Department for Education

The role and experience of support staff in schools

February 2026

Authors: Laura Thomas, Yvette Boodhna, Stella Fleetwood, Luisa Gomes, Lydia Smith, Dr. Rob Webster and Alexander Carr

Government Social Research

Contents

List of tables 5

List of figures 7

Executive summary of main findings 10

- Research aims and approach 10
- Key findings 10

Introduction and methodology 15

- Background and context 15
- Research aims 16
- Overarching methodology 16
- Sampling 17
- School participation rates in the quantitative survey 18
- Profile of support staff 19
- Weighting in the quantitative survey 20
- Interpreting the survey findings 20
- Semi-structured interviews 20

Profile of support staff 22

- Roles and responsibilities 23
- Level of education profile 25
- Motivation to become part of the school support staff workforce 29
- Employment status and contract types 30
- Length of service 32

Job satisfaction 34

- Overall job satisfaction 35
- Satisfaction with specific aspects of role 36
- Staff perceptions of professional value 39
- Access to wellbeing support 43

Working practices and conditions 46

- Hours worked and overtime 47
- Pay and benefits 52
- Flexible working arrangements 57

Support staff key tasks and activities 63
Workload and work-life balance 83
Manageability of current workload 84
Extracurricular involvement of support staff 86
Frequency of performing tasks outside of job description 89
Whether support staff like completing tasks outside of role 90
Working with pupils 91
Working with pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) 93
Time spend supporting pupils with SEND 94
Perceptions of information and training for supporting pupils with SEND 97
Ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND 98
Barriers to effectively providing support for pupils with SEND 102
Training received on supporting pupils with SEND 106
Training 108
Training received and satisfaction 109
Barriers to undertaking training 116
Interest and barriers in teacher training 120
Career progression, recruitment and retention 124
Promotion and career advancement opportunities 125
Barriers to career progression 138
Future career intentions 142
Leader Interview Report 149
Support staff workforce structures 149
Support staff deployment 151
Support staff recruitment 155
Support staff retention 157
Support staff pay and working arrangements 158
Support staff training 159
Support Staff Career Progression 161
Leader Perspectives on the SSSNB 163
Differences in experiences by role type, phase and across time 165
Role summaries 165

School phase summaries 167
Change over time: job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and feeling valued 168

List of tables

Table 1: Number of schools invited and that took part 18

Table 2: Proportion of support staff by gender 19

Table 3: Proportion of support staff age group 19

Table 4: Number of interviews conducted with school leaders by phase 21

Table 5: Number of interviews conducted with school leaders cross LA-maintained and academy trust schools 21

Table 6: School support staff roles by school phase 24

Table 7: Highest level of education by total and school phase 26

Table 8: Level of education profile by support staff role 27

Table 9: Staff perceptions of professional value by support staff role 42

Table 10: Access to wellbeing support by total and school phase 44

Table 11: Access to wellbeing support by support staff role 45

Table 12: Number of hours support staff are contracted to work per week by total and school phase 47

Table 13: Number of hours support staff worked in their most recent working week by total and school phase 48

Table 14: Number of contracted and worked hours in their most recent working week by support staff role 49

Table 15: Spinal Column Points category by total and school phase 53

Table 16: Spinal Column Points category by support staff role 53

Table 17: Formal flexible working arrangements by total and school phase 57

Table 18: Formal flexible working arrangements by support staff role 59

Table 19: Informal flexible working arrangements by total and school phase 60

Table 20: Informal flexible working arrangements by support staff role 61

Table 21: Manageability of current workload by support staff role 85

Table 22: Extracurricular involvement of support staff by support staff role 88

Table 23: Working with pupils by support staff role.....92

Table 24: Approximately how much time school support staff spend directly supporting SEND pupils 96

Table 25: Interventions identified as most likely to improve ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND [responses over 5%]: 100

Table 26: Barriers to effectively provide support for pupils with SEND by support staff role 104

Table 27: Training received by support staff roles 111

Table 28: Interest in further training and development by support staff role 115

Table 29: Barriers to undertaking training by support staff role.....118

Table 30: Interest in training to become a qualified teacher by support staff role 121

Table 31: Previous role in school by total and school phase 127

Table 32: Previous role in school by support staff role 129

Table 33: Opportunities for career progression in support staff roles by school support role 133

Table 34: Career progression support by school support role 136

Table 35: Barriers for career progression by school support role 140

Table 36: Reasons for leaving the state school sector by school support staff role.....147

List of figures

Figure 1: Schools support staff roles 23

Figure 2: Motivation to become part of the school support staff workforce 29

Figure 3: Term time contract 31

Figure 4: Length of service by total and school phase 32

Figure 5: Length of service by support staff role 33

Figure 6: Support staff satisfaction with their present job by total and school phase 35

Figure 7: Support staff satisfaction with their present job by support staff role 36

Figure 8: Satisfaction with contract and conditions of employment by total and school phase 37

Figure 9: Satisfaction with contract and conditions of employment by support staff role 38

Figure 10: Satisfaction with working arrangements by support staff role 39

Figure 11: Staff perceptions of professional value 40

Figure 12: Staff perceptions of professional value by school phase – NET agree 40

Figure 13: Overtime compensation by total and school phase 51

Figure 14: Overtime compensation by support staff role 52

Figure 15: Satisfaction with salary by total and school phase 55

Figure 16: Satisfaction with salary by support staff role 55

Figure 17: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Administrative staff 65

