

Call for Evidence: Teacher recruitment, training and retention, by Fiona Fearon, Policy and Projects Manager, National Governance Association

1. Background

1.1 The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and governance professionals of state schools in England. We represent the interests of boards irrespective of their school type and governing structure. We are the school and trust governance experts in the sector, providing information, advice, guidance, and professional development, including e-learning. Our charitable aim is to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards and improving the effectiveness of governing boards.

1.2 The evidence presented within this submission is largely extracted from NGA's Annual Governance Survey (AGS), a survey of school governors and trustees conducted since 2011. The aim of the survey is to gather the views of those who govern in England in order to inform and shape education policy and, in the absence of official data, to provide an overview of the state of school governance and the strategic challenges faced by their schools. Last year the survey was open to all school governors, trustees and academy committee members between 25 April and 30 May 2022; and there were 4,185 respondents.

2. What are the main factors leading to difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified teachers?

2.1 As you will be aware from many sources, schools and trusts across the country are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit good candidates. NGA can add that the percentage of governing boards reporting that their school/trust had found it difficult to recruit staff to teaching positions in 2022 saw a very significant increase, with a 24 percentage point increase (29% to 53%) on the year before (figure 1).

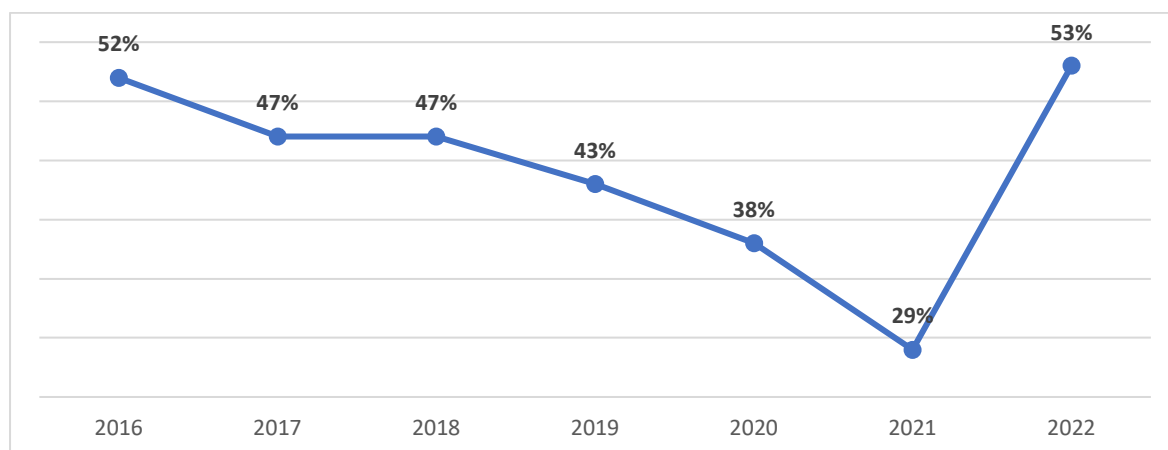


Figure 1: Percentage of respondents since 2016 that agree recruiting to teaching posts has been difficult.

2.2 When asked to share why there was a difficulty in recruitment, the dominant themes emerging were lack of applicants, lack of experienced/qualified candidates and the pay offered. Respondents also voiced concerns over the shortage of well trained, quality teaching staff with the relevant experience, attributing this in part to insufficient training during the pandemic. A lack of applicants specialising in social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and SEND were flagged as presenting a particular recruitment challenge.

2.3 Location was another commonly raised concern in the free text responses, with those governing in schools located in deprived areas struggling to attract quality applicants. The affordability of living in some areas when compared to current salary scales was also flagged as a deterrent to prospective applicants, most commonly by those governing in London, the South East and the South West.

2.4 Continuing the trend from 2021, workplace culture (57%), the reputation of the school (51%) and managing workload and wellbeing (45%), were most likely to be considered by boards as the top factors when recruiting and retaining quality staff (figure 2).

