

Teacher recruitment and retention in schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas in England

Study plan for a review of practice

Principal investigator(s): Prof Sin Wang Chong, Head of Evidence Synthesis,
National Institute of Teaching

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Introduction

There are currently significant challenges in teacher recruitment and retention in England, with schools serving disadvantaged communities in particular facing even greater challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. A recent report points to the gravity of the issue of teacher shortage and its negative impact on disadvantaged schools, especially on education quality (Worth, 2023). To better understand the strategies employed by English schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas to support teacher recruitment and retention, this study plan, prepared by the National Institute of Teaching (NlOT) with support from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), is for a review of practice on teacher recruitment and retention strategies in schools serving disadvantaged areas in England (i.e., education investment areas - EIAs). EIAs are “local authorities in England where educational outcomes were the weakest, based on sustained low performance across key stage 2 and key stage 4 in 2017 to 2019” (Department for Education, 2023, para. 1).

The review of practice comprises two phases. For an overview of teacher recruitment and retention strategies used across schools located in socio-economically challenging areas in England, teacher job advertisements in EIAs in England will be surveyed to identify and categorise general strategies used to recruit and retain teachers (Phase 1). This desk-based research will be accompanied by an online questionnaire to be sent to staff members of schools in our four Founding MATs and Associate Colleges located within EIAs (Phase 2). Findings from the two phases will be combined to develop a typology of more fine-grained and contextualised teacher recruitment and retention strategies. As our questionnaire will provide an indication of which strategies are perceived to be

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effective, the typology has the potential to inform future empirical research testing the effectiveness of approaches that appear promising for disadvantaged schools.

Aims and research questions

As observed in Taylor et al. (2023), the literature base does not always include rich descriptions of recruitment and retention approaches used by schools serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Even when an approach is mentioned in a journal article, it is rarely elaborated on due to the empirical focus of research publications and the word limits imposed by journals. This is an issue that the current review attempts to overcome by documenting the specific practices of recruitment and retention in disadvantaged areas of England in detail, so that they can be adapted and eventually trialled to establish their effectiveness. Specifically, this review of practice aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the teacher recruitment and retention strategies used in primary and secondary schools in England in socio-economically challenging areas?
2. What is the perceived importance of these strategies?

Objectives

These research questions will be answered through a survey of school and/or MAT-specific recruitment and retention strategies in disadvantaged areas in England using a review of practice. A review of practice is a type of realist review in which attention is paid to the contextualised nature of the evidence being synthesised for theory development (Pawson et al., 2005) (in our case, the development of a typology of teacher recruitment and retention strategies); like other types of systematic review, a review of practice conforms to a predetermined methodological approach and steps (Chong et al., 2022). To collect contextualised data, Phase 1 of the review of practice will focus on teaching job advertisements of primary and secondary schools serving the 55 EIAs in England (UK Government, 2022). Phase 2 of the review includes an online questionnaire which will be sent to primary, secondary, special schools, and central teams (i.e., Head of HR, Head of Education, and/or Programme Director) of the four Founding MATs of the NIoT to inquire about strategies used in teacher recruitment and retention and their perceived effectiveness, working closely with the Institute's Executive Director of Partnerships (Emma Rennison) and Director of Recruitment (Tim Ogdon). To increase the diversity of the sample, we will also work with Swift Trust in the Southwest, Seaview who run special schools, and Unity Trust, whose schools include special schools and alternative provision schools. Together, Phases 1 and 2 of the review provide an overview of the state-of-the-art of teacher recruitment and retention tactics employed in schools located in disadvantaged areas in England. Due to time restraints, Phase 2 will be conducted concurrently with Phase 1. From the findings of the two phases, a typology of teacher recruitment and retention strategies, including contexts, descriptions, and perceived importance in MATs, will be developed.

