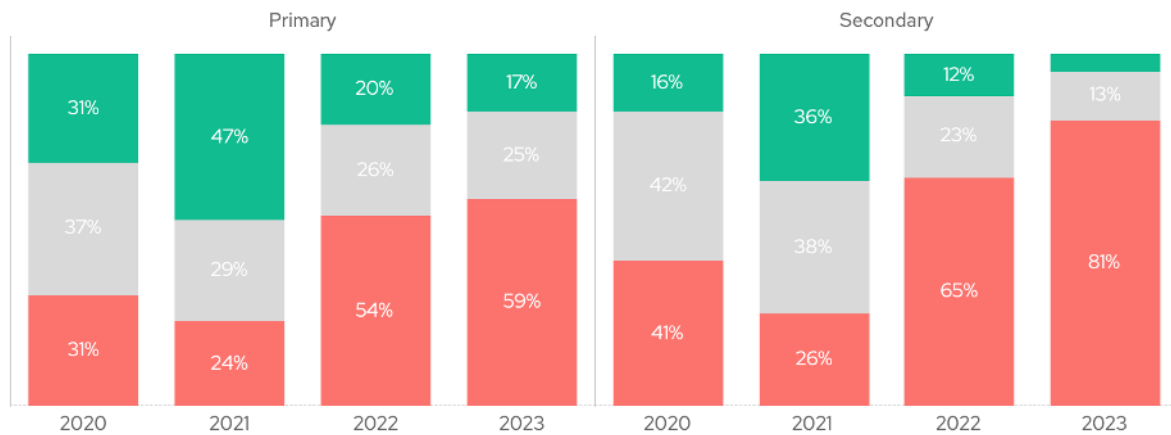
However, there has been an increase in the number of unfilled positions within secondary schools. Among schools who have advertised this year, a notable 19% of secondary teachers this year indicate that their department has at least one vacant position, compared to 15% last year and a mere 8% in 2021. This suggests a growing challenge in filling teaching roles within secondary education.

Fewer applicants for secondary school roles

The current landscape presents teachers seeking to change roles with an abundance of opportunities compared to any point since 2018/19, given the higher number of secondary vacancies available. With the increased job advertisements this year, leaders in both primary and secondary education are reporting a significant decline in the number of applicants per position. In the primary sector, 59% of senior leaders indicate a decrease in the number of applicants compared to the usual, slightly higher than the 54% reported last year. In the secondary sector, the recruitment cycle appears to be even more challenging, with over 80%

of leaders stating a decrease in applicants compared to the norm, a notable increase from 65% reporting the same last year.

If your school has placed job advertisements recently, do you feel the response is higher or lower than usual?

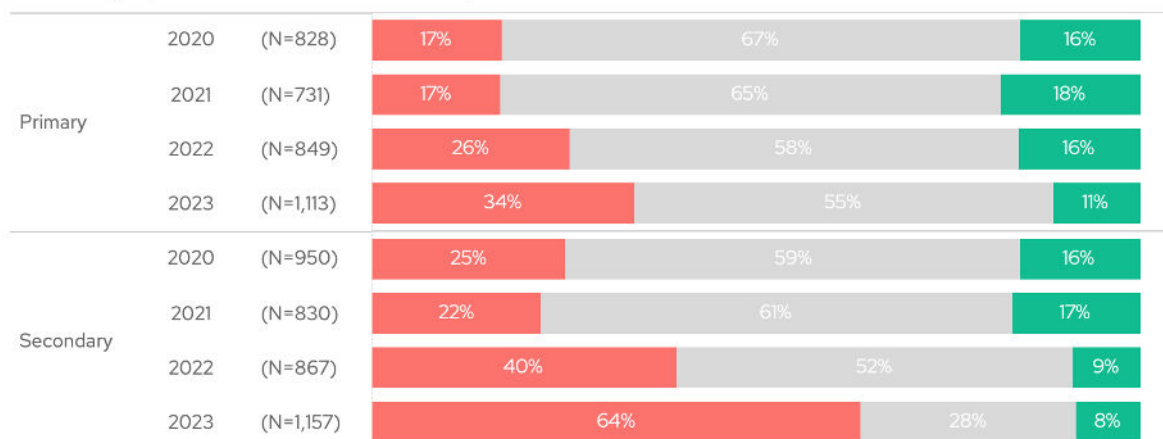


Responses from senior leaders and headteachers, varying from 334 to 1,089, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- Higher
- No change
- Lower

Due to the combination of an increased number of job advertisements and a decreased response rate to them, senior leaders are expressing heightened concerns compared to the past four years regarding the availability of adequately qualified teachers for the upcoming September. This emerging trend is indeed worrying, as 35% of primary leaders are more apprehensive than the previous year about the possibility of having a school staffed with suitably qualified professionals. The level of concern is even more pronounced among secondary leaders, with 61% expressing worry about the potential lack of suitably qualified staff in their schools come September.

Compared to last year, how worried are you that you won't have a school of suitably qualified teachers in September?



Responses from senior leaders and headteachers, varying from 731 to 1,157, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

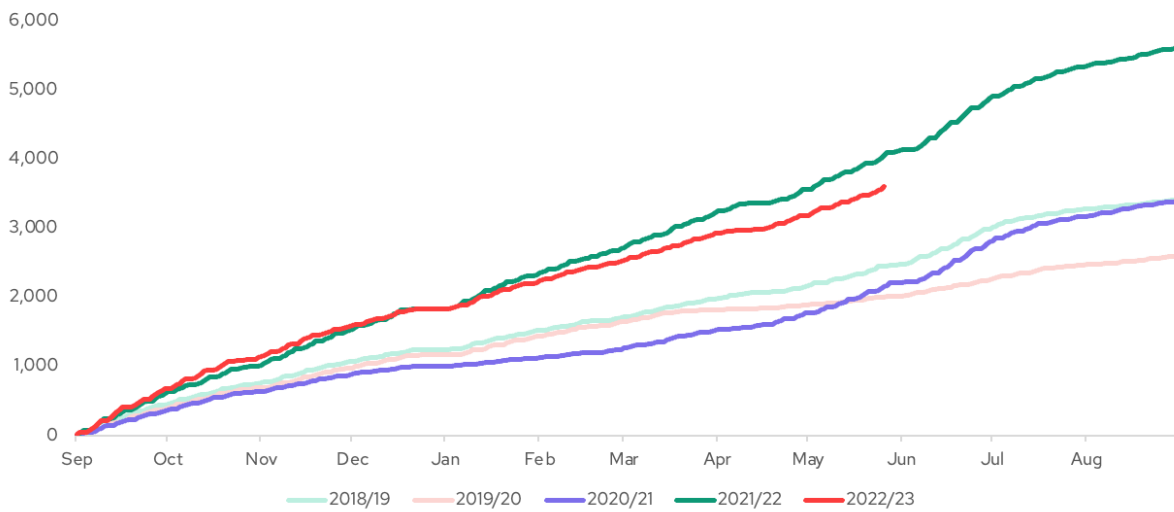
- Less worried
- No more or less worried
- More worried

Persistent high vacancies for technicians

The employment of technicians in secondary schools has faced significant challenges due to the impact of the pandemic and subsequent economic conditions. SchoolDash has been monitoring the number of advertisements for Art, Science, Technology, and other technician positions posted by secondary schools. The pandemic caused a decline in the number of advertisements initially. However, in the last academic year, there was a substantial increase in technician adverts, resulting in a staggering 65% rise compared to the previous year and the 2018/19 period.