Figure 18: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Exam-related staff 65

Figure 19: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Finance-related staff 66

Figure 20: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Admissions staff 67

Figure 21: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – HR staff 68

Figure 22: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Midday supervisors/assistants 69

Figure 23: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Behaviour management staff 70

Figure 24: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Learning mentor 71

Figure 25: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – School attendance and family support staff 72

Figure 26: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Pupil wellbeing management staff 73

Figure 27: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – School business professionals 74

Figure 28: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Site staff 75

Figure 29: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Catering staff 76

Figure 30: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – TAs assistants and additional support needs assistant 77

Figure 31: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Cover supervisors 78

Figure 32: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Early years staff 79

Figure 33: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – IT technician 80

Figure 34: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Food and science technicians 81

Figure 35: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Library and resource centre-related staff 82

Figure 36: Extracurricular involvement of support staff by total and school phase 86

Figure 37: Frequency of performing tasks outside of job description by support staff role 89

Figure 38: Whether support staff like completing tasks outside of role 90

Figure 39: Working with pupils by total and school phase 91

Figure 40: Approximately how much time school support staff spend directly supporting SEND pupils 94

Figure 41: Perceptions of information and training for supporting pupils with SEND, including those with an EHC plan 97

Figure 42: Interventions identified as most likely to improve ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND by total and school phase [responses over 5%] 99

Figure 43: Barriers to effectively provide support for pupils with SEND by total and school phase 102

Figure 44: Received training on supporting pupils with SEND in role in last three years by total and school phase 106

Figure 45: Received training on supporting pupils with SEND in role in last three years by support staff role 107

Figure 46: Training received by total and school phase 109

Figure 47: Satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to support staff by total and school phase 112

Figure 48: Satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to support staff by support staff role 113

Figure 49: Interest in further training and development by total and school phase 114

Figure 50: Barriers to undertaking training by total and school phase 117

Figure 51: Interest in training to become a qualified teacher by total and school phase 120

Figure 52: Barriers to undertaking training to become a qualified teacher 122

Figure 53: Factors facilitating participation in teacher training 123

Figure 54: School support staff who had been promoted by total and school phase 125

Figure 55: Promotion by support staff role 126

Figure 56: Opportunities to progress career within and outside of current school/trust 131

Figure 57: Opportunities for career progression by total and school phase – NET agree 132

Figure 58: Career progression support by total and school phase 135

Figure 59: Barriers for career progression by total and school phase 138

Figure 60: Future career intentions by total and school phase 142

Figure 61: Future career intentions by school support role 143

Figure 62: Reasons for leaving the state school sector by total and school phase 145

Executive summary of main findings

Research aims and approach

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct a comprehensive survey with the school support workforce in England across primary, secondary and special schools. A nationally representative online survey was conducted with 9,626 support staff across various roles, complemented by qualitative data from 32 interviews with school leaders.

This research serves as a baseline study, forming part of a broader evidence base that the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) can use once established. It draws on responses from school support staff, offering a detailed focus on their perspectives. This foundational data, representing the first significant research into the school support staff workforce since the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools (DISS) study, highlights self-reported and perceived insights on significant issues pertinent to school support staff.

Furthermore, this research can be used by multiple stakeholders, extending beyond the SSSNB, to leverage this data. Schools, researchers, and sector bodies can utilise these insights to foster a broader understanding and development of the school support workforce. The findings will also aid the DfE in building a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of school support staff dynamics, underpinning training, career progression, and broader workforce policy development.

Key findings

Profile of support staff

Support staff in schools occupy a wide range of roles, with almost half (49%) working as teaching assistants (TAs) or in learning support positions. These positions are particularly prominent in special schools (68%, compared with 54% in primary schools and 27% in secondary schools), while secondary schools employ the largest proportion of health, pastoral and welfare staff (22%), administrative and finance staff (21%), and technical staff (12%). Around a fifth (21%) of staff in primary schools are midday supervisors/assistants

Education levels among support staff vary, with 57% holding qualifications at Level 3 or below and one in five (20%) holding an undergraduate degree. Technical staff are the most highly qualified, with almost half (46%) holding an undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree. Three percent hold a teacher training qualification.

Motivation to join the school workforce is primarily driven by a desire to work with young people (53%) and work in schools (52%). The ability to balance work with personal commitments is attractive to 47% of support staff.

The vast majority of support staff are employed directly by a single school (96%) on permanent contracts (92%), though temporary roles are more common among TAs and learning support staff (12%) and midday supervisors/assistants (10%). Many staff (64%) work term-time only, particularly in primary settings (66%). Thirty-nine percent of staff have been in post for over ten years or longer, with primary staff the most likely to be in post for this length of time (41%).

Job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction among support staff is mixed. Over three in five (63%) are satisfied, while nearly one in five (19%) are dissatisfied. Satisfaction varies by role, being highest among administrative and finance staff, and midday supervisors/assistants (both 71%), and lowest among TAs and learning support staff (58%). Staff in special schools report higher satisfaction than those in mainstream settings (69%, compared with 63% in primary schools and 61% in special schools).

The interviews found that support staff's work is greatly valued by school leaders and they are seen as highly important to the effective day-to-day running of schools. A strong link appears to exist between job satisfaction and feeling valued. While most staff feel appreciated by teachers (67%) and leaders (60%), nearly half feel valued by parents and carers (48%) and far fewer feel valued by policy makers (9%).

