Improving Staff Retention in Academies

Findings from the Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey

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edurio

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Executive Summary

Amidst the growing staff retention problem in schools across England, there is an urgency to better understand the motivations behind those resigning their posts and to implement solutions that work on a large scale.
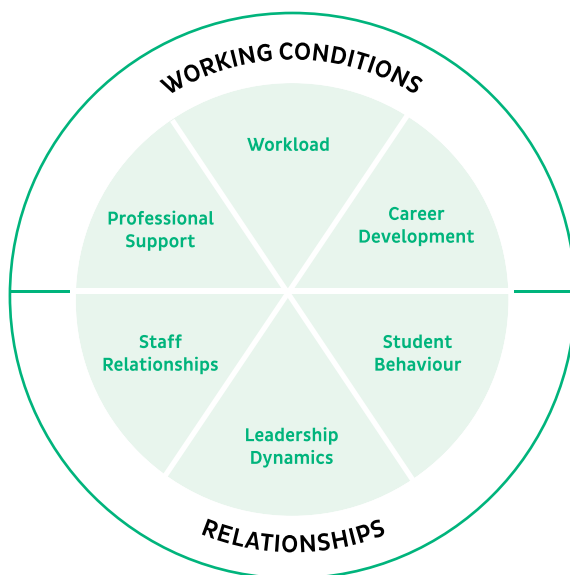
Multi-academy trusts across England were invited to participate in the **Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey** that was designed to provide actionable insights to the participating schools and trusts, but also to better understand what schools across England can do to improve staff retention.

Quick facts

23 MATs
322 schools
10,530 respondents
45 questions

Responses collected:
Oct 18 – Apr 19

As of April 2019 the survey has been completed by 10,530 respondents from 322 schools. It has become England's largest independent study of the driving forces behind school staff staying in or leaving their posts.
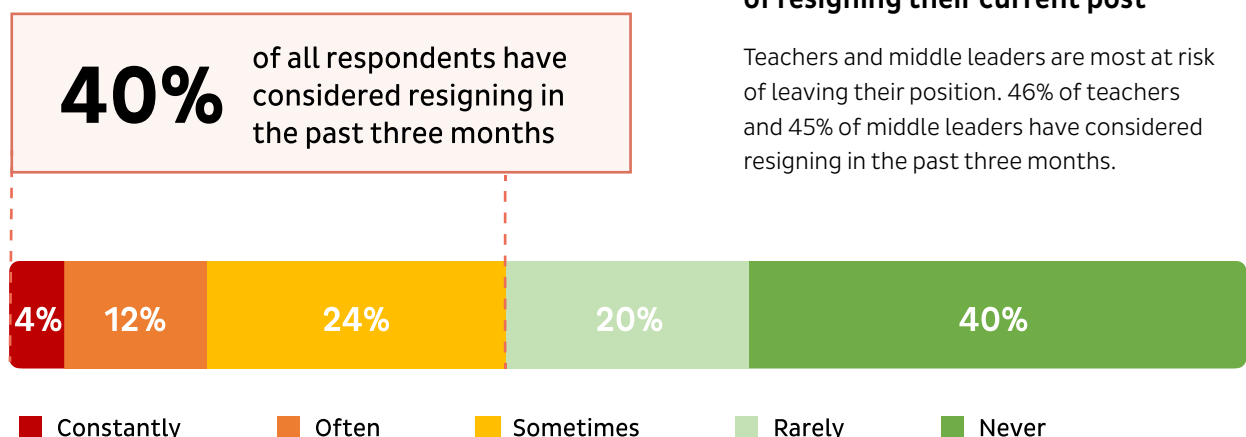

Existing research, along with school leader interviews, highlighted six factors within a school's control that have a material impact on staff retention. These factors make up Edurio's **Framework for Staff Retention**, which guided survey design and analysis.

The analysis found that all six factors can have an impact on staff retention. Most importantly, it showed that many possible improvements are within the control of each individual school.
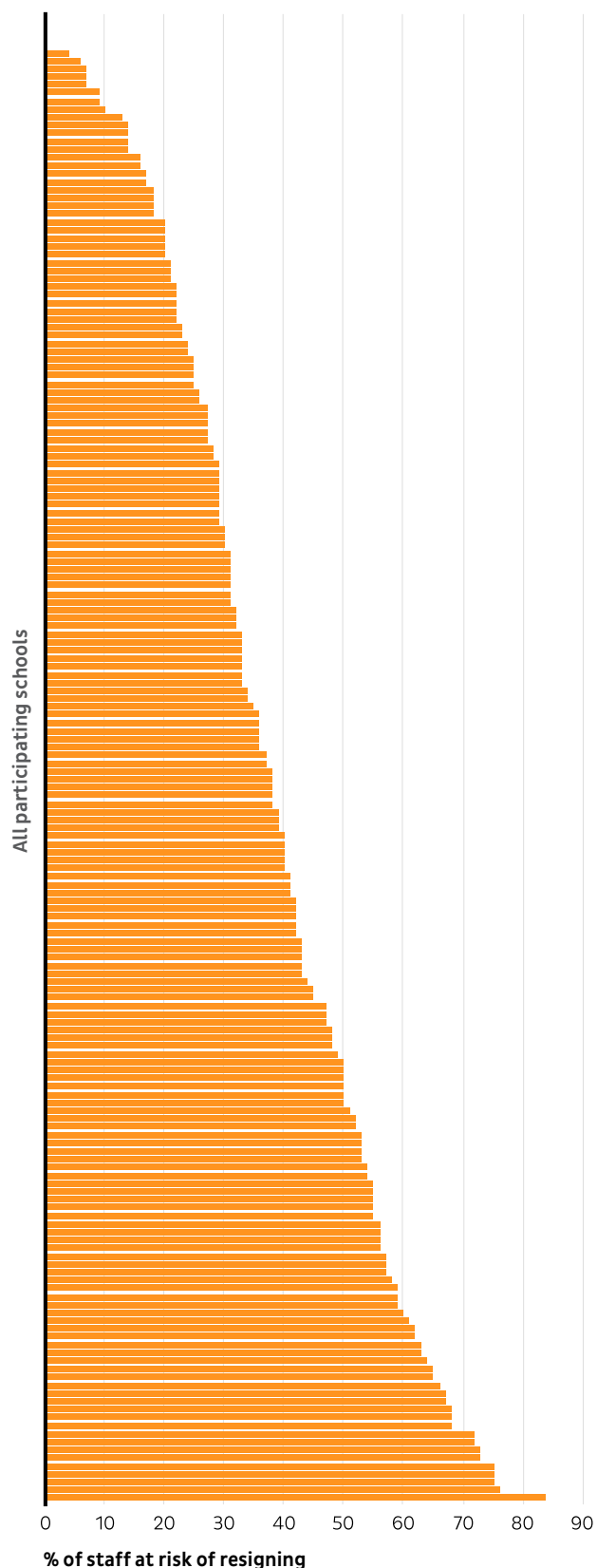
This report identifies common trends and key takeaways that may provide insight to school leaders and policymakers alike.

40% of academy staff are at risk of resigning their current post

Teachers and middle leaders are most at risk of leaving their position. 46% of teachers and 45% of middle leaders have considered resigning in the past three months.

40% of all respondents have considered resigning in the past three months

4%	12%	24%	20%	40%

■ Constantly ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely ■ Never

STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY SCHOOL

All participating schools

% of staff at risk of resigning

The extent of staff risk of resigning is a school-by-school issue

Across the 322 participating schools, the percentage of staff at risk of resigning ranged from 0% in some schools to a staggering 84% in others. Although there were some differences between different types of schools and respondent groups, those were relatively minor and insufficient to explain the wide variation. This suggests that improving retention is within the control of each individual school.

Working Conditions and Relationships are both highly important for improving staff retention

Both survey themes (Working Conditions and Relationships) show a strong correlation with staff risk of resigning. This highlights the danger with focusing all efforts to improve staff retention on one singular issue.

Leadership Dynamics in the school is the strongest indicator of staff retention

Among the six factors explored in the survey, Leadership Dynamics showed the strongest correlation with staff risk of resigning. Leadership Dynamics measures whether relationships with school leaders are based on fairness, respect and staff engagement.

Many schools can improve Leadership Dynamics by increasing staff engagement in decision-making and welcoming staff feedback

Within Leadership Dynamics the lowest results were typically in questions asking staff members whether they felt their professional needs were understood by the leadership, whether they were consulted in decision-making, and whether their feedback to leadership had an impact.

Heavy workload is a widespread concern among the majority of teachers

When asked how often they feel overworked, two thirds of teacher respondents answered "Constantly" or "Often", while only 4% said "Rarely" or "Never". Further analysis points to data input, administrative tasks, and marking and assessment as potential starting points for reducing teacher workload.

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Foreword

As the General Secretary for the Association of School and College Leaders I have the opportunity to speak with leaders and teachers in state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK all of the time. I know that what brought them into the profession was the desire to be a 'transformer of lives'. This was our mission.

Leaders understand that what lies at the heart of education are the people who support our children and young people, our nation's future. It is teachers and other staff who provide the calm, rational leadership that young people need to help guide them through a turbulent world.

But there are significant challenges facing the profession in early years, primary, secondary and post-16 education. Inadequate levels of funding, workload pressures, real terms decreases in pay, concerns over young people's and staff mental health — all of these issues have become more acute over recent years and have contributed to worsening rates of teacher recruitment and retention.

We cannot continue to fail to recruit sufficient teachers for the number of pupils in the school system. This trend must end. However, the situation is made much, much worse by the fact that we now have more teachers leaving the profession than entering each year. Recruitment alone is not the answer. We must address teacher retention, and do so urgently, or the consequences for the nation's children and young people will be disastrous.

To do this it is essential that we understand the subtleties behind what makes some teachers leave the profession and why others, facing what appear to be the same challenges, decide to stay. Understanding this will enable school leaders, employers and policy makers to adapt and change to better address the retention crisis.