The cumulative number of technician advertisements has slightly decreased from the high rate observed last year. But ongoing demand for technicians remains high: technician advertisements are 46% higher than the levels seen in the pre-pandemic year of 2018/19. Notably, there has been significant growth in demand for Technology and Computer Science technicians during this period. Considering that advertisement rates are almost on par with those of last year, it is likely that the upcoming year will present continued challenges for schools, with technicians able to take the pick of roles.

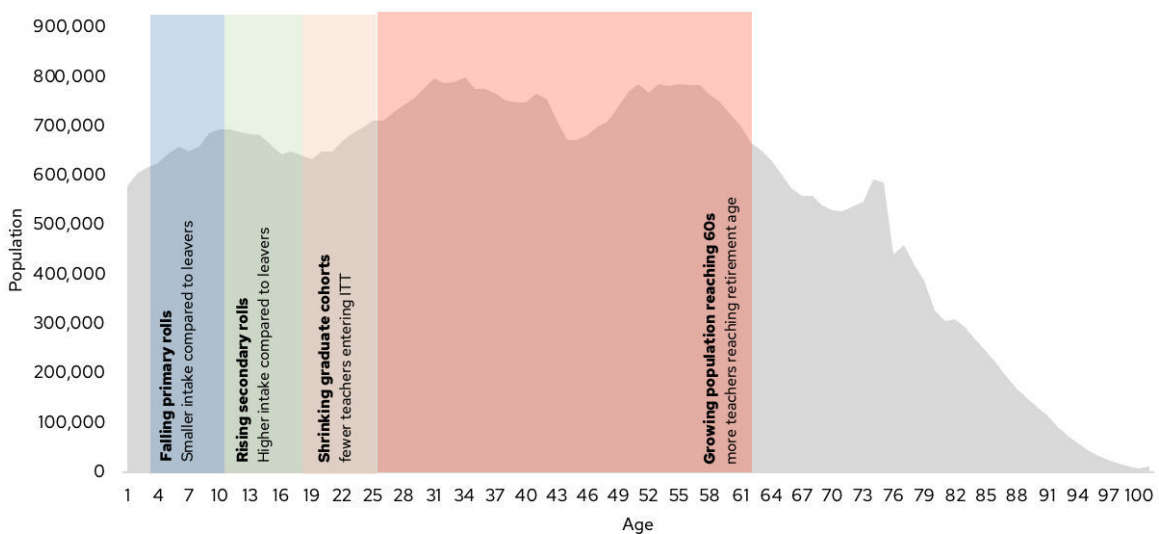
Secondary school technician adverts, cumulative over school year



Future Teacher Shortages

Explaining the disparity in teacher supply and demand across phases

The supply and demand dynamics of teachers in England are influenced by various factors, including economic conditions, perceptions of the teaching profession and opportunities to teach abroad. However, the impact of population size is often overlooked. As we have illustrated earlier, teacher shortages are currently more pronounced in the secondary phase compared to the primary phase. We anticipate this trend will persist in the coming years. The following figure, depicting the population of England and Wales by age groups, provides an explanation for this phenomenon.



The demand for teachers, barring any significant changes in class sizes, is contingent upon the number of school-aged children in the population. Presently, cohorts of 4-year-olds entering primary schools are considerably smaller than the cohorts of 11-year-olds leaving, leading to a decline in primary school enrolments. Assuming capacity is effectively managed through school and classroom closures, this should result in a decrease in demand for primary teachers. Conversely, cohorts of 11-year-olds transitioning to secondary schools are much larger than the cohorts of 16/18-year-olds exiting, resulting in an upward trajectory in secondary school enrolments. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for secondary teachers, and this pressure is expected to persist for a few more years before reversing.

The supply of teachers, to some extent, depends on the size of the working-age population. Teaching attracts over 60% of its new trainees from the pool of recent graduates, making recruitment to initial teacher training more challenging when these cohorts are small. The size of cohorts graduating from universities will continue to decrease for a few more years, potentially exacerbating the difficulty in recruiting new teachers. By contrast, the population starting to reach retirement age is quite large and is increasing.

Overall, the combination of limited new teacher supply and high demand for secondary teachers necessitates careful planning to address the imminent shortages in the next few years. However, beyond this period, we may enter a prolonged phase characterised by declining demand for teachers in both primary and secondary phases.

Indicators of challenges in the recruitment season

As the teaching profession, particularly in the secondary sector, appears poised to face several years of exceptionally challenging teacher recruitment, it is crucial to monitor the deteriorating labour market conditions in a timely manner. This will enable policymakers to make swift decisions on how to respond. Unfortunately, the annual School Workforce Census is insufficient for monitoring the state of the teacher labour market, partly because there are long delays between a poor Spring recruitment market and eventual publications of the census over 12 months later. More importantly, teacher shortages do not look the same as shortages in other professions, where it might be possible to leave roles vacant for extended periods. Ultimately, somebody must be standing at the front of the classroom.

