

Teacher Recruitment and Retention in 2026

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Becky Allen
Timo Hannay
Iain Ford



Executive Summary

The Teacher Tapp and SchoolDash annual report on teacher recruitment and retention, funded by the Gatsby Foundation, draws on monitoring of job advertisements and surveys of over 10,000 teachers to track the state of the profession in England. This year's report adds new analysis of how recruitment actually plays out – for the schools doing the hiring and the teachers applying – and of schools' use of teachers from overseas. Here are the key findings.

Key Finding 1: Secondary recruitment has fallen to its lowest level in a decade, yet schools are no better staffed. Job advertisements for secondary roles are down 27% on last year and 49% below the pre-pandemic 2018/19 baseline, a decline seen across every subject. But fewer vacancies have not eased staffing pressures: 21% of primary teachers now say their school is inadequately staffed with suitably qualified teachers, up from 16%, and reliance on non-specialists and temporary staff continues to grow. Schools are advertising less and absorbing shortfalls internally – not finding it easier to staff their classrooms.

Key Finding 2: Recruitment has become easier, but the benefits are deeply unequal. As the market has contracted, the difficulties schools face when hiring have eased across the board. Outcomes, however, are sharply stratified by disadvantage: 61% of fee-paying schools and 49% of the most affluent state schools appointed a strong candidate this year, compared with just 36% of the most deprived schools. This gap is driven by supply – disadvantaged schools attract markedly weaker applicant pools – rather than by how well they recruit.

Key Finding 3: Overseas recruitment is not filling the gap. Employing a non-UK national teacher is common in London (57% of schools) but rare elsewhere, and most such teachers already held the right to work in the UK rather than being recruited from abroad. Deliberate international recruitment for shortage subjects remains marginal – undertaken by just 3–18% of schools depending on region – and is held back chiefly by the cost and administrative burden of visa sponsorship. It is not currently relieving shortage-subject pressures.

Key Finding 4: Teachers' long-term commitment remains well below pre-pandemic levels. Around 61% of teachers now expect to still be teaching in three years' time, compared with roughly 75% before the pandemic. The figure has stabilised since 2022, but the persistent gap reflects ongoing challenges, including the burden of managing pupil behaviour and the limited flexibility of teaching relative to other careers. With a weak wider labour market currently suppressing departures, this leaves a latent risk of rising turnover if conditions improve.

Key Finding 5: The pipeline of future headteachers continues to narrow. Just 37% of deputy and assistant headteachers say they aspire to headship, down from 55% in 2017. Headteacher turnover in the secondary phase has also fallen to its lowest level outside the pandemic, raising concerns about leadership capacity in the years ahead.

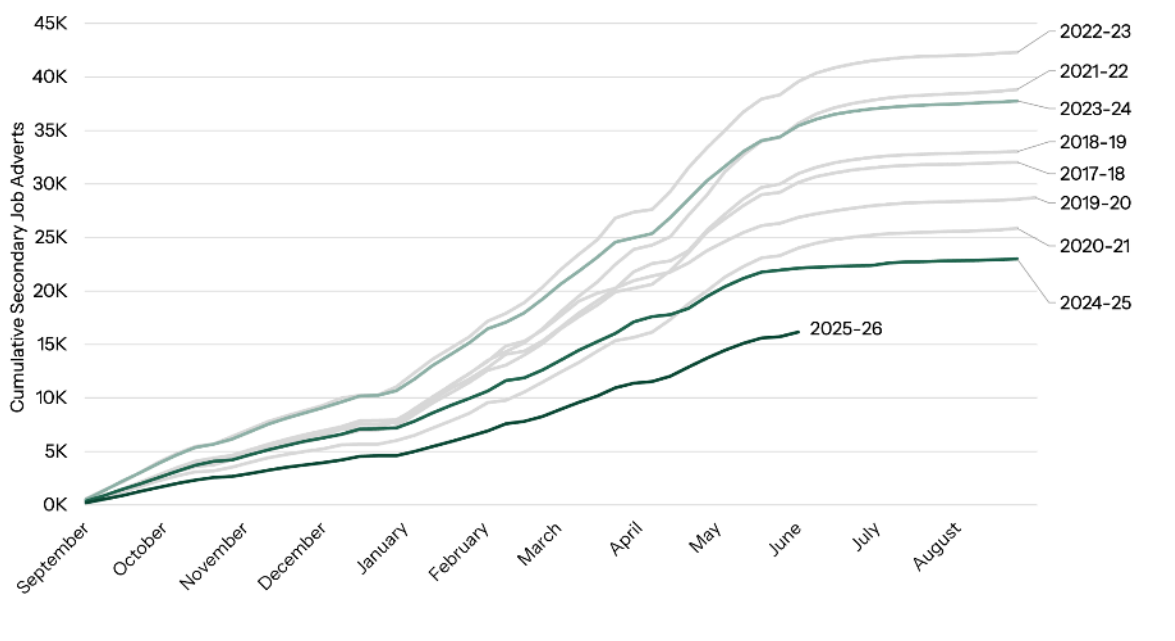
Teacher Recruitment in 2026

Secondary school job advertisements fall to historic lows

This report is the follow-up to the one we published in April, and appears after the 31st May resignation deadline – the point by which any teacher wishing to take up a new post in September must have given notice to their current school. The recruitment activity that was still unfolding when we last reported has now largely concluded. As a result, these data capture resignations for the coming year in full and provide a much more complete picture of the teacher labour market for the 2025/26 academic year.

SchoolDash has been monitoring the volume of job advertisements posted by secondary schools over the past nine years. As shown in the chart below, cumulative job adverts in the current academic year are tracking well below every previous year in the dataset, including the 2020/21 academic year when the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted staff movement. Compared to last year, the number of secondary job adverts is down by 27%, and it is 49% lower than during the 2018/19 pre-pandemic period. The scale of this decline is unprecedented in the period for which we have data.

Secondary school job adverts, cumulative over academic year



The number of secondary job ads has fallen dramatically, and this is consistent across all subjects, which suggests a systemic shift in demand for teachers rather than subject-specific supply issues. In primary schools, falling pupil numbers have clearly been reducing demand for teachers for several years. In secondary, the picture is more complex. Official census data show that total secondary rolls were broadly flat through 2025, but the DfE's national pupil projections indicate that secondary rolls have now plateaued and are projected to begin declining from September. Crucially, at this point in the academic year,

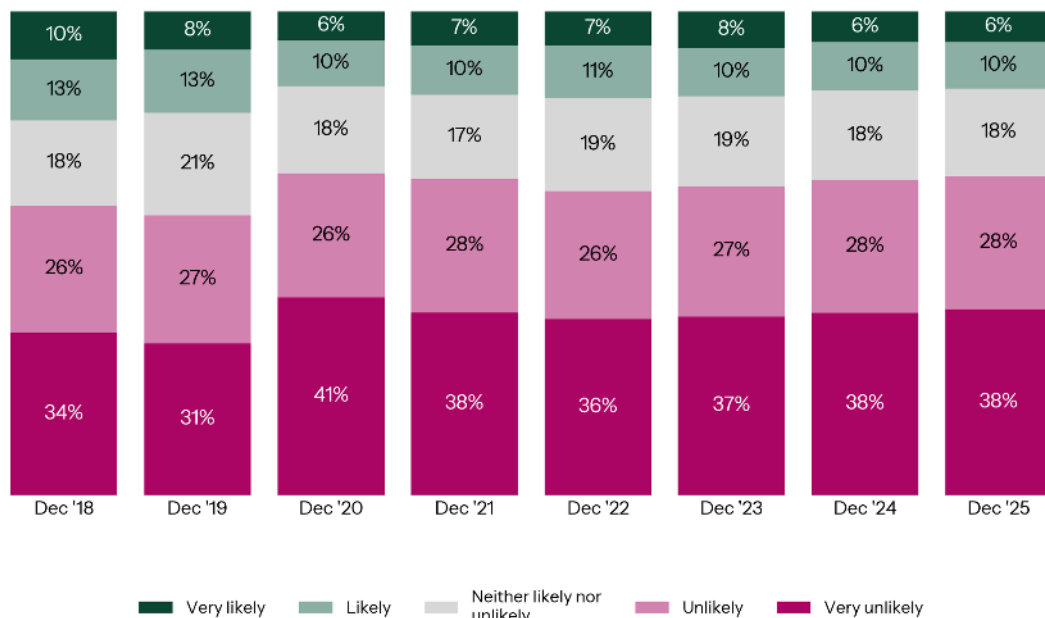
schools already know the size of their incoming Year 7 cohort, which is smaller than the Year 11 cohort about to leave. Schools are therefore hiring for a net smaller pupil body, even before this shows up fully in published census figures.

It is important to note that teacher labour markets are highly sensitive to marginal changes in demand. Even a modest reduction in the average number of posts per school can produce a sharp fall in total advertised vacancies, because most of the "flow" in teacher recruitment comes from the margin, i.e. the posts that tip from being needed to not being needed. At the same time, the wider UK labour market has weakened, with fewer job opportunities available outside teaching. This may be suppressing teacher wastage from the profession, which in turn reduces the number of replacement posts schools need to advertise.

Survey data from the Christmas period supports this interpretation. At that point in the year, teachers have not yet seen most job advertisements for the coming academic year, so their stated intentions reflect underlying inclination rather than responses to specific opportunities. As shown in the chart below, the proportion of teachers reporting that they are likely to leave their school has been largely unchanged since the pandemic, suggesting that demand from teachers to move has held steady even as the number of available positions has fallen sharply.

All these factors likely reinforce one another. Schools anticipating smaller cohorts may be choosing not to replace departing staff, while lower wastage to other professions means fewer departures to replace in the first place.

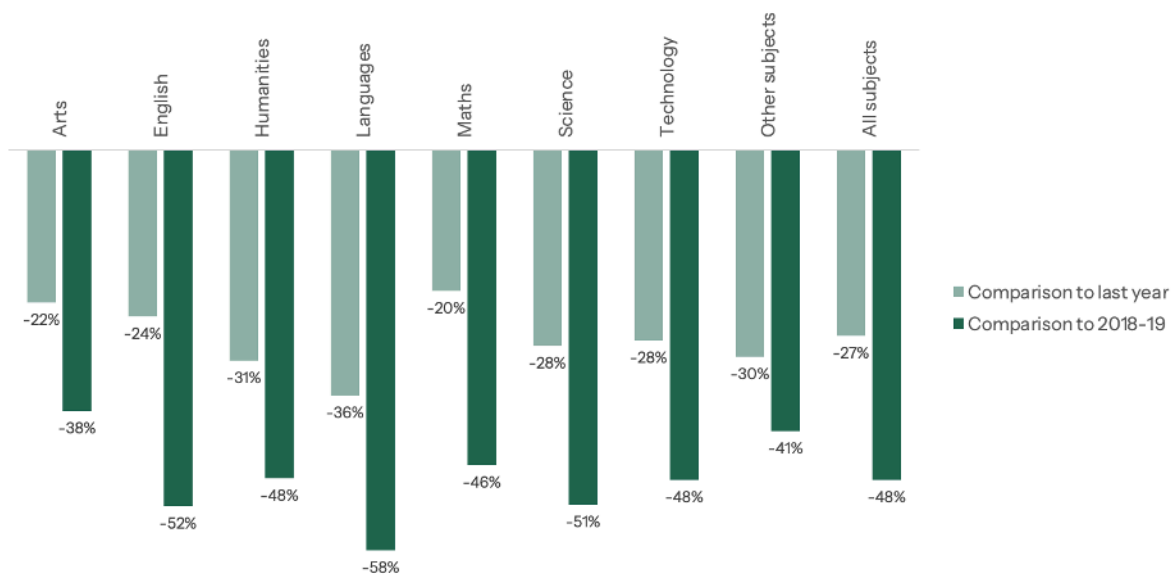
Teachers' inclination to move at Christmas has stabilised since the pandemic



Question asked: "How likely is it that you will leave your school at the end of this academic year?"