This report highlights some potentially ground-breaking findings. It reinforces what other studies have told us about the impact of workload and we must work together to reduce unnecessary burdens on all staff. Interestingly though the report also highlights the significance to teacher retention of other working conditions such as professional support and career development. These are both areas within an employers' control.

I was particularly taken with what the report tells us about the importance of Leadership Dynamics. Clearly where this is strong it has a positive impact, but unfortunately the reverse is also true. Understanding this and acting on it has the potential to be a game-changer.

I know that all staff enter education motivated by a desire to do the very best by children and young people. It is essential that we understand what motivates teachers to stay in the profession so that they can continue to transform life-chances for many years to come. This report provides an important step in that process.

Geoff Barton
ASCL General Secretary

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

The staff retention challenge

The proportion of teachers leaving the profession is growing each year and has become a huge concern for school leaders and policymakers alike. According to the Department for Education (DfE), over 20% of new teachers leave the profession within their first two years of teaching, and 33% leave within their first five years[1].

The retention discussion is typically centred on teachers, but in our conversations with school and multi-academy trust leaders, it is not only teachers they are concerned about. Staff stability across a school is important for efficiency and creating the best learning environment possible for pupils. That includes teachers but also teaching assistants, school leaders, administrative staff and others.

In recent years, there have been focused efforts to improve retention. Most recently, the DfE's teacher recruitment and retention strategy has provided welcome steps in the right direction. However, more needs to be done in understanding the unique challenges faced by staff members in each school and how those influence their decisions to stay or leave. Because of this, Edurio worked with research experts at the University College London Institute of Education to create an approach that measures the key drivers of staff retention in schools.

England's largest independent study of staff retention in academies

In September 2018 Edurio invited selected multi-academy trusts to participate in the Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey. 322 schools across England took part in the project to validate the Framework for Staff Retention, give schools a detailed understanding of their situation, and assess staff retention trends across England.

10,530 staff members — teachers, school leaders, teaching assistants and other school staff — have responded to the survey. All participating trusts and schools have had access to their own results, along with the national benchmark, and have been able to react with their own targeted interventions. Analysing the results on a system level reveals insights that can be both useful and informative to school leaders and policymakers across England. This report lays out the magnitude of the staff retention challenge and explores where schools can take action in order to address it.

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[1] Department for Education (2018), School workforce in England: November 2017

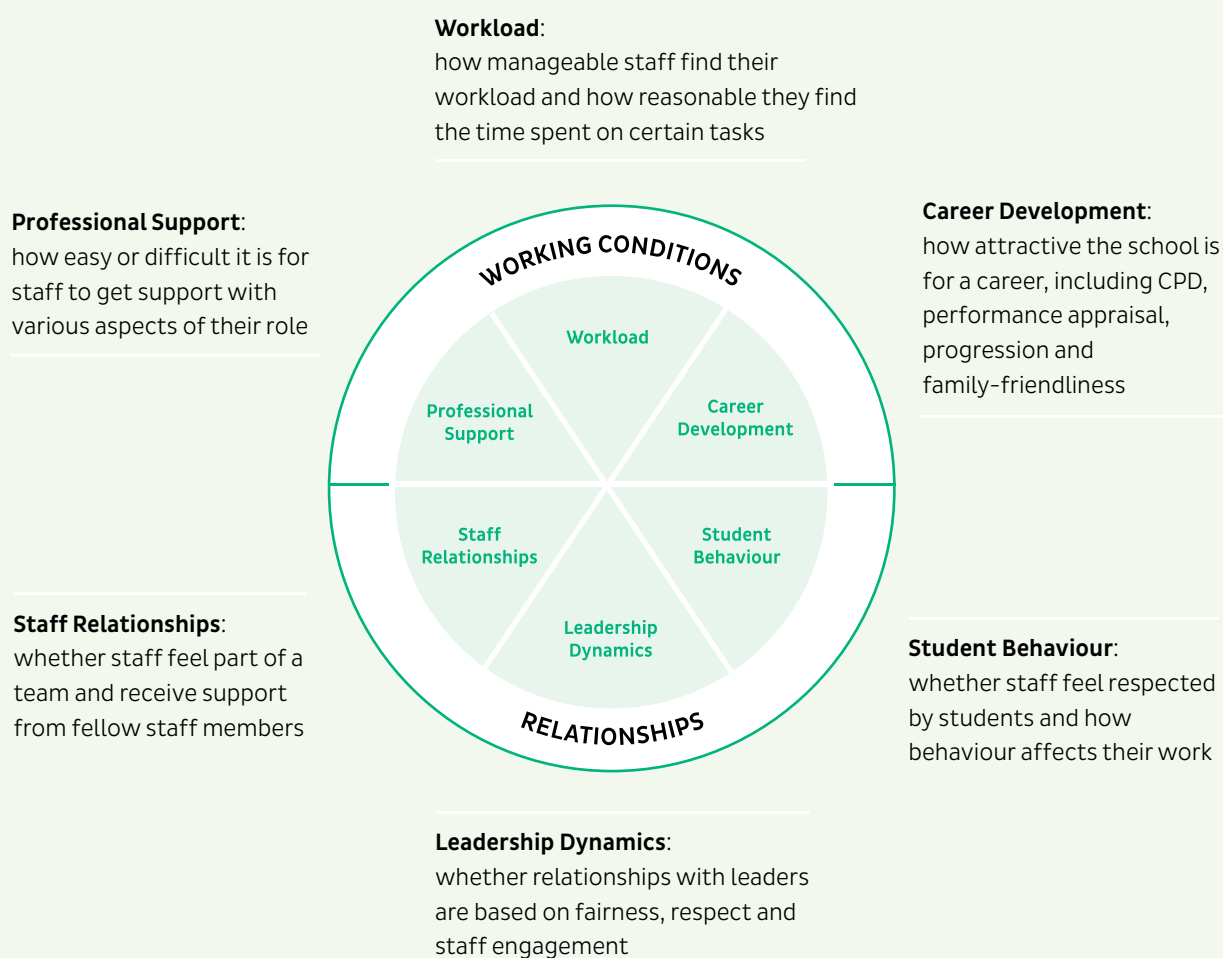# Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey

Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey

About the survey

The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey was developed for multi-academy trust and school leaders to help guide their strategy for staff retention. The survey content was developed in collaboration with researchers at University College London Institute of Education, with additional guidance from multi-academy trust leaders. It is based on a review of academic research as well as the work of the Department for Education and other sector organisations.

The aim in creating this survey was to track the factors shown to have the greatest impact on a school staff member's decision to leave or stay at a particular school. Existing research, along with school leader interviews, highlighted six key factors that needed to be explored in order to better understand why someone may choose to leave a particular school. These factors became the basis of the Edurio Framework for Staff Retention that guided both the survey question design and analysis.

FIGURE 2.1: FRAMEWORK FOR STAFF RETENTION

Workload:
how manageable staff find their workload and how reasonable they find the time spent on certain tasks

Professional Support:
how easy or difficult it is for staff to get support with various aspects of their role

Career Development:
how attractive the school is for a career, including CPD, performance appraisal, progression and family-friendliness

Staff Relationships:
whether staff feel part of a team and receive support from fellow staff members

Student Behaviour:
whether staff feel respected by students and how behaviour affects their work

Leadership Dynamics:
whether relationships with leaders are based on fairness, respect and staff engagement

The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey brings together a question set for each factor, along with qualitative comments and questions that track general staff satisfaction and and their risk of resigning.

Survey participants

Responses from 10,530 staff members across 322 schools in 23 multi-academy trusts were analysed in this report. The participants responded to the survey electronically via the Edurio platform between October 2018 and April 2019. They accessed the survey via unique logins that ensured data credibility and allowed anonymity to be maintained, while also enabling more detailed comparison and analysis by school type as well as respondent characteristics.

With a 46% staff member response rate across the participating schools, this study has been able to build a school-wide perspective. The respondents represent a wide range of roles, responsibilities and experience levels. The research covers both primary and secondary schools across all regions of England.

For a detailed breakdown of participants by school type and individual respondent characteristics, see Appendix A.

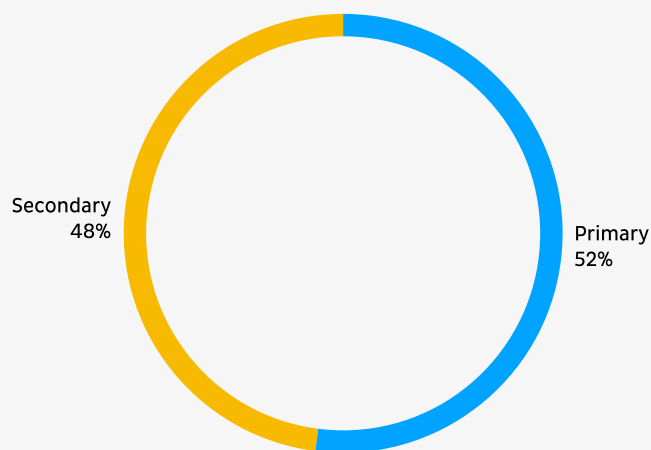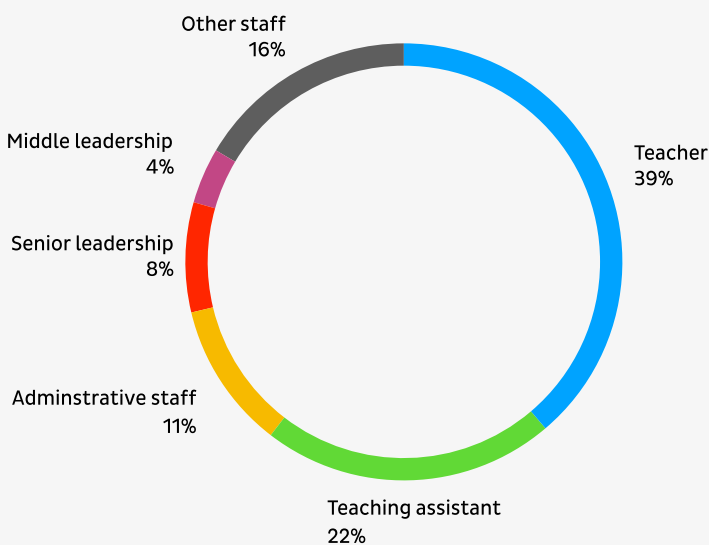**FIGURE 2.2: RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATION PHASE OF THEIR SCHOOL**