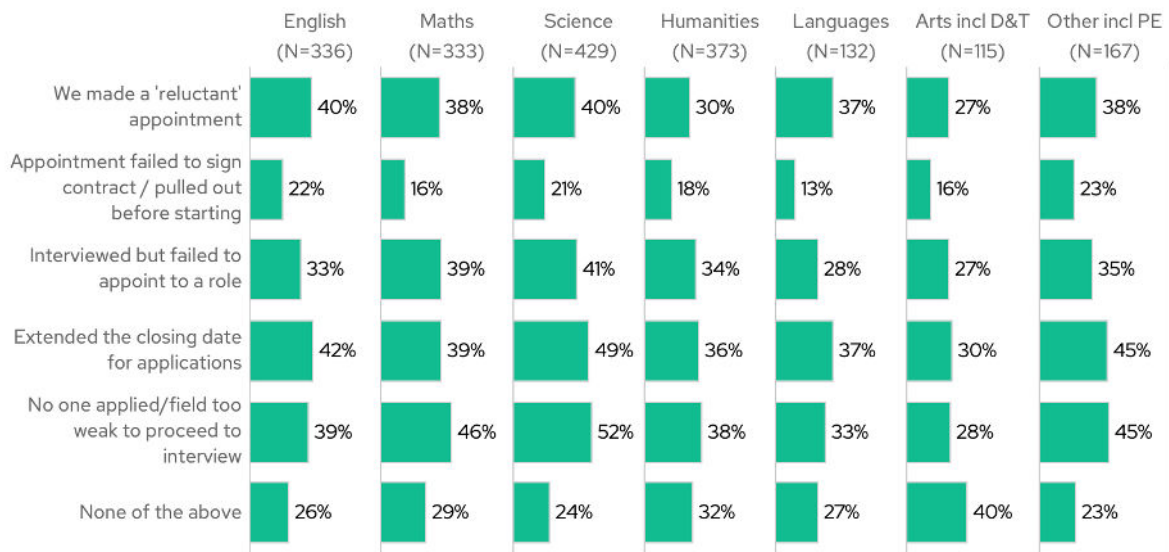
To address this, our initial approach focuses on monitoring unfavourable outcomes during the recruitment season. Alongside tracking recruitment failures, we have surveyed middle and senior leaders to gather information on the following occurrences during their involvement in the recruitment process (May 2023 figures are reported in parentheses):

- Reluctantly appointing candidates who may lack adequate qualifications or have performed poorly in interviews (27% in primary; 39% in secondary)
- Instances where appointees fail to sign contracts or commence employment (14% in primary; 22% in secondary)

- Failures to fill positions after the interview stage (34% in primary; 42% in secondary)
- Needing to extend application closing dates (30% in primary; 46% in secondary)
- Failure to proceed to interview due to a weak or absent field (28% in primary; 49% in secondary)

Recruitment difficulties are affecting some subjects more than others. When asked, middle leaders in science departments were most likely to report challenges, with recruitment being more straightforward in the Humanities and Arts subjects.

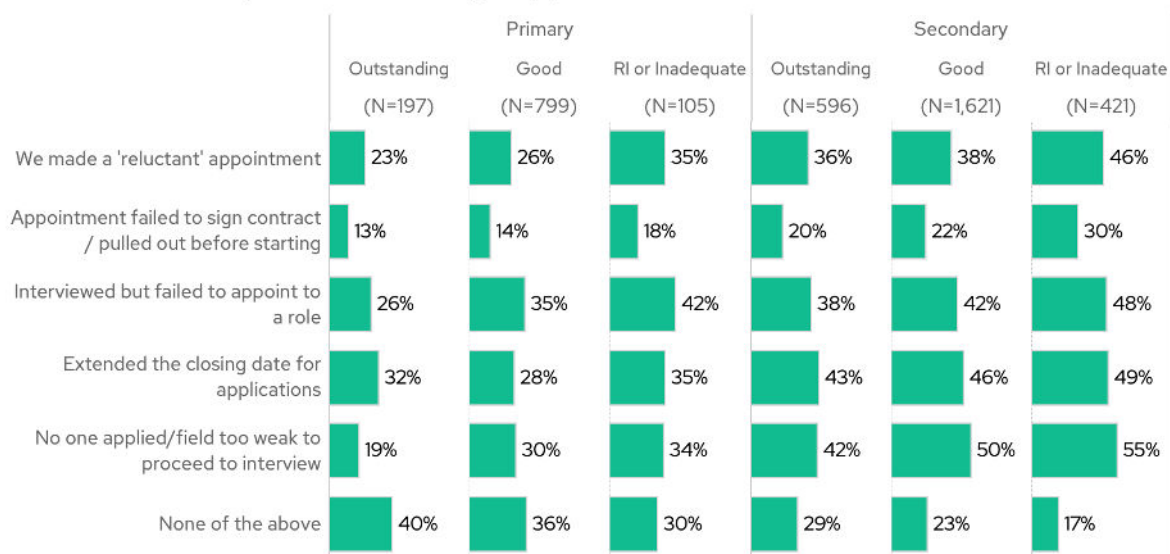
If you have been involved in internal or external recruitment over the past 12 months, have any of the following happened?



Question answered by 1,903 middle leaders only on 24/05/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

In addition to examining whether these statistics deteriorate further in 2024, we will closely analyse what types of schools are disproportionately affected by shortfalls in applications. For example, the chart below shows that schools currently holding a 'Requires Improvement' (RI) or 'Inadequate' Ofsted rating are more likely to find it difficult to recruit.

If you have been involved in internal or external recruitment over the past 12 months, have any of the following happened?



Question answered by 3,739 headteachers and middle and senior leaders on 24/05/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Indicators of effects of teacher shortages

In addition to monitoring teacher shortages during the recruitment season, we plan to assess the impact of these shortages on school operations and the quality of education provided.

To gain insights into how primary headteachers are addressing recruitment challenges, we surveyed those already facing difficulties. Their responses revealed various coping strategies, such as using supply/agency teachers and using higher-level teaching assistants as class teachers. Some mentioned the potential placement of deputy or even headteachers into class teaching roles, while others hoped to persuade part-time teachers to increase their working hours.

These insights have formed the basis of our **four indicators of primary teacher shortages**:

1. Percentage of teachers reporting that their school is inadequately staffed with suitably qualified teachers: 14% (unchanged from 13% in 2019)
2. Percentage of teachers reporting that non-teachers cover their Planning, Preparation, and Assessment (PPA) time: 57%
3. Percentage of teachers reporting that a class is led by a short-term temporary, agency, or non-qualified teacher: 49%
4. Percentage of teachers reporting that they are not currently teaching their preferred year group: 26%