SchoolDash data also allows for analysis at the secondary phase subject level. As shown in the chart below, the decline in job advertisements is broadly consistent across all subjects, both compared to last year and to the 2018/19 pre-pandemic baseline. Even in traditionally hard-to-recruit subjects such as maths and science, adverts are down by around 20% and 28% respectively compared to last year, and by 46% and 51% compared to 2018/19. Languages has seen the largest fall relative to pre-pandemic levels, at 58%. The breadth of the decline reinforces the view that this reflects a systemic contraction in the secondary teacher labour market (whether through fewer posts, lower turnover, or both) rather than changes in teacher supply in particular subject areas.

Job advertisements down across all secondary subjects



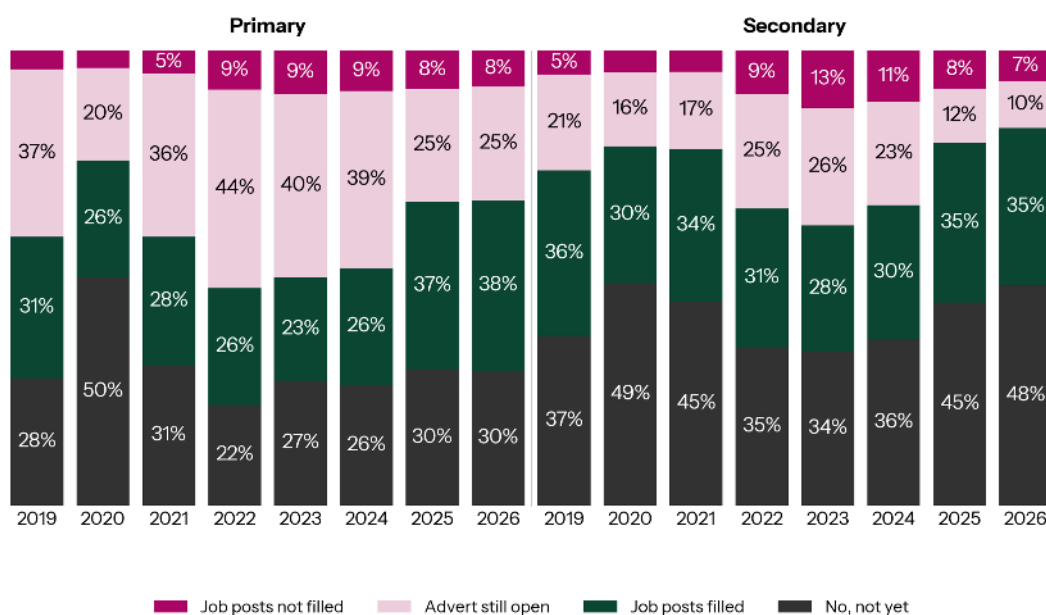
Primary recruitment stabilises at low levels

In the primary phase, falling pupil numbers have been reducing demand for teachers for several years. The survey data below suggest that the worst of this contraction may now have largely worked through into the recruitment market: the proportion of primary teachers reporting that their school has not yet advertised any jobs this season is broadly unchanged from last year, both sitting at 30%. Similarly, the share reporting that posts have been advertised and filled is stable at 38%, compared with 37% last year.

In the secondary phase, where the demographic decline is arriving later, the picture continues to suggest a deterioration in job availability. The proportion of secondary teachers reporting that no jobs have been advertised in their department has risen from 45% last year to 48%, consistent with the sharp falls in job advertisements recorded by SchoolDash. This suggests that the contraction in the secondary labour market may have further to run as the anticipated decline in pupil rolls begins to take effect across more schools.

Over the past five years, unfilled teaching positions have been a persistent challenge for both primary and secondary schools, with direct consequences for the quality of education that schools are able to provide. There are now signs that this is beginning to improve. In the primary phase, 8% of teachers report that advertised posts in their school or department remain unfilled at this point in the year, compared with 7% in the secondary phase. These are close to the lowest figures reported since we began tracking this measure.

Primary recruitment activity holds steady while secondary continues to slow

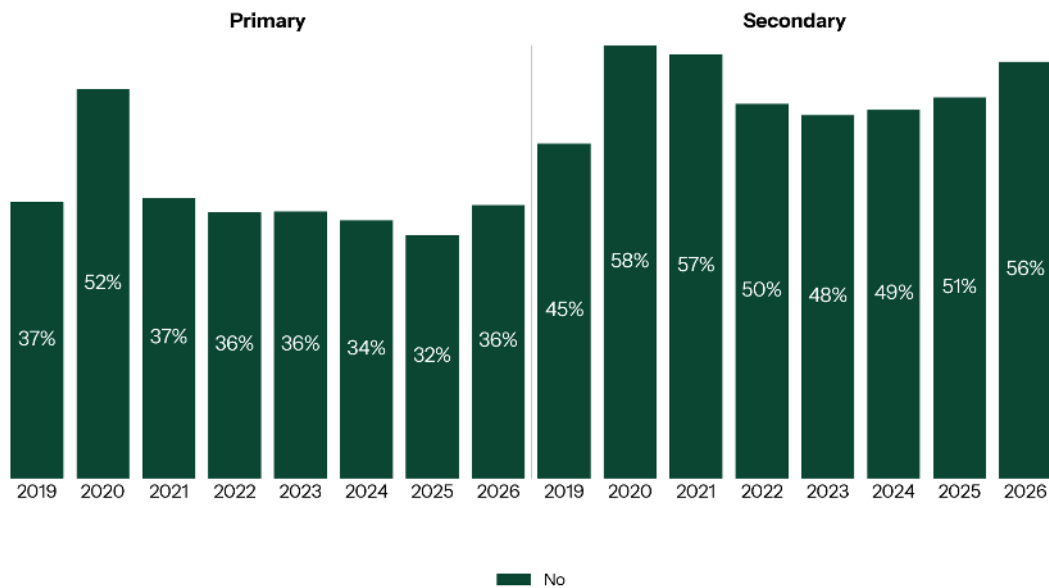


Question asked: "Has your school (primary) or department (secondary) already advertised for any jobs this season?"

The same subdued movement is visible in teachers' own reports of who is leaving. We asked whether anyone in their school (in primary) or department (in secondary) had given notice to leave this summer. In 2026, the share saying no one had done so rose in both phases – to 36% in primary, up from 32% last year, and to 56% in secondary, up from 51%. Aside from the exceptional pandemic year of 2020, when staff movement all but froze, these are among the highest figures we have recorded, and they fit the wider picture in this report: a weak labour market outside teaching appears to be suppressing voluntary departures, leaving fewer posts for schools to backfill.

This apparent stability should be read with care. The question captures *voluntary* departures – teachers actively giving notice that they intend to leave – not staff who leave through redundancy or whose posts are simply not replaced. With pupil rolls now falling, particularly in primary, a growing share of workforce reduction is likely to be involuntary and would not show up in these figures at all. Fewer teachers choosing to move is therefore not the same as a settled workforce: some of the "stability" recorded here may reflect schools quietly shedding posts rather than staff staying put.

More schools and departments report no staff leaving this summer



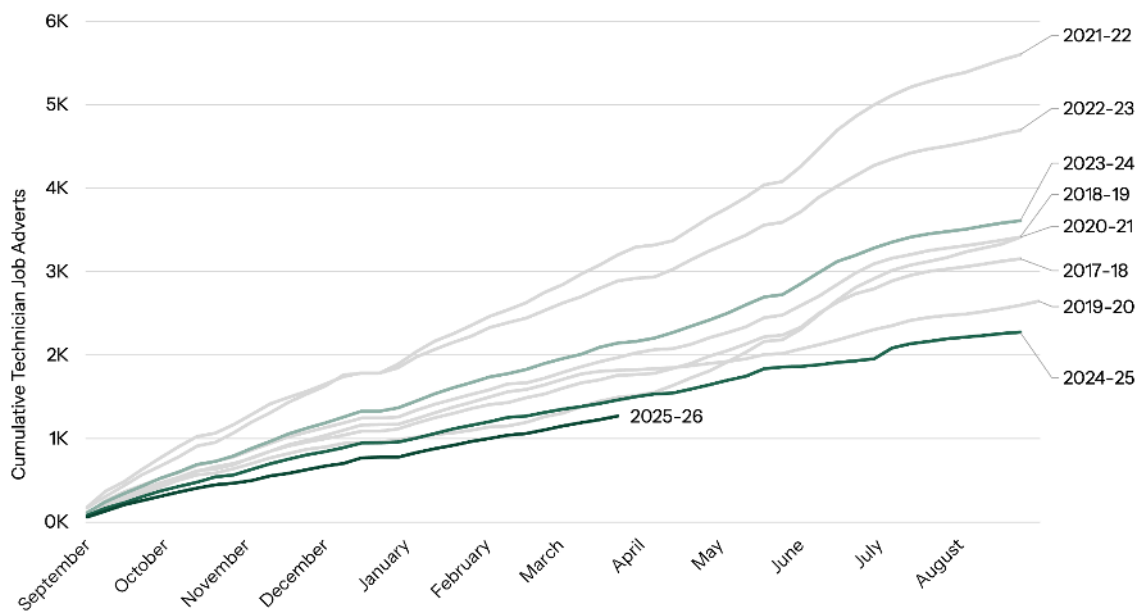
Question asked: "Has anyone in your school (primary) or department (secondary) given notice that they intend to leave this summer?"

Technician recruitment mirrors the decline in teacher vacancies

SchoolDash has also tracked job advertisement levels for secondary school technicians over the same period. As shown in the chart below, the pattern closely mirrors the decline observed in teacher job adverts: cumulative technician adverts in the current academic year are tracking below every previous year in the dataset. Compared to the 2024/25 academic year, advertisement levels are down by 12%.