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Methodology

Phase 1: Analysis of teaching job advertisements

The review team will search on the TES (<https://www.tes.com/jobs/>) and Guardian (<https://jobs.theguardian.com/>) websites for teaching and leadership job advertisements from primary and secondary schools in the 55 EIAs, to locate information about recruitment and retention strategies. To help with identifying the relevant schools, we have created a list of primary, secondary, and special schools in England located in the 55 EIAs (Figure 1). This search will be limited to jobs currently advertised on the day the search is undertaken in June 2023, as advertisements are generally only public for one month before they expire and are removed from the websites. When collecting data relating to job advertisements, we will search through all relevant documents (e.g., job description, school brochure), to capture any additional relevant information provided.

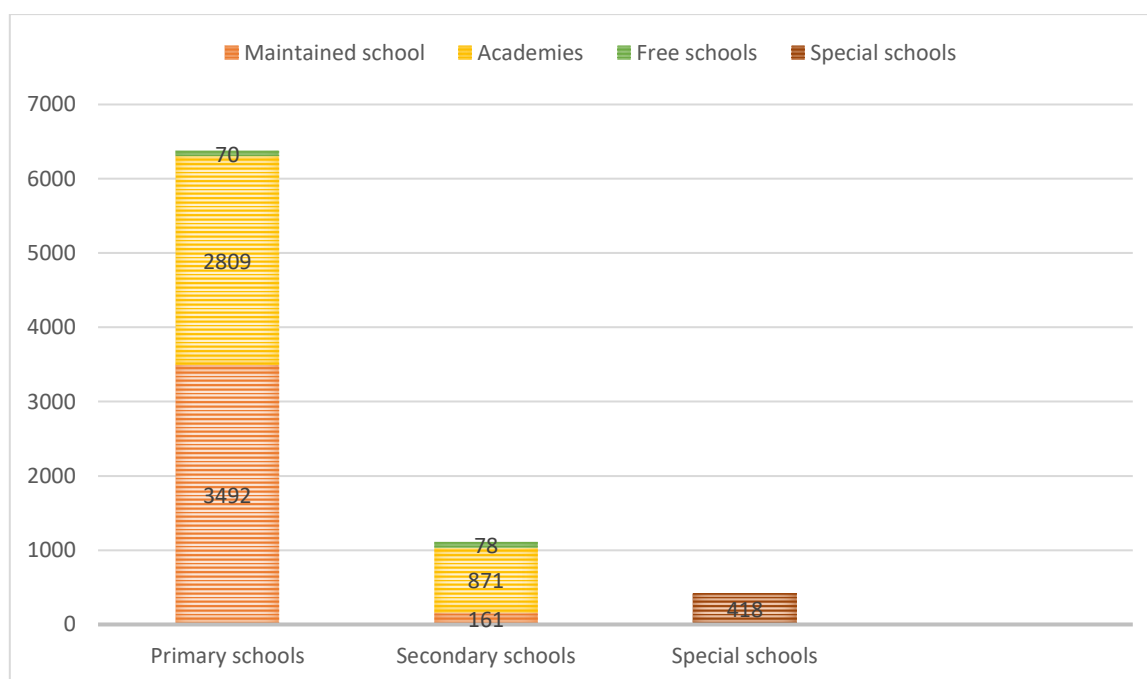


Figure 1. Number of primary, secondary, and special schools in the 55 EIAs

Inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1) will be used to screen the job advertisements to ensure the sources are relevant to the scope of the review. Relevant information from each advertisement will then be copied and pasted individually to a Word document and saved as a PDF. These will then be uploaded into the evidence synthesis software, *EPPI Reviewer*, (Thomas et al., 2023) as individual items, where items will then be screened once more to ensure they fit the inclusion criteria.

