

What did we find?

High quality teaching is the most powerful lever we have to improve pupil learning. To make sure all pupils have access to excellent teaching, we must recruit strong candidates into the profession, support their development into highly effective teachers, and retain them in schools. Yet we know that recruitment and retention is at crisis in English schools.

43%

of teachers leave the
profession within 10
years

Almost one in three teachers leave within their first five years of teaching, rising to 43% within ten.^[1] In 2023, around a third of teachers reported that they were considering leaving the profession.^[2]

The EEF has published an accessible overview of the best available evidence on classroom teacher recruitment and retention in schools, for headteachers and other leaders and decision-makers in primary and secondary schools. There is also an accompanying reflection tool, designed to support leaders to reflect on how to apply the evidence in their own setting. For further details, see the full report and reflection tool.

There's limited evidence on the direct impact of recruitment and retention strategies but some strategies show promise.

The summary centres around four areas with potential to improve teacher recruitment and retention:

- 01** Teacher workload
- 02** Flexible working
- 03** School leadership, culture and climate
- 04** Financial incentives and other benefits



Overview of key findings

1. Teacher workload

Reducing teacher workload could be one of the most promising ways to boost retention.

- Teachers in schools with multiple workload strategies in place report more manageable workloads, suggesting a multi-pronged approach may work best.
- Common strategies currently used by schools include access to existing schemes of work, collaborative planning, and streamlined marking and feedback.
- Teachers want workload reduction to focus on lesson planning, marking and assessment, behaviour, and pastoral care.
- Generative AI shows early promise: a recent trial found using ChatGPT cut lesson planning time by 31%.
- School workload policy changes can initially raise workload as staff adapt. Leaders should time rollouts carefully and monitor both short- and long-term impacts.

2. Flexible working

Teachers value flexible working. When implemented well, it can improve job satisfaction and wellbeing.

- Flexible working is still rare in teaching but is becoming more common.
- While there's no direct evidence it improves retention, teachers consistently link being able to work flexibly to better wellbeing, motivation, and job satisfaction.
- Leaders should plan how to address common concerns like cost, teaching continuity, and career progression when introducing flexible working.
- Successful examples highlight the importance of supportive leadership, a whole-school proactive approach, clearly defined responsibilities, effective timetabling, and a willingness to compromise.

3. School leadership, culture, and climate

Leadership practices that build trust, support professional growth, and foster a strong school culture could make a meaningful difference to teacher retention.

Research is still emerging, but leadership practices that show promise for retention include:

- Fostering a supportive working environment, including building positive and trusting relationships among staff.
- Prioritising teacher development, such as enabling access to professional learning.
- Promoting autonomy and agency by involving teachers in school decision-making.

4. Financial incentives and other benefits

Pay matters, especially for attracting teachers, but clearly defined benefits and working conditions also play a crucial role.

- Financial incentives are the best evidenced strategy for attracting teachers to schools. However, budget constraints make this challenging.
- Schools in disadvantaged communities may need to offer higher pay than other schools to attract and retain teachers
- Teachers value clearly defined workplace benefits—such as a specified amount of PPA time- more than vague or less tangible commitments such as broad statements about school culture or staff wellbeing.
- Some evidence suggests that offering healthcare benefits, childcare subsidies, or concrete flexible working commitments could be more cost-effective than pay rises in some cases.