



Department
for Education

School leadership in England 2010 to 2020: characteristics and trends

Addendum

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Retention of leaders in state-funded schools

This report addendum is an addition to the report published on the 28th of April 2022¹. This addendum and the full report build on the statistics presented in the annual School Workforce Census National Statistics 2020² by providing further analysis on the characteristics and trends of teachers in leadership roles. This addendum focuses on just one aspect, retention in the state-funded sector for new to post leaders.

Section 3 of full report contains data showing the retention of new to post leaders, defined as “the proportion of teachers who were employed in subsequent years in a role of the same or higher level and in the same phase, as recorded by the School Workforce Census”¹. This retention definition will be referred to in this addendum as “retention/retained at grade or higher”. The data shown in this addendum shows the proportion of teachers who were employed in subsequent years in a role at any grade and in the same phase, as recorded by the School Workforce Census². The definition of retention will be referred to as “retention/retained in state-funded schools”.

This definition is not the same as “retention/retained in teaching” as teachers can move to schools in the devolved nations, the independent sector or central teaching and management roles in academy trusts. These teaching roles are not captured by the School Workforce Census National Statistics². It is not possible to determine what proportion of each cohort left teaching altogether from this data.

These additional retention figures have been released to provide further clarity on leader retention due to key stakeholder interest, following the publication of our report, and some misinterpretation in the press of the retention figures therein.

Many leaders who are not retained at the same grade or higher remain as teachers in state-funded schools

For comparison of the following tables with the previously published data please refer to Section 3, Tables 16 - 23 in the full report¹.

Many leaders who are not retained at the same grade or higher remain as teachers in state-funded schools. Further detail on downward grade movements are detailed in the full report¹, under “*Leadership flows are more complex than the ‘pipeline’ model suggests, including demotion and multi-grade promotions*” (Page 66). Teachers often move down as well as up the leadership grades, due to temporary promotion, job

¹ For the full report see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-leadership-in-england-2010-to-2020-characteristics-and-trends>

² Department for Education (2020) ‘School workforce in England: November 2020’. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce>.

changes or changes in responsibilities within the same school. These movements from higher to lower leadership grades give rise to the differences between the two retention definitions (“retained at grade or higher” vs “retained in state-funded schools”). Movements down the leadership structure are not equally common from all leadership grades.

Teachers at lower leadership grades are more likely to go back down the leadership structure as was shown in the full report¹ (see Figure 28, Figure 29, and Annexe 7, Figure 58). This is particularly true of middle leaders, as some responsibilities and payments that categorise a teacher as a middle leader are fixed term, such as the Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) payment, TLR3. It is also common for assistant headteachers to go back down the leadership structure as well; possibly as schools have multiple assistant headteachers, and multiple middle leaders may take on more leadership responsibilities on a temporary basis.

When comparing the two retention definitions, the difference narrows as the grades increase, as more senior teachers are less likely to move back down the leadership structure. The difference between the retention definitions also widens from the 1-year to 5-year measurements, as the number of teachers from each cohort moving back down the leadership structure increases over time. Slight differences between the two major phases are also visible. In addition, the measure of retention in state-funded schools is more stable from each cohort to the next, than that of retention at grade or higher.

Headteachers

Table 1 and Table 2 show new to post headteachers in primary and secondary schools, and the proportion retained in state-funded schools in subsequent years. For comparison, the tables from the full report¹ on new to post headteacher retention at grade or higher are Table 16 and Table 17.

More headteachers are retained in state-funded schools than are retained in grade or higher. The tables below show a much more stable year-on-year trend than is visible in the retention at grade or higher tables, figures shown here differ only by 3% at most from the first to last cohorts available.

In the retention at grade or higher tables in the full report, there are clear differences between the major school phases. These differences are also visible when looking at retention in state-funded schools. Looking at each new-to-post cohort of headteachers in primary schools the retention in state-funded schools declined somewhat between 2011 and 2014, and for more recent cohorts retention has been stable or has improved.

Table 1: Rates of new headteachers aged under 50 retained in state-funded primary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of headteachers retained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	970	97%	95%	92%	89%	85%
2012	1,080	96%	94%	92%	88%	84%
2013	1,180	97%	94%	91%	88%	85%
2014	1,300	96%	93%	89%	86%	83%
2015	1,310	96%	93%	89%	87%	84%
2016	1,350	96%	92%	89%	87%	
2017	1,410	96%	93%	90%		
2018	1,260	95%	92%			
2019	1,220	97%				

Source: School Workforce Census

Patterns in the data for new-to-post secondary heads are more volatile due to smaller cohort sizes. Taking the first and last datapoint for each column, short term (1-2) years retention seems to be relatively stable, while longer term retention (4-5) years has improved for more recent cohorts.