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Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for school job advertisements

	Include	Exclude	Justification
Sample	Job advertisements of classroom teachers and leadership roles in the 55 EIAs identified in the government’s levelling up agenda in England (UK Government, 2022).	Job advertisements of early year settings, further education, and higher education institutes in England. Primary, secondary, and special schools outside of the 55 EIAs in England.	The focus of this second review is on recruitment and retention strategies in disadvantaged schools in England.
Phenomena of interest	Job advertisements that include information about teacher recruitment and/or retention strategies.	Job advertisements that do not include information about teacher recruitment and/or retention strategies (e.g., staff benefit package including professional development opportunities)	
Other criteria	Job advertisements that are published in June 2023.	Job advertisements that are published before May 2023.	We are interested in the latest strategies used by schools in England. Moreover, older job advertisements may no longer be accessible.

To ensure reliability of screening, two researchers will independently assess a 10% sample of the included job advertisements content using the inclusion and exclusion criteria at the second-level screening stage. Then, overseen by the principal investigator, results will be compared, and any discrepancies will be discussed and resolved in online meetings. If agreement is lower than 90%, the independent screening process will re-run on another 10% of the sample until agreement is 90% or

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higher. Then, the remaining items will be screened by members of the research team. A PRISMA diagram (Page et al., 2021) will document the search and screening process.

Data extraction

The following information will be extracted from the included job advertisements content within *EPPI Reviewer*. The codes are based on the PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome) framework. This represents a preliminary list, as codes will also be added inductively, especially for the retention and recruitment strategies, as they develop through the analysis. Moreover, we understand that, in most cases, a strategy can be used as both a recruitment and retention incentive (e.g., professional development opportunities) so, at this preliminary stage, we have decided not to separate the strategies into recruitment and retention in the extraction form. This conceptualisation is in line with published work in this topic. For instance, the UK Government's recruitment and retention strategy policy paper published in 2019 did not separate recruitment from retention when stipulating the four priorities. However, we acknowledge that there are incentives targeting new or in-post teachers specifically (e.g., one-off recruitment bonus). In those cases, we will indicate clearly that it is for recruitment or retention purpose.

- Publication type
 - job advertisement
 - Any external documents or resources referred to (Y/N & description)
- School overview
 - school level (primary, secondary)
 - school type (academy, foundation, special, voluntary controlled, alternative provision etc.)
 - gender (mixed, boys, girls)
 - selective (yes, no)
- Job advertisement information
 - position level (teacher, coordinator, head teacher)
 - position type (permanent, contract)
 - subject sought (Maths, Science, RE, Foreign Languages, Drama, Music etc)
 - teaching experience (UK teaching experience, years of experience)
- Recruitment and retention strategies
 - language in advertisements
 - school reputation
 - school facilities
 - salary
 - financial incentives
 - promotion opportunities
 - flexible working opportunities

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- Induction
- Professional development
- Bonus after X years

Data analysis

The results will undergo a qualitative synthesis using EPPI Reviewer (Thomas et al., 2023). A qualitative synthesis allows for collecting large quantities of qualitative data and producing aggregated codes (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). Synthesising the data involves comparing records and designing conceptual coding categories (Charmaz, 2014). The purpose of this data synthesis is to develop a typology of current recruitment and retention strategies used by disadvantaged schools in England. Specifically, thematic analysis will be conducted following the methodological framework of Nowell et al. (2017): This framework is chosen because it is systematic and aims to build the trustworthiness criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) into its steps. Specifically, the data synthesis will follow five phases, namely “familiarizing yourself with the data”, “generating initial codes”, “searching for themes”, reviewing themes”, “defining and naming themes”, and “producing the report” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 4-8).

Phase 2: Online questionnaire to Founding MATs and Associate Colleges

The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather more in-depth information on recruitment and retention strategies from teachers’ own perspectives and experiences.