Secondary
48%

Primary
52%

FIGURE 2.3: RESPONDENTS BY ROLE

Other staff
16%

Middle leadership
4%

Senior leadership
8%

Adminstrative staff
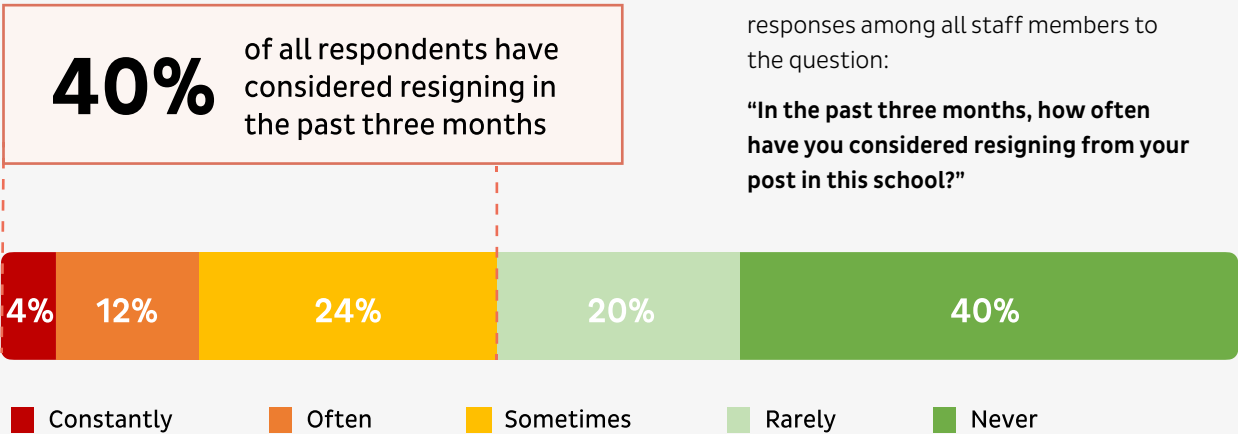11%

Teaching assistant
22%

Teacher
39%

Chapter 3

Magnitude of the Problem: Staff Members at Risk of Resigning

Magnitude of the Problem: Staff Members at Risk of Resigning

The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey was designed to not only measure the factors leading to staff retention but also to directly assess the risk of staff resignation. This is calculated by asking staff members how often they have considered resigning in the past three months. This information, paired with responses in each of the six measured factors, sheds light on areas that schools can improve so that their staff are less likely to leave, enabling school boards and leaders to plan improvements in order to build more stable and effective teams.

FIGURE 3.1: STAFF MEMBERS AT RISK OF RESIGNING

40% of all respondents have considered resigning in the past three months

This chart shows the distribution of responses among all staff members to the question:

"In the past three months, how often have you considered resigning from your post in this school?"

| 4% | 12% | 24% | 20% | 40% |

■ Constantly ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely ■ Never

The survey results highlight the gravity of the challenge faced by schools and multi-academy trusts. Across England, 40% of academy staff are at risk of resigning.

It is important to pinpoint where the challenge is most acute, so this chapter assesses the proportion of staff at risk of resigning in terms of various staff member characteristics and across different types of schools.

Risk of resigning by staff characteristics

The results were analysed across two key dimensions – by role of the respondent and by their years of experience (both in their current school and, for teachers, their total experience teaching).

Role of respondent

Teachers and middle leaders are most at risk of leaving their position with nearly half considering resigning. Administrative staff, teaching assistants and other staff are all at 37-39%, still a high percentage. 27% of senior leaders are at risk of resigning — lower than other roles, but still a considerable proportion.

FIGURE 3.2: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY ROLE

Role	%
Teacher	46%
Middle leadership	45%
Administrative staff	39%
Teaching assistant	37%
Other staff	37%
Senior leadership	27%

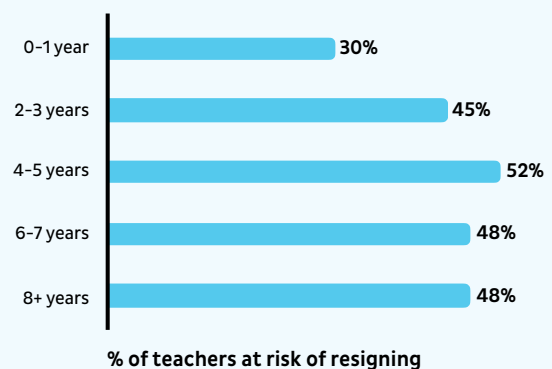**% of staff at risk of resigning**

Experience of respondent

The experience of the respondent, both as time spent in their current school and as total teaching experience for teachers, reveals a concerning trend. Staff members with up to one year of experience demonstrate the lowest risk of resigning, but that rapidly deteriorates as they gain experience–peaking at half of staff at risk of resigning by their fifth year.

FIGURE 3.3: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY JOB EXPERIENCE AT CURRENT SCHOOL

Experience	%
0–1 year	27%
2–3 years	41%
4–5 years	48%
6–7 years	45%
8+ years	42%

% of staff at risk of resigning

FIGURE 3.4: TEACHER RISK OF RESIGNING BY TOTAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Experience	%
0–1 year	30%
2–3 years	45%
4–5 years	52%
6–7 years	48%
8+ years	48%

% of teachers at risk of resigning

Risk of resigning by school type

This section assesses the differences in staff member risk of resigning across education phase, Ofsted rating, school size and free school meals (FSM) rate.

Education phase

There is a notable difference between primary and secondary schools, with 47% of secondary school staff at risk of resigning compared to 35% of primary school staff.

FIGURE 3.5: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY EDUCATION PHASE

	%
Primary	35%
Secondary	47%

% of staff at risk of resigning

Ofsted rating

While the data show no difference between Good and Outstanding schools, there is a materially higher proportion of staff at risk of resigning in schools with an Inadequate or Requires Improvement rating.

FIGURE 3.6: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY THE SCHOOL'S OFSTED RATING

	%
Outstanding	38%
Good	39%
Requires Improvement or Inadequate	47%

% of staff at risk of resigning

School size

Neither primary nor secondary schools show material differences in the proportion of staff at risk of resigning between schools of different size (by number of pupils). This indicates that school size does not have an impact on a staff member's likelihood of resigning.

FIGURE 3.7: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY SCHOOL SIZE (NUMBER OF PUPILS)

Primary Schools

	%
1–250	34%
251–500	34%
501–750	35%

Secondary Schools

	%
1–750	46%
751–1500	45%
1501+	50%

% of staff at risk of resigning

FSM rate

The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals at a school shows no correlation with the likelihood that staff will consider resigning.

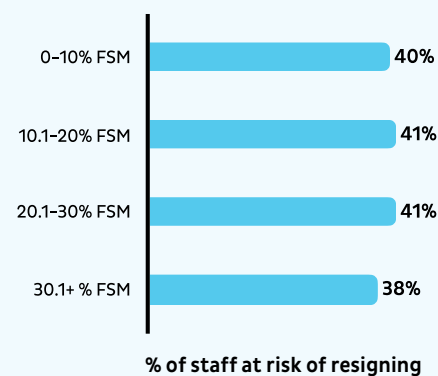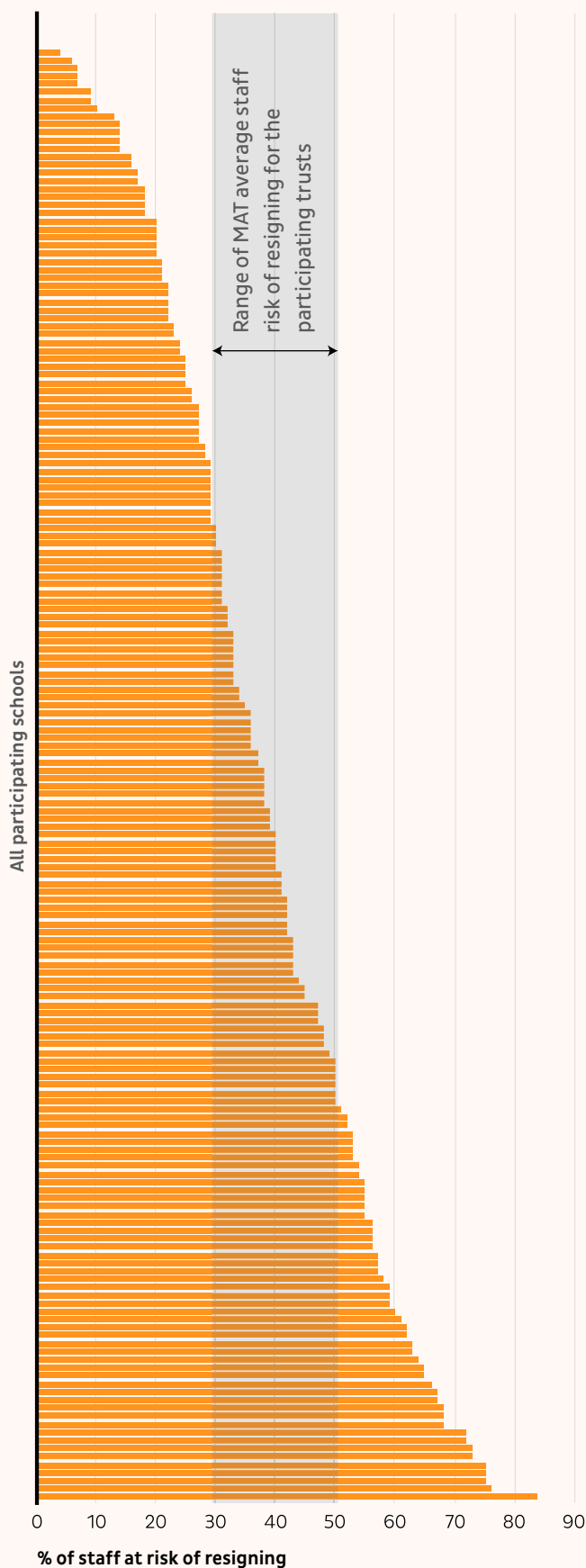**FIGURE 3.8: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BY THE PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS RECEIVING FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) IN A SCHOOL**

	%
0–10% FSM	40%
10.1–20% FSM	41%
20.1–30% FSM	41%
30.1+ % FSM	38%

% of staff at risk of resigning

Range of MAT average staff risk of resigning for the participating trusts

All participating schools

% of staff at risk of resigning

Variance in staff risk of resigning across schools

While there are some important differences across staff characteristics and school types, these capture a small part of the variance in staff risk of resigning across schools.