It is important to note that these figures alone do not indicate whether the decline is primarily due to reduced staff turnover within the technician workforce, or whether schools are actively reducing the number of technician posts in response to budgetary pressures. We do not currently collect survey data from technicians, so we are unable to distinguish between these explanations. It is worth noting that the School Workforce Census shows overall support staff numbers in secondary schools have continued to rise in recent years, suggesting that the fall in technician adverts is more likely to reflect lower turnover than a systematic reduction in posts, though we cannot confirm this without technician-specific workforce data.

Technician job adverts, cumulative over academic year



Fewer vacancies, but schools are not better staffed

The sharp fall in job advertisements might suggest that teacher supply pressures are easing. In fact, the opposite appears to be true. What has changed is the nature of the problem: schools are no longer struggling to fill advertised posts, but are instead absorbing staffing shortfalls internally: by relying on non-specialist teachers, splitting classes between staff, and using non-teaching staff to cover PPA time. The recruitment challenge has become less visible, but the underlying workforce capacity problem has, if anything, worsened.

We continue to monitor **three key indicators of primary teacher shortages**, and all three have worsened a little compared to last year. Despite relatively low levels of recruitment activity, the proportion of primary teachers reporting that their school is inadequately staffed has risen to 21%, up from 16% in both 2024 and 2025. At the same time, reliance on non-teaching staff to cover PPA time and on temporary or unqualified teachers to lead classes continues to grow. This pattern suggests that schools are responding to financial pressures by not replacing departing staff, rather than finding it easier to fill the posts they do advertise.

The most recent survey data for primary schools show:

1. Percentage of teachers reporting that their school is inadequately staffed with suitably qualified teachers: 21% (compared to 16% in 2025 and 16% in 2024)
2. Percentage of teachers reporting that non-teachers cover their PPA time: 57% (compared to 54% in 2025 and 51% in 2024)
3. Percentage of teachers reporting that a class is led by a short-term temporary, agency, or unqualified teacher: 54% (compared to 53% in 2025 and 51% in 2024)

Taken together, these figures suggest that schools are responding to financial and demographic pressures not by advertising posts they cannot fill, but by coping with fewer qualified staff than they feel they need. The result is a deterioration in the quality of provision that does not show up in headline vacancy figures.

We also track **three indicators of secondary teacher shortages**, focusing specifically on teachers' experiences within their own subject departments or faculties. These data suggest a similar level in staffing pressures compared to last year:

1. Percentage of teachers reporting that their department lacks an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers: 24% (compared to 21% in 2025 and 23% in 2024)
2. Percentage of teachers expressing dissatisfaction with classes being split between two teachers: 33% (compared to 33% in 2025 and 36% in 2024)
3. Percentage of teachers expressing unhappiness with mid-year changes to their timetable: 20% (compared to 20% in 2025 and 25% in 2024)

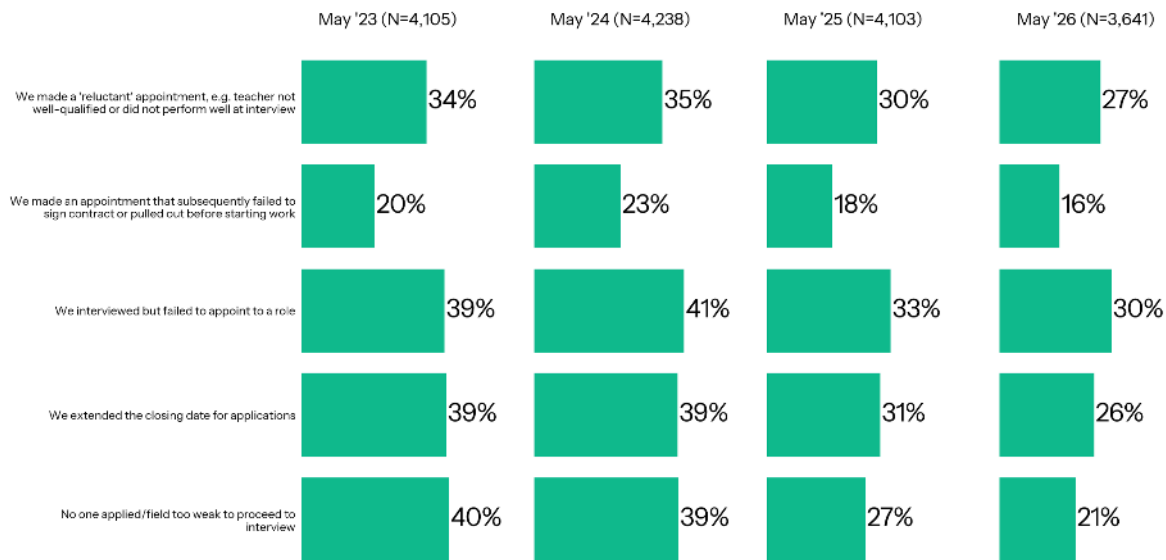
These pressures are particularly acute in shortage subjects such as physics, where securing enough specialist teachers has long been a challenge. A fall in advertised vacancies for these subjects does not mean the underlying shortage has been resolved; it may simply mean that schools have stopped trying to recruit specialists they know they cannot attract.

What schools experience when they recruit

This year we look more closely at how recruitment is actually unfolding, drawing on questions asked both of the teachers who do the hiring and of those who apply for jobs. Two pictures emerge. For schools, the recruitment difficulties of recent years have eased – but unevenly, and in ways that mask a persistent gap between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. For applicants, fewer teachers are looking to move than at any time since 2020, and those who do apply navigate a funnel from application to interview to offer that works reasonably well, though not equally for everyone.

Schools are finding recruitment markedly easier than they did two years ago. Among teachers involved in hiring over the past 12 months, every difficulty we track has become less common since 2024. The share reporting that no one applied, or that the field was too weak to proceed to interview, has almost halved, from 39% in May 2024 to 21% in May 2026. Fewer schools extended closing dates (26%, down from 39%), interviewed without being able to appoint (30%, down from 41%), or made reluctant appointments (27%, down from 35%). This is consistent with the collapse in advertised vacancies: with fewer posts to fill and a weak wider labour market, the schools that do recruit face less competition for candidates.

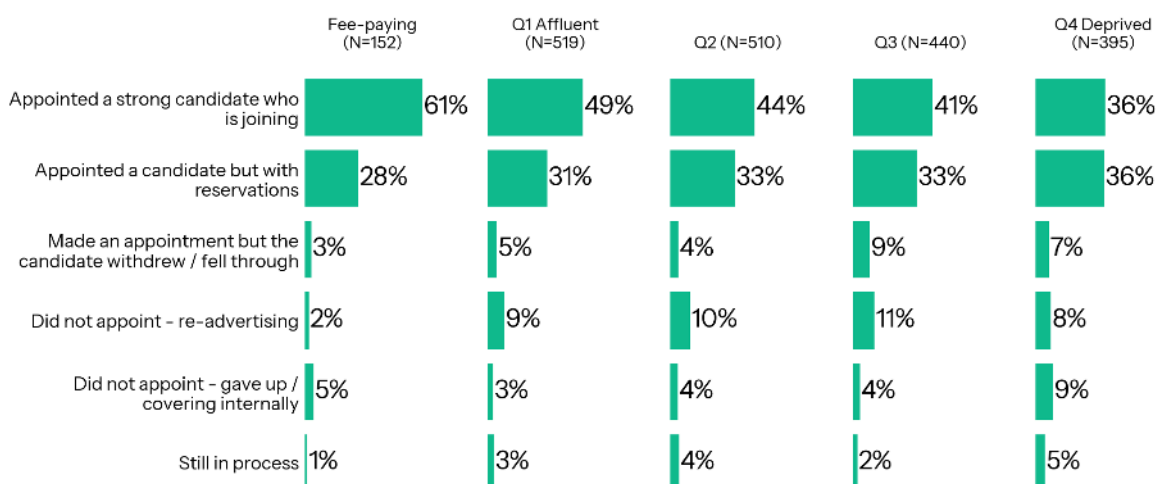
Recruitment difficulties over time (May '23-'26)



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

That easing is far from evenly shared. Looking at the outcome of schools' most recent recruitment by their level of advantage, a clear gradient appears. 61% of fee-paying schools and 49% of the most affluent state schools appointed a strong candidate who is joining, compared with just 36% of the most deprived schools. Disadvantaged schools were correspondingly more likely to appoint a candidate with reservations (36%, against 28% in fee-paying schools), to give up and cover the role internally, or to still be searching. The headline improvement in conditions has done little to close this gap.

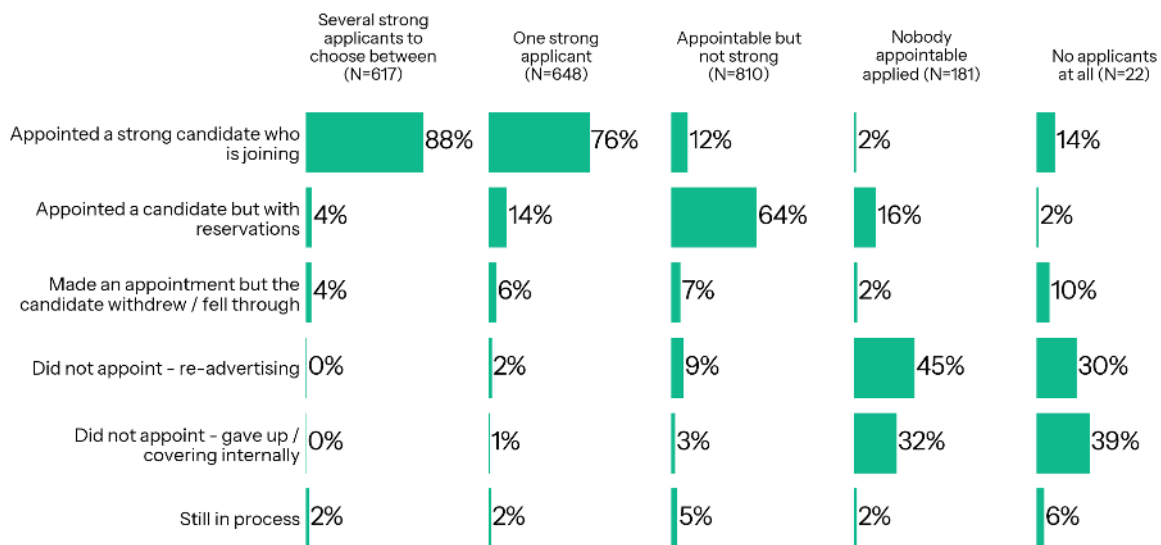
Recruitment outcomes by school affluence



Question asked: "Thinking of the most recent teaching role you have been involved in recruiting for this academic year, what was the outcome?"