Like Phase 1, the second phase of the review aims to broadly scope the practices of teacher recruitment and retention strategies used in schools in the 55 EIAs to develop the typology. The focus of Phase 2, however, is on schools that are affiliated with the NIOT. The target participants of this phase are the four Founding MATs (The Harris Federation, Oasis Community Learning, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Star Academies), Swift Trust, Seaview, and Unity Trust. This more targeted approach enables the research team to potentially gain access to richer information about recruitment and retention strategies in our MATs; at the same time, restricting the sample to our MATs is for the purpose of time restraints and logistics, and thus, we note this is a limitation of this study as the data collected and analysed in Phase 2 may not be representative of all schools located in the EIAs. The selected participants can provide unique insights into recruitment practices in their own school context. This enables us to identify best practices and potential challenges in recruitment and retention that may not be captured from the advertisements.

Sampling strategy

Not all schools affiliated with the NIOT are eligible to participate in this phase because our focus is on schools in socio-economically challenging areas. To identify eligible schools within our MATs and the three participating Associate Colleges, we have created a list of NIOT’s primary and secondary schools located in the 55 EIAs from our CRM system (Figure 2). To increase representativeness of our findings,

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priority will be given to schools that are in the EIAs but were not covered in Phase 1. The intent is to capture views and perspectives from a larger population to increase the generalisability of the findings and to gain a more ecologically valid understanding of recruitment and retention strategies in disadvantaged areas. Both teachers and school leaders in those schools will be invited to complete the online questionnaire.

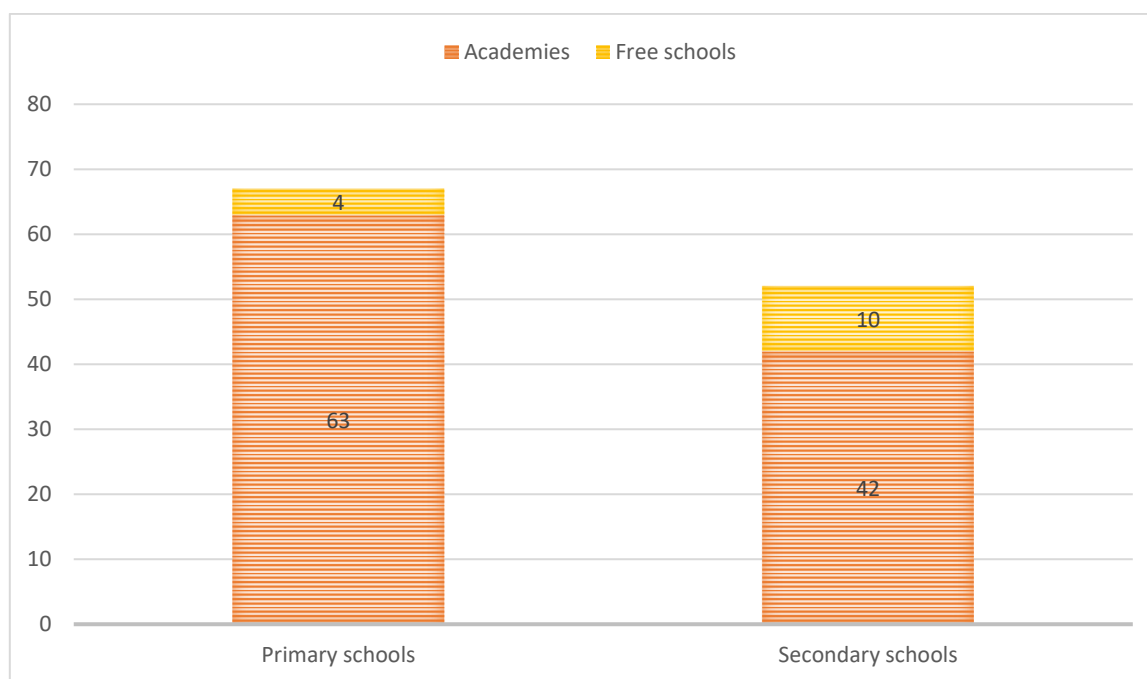


Figure 2. Number of primary and secondary schools in the 55 EIAs affiliated with the NIoT (schools of NIoT's Founding MATs and Associate Colleges)