Access to wellbeing support also varies, with staff in special schools and school business professionals more likely to report that they receive it, while midday supervisors/assistants and site staff are less likely to report this.

Compared to the DISS surveys (2004–2008), job satisfaction and perceptions of being valued have declined over time. Despite this, school leaders emphasise the essential role support staff play in schools.

Working practices and conditions

Support staff typically work around 28 contracted hours per week, though many report working longer, averaging 30 hours in their most recent working week. School business professionals and pastoral staff in particular report working beyond their contracted hours. Perceptions of working beyond contracted appears linked with lower job satisfaction.

Pay is a key concern. While most schools follow the NJC for local government services pay scale, many staff are unclear about their grading. Just under half (47%) were aware of the NJC Spinal Column Points[1], but 54% of support staff don't know their pay-scale.

[1] The NJC spinal column points (SCP) are a part of a unified pay scale used in the United Kingdom for local government staff, managed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services. These points determine the salaries for council employees depending on their job role, responsibilities, and experience.

Dissatisfaction with salaries is widespread (72% are dissatisfied), particularly among TAs (85%). School leaders acknowledge that low pay hinders recruitment and retention.

Use of flexible working is mixed. Formal arrangements are uncommon due to the in-person nature of most support roles, but many staff use informal flexibility, such as occasional time off (60%) or adjusted start and finish times (23%). Such arrangements are more common in secondary schools (64% and 29%, respectively) and among administrative staff (71% and 36%, respectively) or technical staff (72% and 44%, respectively) but are less used by TAs (56% and 12%, respectively). Lack of flexibility appears linked to lower job satisfaction.

Workload and work-life balance

While 57% of support staff feel able to manage their workload, around a quarter (24%) do not. School business professionals (41%) and pastoral staff (32%) report feeling the most stretched. Job satisfaction appears strongly linked to workload, with those who feel overloaded far more likely to be dissatisfied. Most support staff (86%) contribute significantly to extracurricular activities – from school events (64%) and school trips (63%), to parents' evenings (27%) and after-school clubs (19%) – with TAs and pastoral staff particularly involved.

The majority of support staff (80%) take on tasks outside their job descriptions and 85% say they enjoy this at least a little, though a minority do not (12%). School leaders describe this flexibility as essential to smooth school functioning and singled out the flexibility of TAs in relation to managing increased pupil needs. The majority of staff (83%) work directly with pupils, though this varies by role, with school business professionals (32%), and site and catering staff (35%) being less likely to do this. Overall, workload pressures are compounded by additional responsibilities, yet many staff embrace these as part of their contribution to school life.

Working with pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Support staff play an important role in enabling inclusive education, with supporting pupils with SEND being a substantial part of many support staff roles. Around 85% of those who work with pupils spend at least some of their time supporting learners with SEND. For 20%, it is their principal focus. TAs and learning support staff are particularly concentrated in this area (97% work with pupils with SEND), while site and catering (36%), and administrative staff (44%) are less involved. School leaders report a shift in recent years towards more targeted deployment of TAs, often to provide dedicated support for pupils with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

Over half (54%) of staff feel they have sufficient training and information to work effectively with pupils with SEND, but many (27%) highlight a need for more specialist training and resources. Support staff report barriers such as rising numbers of pupils with SEND (60%),

limited funding (48%), and lack of time (34%). Training opportunities are seen as uneven. Most special school staff report receiving SEND-related training in the last three years (85%), compared to 53% of primary school staff and 42% of secondary support staff.

Training

The majority of support staff receive some form of training, usually in the context of whole-school provision (93%). However, fewer receive training tailored to their specific role (50%) or personal development (30%). Special schools are more likely to provide role-specific training (64%), while TAs (40%) and midday supervisors/assistants (32%) are least likely to receive it. Overall satisfaction with training is moderate (55%), with higher satisfaction levels among special school staff (70%) and school business professionals (67%), and lower levels among technical staff (41%).

The majority of support staff express strong interest in training opportunities (89%), but face barriers, including limited opportunities (37%), lack of time (31%), and inadequate funding (30%). A notable minority of staff (24%) – particularly TAs (34%) – express interest in training to become qualified teachers, but concerns about cost (72%), workload (46%), and school support (37%) inhibit uptake. Many support staff (72%) report that the option to train while staying in their current school, alongside greater financial support, would greatly facilitate progression.

Career progression, recruitment and retention

Career progression opportunities for support staff are limited. While three in ten (30%) have received a promotion within their school or trust (most commonly within their role type (20%)), the majority have not (70%). Only a fifth (20%) of staff believe their current school offers genuine career development prospects. Of these staff, secondary school staff (55%) and technical staff (65%) were the least likely to say their school does not offer career development. Many identify more training opportunities (46%), more career progression routes (44%), and clearer career pathways (37%) as key enablers. Current barriers include unclear progression routes (39%), heavy workloads (27%), and financial constraints (32%).

Retention is also a concern, with school leaders citing pay, the variety of work in support staff roles and the changing nature of these roles as making retention more difficult. However, they identify a supportive school culture and professional development opportunities as useful for aiding retention.

