

Teacher Recruitment and Retention in 2023

We've been asking lots of questions about teacher recruitment, vacant posts and career intentions. After first asking these questions in 2019, we've repeated the questions each year since. With COVID-19 severely disrupting the recruitment cycle in 2020 and 2021, we have now seen two more 'normal' cycles. This year we asked the questions once again, so what's the state of teacher recruitment and retention in 2023?

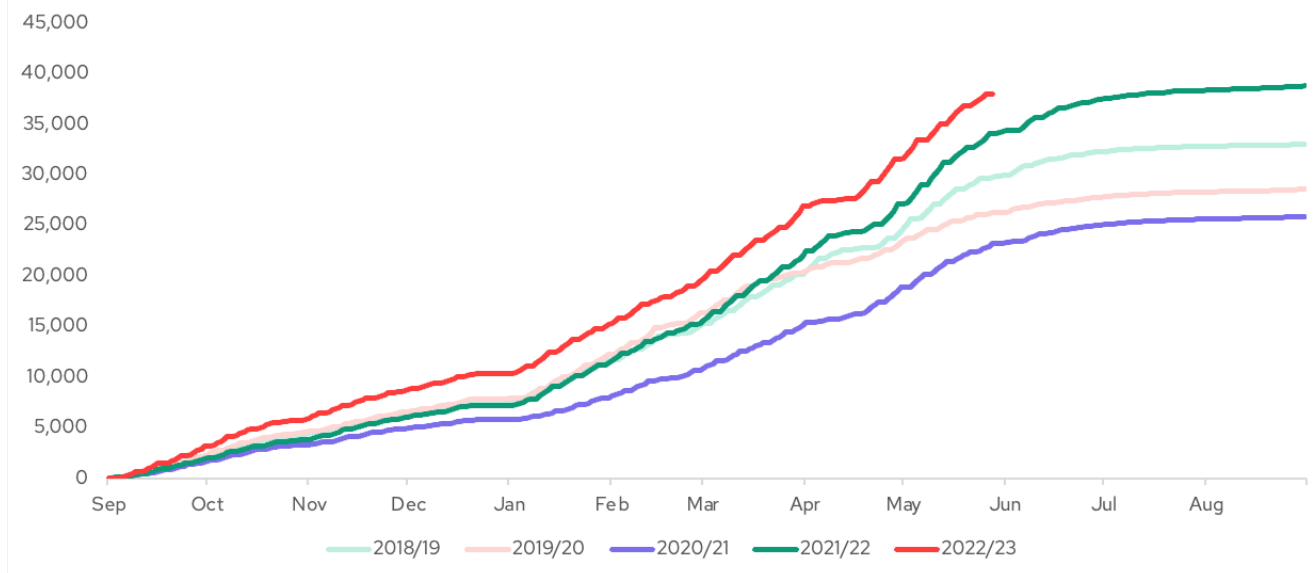
Today, we're publishing our latest look in teacher recruitment. As in previous years, we have worked with SchoolDash who monitor job advertisements on school websites. You can read more in our report: ['Teacher views on coping with shortages, job attachment and flexible working'](#)

Our headlines are below:

Secondary teacher job advertisements reach record levels

Our report shows that recruitment activity in secondary schools has reached its highest point in the past five years. The cumulative number of job advertisements is currently 12% higher than even last year, which already had a significant number of adverts! Looking at subjects in particular, all have seen an increase, but Technology and Humanities subjects have seen the biggest growth compared to 2018, with 52% and 41% increase, respectively.