As demonstrated in this chapter, averages for any school type or respondent group fluctuate between 30-50%, leading to the conclusion that regardless of the type of school, staff retention is a pressing issue that needs special attention.

However, looking at the results across all participating schools reveals a staggering range from 0 all the way to 84% of staff at risk of resigning. The unique situation within the school has a much bigger impact than any of the staff member or school characteristics.

The range across schools is also much wider than the difference between the multi-academy trusts — among the 23 participating trusts, the lowest proportion of staff at risk of resigning was 29% and the highest — 51%.

The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey was developed to gain an understanding of the situation inside the school by getting staff feedback on the factors that can influence staff retention. School performance across these factors is a better predictor of staff risk of resigning than school types or staff member characteristics.

Therefore, the following chapters will look more closely at the factors that can influence staff retention and are within a school's control.

Chapter 4

The Impact of Working Conditions and Relationships on Staff Retention
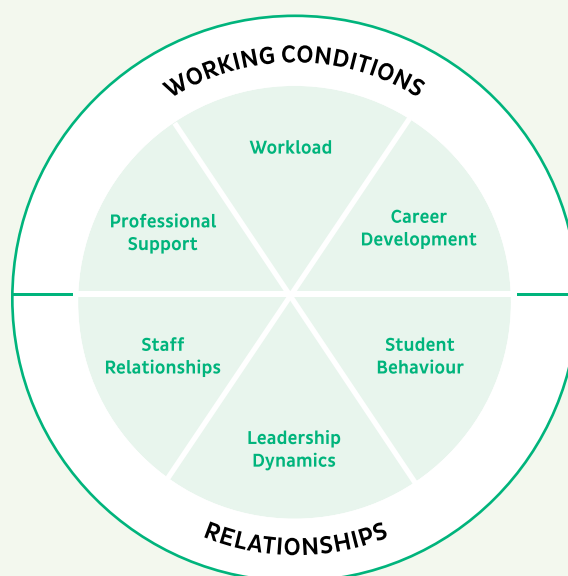
The Impact of Working Conditions and Relationships on Staff Retention

Staff retention is influenced more by the unique conditions of each school than either the school type or staff member characteristics. Therefore, to improve staff retention, it is critically important to better understand what factors drive retention and where schools and multi-academy trusts need to take action to improve it.

The Edurio Framework for Staff Retention, introduced in Chapter 2, covers the factors within the school's control that are likely to influence staff retention (Figure 4.1).

This chapter aims to assess how strong the link is between each of the six factors and staff retention by examining how the responses to each of the six factors correlate with staff risk of resigning.

FIGURE 4.1: FRAMEWORK FOR STAFF RETENTION

WORKING CONDITIONS

Workload

Career Development

Professional Support

Student Behaviour

Staff Relationships

Leadership Dynamics

RELATIONSHIPS

How are Working Conditions and Relationships linked with staff risk of resigning?

A key objective of this study was to understand the impact of the two themes (Working Conditions and Relationships) and the six factors on staff risk of resigning. Therefore, in the following analysis respondents were ranked by how they rate each factor in their school and grouped into five equal groups (quintiles) from those with the highest score in each factor to those with the lowest. The proportion of each group that is at risk of resigning was then calculated. For the more statistically-minded reader, a correlation coefficient is also provided.

Looking at the two themes explored in the Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey, both Working Conditions and Relationships have a strong link with staff members being at risk of resigning.

> **REMEMBER!**
> A factor with a high impact on staff retention will show a much lower % risk of resigning for the top quintiles than the bottom quintiles. A factor with little or no correlation will lead to similar risk of resigning across all quintiles.

FIGURE 4.2: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BASED ON PERCEPTION OF WORKING CONDITIONS
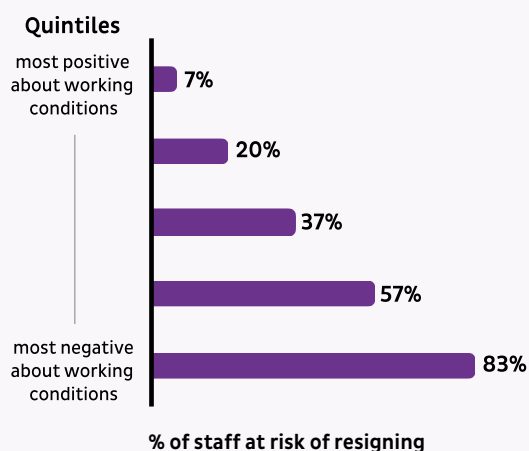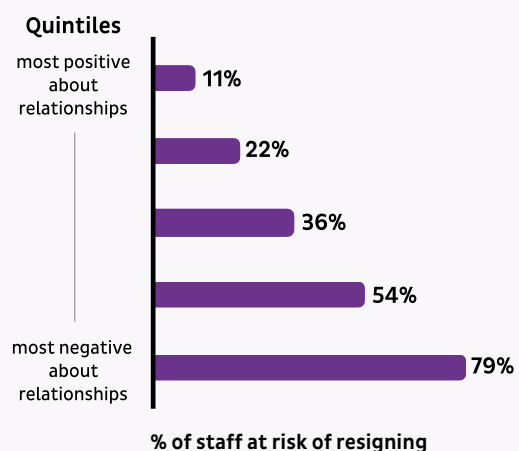

FIGURE 4.3: STAFF RISK OF RESIGNING BASED ON PERCEPTION OF RELATIONSHIPS

The staff member groups with the highest score in both Working Conditions and Relationships are unlikely to be considering resignation. Of the quintile that rates them the highest, only 7% (Working Conditions) and 11% (Relationships) are at risk of resigning.
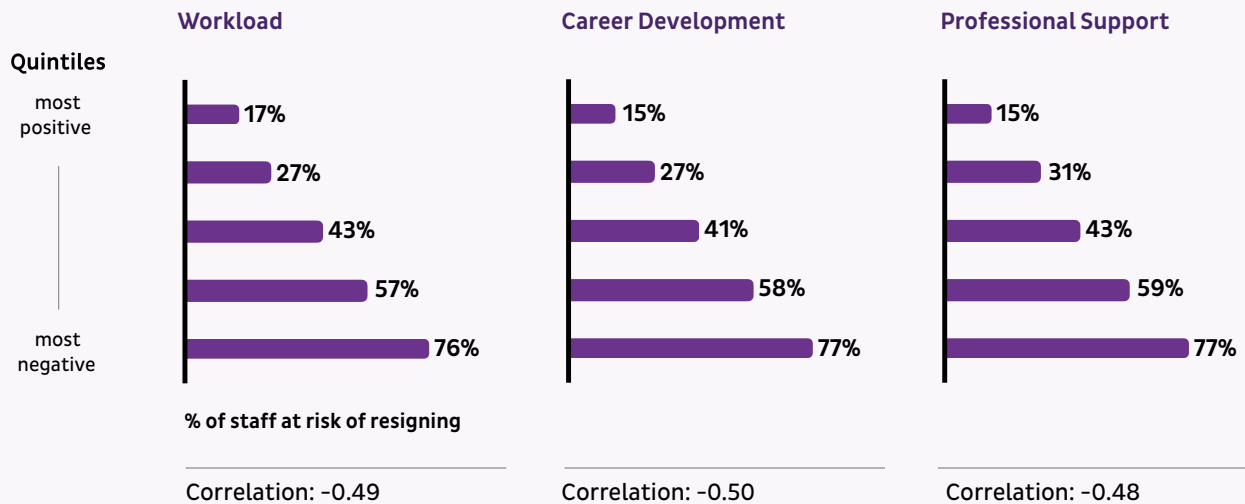
On the other hand, among staff members with the lowest ratings of Working Conditions and Relationships, four out of five staff members are at risk of resigning (83% and 79%).

There is a clear correlation between the survey scores for both Working Conditions and Relationships and staff at risk of resigning (confirmed by the strong correlation coefficients of **–0.61** and **–0.56**, respectively).