The survey, meanwhile, found that over a fifth (22%) of support staff are considering leaving the state school sector within a year (for a reason other than retirement), with dissatisfaction over pay (73%), lack of progression (50%), high workload (45%), and pupil behaviour (39%) cited as common reasons. Health issues (25%) and a lack of support from managers (28%) also influence these decisions. Staff in technical (30%), health,

pastoral and welfare roles (27%) and school business professionals (26%) are among the most likely to consider leaving.

Drivers of support staff structures

The interviews with school leaders indicated that workforce structures are sensitive to budget constraints, which impacts recruitment and retention. Leaders described challenges in recruiting support staff due to low pay and a competitive job market.

Most leaders of maintained schools said the local authority had minimal involvement in decisions about support staff workforce structure and recruitment, beyond providing some funding. Academy leaders report greater involvement from their trusts in workforce structure decisions, describing access to a range of centralised support services for recruitment, staffing, and finance.

Introduction and methodology

Background and context

Support staff make up over half of the school workforce and play a crucial role in the education and well-being of children and young people, and the day-to-day running of schools across England. Yet, despite the size and diversity of this section of the workforce and the valuable contribution they make, relatively little is currently known about their specific characteristics, roles, and experiences.

The research was designed to provide foundational evidence in light of the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). There is presently no statutory, national pay body for school support staff. The SSSNB is being set up to address this, by providing a dedicated forum for negotiating pay, terms, and conditions for school support staff, and advising ministers on access to suitable training and career progression opportunities.

The establishment of the SSSNB forms part of the Government's Plan to Make Work Pay and its Opportunity Mission. By recognising the essential contribution and professionalism of school support staff, the work of the SSSNB will help schools to recruit and retain the staff they need to drive high and rising standards, and ensure schools are more inclusive.

This report presents results from a nationally representative survey, commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), designed to provide much-needed insight into the demographics, employment arrangements, responsibilities, experiences and aspirations of support staff working in a wide range of roles in mainstream schools and specialist settings in England. This is also complemented by semi-structured qualitative interviews (conducted by DfE) with school leaders to provide the school leader perspective on support staff. As well as informing and underpinning the work of SSSNB, this research will be of interest to schools, trusts, Local Authorities, and other employers of support staff, researchers, and support staff themselves.

This research fills key evidence gaps and provides an up-to-date and comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and condition of the support staff workforce. The survey was carried out concurrently with, but independently of, a government consultation and call for evidence to inform the establishment of and transition to the SSSNB[2].

This report draws together quantitative data from a large, representative sample of 9,626 support staff across different roles, school phases, and school types, and qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews with 32 school leaders. The findings provide a timely and much-needed update to the evidence base on the support staff workforce, and a robust basis for the SSSNB.

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/setting-up-the-school-support-staff-negotiating-body-sssnb

Research aims

DfE commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct a comprehensive survey of the school support workforce in England. The aim was to provide data on pay, role definitions, working conditions, and career development opportunities for support staff.

The primary research aims were to explore the following:

I. Characteristics – understanding work experience, qualifications, motivations and how these differ by school phase and role.

II. Workforce structure – understanding the current recruitment and retention landscape, including the enablers and challenges schools face, in addition to the factors influencing deployment.

III. Working practices – understanding working and contractual arrangements.

IV. Responsibilities and time use – identifying the roles and responsibilities per-formed in schools and how these differ by school phase and role.

V. Perceptions and views of support staff role – exploring whether work accurately reflects roles and pay, and understanding staff satisfaction and perspectives.

VI. Career development and training – examining the availability and interest in training and progression opportunities, perceived opportunities for advancement, and support needed for professional development.

Overarching methodology

Quantitative survey

The quantitative survey, led by Ipsos UK, was conducted in primary, secondary and special schools in England. The research was conducted with all support staff who were categorised into the following roles:

1. Administrative and finance staff
2. Midday supervisors/assistants
3. Health, pastoral and welfare staff
4. School business professionals
5. Site and catering staff
6. Teaching assistant and learning support staff
7. Technicians
8. Other support staff

These roles are based on National Joint Council (NJC) job descriptions, which differ slightly from those in the School Workforce Census (SWFC). Roles informed by NJC job descriptions were used in the survey as they more accurately reflect the actual roles people perform (e.g., administrative or technical tasks). Currently, there is no standard approach to support staff role definitions. It was also important that the role titles were relevant and made sense to staff completing the survey.

More information about the quantitative research methodology is available in the technical appendix, which is a separate document and can be found on the Gov.UK page for this research.

Qualitative research

DfE conducted 32 in-house semi-structured interviews with school leaders across primary, secondary and special schools in England, between February and April 2025. The interviews were conducted online, using Microsoft Teams, and were semi-structured in nature, following a discussion guide to ensure that specific topics were covered. During the interviews, a note taker was present to write notes and Microsoft Teams transcription software was used to transcribe the interview. After each interview took place, the note taker finalised their notes, referring to the transcript to ensure notes taken were accurate and comprehensive. A thematic analysis was then conducted on the interview notes, using the qualitative analysis software NVivo to assess and classify the interview notes data into different thematic codes.

Previous research

This report also includes findings from the DISS survey by the Institute of Education, University of London, for the Department for Education and Skills. In 2003–2004, a national survey of around 10,000 schools in England and Wales gathered responses from school leaders, teachers, and support staff through three questionnaires. The study established baseline data on the characteristics, deployment, and impact of support staff, identifying seven main staff categories and highlighting issues of recruitment, training, job satisfaction, and their effects on teacher workload and pupil learning. This study is relevant as it represents the last comprehensive large-scale research project conducted by DfE focusing on support staff in England. The findings from this study provide a reference point for understanding changes and developments in this part of the workforce prior to this current research.