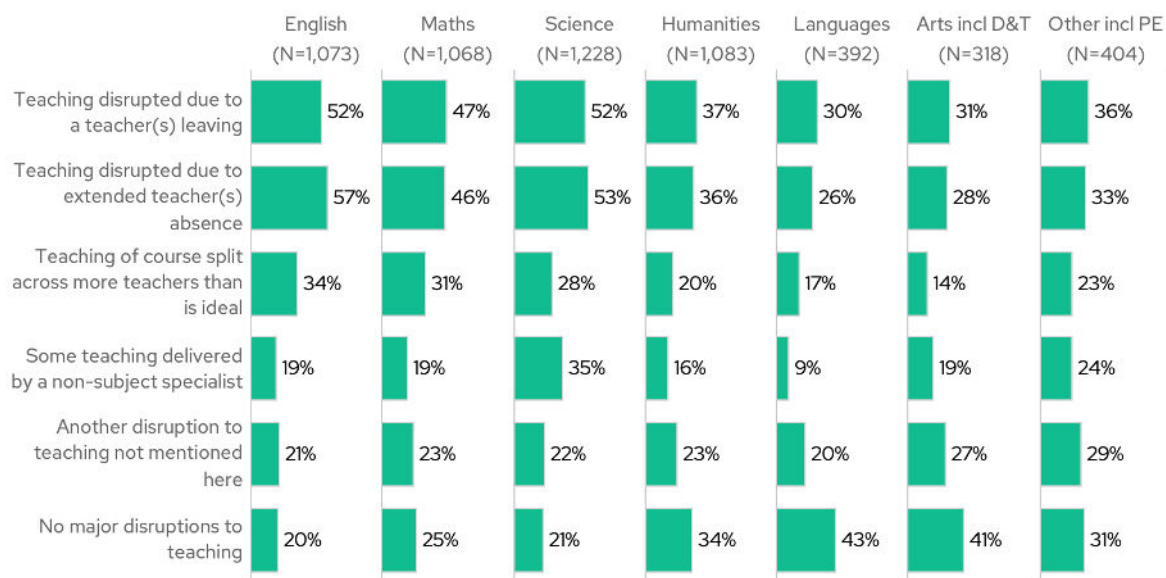
Similarly, we invited secondary headteachers facing recruitment challenges to explain their strategies for managing the situation. Given the greater flexibility secondary schools have in adjusting their educational provision, responses were more diverse compared to primary schools. Many mentioned reviewing the timetable and reducing GCSE options, while a significant number stated that teachers would be assigned to other subject departments. Some even mentioned increasing teaching group size, which would mainly affect lower attaining students in core subjects and less popular exam classes.

As a result, we have created **four indicators of secondary teacher shortages**, focusing on experiences within teachers' own subject departments or faculties:

1. Percentage of teachers reporting that their department lacks an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers: 22% (up from 20% in 2019)
2. Percentage of teachers expressing dissatisfaction with teaching classes split between two teachers: 32%
3. Percentage of teachers expressing unhappiness with changes made to their timetable during the year: 23%
4. Percentage of teachers reporting that some of their current Year 11 GCSE cohort were taught by non-subject specialists: 23%

The disruption to GCSE course teaching is generally greater in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science where teacher shortages are already creating difficulties. Over three-quarters of English, Maths and Science teachers said at least one of their Year 11 classes experienced some kind of disruption. About half of the disruption was due to either a teacher leaving or a long-term absence. For Science teachers, one-in-three said that they had GCSE teaching delivered by a non-subject specialist (although this might have been a biology teacher teaching GCSE physics topics, rather than a PE teacher teaching physics).

Think of the Year 11 GCSE cohort in the main subject you teach. Have any of the following happened to a class during their GCSE course?

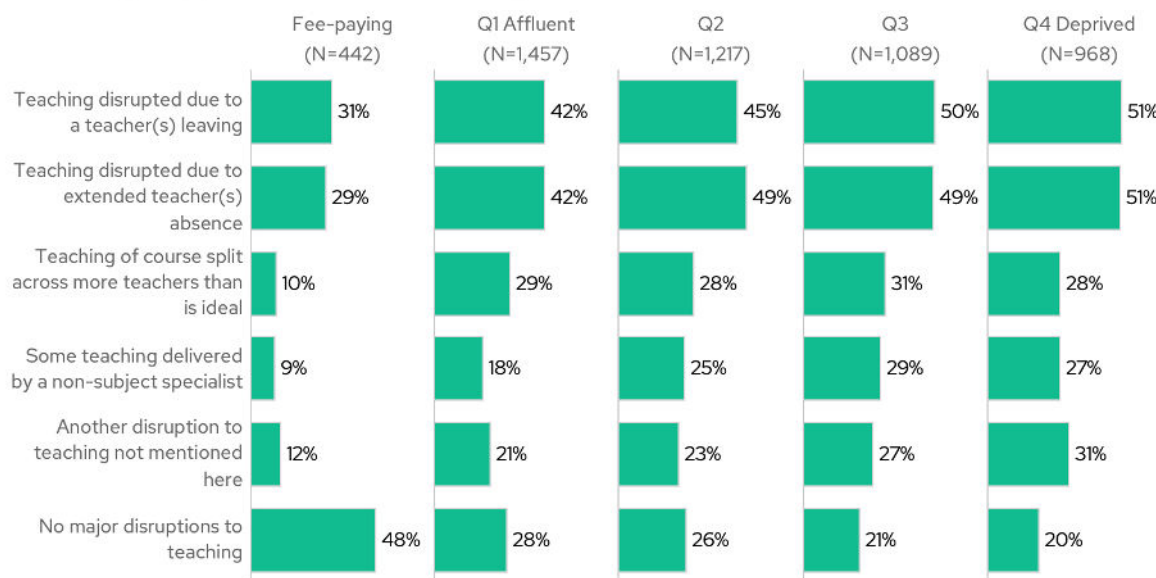


Question answered by 5,613 teachers on 23/05/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

In addition to examining these indicators over time, we will analyse whether social inequalities between schools are widening, since existing academic research suggests that schools serving disadvantaged communities experience greater difficulties in recruiting teachers. The chart below illustrates that Year 11 students are more likely to experience disruption in their studies when they attend schools with higher proportions of students receiving free school meals.

In fee-paying schools, 48% of teachers said their Year 11 cohort saw no major disruptions to teaching in their subject. In the most affluent state-funded schools this figure was 28% and in the most disadvantaged state-funded schools this figure was 20%. Teaching of the GCSE course by a non-specialist happened in just 9% of departments in fee-paying schools, compared to 18% and 27% in the most affluent and most disadvantaged state-funded schools, respectively.

Think of the Year 11 GCSE cohort in the main subject you teach. Have any of the following happened to a class during their GCSE course?