Working Conditions

All three factors explored under Working Conditions have a similar and strong link with staff retention. Looking at the top quintiles, only 15-17% of staff members are at risk of resigning, while in the bottom quintiles, 76-77% are at risk.
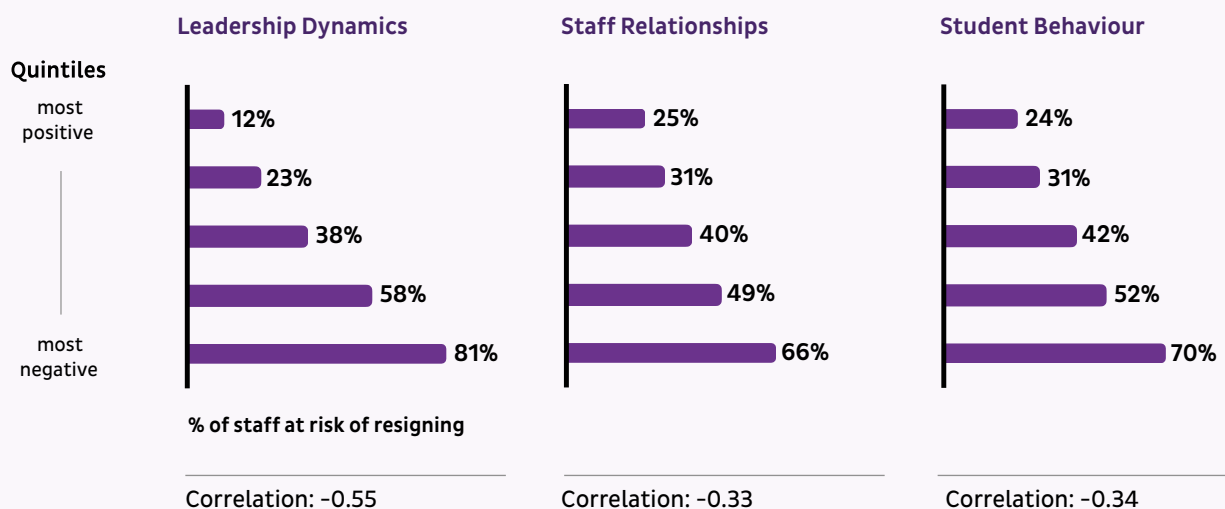
Quintiles

Workload

most positive	17%
	27%
	43%
	57%
most negative	76%

% of staff at risk of resigning

Correlation: −0.49

Career Development

| 15% |
| 27% |
| 41% |
| 58% |
| 77% |

Correlation: −0.50

Professional Support

| 15% |
| 31% |
| 43% |
| 59% |
| 77% |

Correlation: −0.48

Relationships

The results are much more varied for Relationships, with Leadership Dynamics having the strongest link with staff at risk of resigning among all six factors. Staff Relationships and Student Behaviour have a weaker correlation than the others, but also demonstrate a clear link with staff risk of resigning.

Quintiles

Leadership Dynamics

most positive	12%
	23%
	38%
	58%
most negative	81%

% of staff at risk of resigning

Correlation: −0.55

Staff Relationships

| 25% |
| 31% |
| 40% |
| 49% |
| 66% |

Correlation: −0.33

Student Behaviour

| 24% |
| 31% |
| 42% |
| 52% |
| 70% |

Correlation: −0.34

Impact of the six factors on staff risk of resigning

The Edurio Framework for Staff Retention was developed to identify and measure which factors within a school's control have the greatest influence on whether or not a member of staff resigns. The evidence demonstrates that all six factors that are part of the framework have an impact on staff risk of resigning, and that Working Conditions and Relationships are both highly important.

These results highlight the importance of Relationships within the school. In particular, they illuminate the importance of good Leadership Dynamics, which is frequently overlooked within the policy debate and school improvement work.

The next chapter explores how schools in multi-academy trusts across England are doing across the six factors and aims to identify priorities for improvement.

The Current State of Working Conditions and Relationships

The Current State of Working Conditions and Relationships

The previous chapter highlighted the importance of both Working Conditions and Relationships in reducing the risk of staff leaving. This chapter illustrates how staff members across England actually evaluated each factor in the Edurio Framework for Staff Retention (Figure 5.1) by analysing their responses to all corresponding survey questions and using them to assign each factor a score from 1 to 5.

While each school is unique and has its own strengths and weaknesses, the trends described here can help policymakers and sector bodies identify where the most common and pressing issues arise and what to do to improve them.

FIGURE 5.1: FRAMEWORK FOR STAFF RETENTION

Factor scores across Working Conditions and Relationships

Each factor has been assigned a score between 1 and 5 that is calculated from the responses to the questions which contribute to the respective factor. The scores for Working Conditions and Relationships are calculated as an average of the factor scores within each theme.

> **REMEMBER!**
>
> A score of 5 would mean all respondents have selected the most positive answer. A score of 1 would mean everyone selected the most negative answer. A score of 3 indicates a similar distribution of positive and negative answers.

FIGURE 5.2: AVERAGE SCORES OF WORKING CONDITIONS AND ITS COMPONENT FACTORS

Working Conditions

	Score
Working Conditions	3.1
Professional Support	3.3
Career Development	3.2
Workload	3.0

Score (1–5)

FIGURE 5.3: AVERAGE SCORES OF RELATIONSHIPS AND ITS COMPONENT FACTORS

Relationships

	Score
Relationships	3.6
Staff Relationships	4.1
Student Behaviour	3.5
Leadership Dynamics	3.2

Score (1–5)

Working Conditions (Score: 3.1)

Overall, Working Conditions have a lower score than Relationships and the scores are relatively consistent across the three factors. Workload (Score: 3.0) stands out as the lowest-rated factor across the entire survey, indicating this is a clear area of concern for school staff.

Relationships (Score: 3.6)

Relationships, while better-scored overall, illustrate a wider range across the factors covered. Staff Relationships (Score: 4.1) is consistently rated very high, whereas the lower scoring Leadership Dynamics (Score: 3.2) is identified as an improvement area in many schools.

Staff member commentary

Many staff members provided detailed commentary to their responses and two questions in particular explored what they appreciate about their school and where they feel improvement is needed. The most frequently used words across these questions were summarised in word clouds where the size of the word reflects how frequently it has been used.

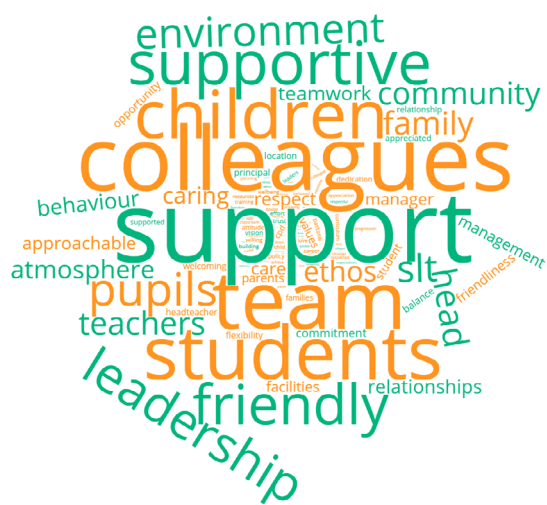**FIGURE 5.4: WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE WHAT THE RESPONDENTS APPRECIATE ABOUT THEIR SCHOOL**

FIGURE 5.5: WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE WHERE THE RESPONDENTS FEEL THE SCHOOL SHOULD IMPROVE

Across both questions the most frequently used words are primarily associated with the relationships in the school. Staff members appreciate their **colleagues** and highlight the **support** available to them in the school. In terms of suggestions for improvement, **communication** and **behaviour** are mentioned most frequently with over 10% of the respondents mentioning each of these topics.
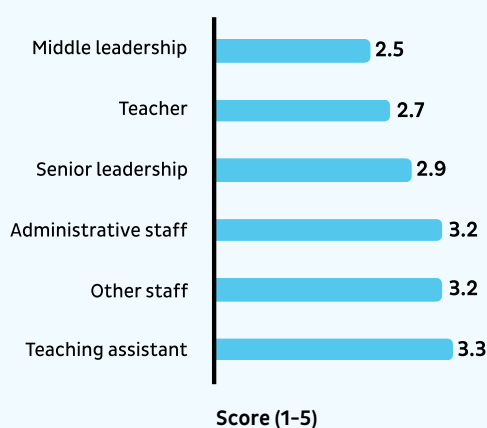
Deep dives

The insights captured in the Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey are far too wide and varied to explore fully in a single report, and each school has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. However, two topics warrant extra attention based on the survey results as well as the priorities of the participating schools and multi-academy trusts. Therefore, this section includes deep dives for two factors: Workload and Leadership Dynamics.

Deep dive 1: Workload

Workload has been raised as a key concern by both schools and the DfE, which released a workload reduction toolkit in July 2018. The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey results confirm the concern, with Workload consistently being the lowest-scoring factor.

FIGURE 5.6: AVERAGE WORKLOAD SCORE BY ROLE OF THE RESPONDENT

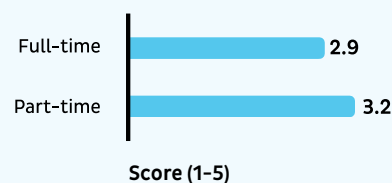| Role	Score
Middle leadership	2.5
Teacher	2.7
Senior leadership	2.9
Administrative staff	3.2
Other staff	3.2
Teaching assistant	3.3

Score (1–5)

Workload has a consistently low score across all staff member roles, but scores from school leaders and teachers are considerably lower than other staff members.

REMEMBER!

Low scores represent a **more negative response** to questions about workload, not that respondents have a low or light workload.