Sampling

Random selection of schools

A total of 4,750 schools were selected from the School Workforce Census (SWFC) using a random stratified approach for school type and region. All support staff within these

selected schools were invited to participate (a census approach). This approach created a more representative sample, allowed all support staff in selected schools the change to participate, and was able to be effectively implemented within the project's timeframe. Additionally, phone calls were made to sampled schools to ensure they had received their survey packs and to encourage dissemination of the survey invites to staff.

The sample of schools were cross referenced with the SWFC to check whether there would be sufficient numbers to achieve the target number of responses for each support staff role. This was calculated based on the assumption that not all schools would participate and, among those that did, we were likely to see a 15% response rate by staff role.

Targeted sampling

Following the school sampling stage, any staff groups identified as potentially having low numbers were selected for targeted mailings. These roles were technical staff, school business professionals[3], and administrative staff.

Using the SWFC as a sampling frame, a random selection of staff in these roles were selected to receive a named and targeted letter. These letters were sent directly to their schools with a covering letter for distribution.

A total of 1,029 staff were selected for targeted mailings, and a full breakdown is shown in Table 4 in the technical appendix.

School participation rates in the quantitative survey

It is not possible to calculate response rates as individual invite letters were only sent to staff selected in the targeted sampling approach, and not to the ones from the census approach. However, we can consider school participation rates – i.e. where at least one interview was completed per school.

Table 1: Number of schools invited and that took part

Schools invited	4,750
Schools that took part	1,627
School participation rate	34%

The participation rate by school phase and region can be found in Tables 2 and 3 in the technical appendix.

[3] Including leadership non-teacher

Profile of support staff

The sample of school support staff was composed largely of individuals aged between 40 and 59, accounting for 62% of the respondents. Within this age range, 27% were aged 40-49 and 35% were aged 50-59. Additionally, 17% of the staff members fell into the 30-39 age bracket, while those aged 60 or over constituted 14%. Only 7% of the participants were under the age of 30, with specific representation of 4% aged 25-29 and 3% aged under 25.

In terms of gender, 88% of the school support staff identified as female, whereas 12% identified as male. This disparity in gender identification varied across school phases, with primary schools featuring the highest percentage of female support staff at 93%, and secondary schools having a higher male representation at 22%. These demographics provide a framework for understanding the composition of school support staff across different educational segments.

The proportions of support staff by gender and age in both this quantitative research and the SWFC can be found in Tables 2 and 3 below. The gender profile in this study closely aligns with that of the SWFC. However, this research indicates a slightly older sample, with 49% of participants aged 50 and above, compared to 43% in the SWFC. In contrast, 24% of support staff in this research are aged 39 or younger, whereas the SWFC shows 31% in this younger age bracket.

Table 2: Proportion of support staff by gender

	School support staff survey	**SWFC**
Female	88%	89%
Male	12%	11%

Table 3: Proportion of support staff age group

	School support staff survey	**SWFC**
Under 25	3%	5%
25 to 29	4%	6%
30 to 39	17%	20%
40 to 49	27%	27%
50 to 59	35%	29%
60 and over	14%	14%

Weighting in the quantitative survey

To be able to analyse the findings by school phase and role, the sample design overrepresented staff from secondary and special schools and underrepresented staff from primary schools.

Corrective weights were applied to ensure the survey data was representative of the overall school support staff workforce.

Target weights were calculated from the school workforce census and are shown in Tables 5, 6 and 7 in the technical appendix. Tables 8, 9 and 10 in the technical appendix detail the achieved sample profiles and the effective sample sizes and efficiencies once weighting was applied.

Interpreting the survey findings

The results are based on a random stratified sample of primary, secondary and special schools, and not the entire population of schools in England. The survey data has been weighted to ensure the findings are nationally representative of school support staff. This rigorous approach ensures that the findings are reliable and robust.

It is important to note that while applying weights enhances representativeness, it also reduces the effective sample size and statistical reliability of the data (see Tables 5, 6 and 7 in the technical appendix).

Throughout this report, unless specified, findings with sufficient sample sizes (n=30 or over) have been included and all differences noted between subgroups are significant at the 95 percent significance level or indicative of a broader trend.

Please note that when different response categories are combined (e.g. 'strongly agree' and 'agree') then the combined figure may sometimes differ slightly from the total that would be obtained by summing the two separate percentage figures. This is due to the rounding of figures to the nearest whole number.

In tables and charts, where percentages do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple answers, computer rounding, or to the exclusion of ‘Don’t know’ or ‘No response’ categories. Please note that the unweighted sample size has been included as base size reference for the purpose of the report.

Semi-structured interviews

A random sample of school leaders was drawn from the Get Information About Schools (GIAS) database, and these leaders were contacted directly by the DfE via email to take part in the interview research. These leaders received a link to a sign-up survey, where they could signal their interest in taking part in interview research. An initial email was sent

to school leaders, followed by two reminder emails over a five-week period. To ensure equal representation across school phase (primary, secondary and special schools), a target quota of at least 10 interviews per phase was applied. Table 4 summarises the sample distribution of the interviews across school phase.