Develop and pilot the questionnaire

An online questionnaire will collect data using Microsoft forms (see Appendix 1 for the piloted and revised questionnaire). The design and structure of the questionnaire is informed by our research questions related to the recruitment and retention strategies used in the context of the schools, their perceived importance, and the factors that influence their effectiveness. The design considers a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. We use Likert scales to gather quantitative data, asking the respondents to select from predefined response options or rate their perceived importance of incentives for recruiting and retaining teachers. The collection of qualitative data enables us to gather in more in-depth information and understanding about the participants' experiences regarding recruitment and retention strategies, and their perceived usefulness.

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In designing the questionnaire, we drew on the existing literature identified in Taylor et al. (2023) on recruitment and retention to identify strategies explored previously that can inform our closed and open-ended questions. We acknowledge that it is difficult to categorise most incentives rigidly into either for recruitment or for retention because the same strategy can be used to attract new teachers as well as to motivate teachers who are in post to stay. Therefore, some items listed under recruitment and retention strategies are identical. The designed and developed questionnaire was piloted with a small number of staff in a school affiliated with the NIoT to identify and address potential issues with clarity, wording, and formatting before it is administered. Feedback on the questionnaire was collected through online interviews and/or email exchanges with the members of staff who participate in the pilot study. Additional feedback was obtained from members of our Research Advisory Group and NFER who are national leaders in this topic and NIoT colleagues in Partnership.

We applied a random sampling to piloting the questionnaire, by randomly selecting a school of our Founding MATs located in an EIA. To encourage participation, the questionnaire is concise and easy to complete in 10 minutes. Before piloting the questionnaire, ethical approval was obtained from NIoT's Advisory Group. After the piloting stage, the revised questionnaire will be disseminated to the key contacts of the schools we identified through the Partnership Team of the NIoT. The online questionnaire begins with an information sheet and informed consent form (Appendices 3 and 4) in which we explain the purpose of our research and ensure the participants of anonymity and confidentiality.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse findings from closed items while thematic analysis will be employed to code open-ended items (see "data analysis" of Phase 1 for details). The analysed findings, together with those in Phase 1, will be used to develop a typology of teacher recruitment and retention strategies used in English schools serving disadvantaged populations.

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Project team

The project is led by Professor Sin Wang Chong (SFHEA, FRSA), Head of Evidence Synthesis at the NIOT, who has substantial methodological expertise in conducting evidence syntheses in educational research, and supported by Jack Worth, Lead Economist at the NFER, who is a national expert in the topic of teacher recruitment and retention. The project is overseen by the Research Advisory Group of the NIOT comprising leading scholars in teacher education research and more specifically on the topic concerned namely Professor Becky Allen and Professor Rob Coe.

The NIOT Advisory Group outline above has granted ethical approval of this project and approved this study plan.

The NIOT is in an ideal position to execute the project because of its “school-led ethos” and integration into MATs that serve children across England, specifically schools serving disadvantaged areas. With its four Founding MATs (The Harris Federation, Oasis Community Learning, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, and Star Academies), the Institute has access to 170 schools. Additionally, the NIOT’s network of Associate Colleges, comprising 14 further MATs, gives further access to state schools attended by over 2% of children in England. Given that approximately 40% of pupils in the schools of the four Founding MATs are regarded as being in a disadvantaged position, as indicated by the Free School Meals measure (using FSM6), this provides us with access to conducting research in schools that serve children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

Participation Information Sheet for teachers

This research has been approved by the National Institute of Teaching's Research Advisory Group.