Table 2: Rates of new headteachers aged under 50 retained in state-funded secondary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of headteachers retained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	240	95%	92%	88%	77%	73%
2012	290	93%	93%	81%	78%	75%
2013	330	95%	90%	83%	76%	74%
2014	380	93%	88%	86%	81%	77%
2015	380	94%	89%	86%	79%	75%
2016	430	94%	88%	86%	80%	
2017	430	94%	89%	84%		
2018	430	95%	92%			
2019	420	94%				

Source: School Workforce Census

Deputy Headteachers

Table 3 and Table 4 show new to post deputy headteachers in primary and secondary schools, and the proportion retained in state-funded schools in subsequent years. For comparison, the tables from the full report¹ on new to post deputy headteacher retention at grade or higher are Table 18 and Table 19.

The difference in retention at each school phase remains at deputy headteacher level when looking at retention in state-funded schools. As with retention at grade or higher retention of deputy headteachers at primary schools has been particularly stable since 2011. Taking the first and last available cohort for each duration of retention, figures only differ by 1% at most.

Table 3: Rates of new deputy headteachers aged under 50 retained in state-funded primary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of deputy headteachers retained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	1,560	97%	94%	91%	89%	88%
2012	1,770	94%	92%	90%	89%	86%
2013	1,820	97%	95%	92%	90%	86%
2014	2,110	96%	94%	90%	87%	86%
2015	2,090	96%	95%	92%	90%	88%
2016	2,040	96%	93%	90%	88%	
2017	1,700	96%	94%	91%		
2018	1,770	96%	93%			
2019	1,550	97%				

Source: School Workforce Census

For deputy headteachers in secondary schools, retention in state funded schools declined around the middle of the decade, with the 2015 cohort having the lowest retention for most year measurements. Since then, the shorter retention periods have improved for more recent cohorts, particularly measuring retention at 2 years which increased from 87% for the 2015 cohort, to 92% for the 2018 cohort. The data from the next few years will be required to see if this picture of improving retention is carried into the 5-year measurement as well.

Table 4: Rates of new deputy headteachers aged under 50 retained in state-funded secondary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of deputy headteachers retained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	570	95%	91%	91%	87%	83%
2012	730	93%	91%	86%	83%	81%
2013	750	96%	92%	86%	84%	79%
2014	930	94%	88%	84%	82%	79%
2015	860	91%	87%	82%	79%	77%
2016	890	93%	88%	86%	83%	
2017	820	93%	87%	85%		
2018	830	96%	92%			
2019	870	95%				

Source: School Workforce Census

Assistant Headteachers

Table 5 and Table 6 show new to post assistant headteachers in primary and secondary schools, and the proportion retained in state-funded schools in subsequent years. For comparison, the tables from the full report¹ on new to post assistant headteacher retention at grade or higher are Table 20 and Table 21.

With assistant headteachers, similar patterns are visible as with higher grades. Retention is better in primary schools than at secondary, and has been more stable over time from cohort to cohort.

Retention in state-funded schools of assistant headteachers at primary schools has been more stable over the decade than retention at grade or higher (Table 20 of the full report¹), and is particularly stable when looking at the 1-, 2- and 3-year measurements. There are slight reductions in the retention when looking at the 4- and 5-year measurements of assistant headteachers at primary schools over the decade, but those declines were mostly for earlier cohorts, and the last three cohorts have had more stable rates of retention.

Table 5: Rates of new assistant headteachers aged under 50 retained in state-funded primary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of assistant headteachers re- tained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	1,240	96%	94%	90%	89%	87%
2012	1,480	96%	94%	90%	89%	86%
2013	1,920	96%	93%	90%	88%	85%
2014	2,540	96%	93%	90%	87%	85%
2015	2,500	95%	92%	90%	87%	85%
2016	2,350	95%	92%	89%	86%	
2017	2,190	97%	93%	90%		
2018	2,040	95%	93%			
2019	1,910	96%				

Source: School Workforce Census

Numbers of new to post assistant headteachers at secondary schools are much closer to, and in some years exceed those of their primary school counterparts. This contrasts with the number of headteachers and deputy headteachers, where the numbers for each new to post cohort are much smaller at secondary schools. Secondary schools have higher numbers of assistant heads per school - this may represent a higher requirement for management and administrative roles at secondary schools which tend to be larger.

Many more assistant headteachers in secondary schools were retained in state-funded schools than were retained at grade or higher (Table 21 of the full report¹). Changes in retention over time from cohort to cohort were much more stable, showing a smaller decline to mid-decade by only a few percentage points. Shorter retention measurements have improved since, and the 5-year retention measurement shown modest improvement since the school workforce census began, climbing from 79% for the 2011 cohort to 81% for the 2015.