Table 4: Number of interviews conducted with school leaders by phase

	Total interviews
Primary	11
Secondary	10
Special	11
Total	32

In addition, a flexible quota for the interviews with school leaders was applied to ensure representation of interviews at the aggregate level by whether the school leaders worked at local authority-maintained (LA-maintained) schools or academy trust schools. Table 5 summarises the sample distribution of the interviews across school LA-maintained and academy trust schools.

Table 5: Number of interviews conducted with school leaders cross LA-maintained and academy trust schools

	Total interviews
LA-maintained	19
Academy trust	13
Total	32

Profile of support staff

Summary: Profile of support staff

Half of support staff (49%) are teaching assistants (TAs) and staff in learning support roles. TAs and learning support staff account for 68% of staff in special schools (compared with 54% in primary and 27% in secondary schools), while there are greater proportions of health, pastoral and welfare staff, administrative and finance staff, and technical staff in secondary schools, compared with primary and special schools. Around a fifth (21%) of support staff in primary schools are midday supervisors/assistants.

The highest level of education most commonly attained by support staff (33%) is A Levels / Level 3 VTQs / Level 3 apprenticeships or equivalent, while one in four (24%) hold GCSEs / O Levels / equivalent as their highest level of education attained. A fifth (20%) of all staff hold an undergraduate degree or equivalent, and this percentage rises to 25% for secondary staff. Technical staff are the most qualified, as 46% hold an undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree or equivalent, followed by school business professionals (40%). Midday supervisors/assistants and site and catering staff hold the lowest qualifications, with 46% of both groups holding GCSEs / O Levels / equivalent as their highest level of education attained. Three percent of staff hold an Initial Teacher Training qualification.

The main motivation for joining the school workforce is the desire to work with young people (53% overall). Other motivating factors are the desire to work in a school (52%), the flexibility to balance work with personal commitments (47%) and time off during school holidays (33%), which is particularly the case for support staff in primary schools. One in five (19%) primary staff, and 30% of all midday supervisors/assistants, cite having a child attending the school as a motivator. Only 2% of all support staff report an attractive salary as a consideration.

The vast majority of school support staff (97%) are employed directly by a school, trust, or Local Authority, and 96% work at one school. 13% of school business professionals work across multiple schools. Over nine in ten (92%) staff have a permanent contract, but TAs and learning support staff (13%).

Almost two thirds (64%) of staff have a term time only contract, but this is less common for school business professionals (42%) and site and catering staff (30%).

Almost three in five support staff (58%) have worked in their role for 5 years or more, and 39% for 10 years or more. A fifth (20%) have worked in their role for 1-3 years, and 8% for less than a year. Primary school staff are the longest serving staff, with 41% working in their role for 10 years or more.

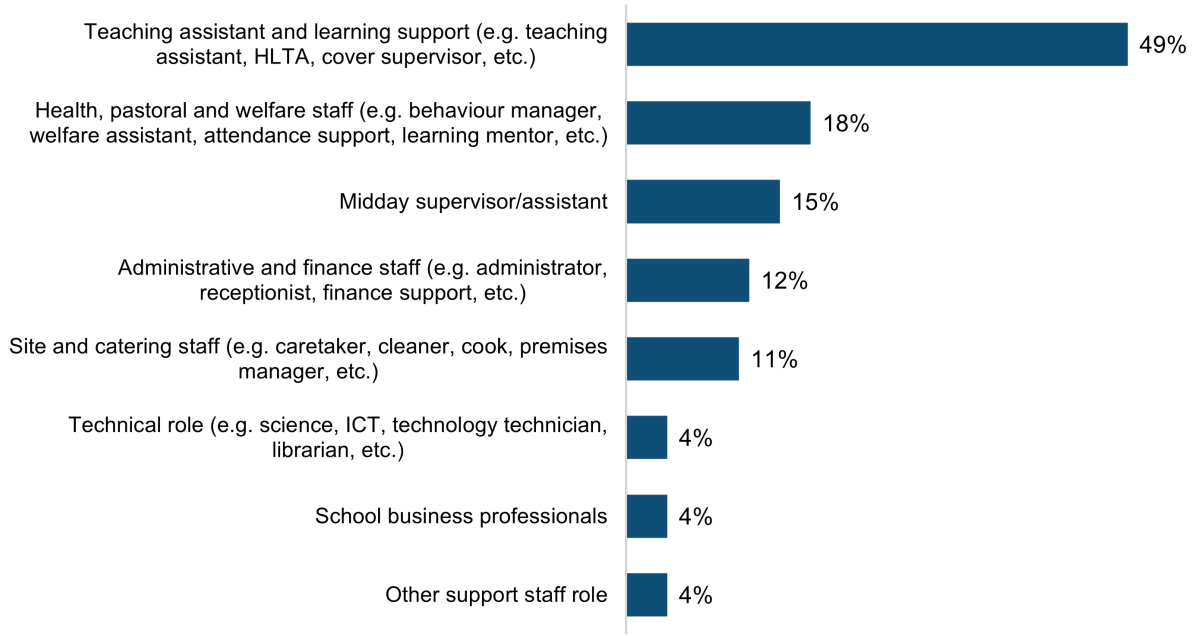
Roles and responsibilities

School support staff roles

Respondents were asked about their current position and could select more than one option.