Should you have any concerns about the Ethics of this research, please contact the Principal Investigator, Professor Sin Wang Chong at s.chong@niot.org.uk

Research Title:

Review of Practice on Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Schools in Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Areas in England

Research Lead:

Professor Sin Wang Chong, Head of Evidence Synthesis, National Institute of Teaching

Dear teacher or school leader,

You are invited to take part in this study aiming to identify effective strategies for recruitment and retention of teachers in disadvantaged schools in England. You have been asked to take part as your school is located in one of the DfE's Education Investment Areas (EIAs). This research is funded by the EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) and led by Professor Sin Wang Chong. This is an important study because there are currently significant challenges in teacher recruitment and retention in England, especially in contexts facing disadvantage. We endeavour to seek the collective wisdom of the profession to support all in recruiting and retaining the very best teachers. Findings could help inform future research in this area.

We would like to invite you to complete an anonymous online questionnaire to gather information and understand your experiences and perceptions of teacher recruitment and retention strategies and of their effectiveness. Your participation is valued. All data gathered will be confidential. Data from the questionnaire will be anonymous and securely held on our secure network. Data will be stored for a period of one year to allow for the dissemination of outputs such as final report and papers submitted to peer-reviewed journals. As the questionnaire is anonymised, you will not be identifiable in any published material. Further information on how we protect the privacy and security of personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and Data Protection Act (2018) is described in our privacy notice: <https://niot.org.uk/privacy-notice>.

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Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any point during the completion of the questionnaire. Please note that you will not be able to withdraw after completing the questionnaire because the data collected are anonymised.

We really value your participation; if you have any questions then please contact Professor Sin Wang Chong using the email below.

Contact information.

Professor Sin Wang Chong, Head of Evidence Synthesis, National Institute of Teaching, email:

s.chong@niot.org.uk

I have read and understand the above information.

Yes

Informed Consent Form for teachers

This research has been approved by the National Institute of Teaching's Research Advisory Group. Should you have any concerns about the ethics of this research, please feel free to contact Professor Sin Wang Chong at s.chong@niot.org.uk.

Research Title:

A Review of Practice on Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Schools in Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Areas in England

Principal Investigator:

Professor Sin Wang Chong, Head of Evidence Synthesis, National Institute of Teaching

Please check the boxes below.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

Yes

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

Yes

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3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised and any personal or identifying information removed from published materials.

Yes

4. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.

Yes

5. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the publications that result from this research.

Yes

6. I understand that the data I provide will be used solely for the purposes of the research study outlined and will not be used for any other purpose. I also understand how long my data will be stored for.

Yes

7. By proceeding to the following page, you are consenting to take part in the research.

Yes

8. Date

I. Background information.

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

2. What is your age range?

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 34

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- 35 - 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 or above

3. What qualifications do you have? (Multiple responses allowed)

- Diploma degree BA/BSc
- Masters' degree
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)
- Other Postgraduate degree
- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
- Other

4. What is your subject of specialism or phase?

5. What educational level do you teach at?

- Primary
- Secondary

6. What subject/subjects do you teach?

7. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

- Less than one year
- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- 16 – 20 years
- More than 20 years

8. In which EIA do you teach?

- Bedford
- Blackpool
- Bolton
- Bradford
- Bury
- Cambridgeshire
- Central Bedfordshire
- Cornwall
- County Durham
- Coventry
- Darlington
- Derby

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- Derbyshire
- Doncaster
- Dorset
- Dudley
- East Sussex
- Halton
- Hartlepool
- Isle of Wight
- Kirklees
- Knowsley
- Leeds
- Lincolnshire
- Liverpool
- Luton
- Manchester
- Middlesbrough
- Norfolk
- North Northamptonshire
- North Somerset
- North Yorkshire
- Nottingham
- Nottinghamshire
- Oldham
- Peterborough
- Plymouth
- Portsmouth
- Rochdale
- Rotherham
- Salford
- Sandwell
- Sefton
- Somerset
- South Gloucestershire
- South Tyneside
- St Helens
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Suffolk
- Sunderland
- Swindon
- Tameside
- Wakefield
- Walsall
- Wirral

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9. What position do you hold? (Multiple responses allowed)

- Teacher
- Senior leader
- Head of department
- Head of subject
- Headteacher
- Other

10. What type of school do you currently teach in?

- Academy – stand alone
- Academy – part of Multiple Academy Trust (MAT)
- Selective school (Grammar school)
- Special School
- Other

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11. Which training route did you take to become a teacher in England?