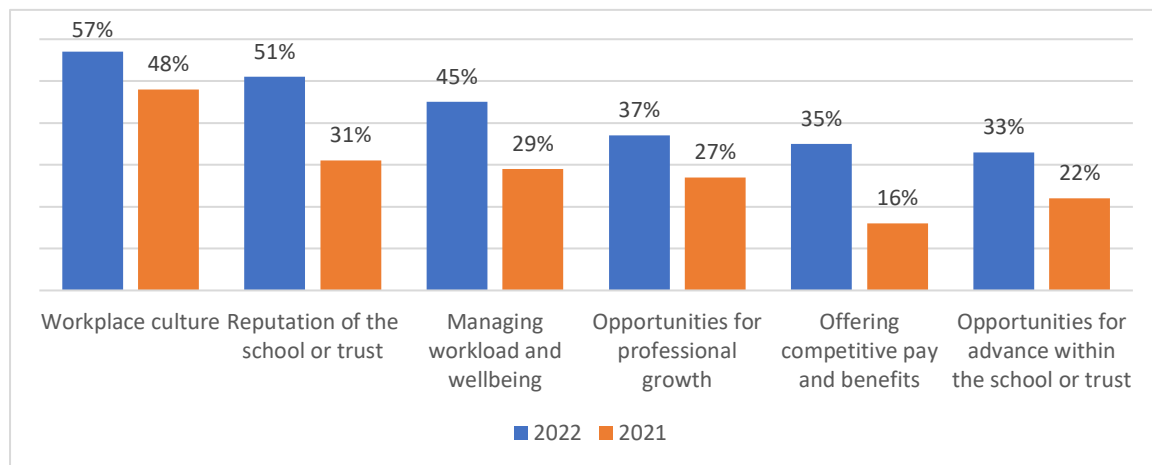


Figure 2: Top factors when recruiting and retaining quality staff.

2.5 Responses to our survey show a clear link between the long-term decline in the real value of pay to and the challenges faced by schools/trusts attempting to recruit the teachers they need. The number of respondents citing competitiveness of the pay as their principal reason for being unable to recruit has risen sharply between 2020 (22%) and 2022 (35%). This is further re-enforced in a survey of pay issues carried out by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) in September 2022. Only 12% of school leaders responding to the ASCL survey said that current salaries are effective in attracting the best graduates to the profession and just 6% said that current salaries will encourage teachers to stay in the profession.

3. Which subjects are most affected?

3.1 When asked to expand on challenges when recruiting for teaching roles, respondents expressed particular concern over a lack of applicants specialising in specific subjects such as modern foreign languages (MFL) and STEM subjects.

4. How does the situation differ across the country and across different types of schools and colleges?

4.1 Those governing in all-through (81%), alternative provision (64%) and special schools (70%) were the most likely to struggle with teacher recruitment (figure 3).

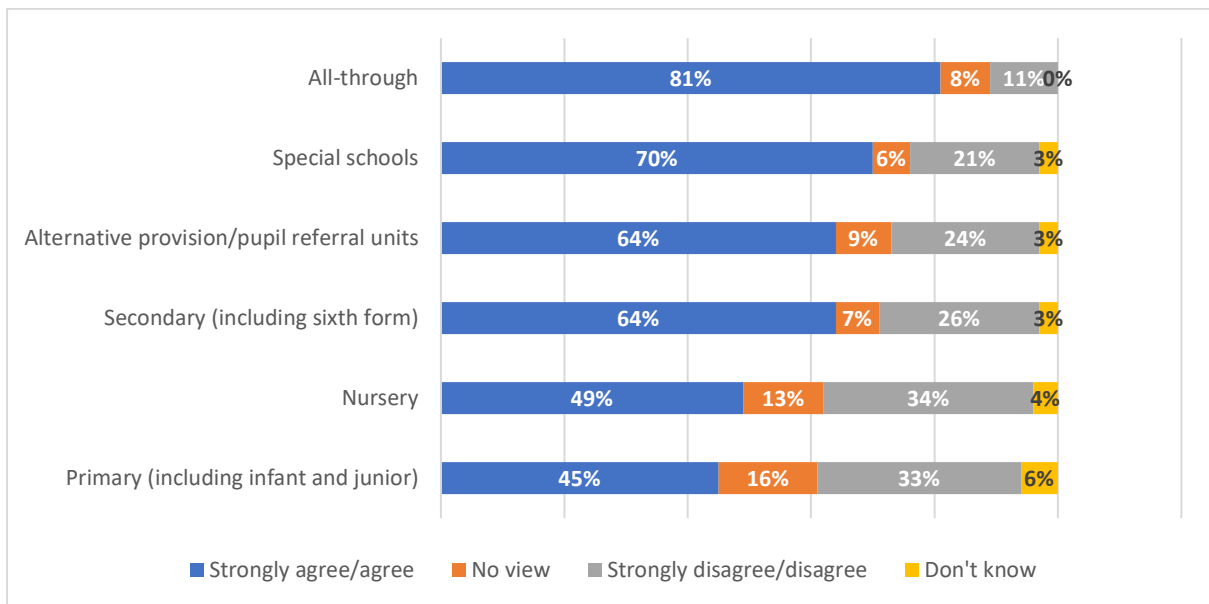


Figure 3: Extent to which schools/trusts are finding it difficult to recruit teaching staff by school phase.