FIGURE 5.7: AVERAGE WORKLOAD SCORE FOR FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STAFF

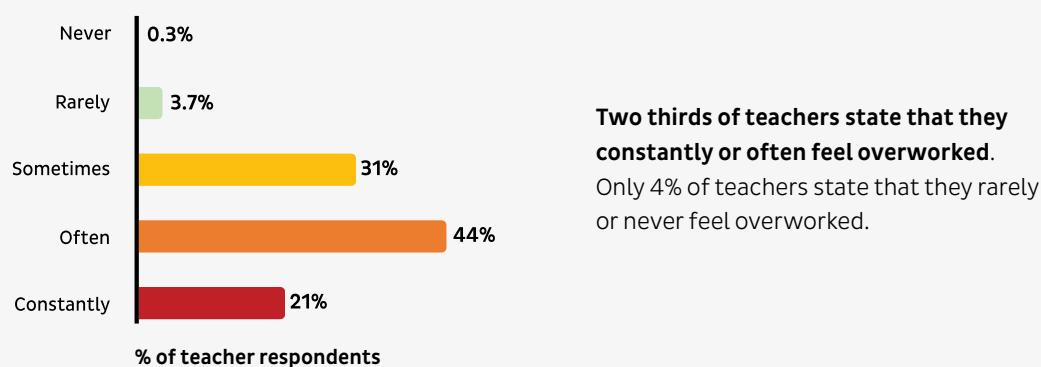| Role	Score
Full-time	2.9
Part-time	3.2

Score (1–5)

Exploring what the data says about flexible working arrangements, workload scores for part-time staff were higher than their full-time counterparts, suggesting that feeling overworked is a greater concern for full-time staff.
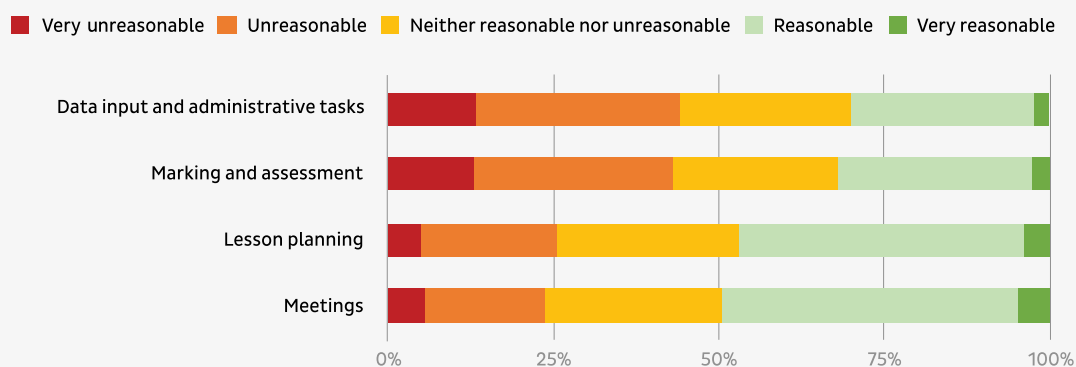
Teacher workload

Workload is of course very specific to the different roles in a school. As teacher workload is frequently a priority for schools, this section explores teacher workload in more detail. First, to move beyond an abstract score, it is worth looking at the results to one of the key questions that contribute to it.

FIGURE 5.8: TEACHER RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION "HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL OVERWORKED"?

Never	0.3%
Rarely	3.7%
Sometimes	31%
Often	44%
Constantly	21%

% of teacher respondents

Two thirds of teachers state that they constantly or often feel overworked.
Only 4% of teachers state that they rarely or never feel overworked.

To give practical recommendations for improvements in schools, the survey also included four follow-up questions that explored how teachers feel about specific tasks and responsibilities.

FIGURE 5.9: TEACHER RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS "HOW REASONABLE IS THE TIME YOU SPEND ON THE FOLLOWING?"

Legend: ■ Very unreasonable ■ Unreasonable ■ Neither reasonable nor unreasonable ■ Reasonable ■ Very reasonable

- Data input and administrative tasks
- Marking and assessment
- Lesson planning
- Meetings

(0% — 25% — 50% — 75% — 100%)

Over 40% of teachers answered that the time they spend on both data input and administrative tasks and marking and assessment is "Unreasonable" or "Very unreasonable". To compare, that proportion is only about 25% when asked about lesson planning or meetings.
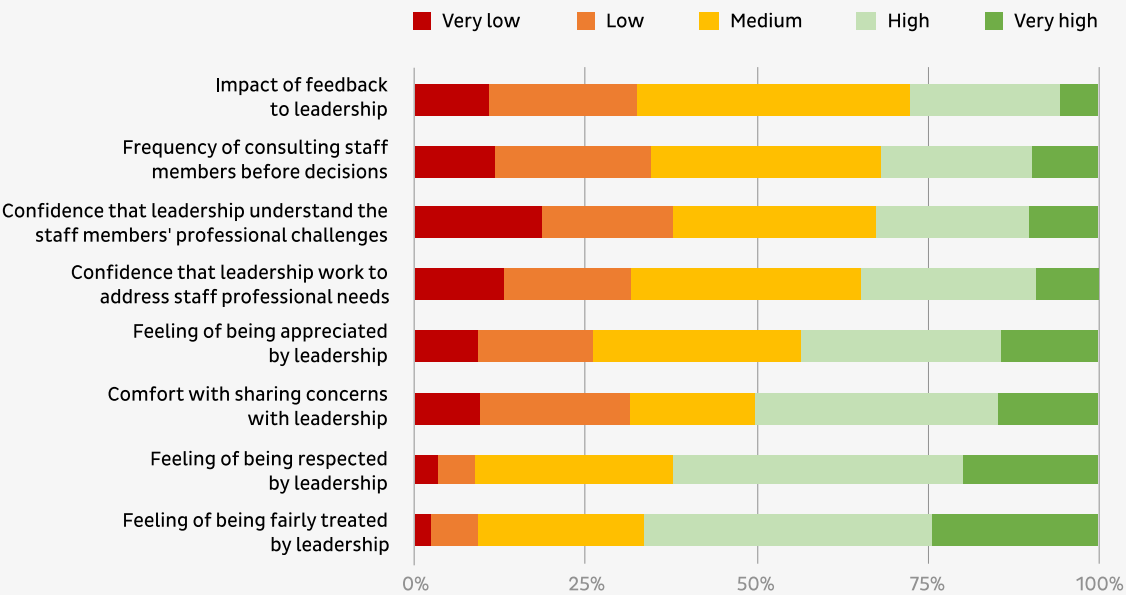
Deep dive 2: Leadership Dynamics

As found in Chapter 4, Leadership Dynamics is the factor that correlates most strongly with staff risk of resigning. It also exhibits the widest variance of scores across the participating schools, indicating that both strengths and weaknesses depend largely on the unique situation in each school. Figure 5.10 outlines the specific elements measured within Leadership Dynamics.

> **REMEMBER!**
>
> For each element, Figure 5.10 shows the distribution of responses from the most negative option (Very low) to the most positive option (Very high). The more 'green' the bar, the better the result.

FIGURE 5.10: STAFF MEMBER RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS

This detailed look at the results reveals some important differences across the topics explored.

Two thirds of staff members report that they feel fairly treated and respected, indicating a positive working relationship between school leaders and their staff.

However, when looking at questions that address staff engagement in school decision-making and leadership's openness to staff feedback, the results are less positive. For example, only a third of staff members feel that their feedback to school leadership has an impact or that they are adequately consulted before decisions that will affect them. This indicates that improving staff engagement in school decision-making and listening to staff feedback is an important opportunity for improvement in academies across England.
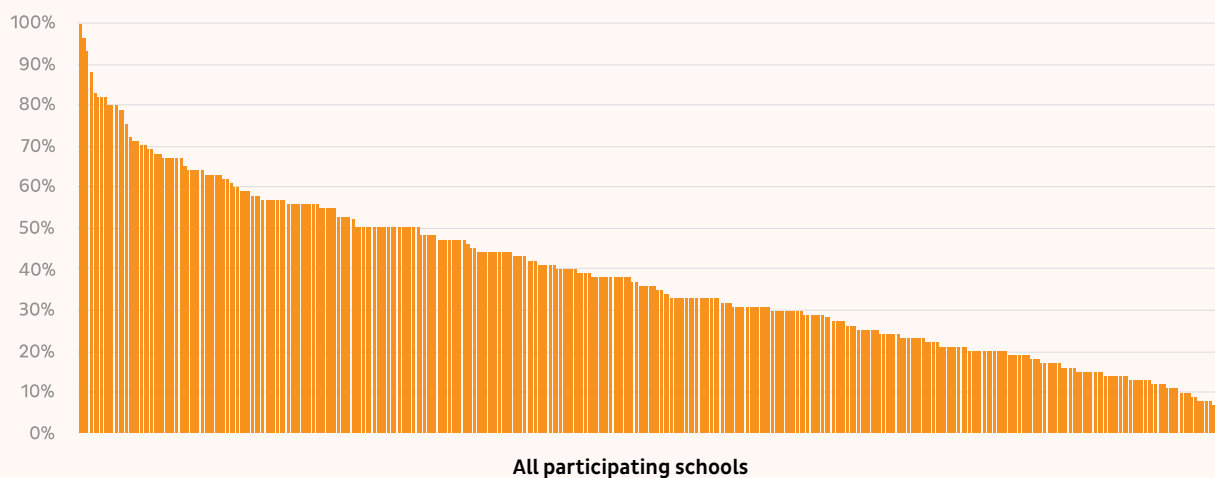
FIGURE 5.11: STAFF MEMBER RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION "HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP UNDERSTAND YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES?"

Completely confident — 10%
Very confident — 22%
Moderately confident — 30%
Slightly confident — 19%
Not confident at all — 19%

% of respondents

School leaders' understanding of staff members' professional challenges is worth particular attention within each school. Not only does it have the highest number of staff members reporting they are not confident at all (19%), but also the spread of answers school by school is the widest across all questions within this factor.

Each bar in Figure 5.12 represents one school and the proportion of its staff answering that they are completely or very confident that the school leadership understand their professional challenges. The positive responses to this question school by school ranged all the way from 100% to 0.

FIGURE 5.12: PROPORTION OF POSITIVE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION "HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP UNDERSTAND YOUR PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES?" BY SCHOOL

All participating schools

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion and Recommendations

The quality of education in schools across England depends on the hard work and devotion of the school staff. It is critically important to understand their workplace experiences better and make sure they feel able to stay in their jobs.

The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions survey, with over 10,000 participants as of April 2019, has become England's largest independent study of the driving forces behind school staff retention. From it, a number of practical recommendations can be made to school leaders and sector organisations.

1 School leaders need to evaluate both Working Conditions and Relationships within their schools. Both areas have a strong link with staff retention, and the picture differs massively across schools.

2 In order to reduce Workload for staff members, most gains can be found in reducing marking and assessment as well as data input and administrative tasks. Recent work by the DfE provides useful resources to school leaders[1], and the policy improvements around Ofsted inspections can have further positive impact.