- Bachelor of Education (BEd Primary)
- Bachelor of Education (BEd Secondary)
- HEI – led Training
- Postgraduate Teacher Training (PGCE)
- Overseas
- School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)
- School Direct Training Programme
- Teach First
- Troops to Teachers
- Other

12. Are you responsible for recruiting teachers for your school?

- Yes
- No

II. Strategies for Teacher Recruitment.

13. How important do you consider the following strategies in attracting new teachers into your school?

Please tick one choice in each row. Note: By "important", we mean a strategy that is effective for recruitment in your school.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Do not know
Recruitment bonuses				
Competitive salaries				
Financial incentives/rewards for teaching performances				
Opportunities for progression				
Financial support for specific needs (e.g., for purchasing materials, technological devices)				
Subsidies for external professional development (e.g., obtaining a postgraduate degree)				

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Flexible working conditions (e.g., part-time work, flexible arrangements, ad-hoc flexibilities)				
Well-developed school environment (facilities, resources, technology, available staff)				
Induction support, coaching and mentoring				
Effective leadership practices (e.g., fostering collaboration, support, communication)				
Availability of physical space and time for collaboration with colleagues				
Positive behaviour management (e.g., promoting positive behaviour and minimising disruption)				
Respect for teachers (trust, appreciation, recognition)				
Professional and supportive colleagues				
Schools located close to amenities				
Social opportunities to develop sense of belonging (e.g., extracurricular activities, clubs, collaborative projects)				
Support on teacher wellbeing (e.g., programmes, counselling, therapy services)				
Balanced workload (equitable distribution of responsibilities, support from senior leaders, time etc.)				

14. Other strategy/ies that you think is/are important for recruitment.

III. Strategies for Teacher Retention.

15. How important do you consider the following strategies in retaining new teachers in your school?

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Please tick one choice in each row. Note: By "important", we mean a strategy that is effective for retention in your school.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Do not know
Retention bonuses				
Competitive salaries				
Financial incentives/rewards for teaching performances				
Opportunities for progression				
Financial support for specific needs (e.g., for purchasing materials, technological devices)				
Subsidies for external professional development (e.g., obtaining a postgraduate degree)				
Flexible working conditions (e.g., part-time work, flexible arrangements, ad-hoc flexibilities)				
Well-developed school environment (facilities, resources, technology, available staff)				
Induction support, coaching and mentoring				
Effective leadership practices (e.g., fostering collaboration, support, communication)				
Availability of physical space and time for collaboration with colleagues				
Positive behaviour management (e.g., promoting positive behaviour and minimising disruption)				
Respect for teachers (trust, appreciation, recognition)				
Professional and supportive colleagues				

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Schools located close to amenities				
Social opportunities to develop sense of belonging (e.g., extracurricular activities, clubs, collaborative projects)				
Support on teacher wellbeing (e.g., programmes, counselling, therapy services)				
Balanced workload (equitable distribution of responsibilities, support from senior leaders, time etc.)				

16. Other strategy/ies that you think is/are important for retention.

IV. Experiences with Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Your Teaching Career.

Think about specific recruitment and retention strategies or approaches you have encountered in your teaching career. Please describe your experiences about these specific strategies/approaches, focusing on how successful they were; factors that contributed to their success; any challenges with implementation; and any suggestions you may have to enhance the strategies' effectiveness.

17. Recruitment strategies

18. Retention strategies

19. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about teacher recruitment and retention strategies that is not covered elsewhere in this questionnaire?