Approximately half (49%) of school support staff are employed in TA and learning support roles. This is followed by pastoral and welfare staff (17%), midday supervisors/assistants (15%), administrative and financial staff (12%), site and catering staff (11%), technical roles (4%), school business professionals (4%), other support staff (4%) and health staff (1%) (Note: for analysis purposes pastoral/welfare and health staff have been combined).

Figure 1: Schools support staff roles



Source: Which type of support staff role best describes your current position? Base: All respondents: 9,626

The prevalence of roles varies by phase. TAs and learning support staff roles represent the highest proportion of staff within special schools (68%) followed by primary schools (54%) and then secondary schools (27%), while midday supervisors/assistants account for around a fifth (21%) of support staff in primary schools but just 4% of special school support staff and 2% of secondary school support staff. On the other hand, the most highly represented roles in secondary schools include administrative and finance staff (21% secondary, 10% primary and 7% special schools), health, pastoral and welfare staff (22% secondary, 16% primary and 14% special schools) and technical roles (12% secondary and 1% both primary and special schools).

Table 6: School support staff roles by school phase

	Primary	Secondary	Special
Teaching assistant and learning support	54%	27%	68%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	16%	22%	14%
Midday supervisor/assistant	21%	2%	4%
Administrative and finance staff	10%	21%	7%
Site and catering staff	10%	16%	6%
Technical role	1%	12%	1%
School business professional	4%	5%	3%
Other support staff role	4%	3%	3%

Source: Which type of support staff role best describes your current position? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Role options in current support staff position

All support staff, except midday supervisors/assistants and school business professionals, were asked about their individual roles in more detail. For example, those who selected administrative and finance staff could choose more granular roles such as receptionist, office support, bursar, HR support, among others. Respondents also could select more than one granular role.

TAs and learning support roles

Among staff working in TAs and learning support roles, TA is the most common role (75%), followed by Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) (17%), cover supervisors (11%) and Additional Support Needs Assistant (ASNA) (10%).

Administrative and finance staff

Around half of administrative and finance staff (51%) are in office support roles while over a third (37%) are receptionists.

Health, pastoral and welfare staff

Among health, pastoral and welfare support staff, the most common roles are pastoral support (65%), pupil welfare support (47%) and attendance support (45%).

Site and catering staff

Over a third (34%) of site and catering staff are caretakers while 30% are premises managers, and 12% are cooks. The most common technical roles are science technician/support (36%) and IT technician/support (27%).

Level of education profile

Most commonly, the highest level of education among school support staff is A Levels / Level 3 VTQs / Level 3 apprenticeships / equivalent, reported by a third (33%). This is followed by GCSEs / O Levels / equivalent, reported by almost a quarter (24%).

Nearly three in ten (29%) support staff hold a degree or above[4]. One in five (20%) hold an undergraduate degree or equivalent, such as a BEd, BSc, or BA, while 11% have completed a foundational degree / Level 4, 5 or 6 apprenticeship / equivalent. Six percent hold a postgraduate degree, including Masters or PhD qualifications. Three percent of school support staff hold an Initial Teacher Training qualification, such as a Postgraduate Certification in Education (PGCE).

Overall, support staff working in secondary schools hold a higher level of education than those working in primary and special schools. Just under two in five (38%) of secondary support staff hold a degree or above, compared to special (27%) and primary (24%) schools.

A levels / Level 3 VTQs / Level 3 apprenticeship or equivalent are the most common qualification in special schools (held by 34% of staff). Findings from the interviews with school leaders[5] show that special school leaders often prioritise a candidate's personal qualities over formal training or previous experience. They report valuing a candidate's potential, aptitude, and positive attitude most highly when recruiting.

[4] Undergraduate degree or equivalent, Postgraduate degree or equivalent, PhD or equivalent, and Initial Teacher Training (ITT)
[5] DfE (2025) Support Staff Research – School Leader Interviews. Workforce Strategy Analysis Team (TAD)

Table 7: Highest level of education by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
GCSEs/O Levels/equivalent	24%	26%	21%	23%
A Levels/BTECs/Level 3 apprenticeship/ equivalent	33%	35%	29%	34%
Undergraduate degree or equivalent (e.g. Bed, BSc, BA etc)	20%	18%	25%	19%
Foundational degree/Level 4, 5 or 6 apprenticeship/equivalent	11%	11%	10%	12%
Postgraduate degree (masters) or equivalent (not including initial teacher training/PhD (doctoral degree) or equivalent)	6%	4%	9%	6%
Initial Teacher Training (ITT) e.g. Postgraduate Certification in Education (PGCE)	3%	2%	4%	2%
None of the above	3%	3%	2%	3%

Source: What is the highest level of education that you have completed? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,357; Primary schools: 2,846, Secondary schools: 4,857, Special schools: 1,654

Across the support staff roles, technical staff (51%) and school business professionals (42%) hold a higher level of education, with a degree or above. On the other hand, midday supervisors/assistants and site and catering staff roles are the most likely to have the lowest level of qualifications (GCSEs / O Levels / equivalent) as their highest education level (both 46%).

The qualifications held by TAs and learning support staff vary. Just under a third (30%) hold a degree or above, while the most common highest qualification for this group is A Levels / Level 3 VTQs/ Level 3 apprenticeship or equivalent (38%). One in five (20%) hold GCSEs / O Levels / equivalent as their highest education level.