The outcome of a recruitment round is overwhelmingly determined by the strength of the applicant pool. Where schools had several strong applicants to choose between, 88% appointed a strong candidate; where there was a single strong applicant, 76% did. But where the pool was "appointable but not strong", only 12% made a strong appointment and 64% appointed with reservations. Where nobody appointable applied, schools were left re-advertising (45%) or covering internally (32%). The quality of the eventual hire follows almost mechanically from the quality of the field.

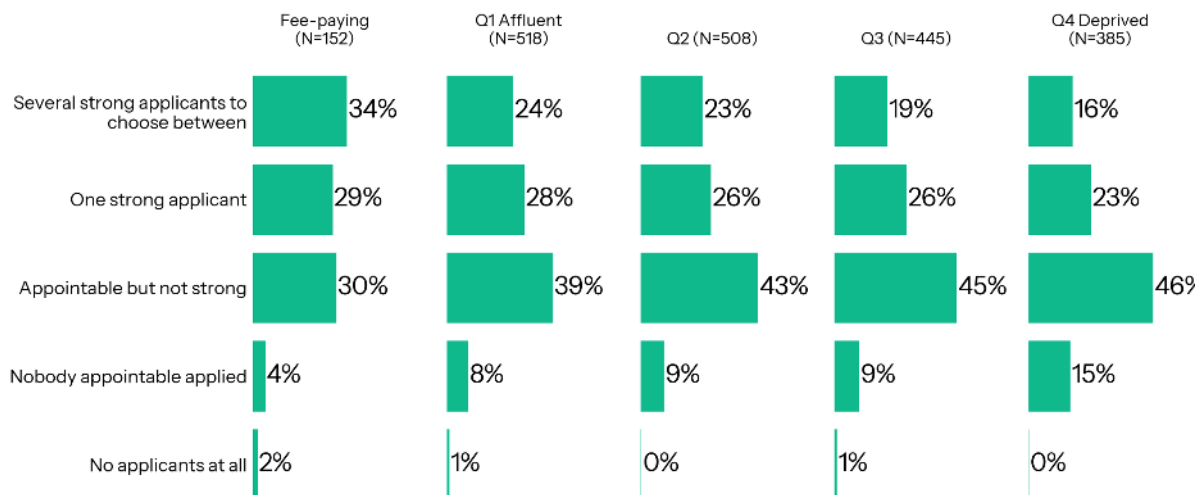
Recruitment outcomes by strength of applicant pool



Question answered by 2,278 teachers on 31st May 2026 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics) | Questions asked: "Thinking of the most recent teaching role you have been involved in recruiting for this academic year, what was the outcome?" (down) versus "For that same role, how would you describe the applicant pool?" (across)

This matters because applicant pools are themselves stratified by advantage. A third of fee-paying schools (34%) had several strong applicants to choose between, falling steadily to just 16% of the most deprived schools. At the other end, 15% of the most deprived schools said nobody appointable applied, against 4% of fee-paying schools. Disadvantaged schools are not failing to appoint because they recruit badly – they are working with materially weaker fields. The gap in outcomes is, to a large extent, a gap in supply.

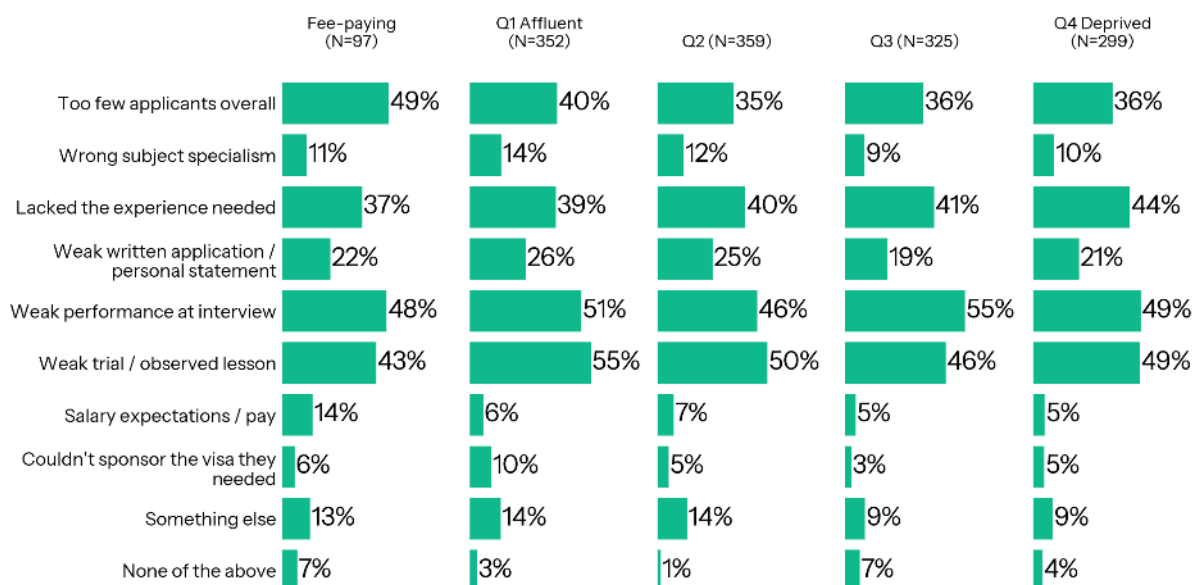
Applicant pool strength by school affluence



Question asked: "For that same role, how would you describe the applicant pool?"

Where schools did struggle, the problems were mostly about quality rather than quantity. Across all school types, the most common complaints were weak performance at interview (around half of schools) and a weak trial or observed lesson (43–55%), followed by candidates lacking the experience needed (37–44%). Outright shortage – too few applicants overall – was cited most often by fee-paying schools (49%), while disadvantaged schools were most likely to point to a lack of experience (44%). Pay and visa issues were comparatively rare. The binding constraint is increasingly the calibre of available candidates, not the raw number.

Main issues with applicants by school affluence

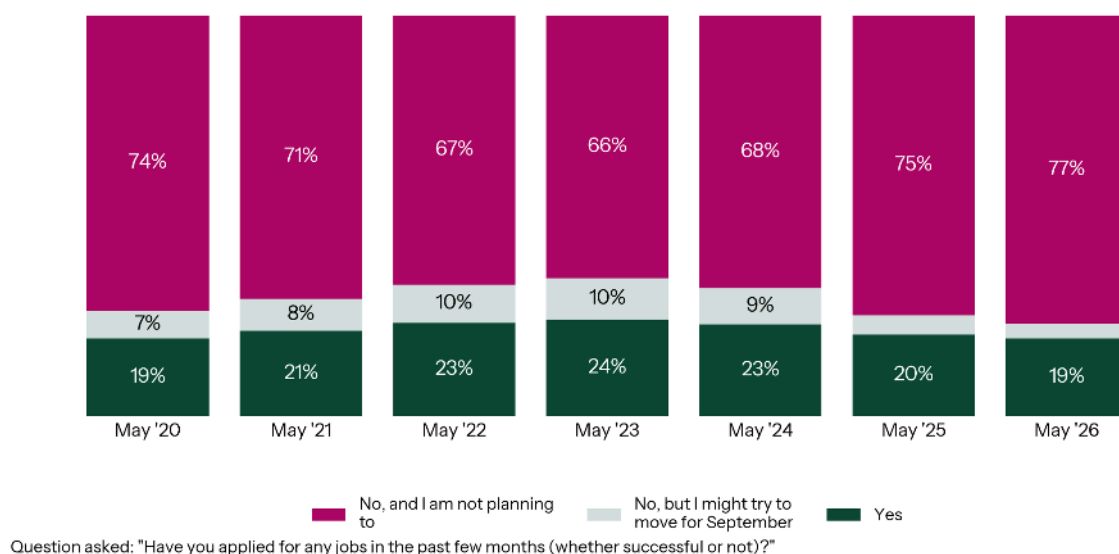


Question asked: "For that same role, what were the main issues with applicants?"

What teachers experience when they apply

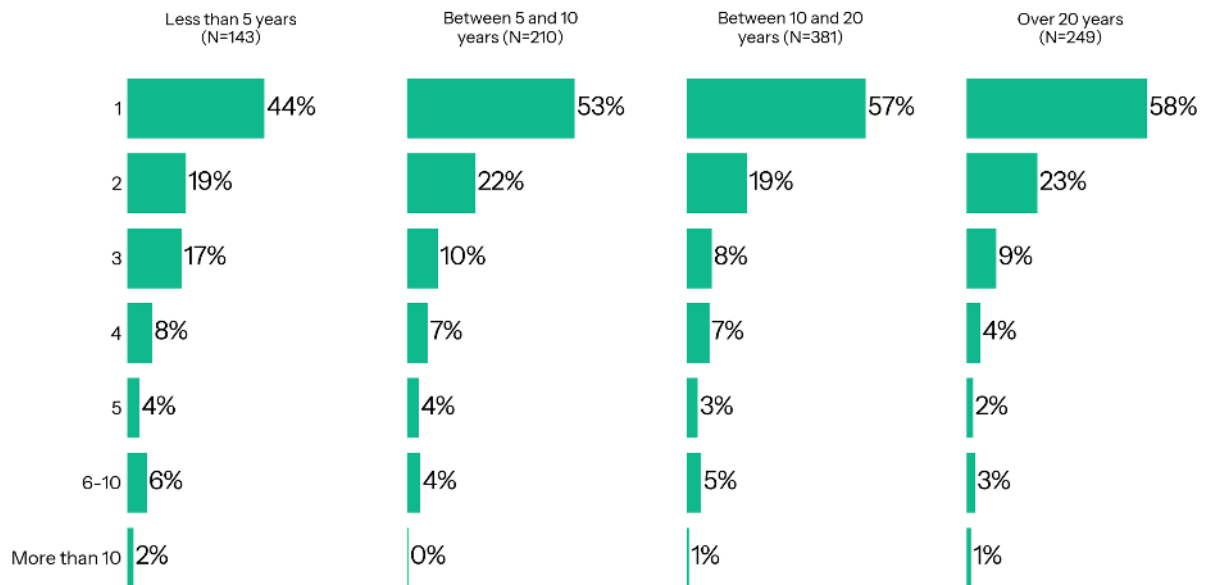
On the other side of the market, fewer teachers are looking to move than at any point in recent years. Just 19% had applied for a job in the past few months in May 2026, down from a peak of 24% in 2023, while the share saying they were not applying and had no plans to has risen to 77%. With the wider labour market weak, teacher mobility has fallen back – one reason the flow of advertised vacancies has dried up.

Whether teachers applied for jobs, over time



Among those who do apply, most apply for very few jobs. The majority submitted a single application, and this concentration rises with experience: 58% of teachers with more than 20 years' experience applied for only one role, compared with 44% of those with under five years. Early-career teachers cast a wider net, with around a third applying for three or more jobs; more experienced teachers appear to move only when a specific opportunity appears.