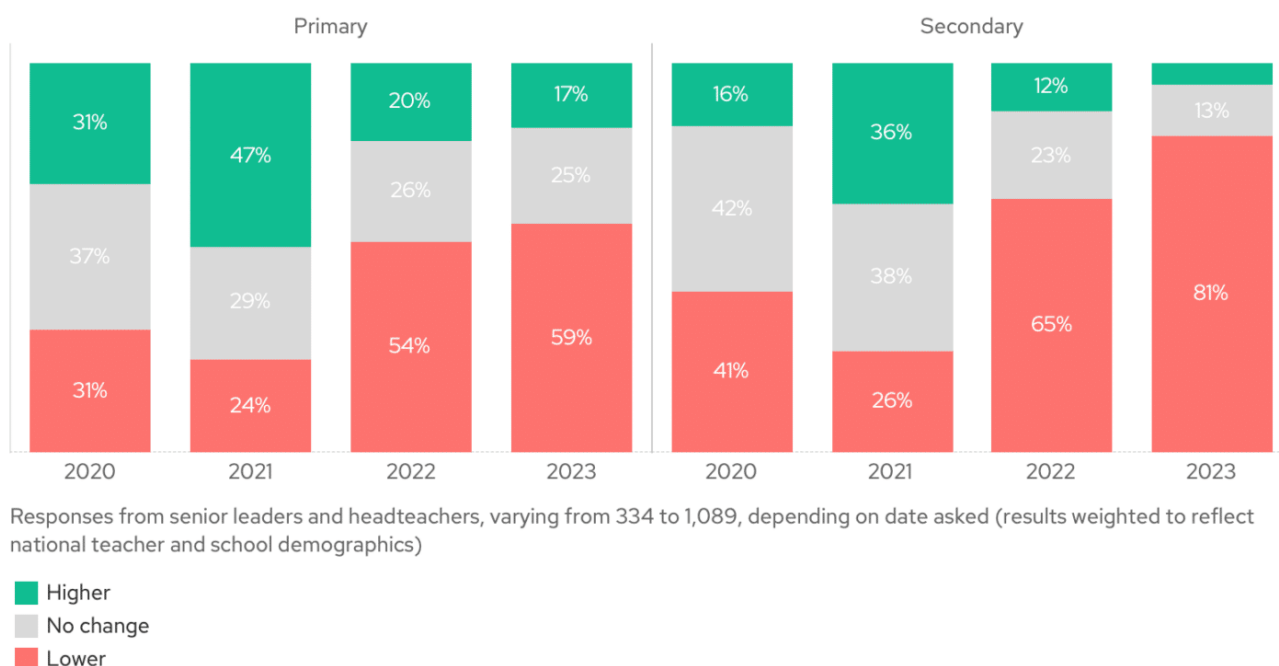
Secondary school teacher job adverts, cumulative over academic year



Teachers searching for a new role have 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.

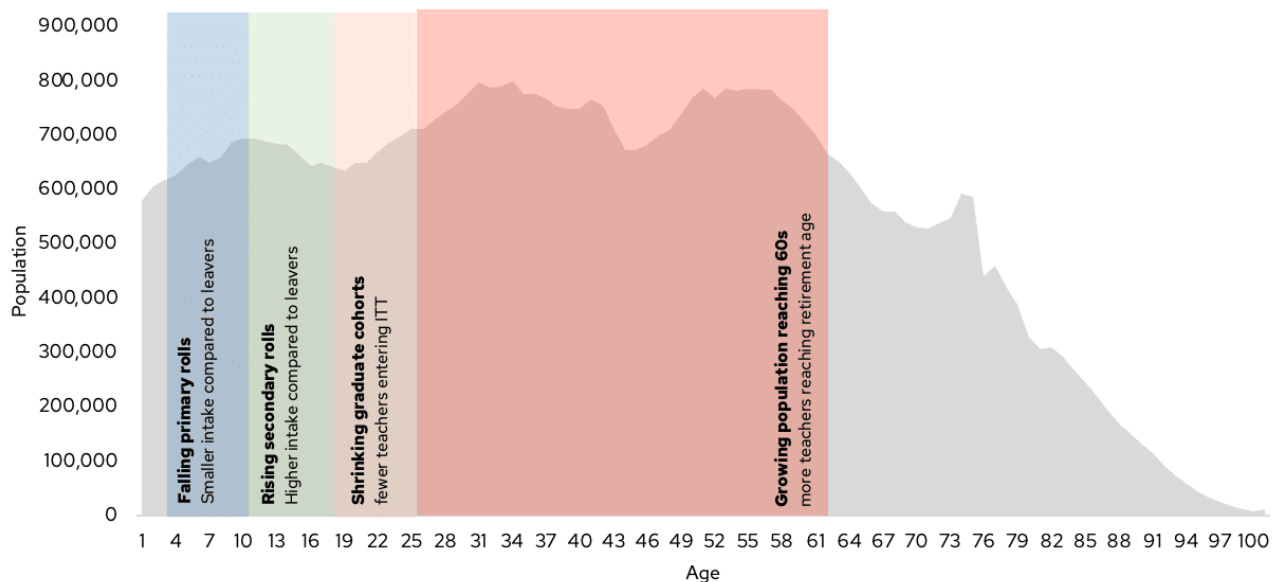
If your school has placed job advertisements recently, do you feel the response is higher or lower than usual?