4.2 In addition, trustees of single academy (61%) or multi academy (60%) trusts reporting struggling to recruit teachers versus 46% of local authority-maintained schools (figure 4). However, this will be in large part because trusts are more likely to be secondaries than primary phase. It is also interesting that academy committee members (often called local governors) of MATs did not report the same level of difficulty as MAT trustees: it is arguable that they may know their schools better than trustees, but this would need testing, especially as the respondents are likely to be from different trusts.

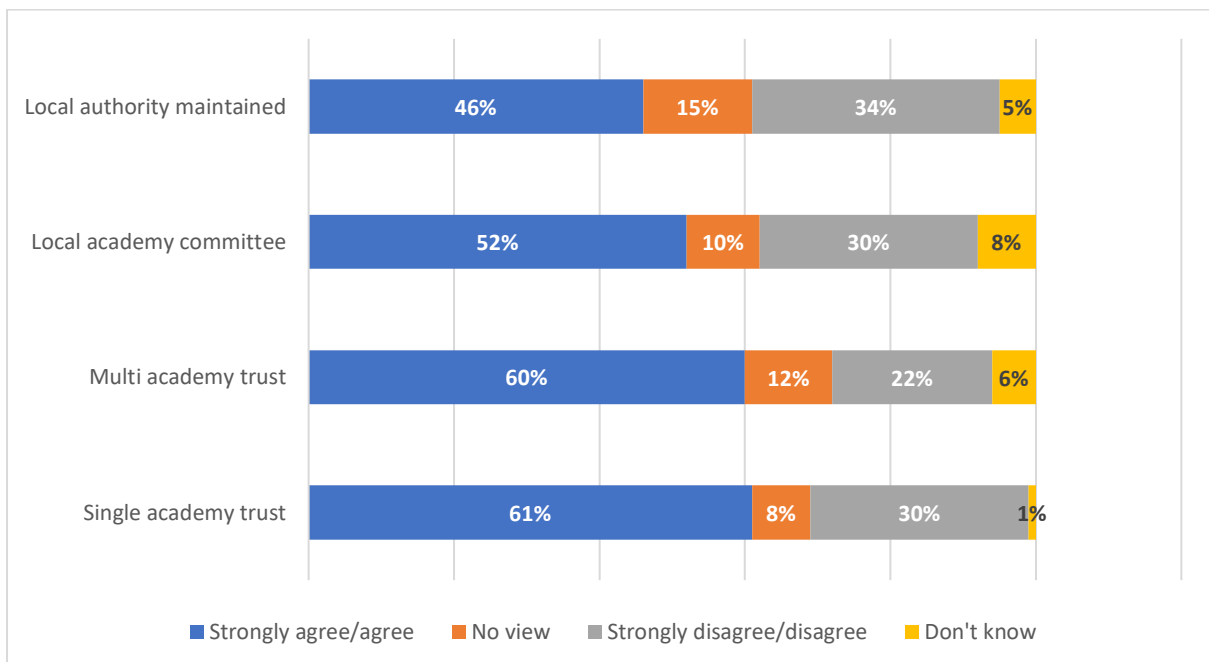


Figure 4: Extent to which schools/trusts are finding it difficult to recruit teaching staff by school type.

4.3 Regionally, those in London (61%), the South West (57%) and the South East (54%) find it most difficult (figure 5) which has been a trend year on year.