3 To improve Leadership Dynamics within a school, there needs to be a clear focus on building a culture of engagement for staff members, where their feedback is heard and seen to be taken into account.

4 Multi-academy trust executive teams need to adapt any interventions for the different conditions in each of their schools. As the variance in scores across the schools within a multi-academy trust is much wider than that between different trusts, a one-size-fits-all solution for the schools within a trust is unlikely to help them retain staff.

5 Communication emerged as a key concern in the open text responses, with 11% of staff mentioning it as an area for improvement. While the workload challenges often prevent a targeted investment of time and effort into effective communication, it needs to be understood better and will be covered by future Edurio research in staff retention.

We will be providing further deep dives and updates to this research, which you can follow on medium.com/edurio or by signing up at: home.edurio.com/insights. There are more multi-academy trusts joining the survey every month, which gives us the opportunity to repeat the analysis with an ever-expanding dataset and identify further insights.

Edurio is also actively working on research in other key school improvement topics like parental engagement, governance and student behaviour. To get in touch with the authors with your questions, feedback or research ideas, please reach out to research@edurio.com.

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[1] Department for Education (2019), *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy.* 28 January 2019
Department for Education (2018), *Workload Reduction Toolkit.* 21 July 2018

Acknowledgements

About the Authors

Ernest Jenavs

Ernest is the CEO of Edurio. He is a frequent public speaker in the UK and internationally on effective use of stakeholder feedback in schools and has published research on student feedback and assessment. Ernest leads Edurio's policy guidance and has advised a number of education systems as well as participated in policy debates with the OECD and European Commission. Previously Ernest was a strategy consultant at McKinsey & Company. Ernest holds a degree in Decision Science from the University of Manchester.

Janis Strods

Janis is a Director and Head of Analysis at Edurio and managed the Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions project. Janis is the author of Edurio's Guide to Evidence-driven School Improvement (edurio.com/schoolimprovement/book) and leads Edurio's work on education quality research and academic partnerships. Janis has previously worked as a classroom teacher and has published work as a researcher of mathematical modelling and statistical analysis in anthropology at University College London.

About Edurio

Edurio is a leading provider of stakeholder feedback solutions to schools and multi-academy trusts across the UK and internationally. Edurio has developed an advanced survey management and data visualisation platform for schools and multi-academy trusts as well as a research-based survey library. The team designs surveys in collaboration with the University College London Institute of Education experts to address school management priorities and inspection requirements. Edurio publishes research, case studies and practical guidance on evidence-driven school improvement and can be followed at www.medium.com/edurio.
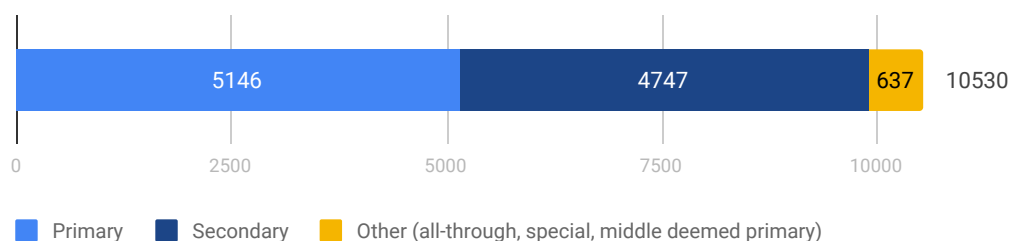
Appendix

Appendix A: Survey Participants

The survey response data set covers 10,530 staff members across 322 schools in 23 multi-academy trusts that responded to the Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions Survey between October 2018 and April 2019.
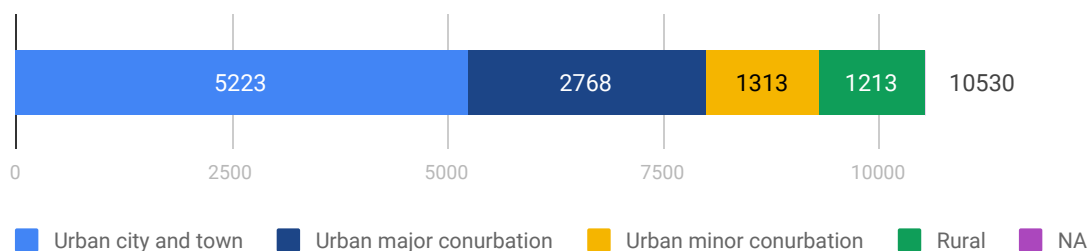
Respondents by School Type

The respondents were grouped by different school types to make sure that all key school groups are well represented. Further analysis was carried out using these groupings.
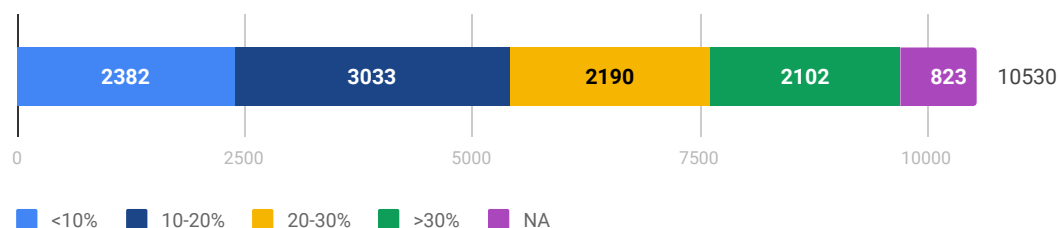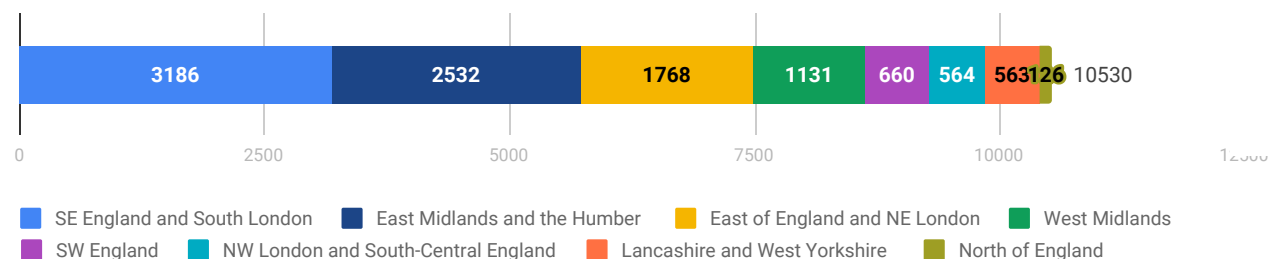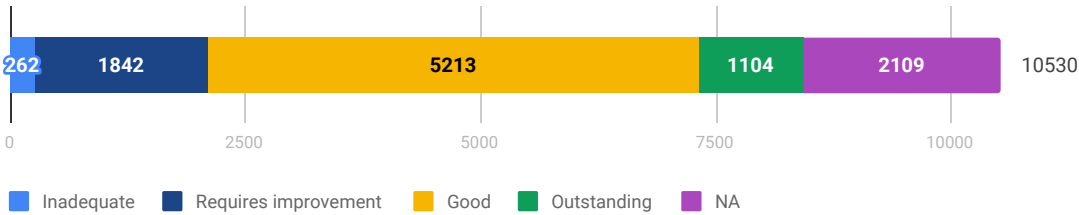
Education Phase

5146	4747	637	10530

■ Primary ■ Secondary ■ Other (all-through, special, middle deemed primary)

Urban | Rural

5223	2768	1313	1213	10530

■ Urban city and town ■ Urban major conurbation ■ Urban minor conurbation ■ Rural ■ NA

Proportion of pupils with FSM status

2382	3033	2190	2102	823	10530

■ <10% ■ 10-20% ■ 20-30% ■ >30% ■ NA

School RSC region

3186	2532	1768	1131	660	564	563	126	10530

■ SE England and South London ■ East Midlands and the Humber ■ East of England and NE London ■ West Midlands
■ SW England ■ NW London and South-Central England ■ Lancashire and West Yorkshire ■ North of England

Ofsted rating

262	1842	5213	1104	2109	10530

- Inadequate
- Requires improvement
- Good
- Outstanding
- NA

School size (number of pupils)

1746	2858	1954	1311	773	444	983	461	10530

- 1-250
- 251-500
- 501-750
- 751-1000
- 1001-1250
- 1251-1500
- 1501+
- NA

Academy type

5668	4699	163	10530

- Sponsor led
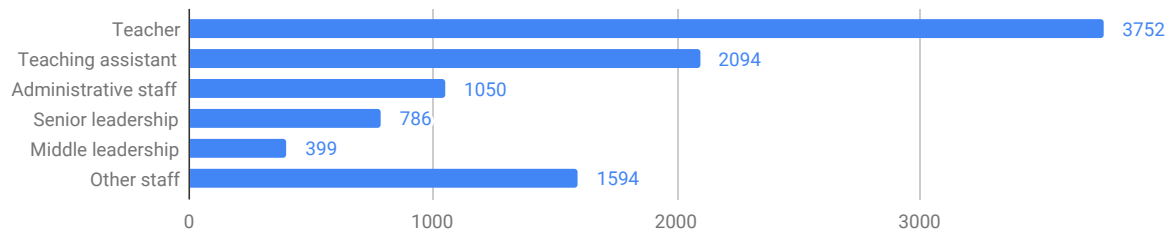- Converter
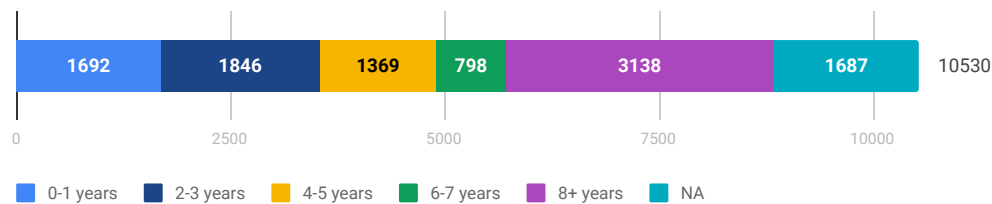- Other