Question answered by 5,173 teachers on 23/05/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

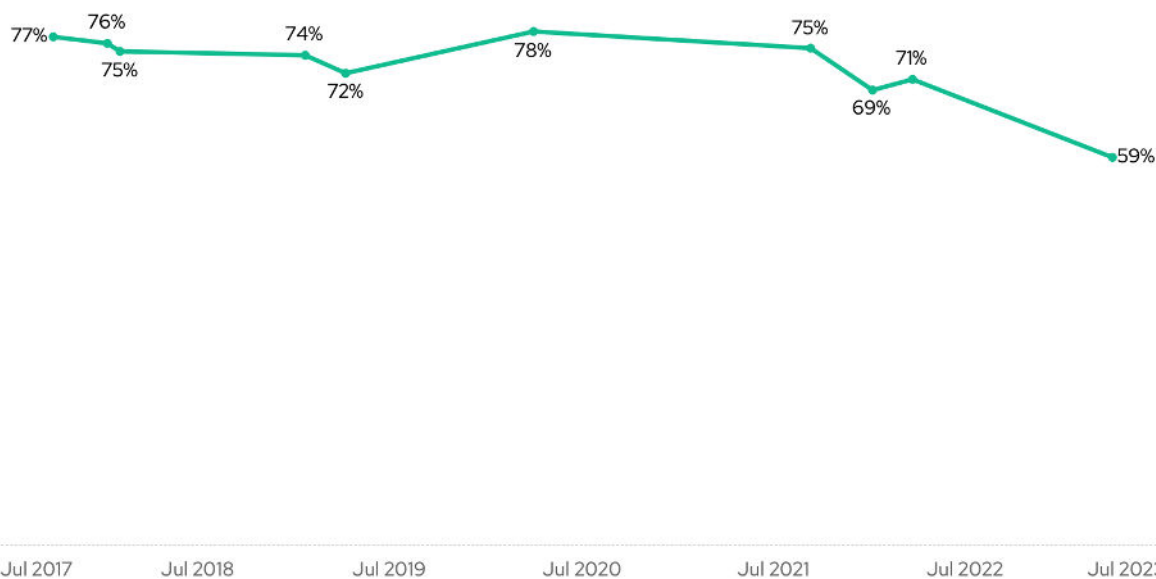
Teacher Morale

Teacher job attachment reaches a six-year low

We use the Teacher Tapp panel to track long-term shifts in teachers' intentions to remain in the profession. The panel regularly asks teachers whether they anticipate still being in the job three years from now. Since 2017 this metric has remained relatively consistent, with approximately three-quarters of teachers expressing their intent to continue as educators in three years' time. In 2022, the figure remained on par with pre-pandemic levels, indicating no immediate impact of the pandemic on teacher job retention.

However, against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis and recent strike actions, this year marks a significant decline, hitting the lowest recorded figure, ten percentage points below the previous low. Teachers in their first five years of teaching are typically more susceptible to leaving the profession. Alarmingly, it is among this group that intentions to remain a teacher have dropped the most, plummeting from 72% in May 2022 to 55% today.

Do you expect to be a teacher in three years' time?



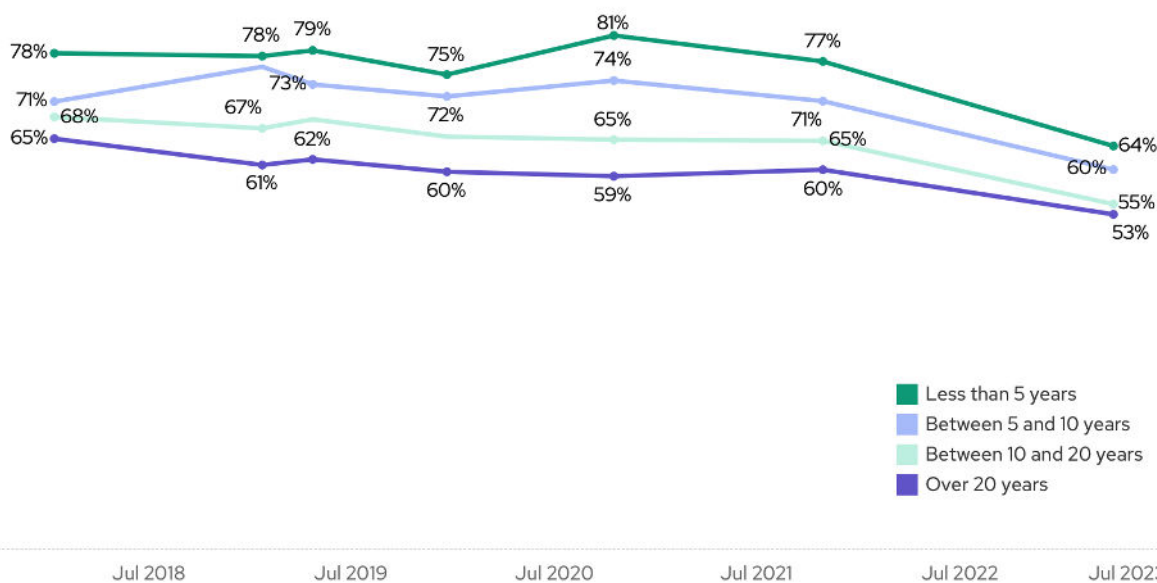
Teacher responses vary from 528 to 9,213, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

However, the reality of the teaching profession is that experienced teachers are less inclined to leave, primarily due to the challenges of finding comparable salaries in alternative careers.

Over the past year, there has been a significant decline in the number of teachers who would choose to train again if given the opportunity. This is most pronounced among those with fewer than five years of experience: only 64% would be willing to train as teachers again, compared to 77% last year. Among more experienced teachers, slightly over half indicate a willingness to pursue teacher training once more. Moreover, just one-in-four teachers currently state they would encourage their own child to become a teacher, while nearly one-in-five would actively discourage them from doing so.

The consequences of this downward trend are evident. A diminishing number of advocates for the teaching profession within the education community is likely to exacerbate an already challenging recruitment situation.

If you could go back in time, would you choose to train to be a teacher or not?