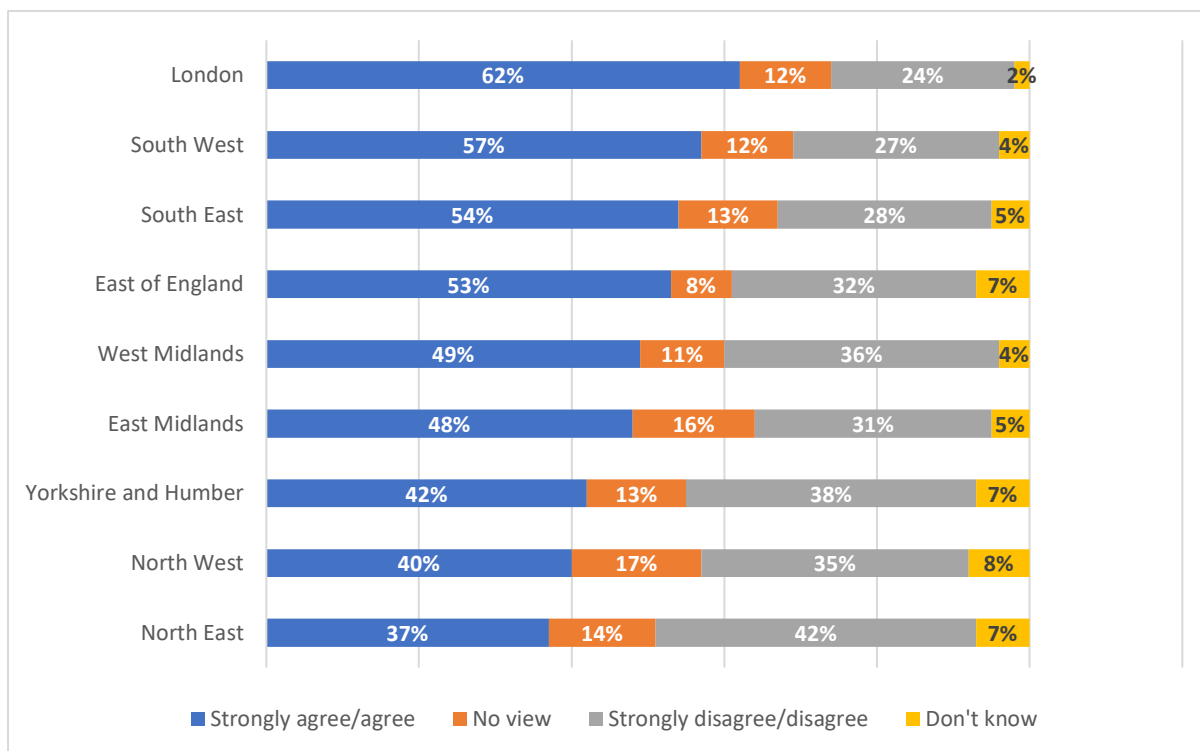


Figure 5: Extent to which schools/trusts are finding it difficult to recruit teaching staff by region.

5. What action should the Department take to address the challenges in teacher recruitment and retention?

5.1 Teacher salaries: Given how important education is towards creating a successful economy and with no credible analysis which shows teachers are less important to our economic prospects than they were ten years ago, we believe there is a strong case for awarding teachers a significant pay increase in order to address the worsening recruitment and retention crisis. A report published by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS), shows how teachers have suffered a significant real terms fall in their pay over the past 12 years while average earnings have risen across the rest of the economy.

5.2 Avoiding reduction in teacher autonomy while increasing ineffective accountability: NGA does champion the role of governing boards in ensuring a good workplace culture. However, issues linked to the schools' system, which are outside of governing boards' control and undermine the aims of the Education staff wellbeing charter are a challenge. In particular we are referring to frequent policy changes (notably curriculum and assessment reforms), stringent accountability and being the last line of support standing due to the reduction of services that support children and families. These issues create workload intensification and limited professional discretion for teachers and especially for school leaders. The psychological impact is difficult to understate and greater if the individual remuneration also means they feel undervalued.

5.3 Flexible working: We believe that flexible working also has a significant role to play in increasing recruitment and retention and supporting wellbeing in schools and trusts. NGA has been at the forefront promoting flexible working and encouraging governing boards to embed it in their policies and working practices of their school/trust. We welcome the DfE's research and resources made available to promote flexible working in schools. However, we also recognise that teaching is a long way from being able to offer the level of flexibility that other graduate roles (with potentially higher salaries) offer and may therefore seem less appealing as a career choice.

5.4 Addressing workload as a result of underfunded and under resourced external children's services: Almost all respondents to the 2022 AGS (95%) said that their school/trust offers additional services to families over and above education. When asking respondents about the further support that would help boards to support families experiencing poverty, 8 out of 10 (82%) said that access to additional funding would equip schools and trusts to go further. This was the most common response across all regions and school phases. Respondents also commonly reported that more support and collaboration from other statutory and non-statutory services would be beneficial.