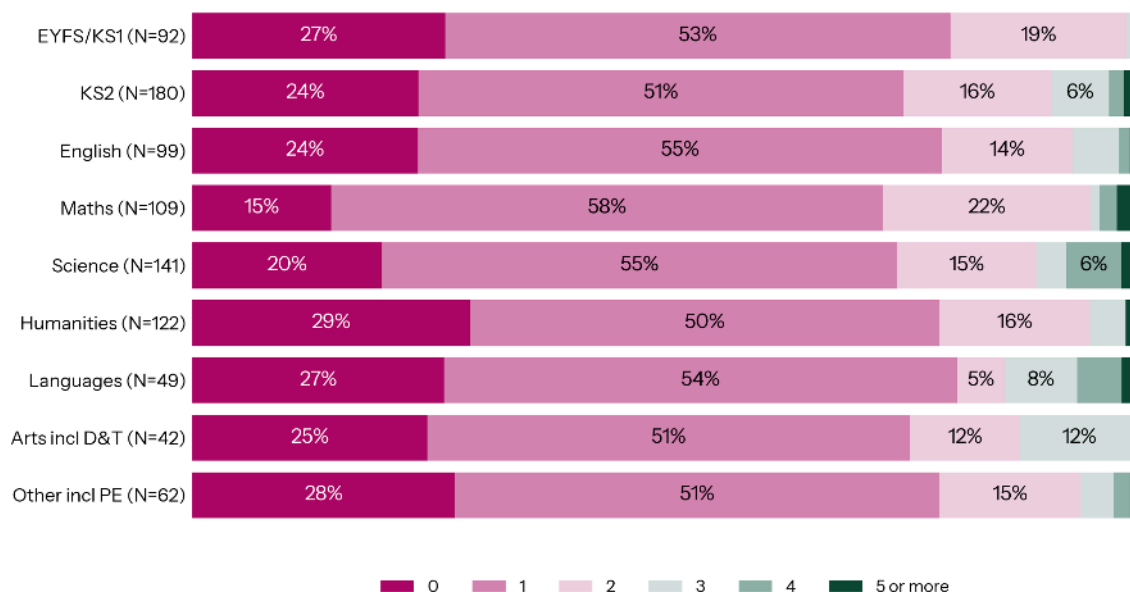
Number of applications, by years of experience



Question asked: "How many teaching jobs have you applied for in the past few months?"

How readily applications convert into interviews varies by subject. Applicants in shortage subjects fare best: only 15% of maths applicants and 20% of science applicants attended no interview, against 29% in the humanities and 27% in EYFS/KS1. The pattern mirrors the wider supply picture – where specialist teachers are scarce, those who apply are more likely to be called in.

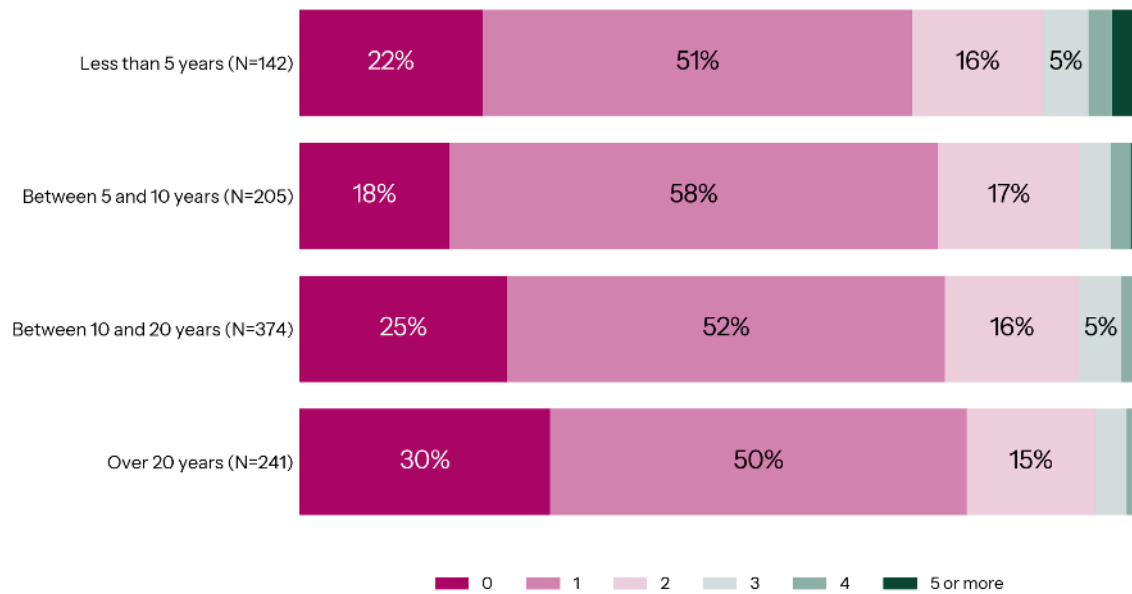
Applications leading to interview, by subject



Question asked: "Of these applications, how many led to a formal interview that you attended?"

Experience cuts the other way. Three in ten teachers with more than 20 years' experience who applied attended no interview at all, compared with around a fifth of less experienced applicants. While most invited applicants attend one interview, the more experienced face a noticeably higher chance of not being shortlisted – a possible sign of cost sensitivity among schools, who can appoint a less experienced teacher more cheaply.

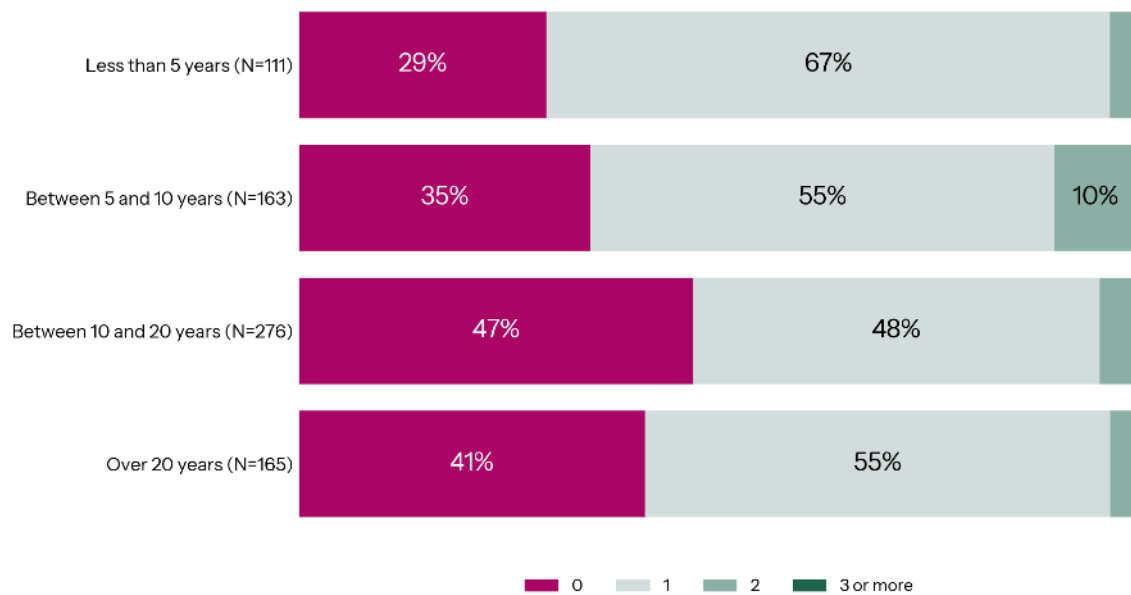
Applications leading to interview, by experience



Question asked: "Of these applications, how many led to a formal interview that you attended?"

The same disadvantage carries through to offers. Of those who attended at least one interview, most early-career teachers received an offer (67% of the under-fives), but nearly half of teachers with 10–20 years' experience (47%) and 41% of those with over 20 years received none. Securing an interview is not the same as securing a job, and the gap widens with seniority.

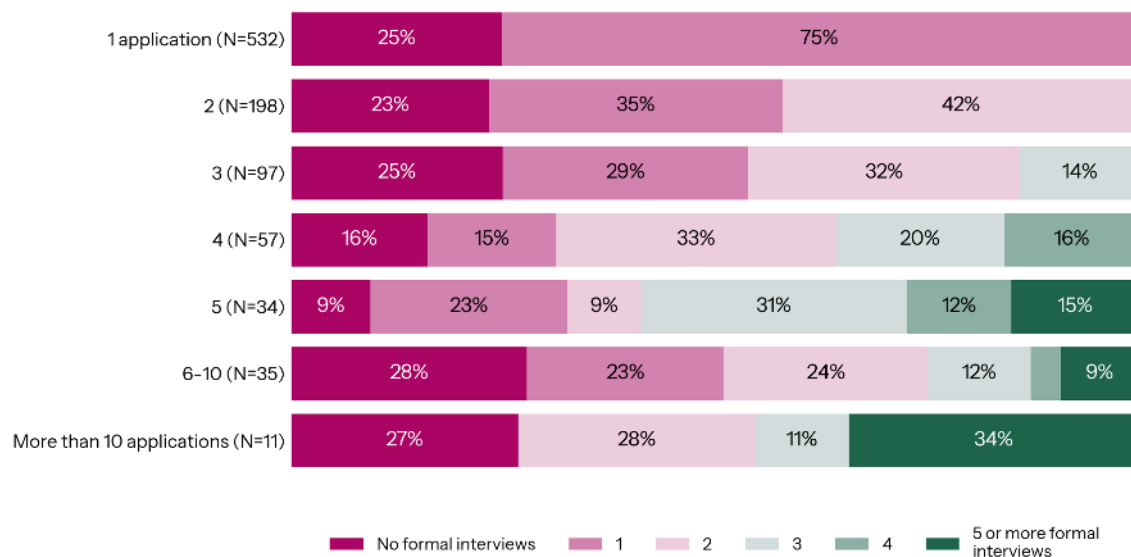
Interviews resulting in a job offer, by experience



Question asked: "How many of those interviews resulted in a job offer?"

The funnel from applications to interviews is efficient at the bottom end: three-quarters of those who made a single application secured an interview from it. But applying more does not scale up proportionally – many of those submitting large numbers of applications were doing so precisely because they were struggling to convert them.