What shortages actually look like

The impact of population size is often overlooked when considering the supply and demand dynamics of teachers in England. As already seen, teacher shortages are currently more pronounced in the secondary phase compared to the primary phase. Presently, cohorts of 4-year-olds entering primary schools are considerably smaller than those leaving, leading to a decline in primary enrolments. However, cohorts of 11-year-olds entering the secondary phase are larger than those leaving, resulting in more secondary enrolments. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for secondary teachers.

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.



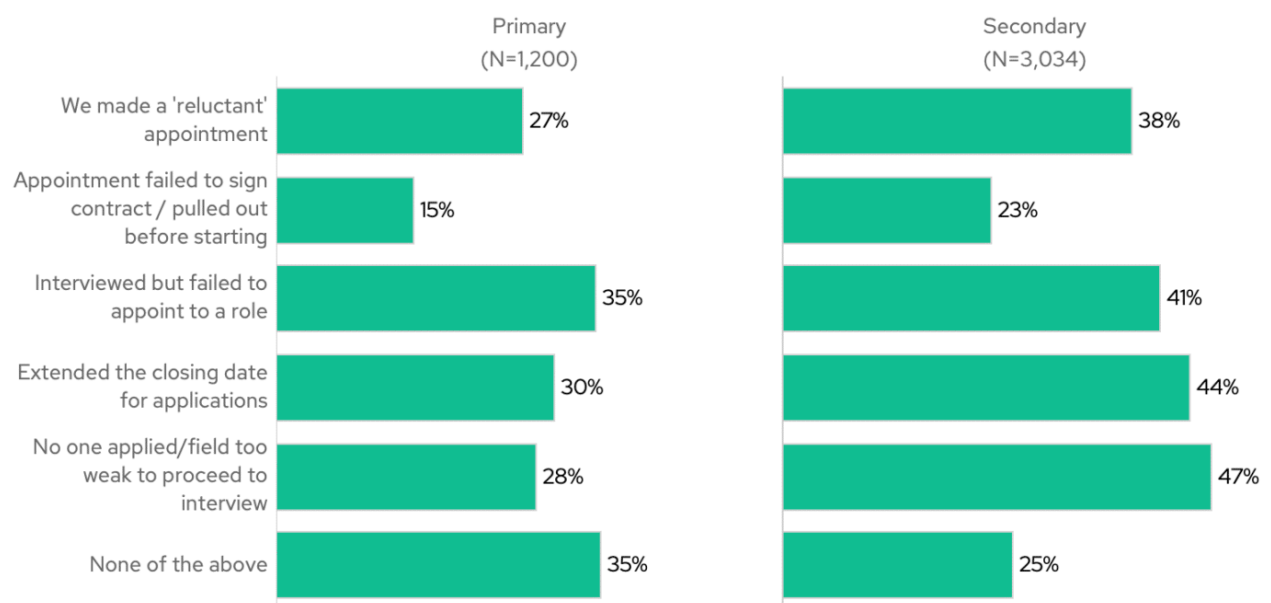
Teacher shortages do not look the same as shortages in other professions, where it might be possible to leave role vacant for extended periods. In teaching this can't happen - ultimately, somebody must be standing at the front of the classroom!