Respondents by respondent characteristics

The respondents answered a number of questions designed to better understand their personal characteristics and circumstances that may influence the likelihood that they consider resigning. It was also important to make sure that the data set covers the various staff member groups. The participating multi-academy trusts were free to keep, edit or remove these questions, therefore not all respondents are grouped.
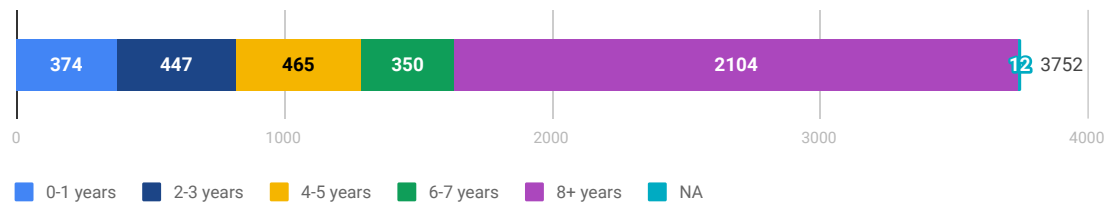
Role of the respondent*

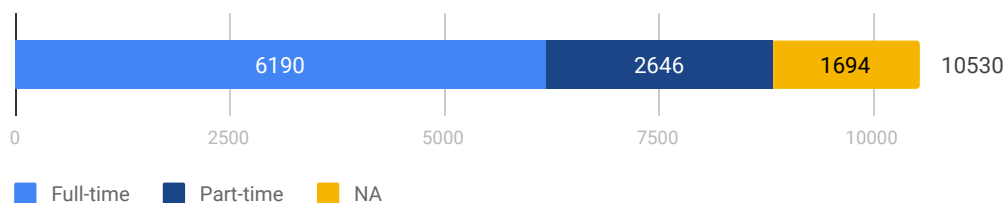*respondents were able to select multiple roles

Years of experience in current school

Total years of teaching experience (Teacher respondents only)

Full-time | Part-time status

Appendix B: The Edurio Staff Wellbeing and Working Conditions survey

The survey was developed based on the existing research on the important factors for teacher retention (see Appendix D: Bibliography), as well as the most recent publications on these topics. The survey was designed to function both as a diagnostic tool, as well as a guide to action for multi-academy trusts and schools.

The survey comprises of 45 questions in total. These include 5 questions about the respondent, 2 open questions, and 38 survey items, grouped in themes and factors (subscales).

Theme	Factor (subscale)	Component questions
Working conditions	Workload	3
	Career Development	4
	Professional Support	6
Relationships	Leadership Dynamics	8
	Staff Relationships	3
	Student Behaviour	3

Each participating multi-academy trust had the opportunity to add and remove questions.

Survey delivery and response rate

322 academies from 23 multi-academy trusts took part in the survey. Additional multi-academy trusts that have started the survey after analysis began have not been included. 23,428 staff member respondents were set up in the platform.

The survey was administered using the Edurio online platform. Most of the surveys were delivered via e-mail as unique links for each respondent, with one trust distributing unique codes. This ensured that each respondent could respond to the survey once, and allowed Edurio to send out targeted reminders to those respondents that had not completed the survey.

10,890 staff members responded to the survey (response rate = 46%). The analysis for this report was done on a dataset that removed multi-academy trust central teams, leaving 10,530 respondents. Each question has a slightly different number of respondents due to skipped questions, the answer 'not applicable' or trust decision to change the question. For the calculation factor scores and correlations, only the fully finished responses were used (n = 9928). Cronbach's Alpha for the survey is 0.89, indicating high reliability.

Appendix C: Methodology and List of Figures

This appendix contains a brief description of the data analysis done to produce the figures of the Report.

A respondent was deemed at **risk of resigning** if he/she answered "Constantly", "Often", or "Sometimes" to the question "In the past three months, how often have you considered resigning from your post in this school?"

Figure 2.1: Framework for staff retention

The survey framework is described in Appendix B.

Figure 2.2: Respondents by education phase of their school

The figure shows the proportion of respondents that were included in the calculations by the education phase of their school. All-through schools, special schools and middle-deemed primaries were excluded from the graph for clarity but are shown in Appendix A

Figure 2.3: Respondents by role

Figure shows the proportion of respondents at risk of resigning by their role and level of leadership. The role of the respondent and their level of leadership were determined by multiple option questions. Respondents selecting multiple options (e.g. "Teacher" and "Middle leader") were included in both columns.

Figure 3.3: Staff members at risk of resigning

Figure shows the proportion of responses to the question "In the past three months, how often have you considered resigning from your post in this school?" (n = 8323). Responses from Academy Trusts that chose to adapt the question, as well as incomplete questionnaires were excluded.

Figure 3.2: Staff risk of resigning by role

Figure shows the proportion for respondents at risk of resigning by their role and level of leadership (n = 9174, including duplicates for staff members in multiple roles)

Figures 3.3 and 3.4: Risk of resigning by job experience at current school and by total teaching experience

Figures show the proportion of respondents at risk of resigning by their job experience, both at their current school (n = 8395) and total teaching experience for teachers (n = 3572).

Figures 3.5-3.8: Staff risk of resigning by education phase, the schools' Ofsted ranking, school size and by the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM) in a school

Figures show the proportion of respondents at risk of resigning by their school's education phase (n = 7958), Ofsted ranking (n = 6128), school size (n = 8088) and FSM rate (n = 7743). School data was gathered from the Department for Education "Get Information About Schools" dataset "All establishment data" (https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Downloads), retrieved February 5, 2019.

All-through schools and middle-deemed primaries were excluded from Figure 3.5 due to a small sample size.

"Requires Improvement", "Serious Weaknesses", and "Special Measures" were merged in a single category for Figure 3.6. For schools that had not been inspected after academisation, the last Ofsted rating of the previous establishment was used where available.

Other socio-economic proxy variables (proportion of Pupil Premium students) were also explored in the analysis for Figure 3.8. No substantive differences were found.

Figure 3.9: Staff risk of resigning by school

The individual bars in the chart represent each pschool that participated in the survey ranked by the staff at risk of resigning (n = 8418).

Figure 4.1: Framework for staff retention

See Figure 2.1.

Figures 4.2-5: Risk of resigning by Working Conditions, Relationships, Workload, Career Development, Professional Support, Leadership Dynamics, Staff Relationships, and Student Behaviour scores]

The figures show the proportion of respondents at risk of resigning for each quintile of respondents by their theme (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) or factor (Figures 4.4. and 4.5) scores (n = 8323).

The theme scores (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) were constructed as the mean average of their component factor scores.

$$\text{Relationships score} = \frac{\text{Leadership Dynamics} + \text{Staff Relationships} + \text{Student Behaviour}}{3}$$

$$\text{Working Conditions score} = \frac{\text{Workload} + \text{Career Development} + \text{Professional Support}}{3}$$

The factor scores (Figures 4.4 and 4.5) were constructed as the means of the responses for the component questions, based on a 1 – 5 Likert scale. Missing values for cases where the Trust had decided to exclude a question or where the respondent had selected a "Not applicable" option were imputed as the mean of the existing responses of other component questions for that respondent.

Factor	N. of component questions	Cronbach's alpha
Workload	3	0.79
Career Development	4	0.77
Professional Support	6	0.79
Leadership Dynamics	8	0.93
Staff Relationships	3	0.79
Student Behaviour	3	0.66

The Spearman correlations shown under the figures were calculated between the theme and factor scores and the 1 to 5 Likert scale responses to the question "In the past three months, how often have you considered resigning from your post in this school?".

Figure 5.1: Framework for staff retention

See Figure 2.1.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3: Average scores of Working Conditions and its component factors

The figure shows the mean theme and factor scores of all staff (n = 8323).
See Figure descriptions for Figures 4.2-4.5 on more detail how the scores were calculated.

Figures 5.4 and 5.5: Words used to describe what the respondents appreciate about their school

The word clouds show the most frequently used words in the responses to questions "Please name two things that you appreciate about this school" (Figure 20) and "Please name two things that this school should improve" (Figure 21).

Stopwords, as well as words that are difficult to interpret (such as "school" and "staff") were excluded from the analysis.

Figure 5.6: Average Workload score by role

The figure shows the mean Workload score, grouped by the respondents' role and level of leadership. See description of Figures 4.2-4.5 on more detail how the score was calculated.

Figure 5.7: Average Workload score for full-time and part-time staff

The figure shows the mean Workload score, grouped by the full-time / part-time status of the respondent. The status was determined by a single-select question.

Figure 5.8: Teacher responses to the question "How often do you feel overworked"?

The figure shows the teacher response distribution across all answer options for the question (n = 3304). Only respondents that identified as "Teacher" in the question about their role are included in the figure.

Figure 5.9: Teacher responses to questions "How reasonable is the time you spend on the following?"

The figure shows the teacher answers to four questions as a distribution of the five available answer options (n = 3274). Only respondents that identified as "Teacher" in the question about their professional role are included in the figure.

Figure 5.10: Staff member responses to questions about Leadership Dynamics

The figure shows the distribution of responses for the 8 component questions of the Leadership Dynamics factor (n = 9904). Questions about feedback and understanding professional challenges had "Not applicable" response options provided to the respondents. These have been removed from the analysis.

Figure 5.11: Responses to the question "How confident are you that the school leadership understand your professional challenges?"

(n = 9630). "Not applicable" was provided as a response option and has been removed from the analysis.

Figure 5.12: Proportion of positive responses to the question "How confident are you that the school leadership understand your professional challenges?" by school

The figure shows the proportion of positive responses ("Completely confident" or "Very confident") to the question "How confident are you that the school leadership understand your professional challenges?" by school (n = 9630).

Appendix D: Bibliography

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