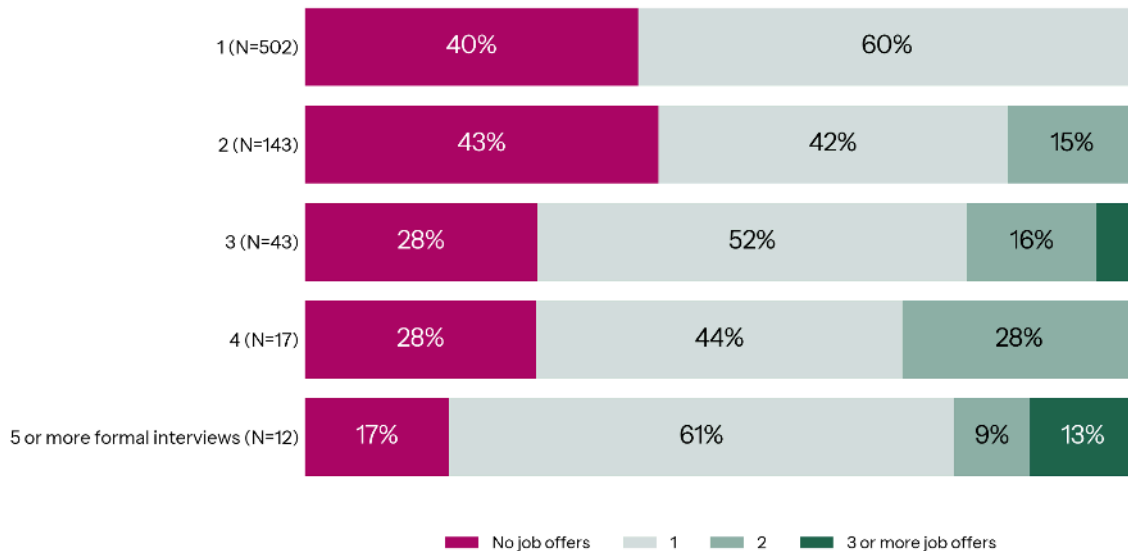
Interviews by number of applications



Question answered by 964 teachers on 1st June 2026 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics) | Questions asked: "How many teaching jobs have you applied for in the past few months?" (down) versus "Of these applications, how many led to a formal interview that you attended?" (across)

Interviews, in turn, convert into offers at a healthy rate – around 60% of those who attended a single interview received an offer from it. For most applicants, the binding step is securing the interview in the first place, rather than succeeding once there.

Offers by number of interviews



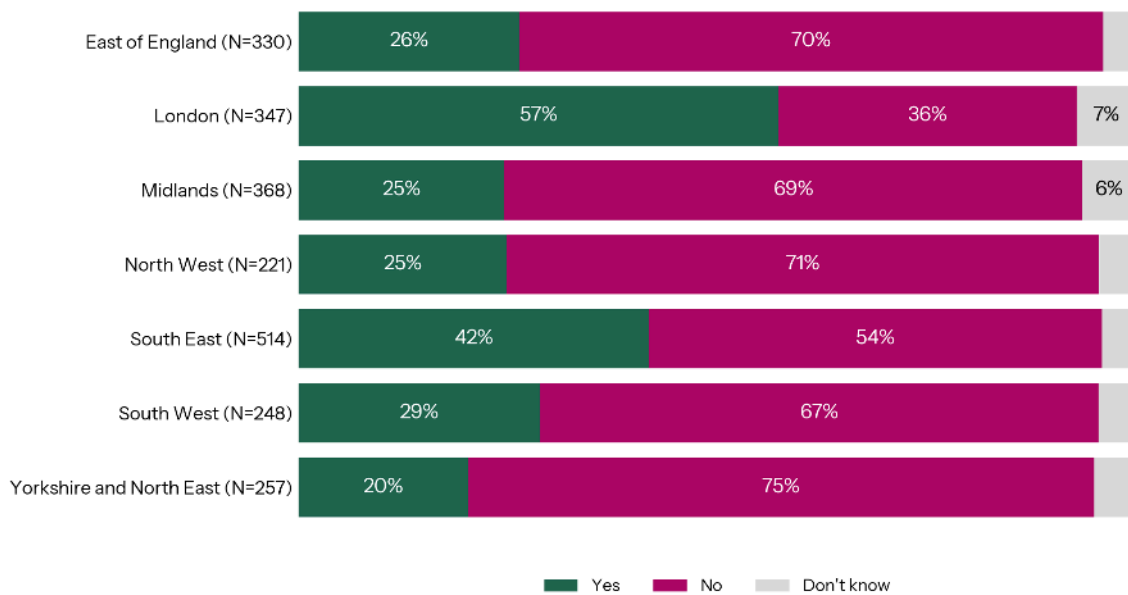
Question answered by 717 teachers on 1st June 2026 (results weighted to reflect teacher and school demographics) | Questions asked: "Of these applications, how many led to a formal interview that you attended?" (down) versus "How many of those interviews resulted in a job offer?" (across)

Employing teachers from overseas

With the domestic labour market contracting, teachers from overseas are sometimes seen as a potential release valve for shortage subjects. This year we asked both teachers and senior leaders about their schools' experience of employing non-UK nationals – how common it is, how those teachers came to be working here, and what makes international recruitment hard. The picture is one of activity that is more incidental than strategic: employing an overseas teacher is fairly common in some regions, but deliberately recruiting from abroad remains rare and is held back chiefly by the cost and complexity of visa sponsorship.

Whether a school has employed a non-UK national teacher depends heavily on where it is. In London, 57% of teachers said their school had done so in the last few years, and 42% in the South East – but the figure falls to between 20% and 29% across every other region, reaching a low of 20% in Yorkshire and the North East. This mirrors London's distinctive labour market, where both demand and the supply of internationally mobile teachers are concentrated.

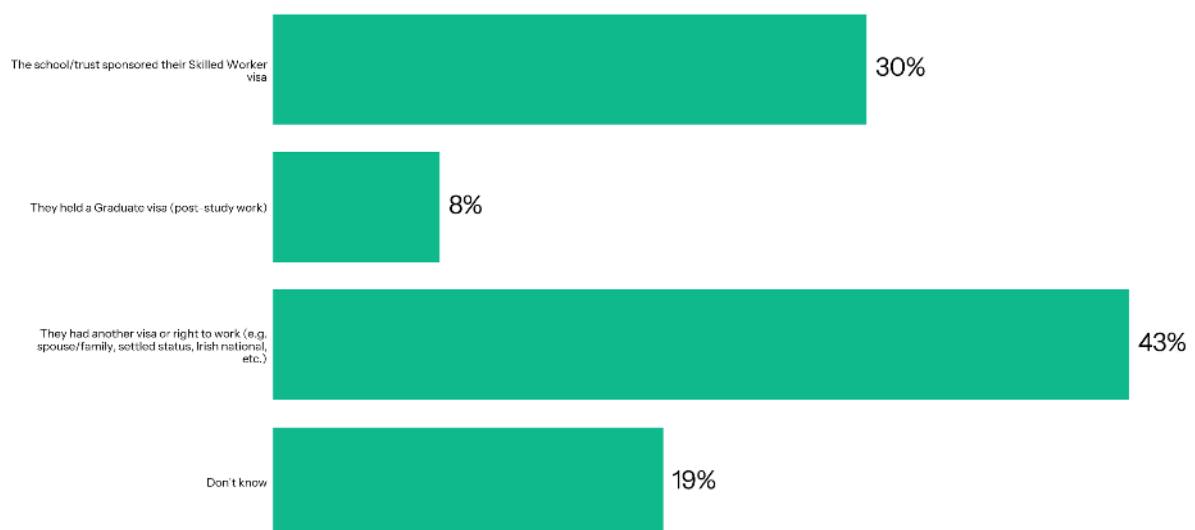
Employment of non-UK teachers, by region



Question asked: "Have you employed any non-UK national teacher at your school in the last few years?"

Crucially, most overseas teachers were not actively recruited from abroad. Asked how their most recent non-UK national colleague was able to work in the UK, only 30% of teachers said the school or trust had sponsored a Skilled Worker visa. The largest group – 43% – already held another right to work, such as a spouse or family visa, settled status or Irish nationality, and a further 8% were on a post-study Graduate visa (19% did not know). Employing an overseas teacher usually means hiring someone already living in the UK with the right to work, rather than running an international recruitment campaign.

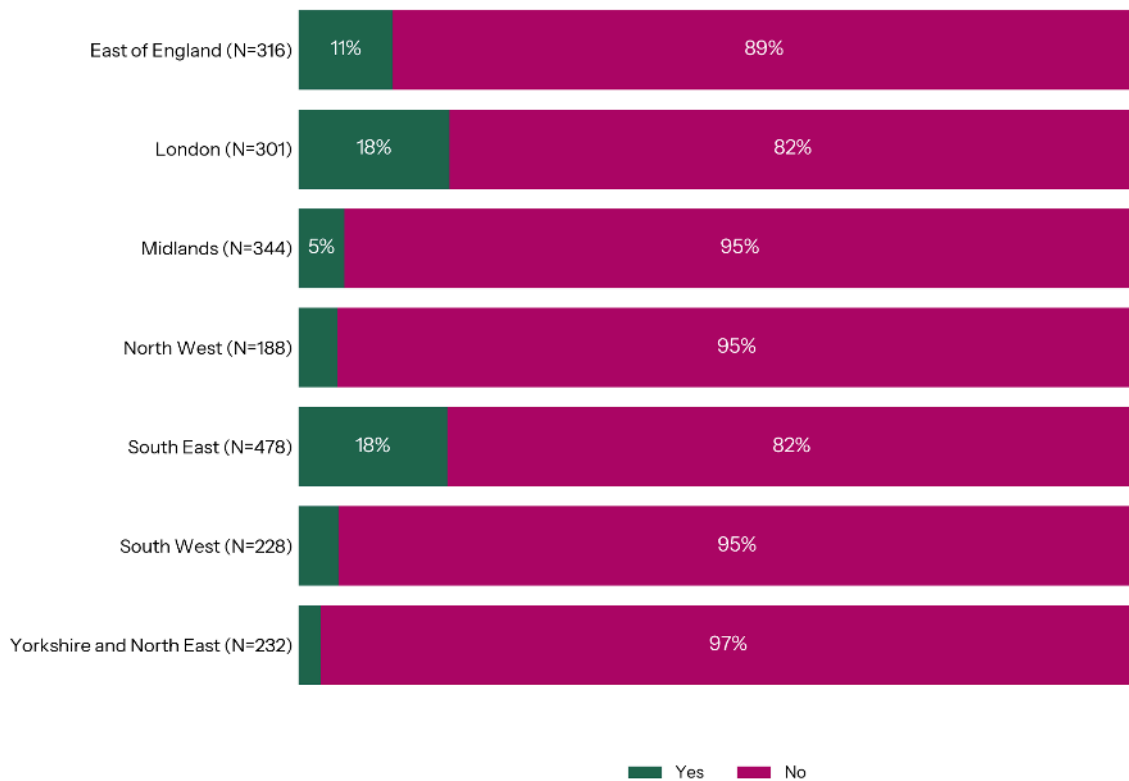
Visa route to working in the UK



Question asked: "Thinking of the most recent non-UK national teacher your school employed, which of the following best describes how they were able to work in the UK?"

Actively seeking teachers from overseas to fill shortage subjects is rare. Even in London and the South East, where it is most common, only 18% of schools do it; across the Midlands, North West and South West the figure is just 5%, and in Yorkshire and the North East only 3%. Despite persistent shortages in subjects such as physics, very few schools are looking abroad to address them.