The mental health and wellbeing of pupils was also a concern for respondents with many expressing frustration around schools picking up responsibilities that they have neither the time, capacity, expertise or resource for, highlighting further the impact of underfunded and stretched external services. When respondents expanded on the support schools and trusts needed in relation to pupil mental health and wellbeing, an overwhelming narrative around extensive waiting times for the essential intervention of external services emerged.

5.5 Effective use of incentives:

5.5.1 A more effective use of bursaries to help with the chronic shortage of physics, design and technology and modern foreign language teachers.

5.5.2 A reduction in student loan debt for each year new teachers continue to work within a state school.

5.5.3 Actively encouraging overseas trained teachers to come and teach in England.

5.5.4 Encouraging teaching talent to stay in the profession as well as join. ASCL makes this point in their STRB evidence: about looking closely at what might prevent teachers from not returning from maternity leave and preventing teachers from leaving when they reach fifty.

5.6 More time, development and respect for good Human Resources understanding & practice: It is very usual for employees to move on from a job when they do not have a good relationship with their line manager. This is not something which is given much profile in most schools and trusts, nor in the sector as a whole. It is often left in the side lines in leadership development and literature, as though it was an area of expertise only needed in times of crisis or low performance, rather than management skill central to developing an organisation as a healthy place to work. The DfE needs to play a significant role in addressing this. It should emphasise the role of employers and encourage loudly and explicitly the development of People Strategies.

6. Are there ways in which teacher training could be improved to address the challenges in recruitment and retention?

6.1 Most governing boards recognise the role CPD plays in making a career in education attractive and sustainable and schools/trusts have it in their improvement plans. 37% of respondents to the annual governance survey said that agreed that providing CPD and opportunities for professional growth were a key factor in the recruitment and retention of teachers for their school/trust (figure 2). We therefore welcome the funding of an entitlement for all early career teachers in England to access high quality CPD during their first two years in the profession, underpinned by the Early Career Framework. We also recognise there has been investment in fully funded National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), which more experienced staff, teachers and leaders can access. Over the years NGA has been involved in three reviews of the NPQs. We argued tenaciously that the frameworks should be designed in such a way that builds a wider base of knowledge and skills relevant to the career stage. In particular, we argued that there should be more expectation of governance knowledge in the frameworks, especially for NLQH and NPQEL, and of those aspects of management which are not contained within teacher development.

6.2 Investment in CPD does not only mean money but also finding time for that CPD, which brings further resourcing implications. Therefore, we would welcome further investment to support schools and trusts to develop and deliver co-ordinated workforce and talent strategy that impacts on recruitment and retention.

7. How well does the demographic makeup of the teaching workforce reflect that of the pupils they teach?

7.1 Governing boards have far less ethnic diversity than the school communities they serve. Only 6% of governors and trustees surveyed in the 2022 annual governance survey reported they were from an ethnic minority background. The governance community does not reflect national data for pupil, staff or general population, teacher and headteacher ethnic diversity, nor is it reflective of the most recent census data published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2022 (figure 6).

	2021 census	Pupils in England	Teachers in England	Heads in England	Governance volunteers surveyed*	Chairs of governing boards surveyed *
White	82%	71%	90%	92%	95%	96%
Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	4%	6%	2%	8%	1%	1%
Asian	9%	12%	5%		3%	2%
Mixed/multiple	3%	7%	2%		1%	1%
Other	1%	2%	1%		0%	0%

Figure 6: a table showing ethnicity of pupils, teachers, headteachers and those surveyed in school governance survey in 2022.

7.2 NGA is actively encouraging schools and trusts to take a whole organisation approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. We have partnered with ASCL to develop a [programme of e-learning modules](#) intended to focus on creating an inclusive culture through practice, and going beyond compliance. Modules include:

- Creating an inclusive culture
- Governing board diversity
- The board's role in encouraging diversity and ensuring equality
- Increasing the number of volunteers from underrepresented groups

7.3 Our campaign page includes a range of resources designed to provide insight, understanding and awareness to assist boards when having and navigating discussions around equality, diversity and inclusion and to empower boards to take action. These include our report, Increasing participation in school and trust governance which explores volunteer recruitment and retention through the lens of the experiences and views of governors and trustees from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds and young volunteers (aged under 40) alongside data from NGA's annual survey 2021 and a review of research from other sectors: [Increasing participation in school and trust governance - National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](#)