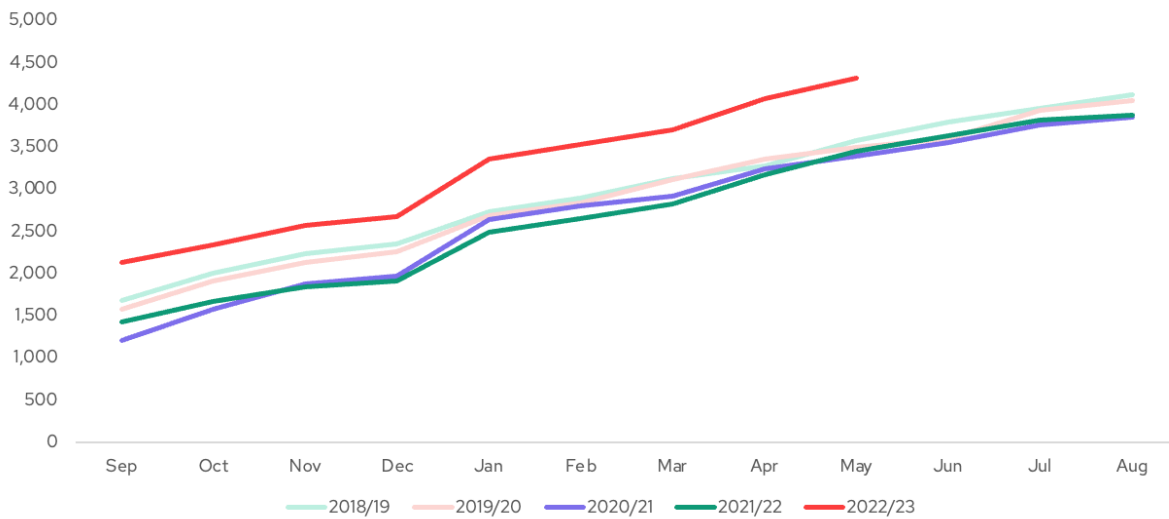


Teacher responses vary from 250 to 3,173, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Potential negative impact of limited applicant pool on headteacher hires

SchoolDash also monitors the number of changes in headship that are recorded in Department of Education records. The 2022/23 academic year has so far seen more headteacher appointments than at any point in the previous four years. The trend of increased headteacher appointments compared to previous years has persisted throughout the academic year. There are two likely reasons for this: first, fewer heads retired during the pandemic whilst heads felt a duty to stay in post; second, our data has shown that this cohort of heads has experienced an exceptionally stressful period of leadership due to the pandemic followed by budgetary and recruitment challenges.

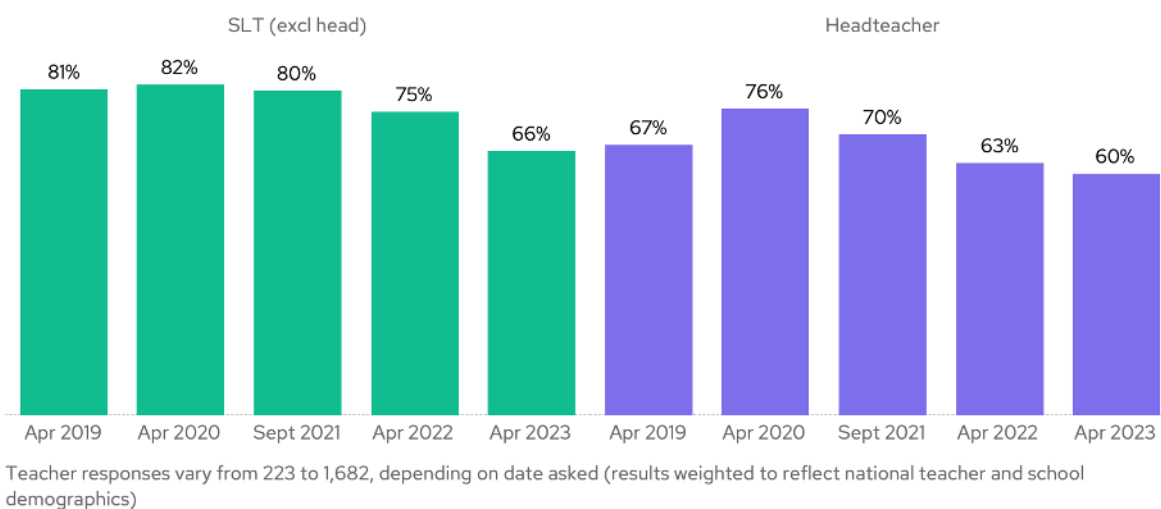
Monthly headteacher appointments, cumulative over academic year



If the current trend of high new headteacher appointments continues, it can present an opportunity for senior leaders who aspire to transition into headship roles. However, it is concerning that the decline in the proportion of teachers envisioning themselves teaching in three years extends to all seniority levels, not just early-career educators.

Among senior leaders, only two-thirds now say they are likely to remain teachers in three years' time, representing a decrease from 75% compared to the previous year. The rates are even lower for headteachers, although they experienced a relatively smaller decline compared to other senior positions, currently standing at 60%. This figure is seven percentage points lower than the response recorded during the same period in 2019.

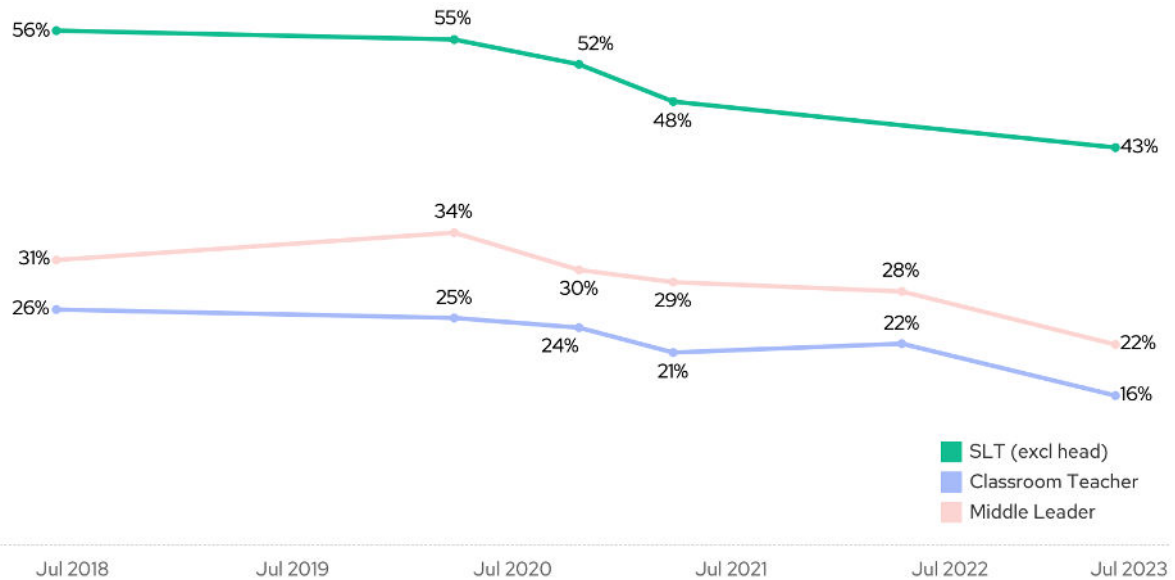
Do you expect to be a teacher in three years' time?