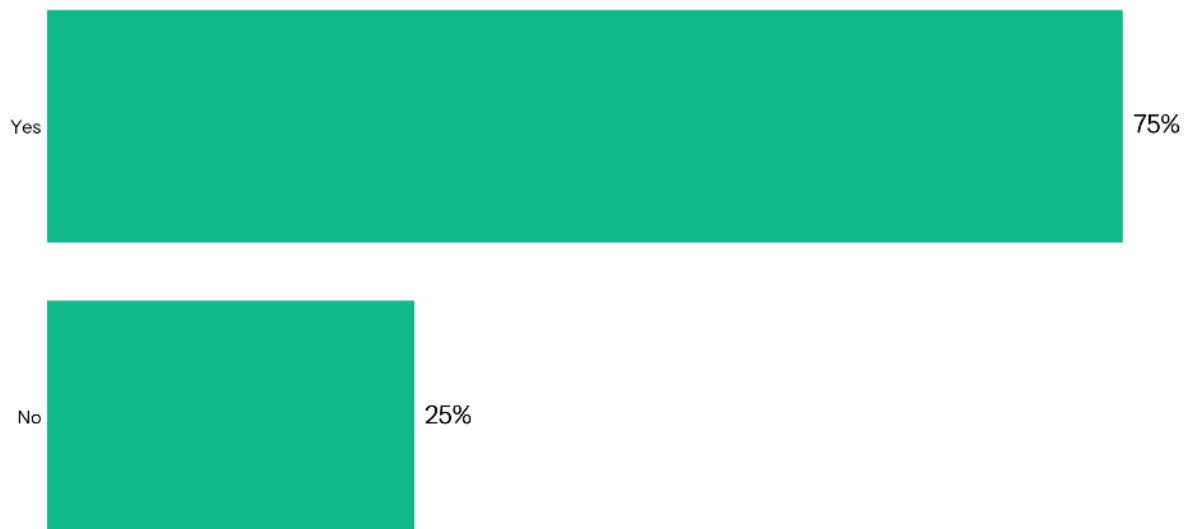
Recruiting in shortage subjects, by region



Question asked: "Does your school recruit international teachers in shortage subjects?"

Among the minority of schools that do recruit internationally, sponsorship is the norm: three-quarters (75%) sponsor visas for these teachers. Visa sponsorship is therefore concentrated in a small group of schools that have made international recruitment a deliberate part of their staffing strategy, rather than a route most schools use occasionally.

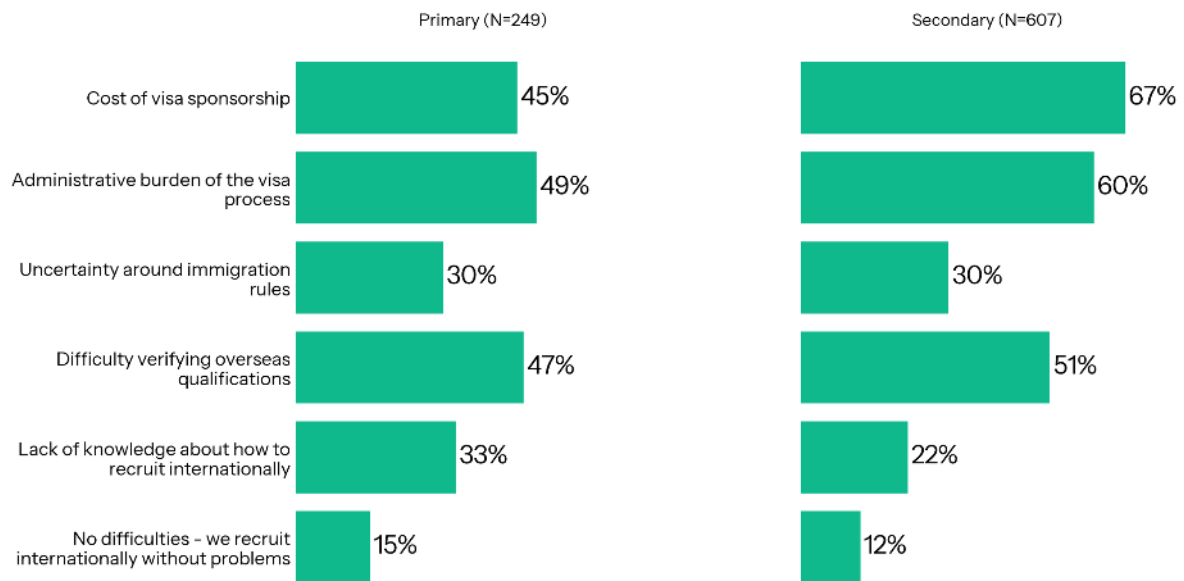
Does the school sponsor visas?



Question asked: "Does your school sponsor visas for these teachers?"

Asked what makes it difficult to employ international teachers, leaders pointed above all to the cost of visa sponsorship and the administrative burden of the visa process – both felt more acutely in secondary schools (67% and 60%) than in primary (45% and 49%). Difficulty verifying overseas qualifications was also widespread (47% primary, 51% secondary). Primary schools were more likely to cite a lack of knowledge about how to recruit internationally (33% versus 22%), suggesting that capability, as well as cost, is a barrier for them. Only around one in eight schools reported no difficulties at all.

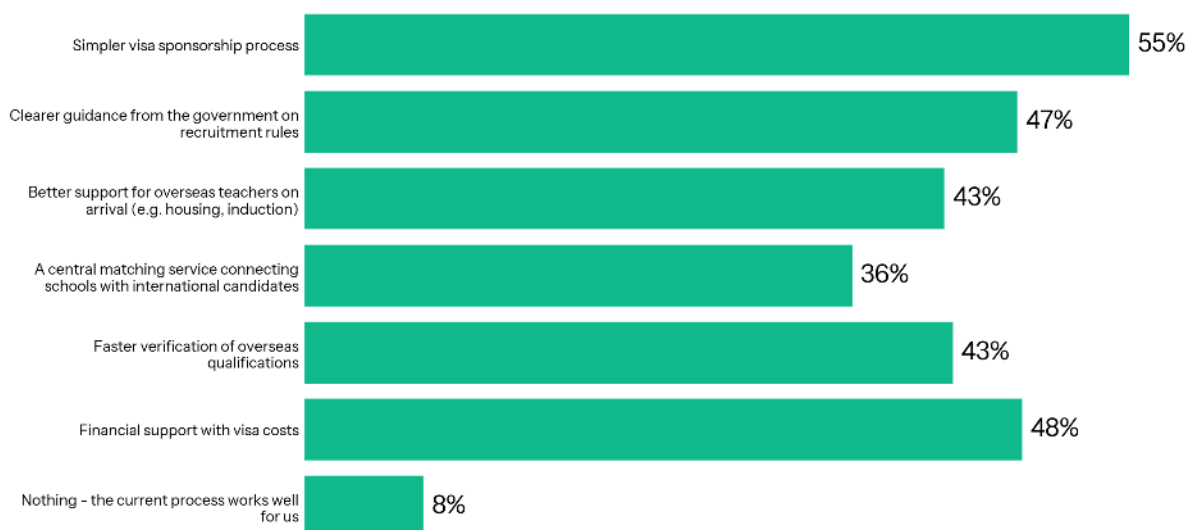
Barriers to recruiting internationally, primary vs secondary (senior leaders)



Question asked: "What, if anything, makes it difficult for your school to employ international teachers?"

Asked what would make international recruitment easier, leaders pointed above all to a simpler visa sponsorship process (55%), followed by financial support with visa costs (48%) and clearer government guidance on the rules (47%). Faster verification of overseas qualifications and better support for teachers on arrival, such as housing and induction, were each cited by 43%. Just 8% said the current process already works well for them. If overseas recruitment is to help relieve shortage-subject pressures, the system around it needs to be cheaper, simpler and better supported.

What would help international recruitment (senior leaders)



Question asked: "Which of the following would make it easier to recruit international teachers?"

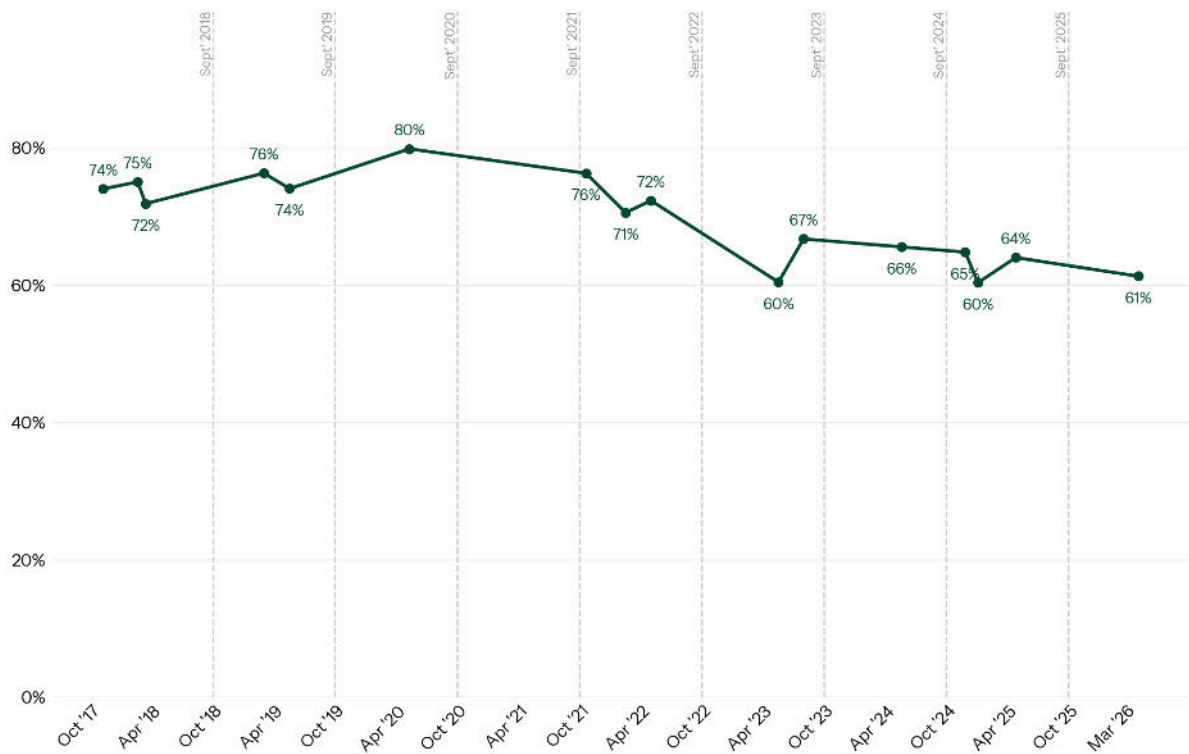
Future career intentions

Since 2017, Teacher Tapp has regularly asked teachers whether they expect to remain in the profession over the next three years. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, this figure was relatively stable at around 75%. Since 2022, it has settled at a markedly lower level, fluctuating between 60% and 67%. The most recent data, from March 2026, show 61% of teachers saying they expect to still be teaching in three years' time.