Therefore, there are likely to be unfavourable outcomes during the recruitment season. Alongside tracking recruitment failures, we surveyed middle and senior leaders to gather information on the following occurrences:

- 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 marginally 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?



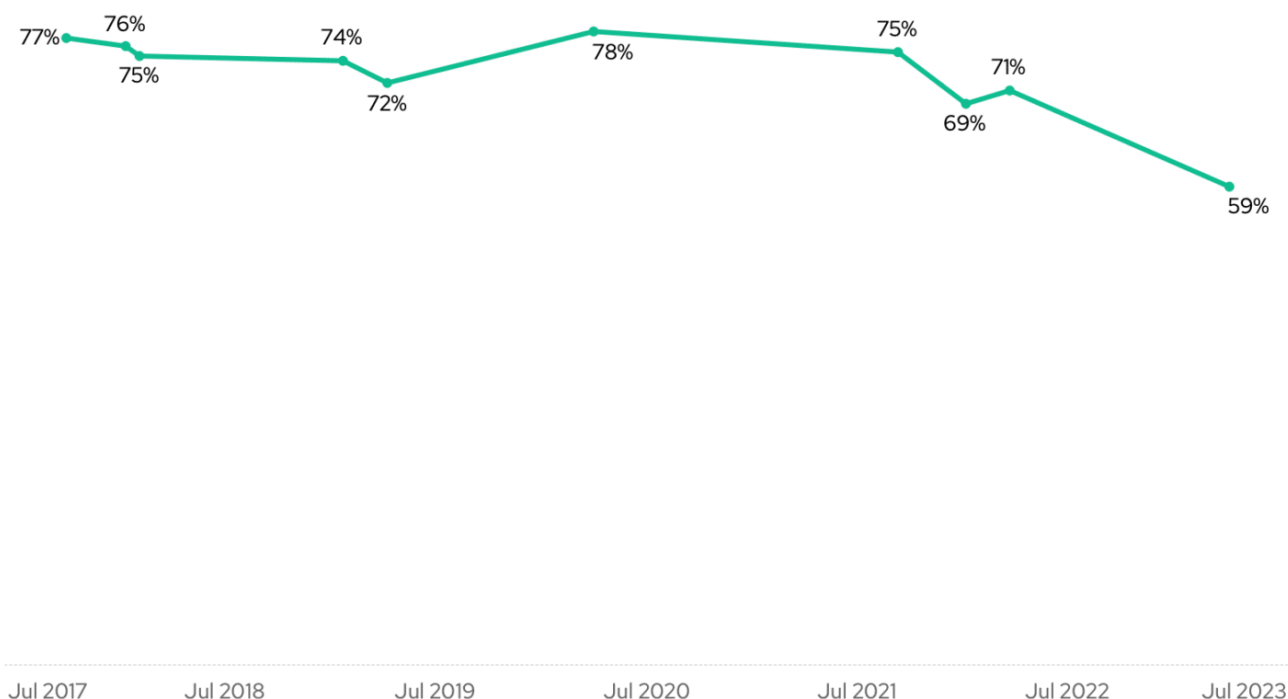
Question answered by 4,234 headteachers, senior and middle leaders only on 24/05/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Teacher morale reaching all-time low

We regularly ask 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. Alarming, 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?



Flexible working

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.

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:

- PPA taken at home if desired within existing timetables
- Creating PPA at particular times to accommodate teacher preferences
- Whole day PPA for every teacher

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.

Where to read more...

You can read the full report into Teacher Recruitment and Retention [here](#).

Further information, data and interactive charts can be found on the corresponding SchoolDash blog [here](#)