A growing number of headteacher roles may lead to a problem for schools if too few teachers aspire to be a headteacher. The pandemic led to a fall in the proportion of senior

leaders who aspired to become headteachers, in part owing to the greatly increased stress levels, which are still being felt by headteachers today. This year has seen another fall in the proportion of Deputy and Assistant Heads who say they would like to become headteachers, with 43% aspiring to do so, compared to 48% last year, and 56% pre-pandemic. Teachers in other senior positions also report declining levels of enthusiasm for pursuing headship roles.

Would you like to be a headteacher yourself one day?



Teacher responses vary from 529 to 3,625, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Flexible Working

How flexible working influences teacher recruitment and retention

Flexible working arrangements have gained popularity in many white collar industries following the pandemic, and this raises challenges for both recruitment and retention in schools. It affects recruitment, because job seekers can seek work beyond their immediate geographical area, often with flexibility in working hours. It affects retention because more flexible working environments may attract teachers, teaching assistants and non-teaching staff away from school roles, which have been traditionally considered family-friendly.

More than a third of teachers (39%) said that the rise of work-from-home contracts has increased the likelihood of them leaving the teaching profession. This sentiment is particularly prevalent among younger and less experienced teachers, whose salaries may not significantly differ from what they could earn in other fields. Nearly half of teachers in their 20s (46%) stated that the rise of working from home is prompting them to reconsider their career in teaching.

There are clearly many constraints around flexible working in teaching which are unlikely to be overcome without substantial changes to school working patterns. Nevertheless, it is important to consider what aspects of flexible working teachers may like to see introduced in order to retain some of those teachers who would otherwise leave to go to a more flexible role.

Flexible holidays - but not at any price

Teaching is relatively unique among professions in that holiday dates are set well in advance and moving within the profession is unlikely to substantially change these dates. Though their holidays are long (over twice as long as many other jobs), teachers must take their holidays when prices for flights and hotels are expensive. Furthermore, they are unable to book days off work to attend special occasions or manage life events. In open text responses, teachers frequently mentioned the difficulty of dealing with things such as broken boilers and dentist appointments. For parents, they find it upsetting they are unable to book time off for their own children's sports days and school plays.

We wanted to understand the extent to which teachers would be willing to give up their longer holidays in exchange for flexibility in leave during term-time. It is difficult to measure these trade-offs straightforwardly because teaching is a unique job. In addition to fixed, but longer holidays, teachers typically work long hours during their term-time.

We asked two hypothetical questions to see how willing teachers would be to give up some of their longer holidays for greater flexibility in booking leave. First, we offered them the opportunity to take extra days of leave during term time, but each day of term time leave would require them to teach two days' holiday classes. Three-quarters of teachers would not want to take a single day's term time holiday at the expense of two days of holiday teaching. Just 6% of teachers said they would take five days' holiday during term-time (perhaps enough for a holiday abroad) in exchange for ten days' teaching during the school holidays.

Our second hypothetical question offered them a job at a school with 70% workload (i.e. 15 hours a week teaching) but in exchange they would only get six weeks' paid holiday, to be taken at any time. 4-in-10 teachers said they would likely accept this type of job contract which would give them more reasonable working hours at the expense of shorter school holidays. However, the remaining six-in-ten prefer the status quo and this shows how hard it is to use wholesale contractual changes across the profession to better align with work preferences. Overall therefore, while teachers would like greater flexibility in being able to take leave, they are unconvinced by the merits of broader changes in the structure of the school year.

Taking preparation, planning and administration time at home

We invited teachers to give suggestions of flexible working arrangements they would like to see. Approximately 4-in-10 responses related to working at home during preparation, planning and administration (PPA) time. The responses fell into three broad categories of increasing complexity and cost:

1. **PPA taken at home if desired within existing timetables.** Currently, two-thirds of teachers say they are not allowed to go home during their PPA times (the rest either freely can go home or can go home in particular circumstances). Our responses suggest that teachers would welcome this freedom being extended to all schools. However, if there are no changes to existing timetables it may create substantial unfairness where some teachers find themselves with PPA concentrated on Friday afternoon whilst others have their PPA in the middle of the day, making it impossible to go off-site. Furthermore, middle leaders with fewer timetabled classes would have a greater chance of selecting a time to leave early or arrive late. The profession would have to tolerate this unfairness.
2. **Creating PPA at particular times to accommodate teacher preferences.** Teachers who are parents often mentioned their desire to be able to occasionally drop off or pick up their own children from school by concentrating their PPA time at the start or end of the day. Assuming all students are still at school during the core hours of 9-3, it is simply impossible to concentrate PPA time at the start and end of the day. Furthermore, even if teachers without their own children were happy that parent-teachers always took the start and end of day slots, this would create significant pressure on the timetable.

3. **Whole day PPA for every teacher.** Many teachers expressed a desire to teach four full days followed by a day at home. This is clearly quite a radical change from existing provision, with a doubling of the typical PPA time of a full-time teacher without responsibilities. If the government could make available the budget to increase PPA time, this would not be too difficult to implement in primary schools through the use of floating teachers who move between classes. However, creating a timetable that gives each teacher one day without lessons each week would undoubtedly mean a large increase in the number of split classes at secondary. These radical reforms therefore do not seem viable without substantial changes in how students attend school.

Improving the experience of part-time teachers

Teachers who already work part-time described many shortcomings. Firstly, some could not specify in advance which times they would not be working, so it was hard to secure nursery and other childcare places that are often reserved a year in advance. Secondly, others said working part-time meant they no longer had their own classroom so had to move throughout the day, leading to a worse experience whilst at school. Thirdly, whilst teachers can be given four-fifths of a teaching allocation, they inevitably find they work the equivalent of a full-time job when it comes to meetings, communication with parents, report writing and form tutor duties.

Other part-time teachers pointed out the substantial career penalty that comes with part-time work. Many said that part-time and job-share middle leadership positions were discouraged in their school, or that they were forced to drop responsibilities in exchange for a part-time contract. Others said they were able to continue a role such as a Head of Department, but would receive a reduced proportion of the wage they used to receive for the responsibility, even though it is not shared with another teacher.

Senior leaders grappling with the challenges of accommodating flexible working

While flexible working arrangements can be advantageous for individuals, they can pose challenges for senior leaders. Dealing with flexible working requests adds another layer of complexity to an already complex timetabling process. Moreover, certain types of flexible working arrangements may necessitate hiring additional staff members. When asked, 70% of senior leaders agreed it was difficult to accommodate flexible working requests, with little variation between the primary and secondary phases. As one leader put it:

"More flexible working would be great from a personal point of view but I am not aware of a way in which this could work without causing issues for students or colleagues."

Another leader summarised their attitude as:

"Flexible working is very difficult to manage in a school setting. We offer it for a limited period but the expectation is that staff then return to their full time roles."

