

# 4 Reasons People Become Teachers

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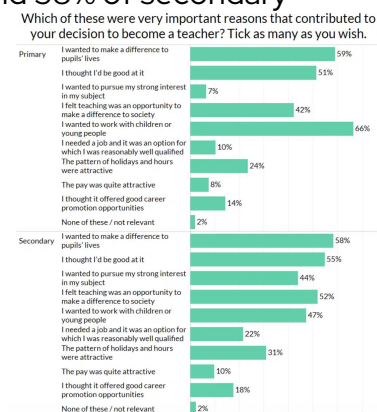


It's hard to avoid the endless headlines about a [national shortage of teachers](#) and the high number of [teachers burning out and leaving the profession](#). But for all those that leave or feel put off from applying to train, there are thousands of teachers who choose to remain in their roles and teaching is still a popular choice in many universities. So, why do people become teachers? Understanding the reasons that people choose this rewarding yet often challenging career may help us to fight the tide of people opting out of teaching while also attracting ambitious new trainee teachers.

### 1. Feeling Driven to Make a Difference

Many people who enter the teaching profession have a genuine desire to make a difference in peoples' lives. As a teacher, regardless of the age of your students, you have the opportunity

(and the responsibility) to shape the learning and social experience of young people at one of the most impressionable stages of their lives. Most of us have strong memories of our school life – whether positive or negative – because these experiences helped to shape us into the people we are today. Children of school age are still growing, developing and learning about the world and their place in it. A teacher is in an unrivalled position to nurture and support their students to provide them with the best chance of success – whatever that means to them. A recent Teacher Tapp survey found that 59% of primary teachers and 58% of secondary

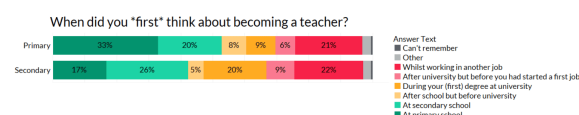


Contrary to popular belief, it is not the draw of long holidays that attracts most people to teach! However, too many teachers feel tied by the demands of tests, inspections and the National Curriculum. It would not be surprising if teachers feel that they are not making the difference they hoped to due to the demands placed on them, which is likely to have a detrimental effect on morale. To stem the flow of people leaving teaching, the government and school leaders should harness this knowledge and consider how they can allow teachers the freedom to teach in a way they believe will make the greatest difference. This is likely to boost teacher morale, increase retention and improve pupil performance.

## 2. Passion for a Subject

Almost half of the secondary teachers we surveyed said that their passion for a particular subject was an important factor in their decision to become a teacher. At the secondary level, subject knowledge is one of the [essential qualities of a good teacher](#). Attracting individuals to the profession who are genuinely committed to pursuing a keen interest in their subject is vital to maintaining standards of teaching. Passion for subject matter is less of a factor in primary schools where teachers are responsible for delivering the whole curriculum, rather than specialising in one subject. Only 7% of primary teachers surveyed by Teacher Tapp gave subject interest as an important reason for joining the profession. Linked to this is our finding that more than double the number of secondary teachers than primary teachers first started

The pattern is different for primary vs secondary teachers...



Degree level study is the first time that students can focus solely on one subject. For some secondary teachers, this opportunity to delve deeper into their chosen subject boosted their interest and instilled a desire to pursue a career path which would allow them to develop their knowledge in that area. However, primary school teachers were more likely to have first started considering a teaching career in primary or secondary school. More than double the number of secondary teachers than primary teachers first started teachers joined the profession to make a difference to pupils' lives.

## 3. Aiming to be Interesting Working with Young People

In a recent Teacher Tapp poll, 66% of primary school teachers said one of the most important reasons they became a teacher was to work with children or young people. This reason received the highest response for any of the possible reasons presented in the survey. Only 47% of secondary teachers felt this was an important reason. Instead, "I wanted to make a difference to pupils' lives" was the most popular choice with 58% selecting this answer. Not everybody has the characteristics and skills to work with children all day every day – and teaching can be especially challenging for teachers who have children of their own at home. Yet the majority of teachers do have the traits necessary to find working with children rewarding. And it seems that many realise this early on in life, with 46% of teachers polled



## 4. The Variety and Potential for Fun

Few careers can provide more variety and fun than teaching. A survey conducted by [The Guardian in 2015](#) found that 32% of teachers chose to teach because "teaching is fun". Working with children can be unpredictable, which means that no day is ever the same. This may be especially true in primary school where teachers plan and deliver lessons in every subject, from Numeracy and Literacy to Art and PE. There's also a wealth of activity that takes place beyond the classroom – school trips, plays, concerts, sports events and many more. Despite complaints about the restrictions placed on teachers by the National Curriculum, the need to meet government targets and the expectations of Ofsted, teachers have a lot more freedom to be creative in their work than many other professionals. Indeed some schools implement a "creative curriculum" whereby teachers plan topics to teach across all subjects. Teachers can make this as varied, fun and creative as they like. Teaching certainly has its challenges, but in what other professions can you get paid to make a giant papier-mache octopus or play rounders with your colleagues?

### What Can We Learn from the Reasons People Become Teachers?

Meeting teacher recruitment targets and retaining experienced staff is an ongoing challenge for schools across the UK. So, how can we use findings on why people become teachers to improve the situation? If the government and school leaders listen to teachers and find out what they need and want, changes can be implemented to boost the morale of existing teachers and to attract ambitious recruits to start teacher training. According to Teacher Tapp survey results, most teachers are committed to their job and driven to make a difference in pupils' lives. They thrive on the variety of their role, are motivated to learn more about their subject and enjoy working with young people. Teachers who have the freedom to be creative in how they teach, the time for Continuing Professional Development and fewer demands on their time which take them away from working with their pupils, are likely to be happier and more likely to remain in teaching.

Make your voice heard by [downloading the Teacher Tapp app](#) and start receiving short daily surveys delivered directly to your mobile phone! Help us to build a picture of teachers' lives in schools, which will lead to the changes you want to see in the education system.