Table 6: Rates of new assistant headteachers aged under 50 retained in state-funded secondary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of assistant headteachers re- tained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	1,340	96%	91%	88%	84%	79%
2012	1,820	93%	91%	86%	81%	78%
2013	2,030	96%	91%	86%	83%	80%
2014	2,560	93%	88%	85%	82%	81%
2015	2,230	93%	89%	86%	83%	81%
2016	2,130	93%	88%	84%	81%	
2017	2,290	94%	89%	87%		
2018	2,220	95%	92%			
2019	2,060	95%				

Source: School Workforce Census

Middle leaders

Table 7 and Table 8 show new to post middle leaders in primary and secondary schools, and the proportion retained in state-funded schools in subsequent years. For comparison, the tables from the full report¹ on new to post middle leader retention at grade or higher are Table 22 and Table 23.

When looking at retention at grade or higher, middle leaders do not follow the typical patterns shown by other grades - having lower rates at primary schools than at secondaries. In contrast, when looking at retention in state-funded schools, the more common trend of poorer retention in secondary schools is visible.

Many more middle leaders are retained in state-funded schools than are retained at grade or higher. Teachers, who may be classified as middle leaders because they are in receipt of a TLR payment in a given year, may take on extra responsibilities temporarily, before becoming classroom teachers again in a subsequent year. It is perhaps these teachers that contribute to the very different patterns of new to post middle leaders in retention in state-funded schools, shown below, than in the tables of retention at grade or higher shown in the full report¹.

Retention in state-funded schools of new to post middle leaders at primary schools shows the common trends with other grades, being much higher, and more stable over the years from cohort to cohort, than with retention at grade or higher. Again, retention declines slightly to new to post cohorts in the middle of the decade, and then improves

for more recent cohorts. For shorter retention measurements, 1- and 2-years, retention for the newest cohort available matches the 2011 cohort, it remains to be seen if these improvements carry forward in the years to come.

Table 7: Rates of new middle leaders aged under 50 retained in state-funded primary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of middle leaders retained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	6,440	95%	91%	89%	86%	83%
2012	7,050	94%	91%	88%	85%	82%
2013	8,430	95%	91%	88%	85%	82%
2014	9,400	94%	88%	85%	82%	79%
2015	10,940	93%	89%	86%	83%	81%
2016	12,140	93%	88%	85%	83%	
2017	10,070	94%	89%	87%		
2018	8,580	94%	91%			
2019	7,700	95%				

Source: School Workforce Census

The rates of middle leaders at secondary schools retained in state-funded schools have been reasonably stable over the decade, although slightly lower than those in primary schools. Similar patterns can again be seen, showing a slight decline from the first cohort to the new to post cohorts in the middle of the decade, with improving retention for more recent cohorts. In secondary schools, rates of new to post middle leaders being retained in state-funded schools, have recovered to the level of the 2011 cohort, for the 1-, 3- and 5-year measurements, with the 2- and 4-year measurements now only 1 percentage point away.

Table 8: Rates of new middle leaders aged under 50 retained in state-funded secondary schools

Year/ Cohort	New to post (headcount rounded)	Percentage of middle leaders retained after:				
		1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
2011	11,420	94%	89%	85%	80%	76%
2012	12,360	92%	88%	83%	78%	75%
2013	13,830	93%	87%	82%	79%	75%
2014	14,650	92%	85%	81%	77%	74%
2015	16,900	92%	86%	81%	78%	76%
2016	14,290	91%	86%	81%	79%	
2017	14,980	92%	87%	85%		
2018	12,480	92%	88%			
2019	12,160	94%				

Source: School Workforce Census

Methodology and definitions

As described earlier, the data shown in this addendum shows the proportion of teachers who were employed in subsequent years in a role at any grade and in the same phase in the state-funded schools, as recorded by the School Workforce Census². As with the previous analysis in the main report teachers classified as retained were teaching in the same phase.

“New to post” is defined, as before, as being recorded in the SWC at a higher level than in the previous year, or who were not recorded in the SWC in the previous year. The number of teachers is measured using headcount, which considers the number of teachers recorded and does not account for full time equivalents.

Retention of leaders with permanent contracts is not directly comparable with those with temporary or fixed contracts that are deliberately shorter term and for this reason, the analysis presented here is restricted to only those with permanent contracts

In addition, the analysis is restricted to only those aged under 50 to minimise the influence of retirement on the figures presented.



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For any enquiries regarding this publication, contact us at:

TeachersAnalysisUnit.MAILBOX@education.gov.uk or www.education.gov.uk/contactus.

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