I find it difficult to accommodate flexible working requests around the weekly life of our school



Responses from senior leaders and headteachers, varying from 1,051 to 1,052, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
■ Agree
 ■ Disagree

One prominent concern mentioned by leaders is the added cost and workload associated with finding suitable cover, particularly when requests involve transitioning to part-time positions. One leader said:

"Difficult to cover their days out. Timing of e.g. regular staff meetings to ensure continuity. Handover of roles across the week with job share. Inconsistency of approaches across the week in terms of curriculum, behaviour, parental concerns etc."

Another leader elaborated on the issues that flexible working creates:

"Consistency for children. Recruitment for the job share. Teachers asking for 4 days is more difficult than 3 or 2 because finding someone for 1 day is impossible other than supply which means it isn't a true job share for anyone and often means more work for the part-time teacher"

Whilst greater encouragement of flexible working is seen as a solution to teacher retention difficulties, the responses of leaders has shown that teacher shortages actually make flexible working more complex because non-timetabled teachers such as leaders are already having to cover for recruitment difficulties and because it can be extremely difficult to find appropriate job share partners in a tight labour market. Leaders find themselves in the difficult position of trying to persuade people to stay in post while dissuading them from requesting flexible work. As one leader put it:

"Schools are currently staffed to such a tight level there is no room for flexibility. Until we introduce a little slack into the system flexible working will not be possible to achieve."

Given the wide range and volume of concerns expressed by senior leaders, we shouldn't be under any illusions that there are magic solutions to working arrangements that are good for all staff and students. However, many concerns of staff could be alleviated by allowing any PPA time to be taken off-site and by giving greater flexibility to take a couple of hours out of school for emergencies and special occasions.

Notes on data and methodology

The SchoolDash job advertisements

The websites of all secondary schools, sixth-form colleges and further-education colleges in England were indexed each weekday night and compared to the previous day in order to detect new advertised teaching positions, excluding trainee positions. This process does not capture all relevant vacancies because: (a) not all positions are advertised on school websites, (b) even when they are, they are not necessarily presented in a way that can be automatically indexed, and (c) websites are sometimes unresponsive or otherwise unavailable. For this reason, the data presented should be thought of as being based not on a comprehensive list of all vacancies but on a subset. However, positions were detected for well over 90% of schools and these are broadly representative of the overall population of schools.

The Teacher Tapp panel

The Teacher Tapp survey panel comprises teachers across the state and private sectors in England who download a mobile app, provide valid teacher credentials and allow it to notify them of new questions at 3:30pm. Teachers are recruited to panel via social and traditional media, promotion at CPD events, and via word of mouth in schools. All questions asked are multiple and single response questions.

Calculation of Teacher Tapp panel weights

We apply post-stratification weights to the Teacher Tapp panel responses to ensure they reflect the demographic characteristics of teachers in England, using the following procedure:

1. We drop the results of all users who've declared they're not a teacher and results for teachers who have not provided us with valid information for: teaching phase; school funding; seniority/job post; gender; age; and school type (requiring users to answer questions on at least 7 days). These are the characteristics that allow us to match the users against the population in the School Workforce Census and Independent Schools Census.
2. We calculate population shares in census data for 24 groupings of teachers who are allocated according to their phase, funding, region, gender, age and job post.
3. We calculate sample shares in the Teacher Tapp valid responses for each question, which yields sample weights as the ratio of population to sample share.

Survey questions asked

Question Text	Target (if any)	Date	Number of responses
Has your school already advertised for jobs this season?	Primary	15/05/2023	2,957
Has your department already advertised for jobs this season?	Secondary	15/05/2023	6,271
If your school has placed job advertisements recently, do you feel the response is higher or lower than normal?	SLT and Heads	22/05/2023	2,199
Compared to last year, how worried are you that you won't have a school of suitably qualified teachers in September?	SLT and Heads	14/05/2023	2,319
Do you expect to be a teacher in three years' time?		18/04/2023	9,214
Would you like to be a headteacher yourself one day?		12/04/2023	9,760
If you could go back in time, would you choose to train to be a teacher or not?		14/04/2023	9,576
My school is currently well-staffed with suitably qualified teachers	Primary	03/05/2023	3,066
My department or faculty is currently well-staffed with suitably qualified teachers	Secondary	03/05/2023	6,455
The increase in work-from-home contracts in other professions has made it more likely that I will leave teaching in the next few years		07/05/2023	9,000
I find it difficult to accommodate flexible working requests around the weekly life of our school	SLT and Heads	29/04/2023	2,103
All else being equal, I would prefer to have fewer teachers working part-time at my school	SLT and Heads	29/04/2023	2,280
Your headteacher offers you a deal to take up to five days' holidays during term time, but for every ONE day you take as holiday you must teach TWO days of holiday revision or catch-up classes. How many days of term-time holiday do you elect to take next academic year?		19/04/2023	9,298
There is a local job available at a tutorial college for individual home-educated children. You would need to work on-site from 9am to 5pm with no		21/04/2023	9,443

preparation or marking outside these hours. The salary is the same as your current one, but you would only get six weeks' holiday each year, which you could take at any time. Would you take the job?			
There is a job available at a school where teachers have 70% of a normal workload. For example, a teacher with no other responsibilities would teach 15 hours a week rather than 22 hours (with the remaining time as on-site PPA). However, at this school you only get six weeks' paid holiday (which could be taken at any time). Would you apply for a job at this school?		24/04/2023	9,189
Who takes over your class during your PPA time?	Primary	23/05/2023	2,933
Are there any classes in your school that are currently being regularly taught by agency/supply teachers, TAs or HLTAs, or teachers on very short-term contracts?	Primary	23/05/2023	3,027
In an ideal world, I would prefer to be teaching another year group this year	Primary	23/05/2023	2,303
Which of the following have you *disliked* about your timetable this year?	Secondary	23/05/2023	6,178
If you have been involved in internal or external recruitment over the past 12 months, have any of the following happened?	Middle Leaders, SLT and Heads	24/05/2023	5,713
Think of the Year 11 GCSE cohort in the main subject you teach. Have any of the following happened to a class during their GCSE course?	Secondary	23/05/2023	6,124
If you find you cannot fill all your advertised vacancies at your school, what will you do to mitigate the problem?	Headteachers who said they either did not fill position, or still had some open	23/05/2023	210
What concerns (if any) would you have if a teacher made a flexible working request?		29/04/2023	1,092
Your headteacher asks for one suggestion to improve the compatibility of work with other commitments in your life. What one thing would you suggest?		29/04/2023	3,565
Is there a flexible working policy that you would like your school / government to introduce?		15/04/2023	2,367



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