While this stabilisation is preferable to further decline, the gap between current and pre-pandemic levels reflects a lasting shift in how teachers view their long-term careers. On the push side, many teachers report that the challenges of managing pupil behaviour and the growing weight of pastoral responsibilities have intensified since the pandemic, making the day-to-day experience of teaching harder. On the pull side, the expansion of remote and flexible working in other sectors has made alternative careers more attractive, particularly for those who find the rigid structure of the school day difficult to reconcile with their personal circumstances (we know that 4-in-10 teachers find work-from-home contracts in other professions very attractive). Together, these factors appear to have permanently lowered the baseline level of commitment to the profession, even as the immediate post-pandemic turbulence has subsided.

This creates a latent risk for the profession. Currently, a weak wider labour market appears to be suppressing teacher turnover, but if and when economic conditions improve and opportunities outside teaching increase, the combination of low commitment and pent-up desire to leave could trigger a sharp rise in departures, precisely when schools may also be adjusting to new demographic realities.

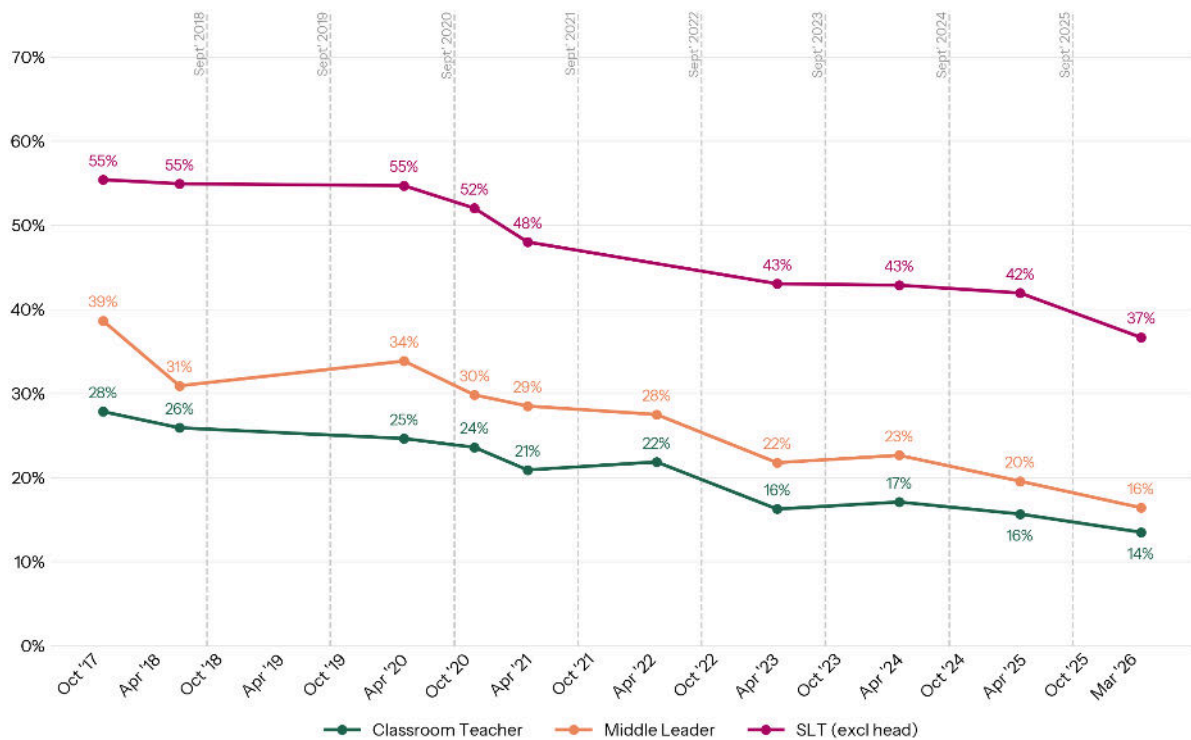
Long-term commitment to teaching remains below pre-pandemic levels



Question asked: "Do you expect to be a teacher in three years' time?" (Those who responded, "Yes, most likely")

A related concern is the declining appetite among teachers at all levels for taking on headship. As shown in the chart below, the proportion of teachers who say they would like to become a headteacher one day has fallen steadily across all seniority groups since we began tracking this question in 2017. The most significant trend is among deputy and assistant headteachers, i.e. the group from whom the next generation of headteachers will be drawn. Just 37% of these senior leaders now express an aspiration to headship, down from 55% in 2017. If this trend continues, schools will face growing difficulty in filling headteacher posts in the years ahead, with potential consequences for school leadership capacity across the system.

Fewer than four in ten senior leaders aspire to headship

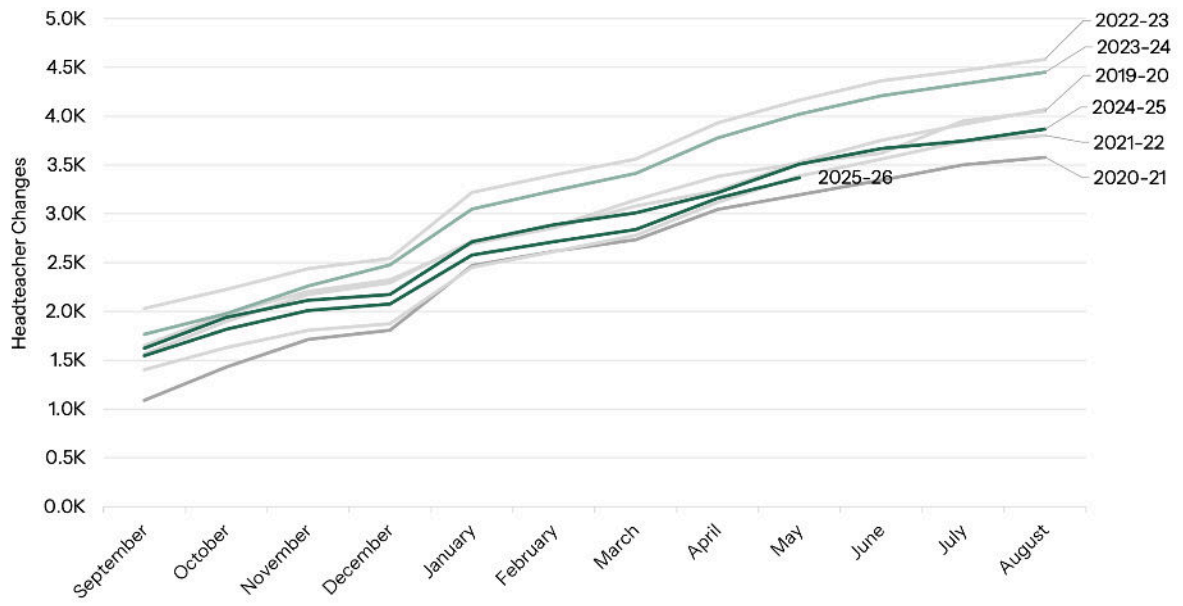


Question asked: "Would you like to be a headteacher yourself one day?" (Those who responded, "Yes, definitely" or "Yes, perhaps")

We draw on Department for Education records to track changes in headteacher appointments across the academic year. SchoolDash monitors whether the named headteacher at each school has changed, providing a direct measure of headteacher turnover that complements the survey and job advertisement data presented elsewhere in this report.

As shown in the chart below, the cumulative number of headteacher changes in 2025/26 is tracking similarly to recent years. However, there is a divergence by phase. Headteacher turnover in the secondary sector is 12% below last year, while the primary phase turnover looks more typical, with the primary movement offsetting low secondary turnover.

Headteacher changes in 2025/26 are tracking similarly to recent years



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 and apprenticeship positions. This process does not capture all relevant vacancies because: (a) not all positions are advertised on school or college 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 colleges, 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 the panel via social and traditional media, promotion at CPD events, and via word of mouth in schools.

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, 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

Teacher Tapp main teacher job market activity questions

Question Text	Target (if any)	Date	Number of responses
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	22/03/2026	3,693
Inability to recruit suitably qualified staff affects the quality of education we can provide at our school		22/03/2026	9,673
Which of the following have you *disliked* about your timetable this year?	Secondary	28/03/2026	5,839
Who takes over your class during your PPA time?	Primary	28/03/2026	3,626
My department or faculty is currently well staffed with suitably qualified teachers	Secondary	28/03/2026	5,867
My school is currently well staffed with suitably qualified teachers	Primary	28/03/2026	3,633
Do you expect to be a teacher in three years' time?		28/03/2026	9,512
Would you like to be a headteacher yourself one day?		21/03/2026	8,888
Has your department already advertised for any jobs this season?	Secondary	03/04/2026	5,869
Has your school already advertised for any jobs this season?	Primary	03/04/2026	3,682
Has anyone in your department/faculty given notice that they intend to leave this summer?	Secondary	03/04/2026	5,881
Has anyone in your school given notice that they intend to leave this summer?	Primary	03/04/2026	3,686
How likely is it that you will leave your school at the end of this academic year?		26/12/2025	10,160
If you have been involved in internal or external recruitment over the past 12 months, have any of the following	Middle and senior leaders	31/05/2026	5,701

happened?			
Thinking of the most recent teaching role you have been involved in recruiting for this academic year, what was the outcome?	Targeted based on those who had been involved in recruitment	31/05/2026	2,470
For that same role, how would you describe the applicant pool?	As above	31/05/2026	2,462
For that same role, what were the main issues with applicants?	Targeted based on those who had at most one strong applicant to the role	31/05/2026	1,648
Have you applied for any jobs in the past few months (whether successful or not)?		31/05/2026	9,241
How many teaching jobs have you applied for in the past few months?	Targeted to those who had applied to at least one teaching job	01/06/2026	1,063
Of these applications, how many led to a formal interview that you attended?	As above	01/06/2026	982
How many of those interviews resulted in a job offer?	Targeted to those who had at least one formal interview	01/06/2026	739
Have you employed any non-UK national teacher at your school in the last few years?	Senior leaders	28/05/2026	2,395
Thinking of the most recent non-UK national teacher your school employed, which of the following best describes how they were able to work in the UK?	Senior leaders who had employed at least one non-UK national	28/05/2026	831
Does your school recruit international teachers in shortage subjects?	Senior leaders	24/03/2026	2,527
Does your school sponsor visas for these teachers?	Senior leaders whose school recruits international teachers in shortage subjects	24/03/2026	269
What, if anything, makes it difficult for your school to employ international teachers?	Senior leaders	24/03/2026	2,501
Which of the following would make it easier to recruit international teachers?	Senior leaders	24/03/2026	2,488



Teacher Recruitment and Retention in 2026

Teachertapp

www.teachertapp.co.uk



www.gatsby.org.uk



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