Table 8: Level of education profile by support staff role

	GCSEs/ O Levels/ equivalent	A Levels/ BTECs/ Level 3 apprenticeship/ equivalent	Foundational degree/ Level 4, 5 or 6 apprenticeship / equivalent	Undergraduate degree or equivalent (e.g. Bed, BSc, BA etc)	Postgraduate degree (masters) or equivalent (not including initial teacher training/PhD (doctoral degree) or equivalent)	Initial Teacher Training (ITT) e.g. Postgraduate Certification in Education (PGCE)	None of the above
Administrative and finance staff	29%	34%	10%	20%	4%	2%	1%
Midday supervisor/ assistant	46%	26%	5%	10%	3%	0%	10%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	16%	32%	16%	24%	7%	4%	2%
School business professional	12%	16%	29%	26%	14%	2%	0%
Site and catering staff	46%	30%	5%	8%	2%	1%	9%
Teaching assistant and learning support	20%	38%	11%	21%	5%	4%	2%

	GCSEs/ O Levels/ equivalent	A Levels/ BTECs/ Level 3 apprenticeship/ equivalent	Foundational degree/ Level 4, 5 or 6 apprenticeship / equivalent	Undergraduate degree or equivalent (e.g. Bed, BSc, BA etc)	Postgraduate degree (masters) or equivalent (not including initial teacher training/PhD (doctoral degree) or equivalent)	Initial Teacher Training (ITT) e.g. Postgraduate Certification in Education (PGCE)	None of the above
Technical role	10%	28%	10%	34%	12%	5%	1%
Other support staff role	21%	30%	13%	22%	8%	4%	3%

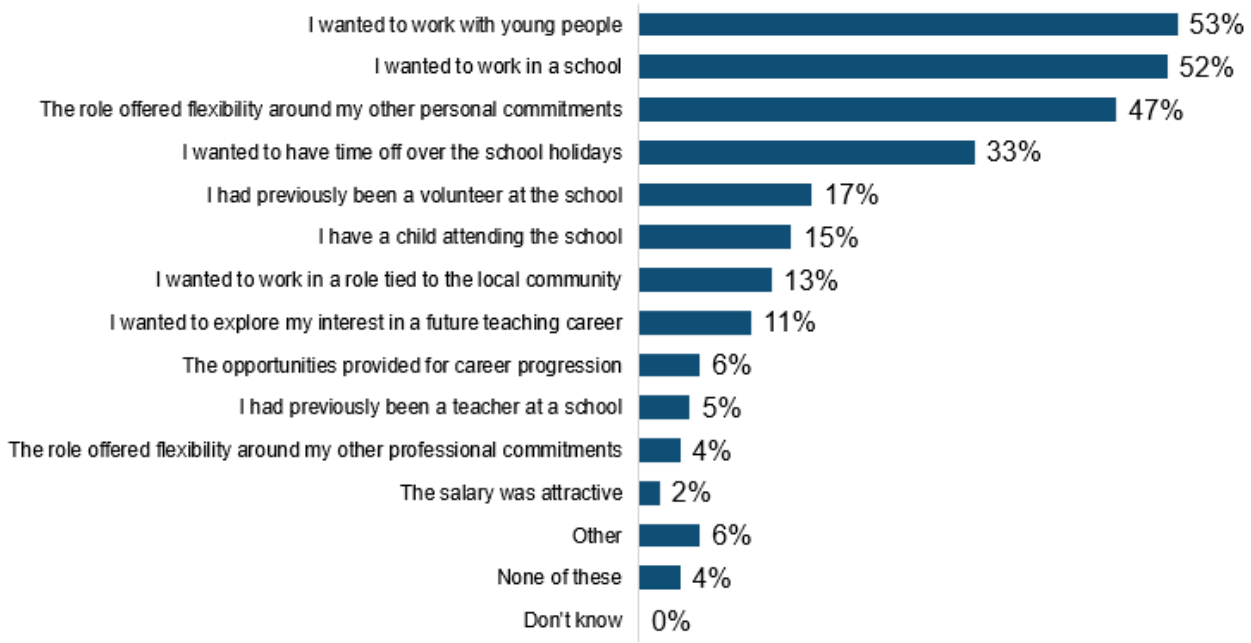
Source: What is the highest level of education that you have completed? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,357; Administrative and finance staff: 1,876, Midday supervisor/assistant: 142, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,047, School business professional: 422, Site and catering staff: 496, Teaching assistant and learning support: 3,955, Technical role: 909, Other support staff role: 510

Motivation to become part of the school support staff workforce

The primary motivations for joining the school support staff workforce are most typically rooted in the school environment itself. The most common reasons are the desire to work with young people (53%), closely followed by the appeal of working in a school setting (52%). The flexibility to balance work with personal commitments is also a major factor for many (47%) and a third of the workforce (33%) are motivated by having time off during school holidays.

In stark contrast, financial incentives are not a significant driver. Only 2% of support staff report that an attractive salary was their motivation, making it the least common reason for choosing this career path. Despite this, there is a high level of dissatisfaction with pay, as evidenced by 72% of support staff expressing dissatisfaction with the pay they receive for their work (See section 5.2.2). Similarly, only 4% are motivated by the flexibility to manage other professional commitments.

Figure 2: Motivation to become part of the school support staff workforce



Source: Why did you decide to become part of the school support staff workforce? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,556

Motivations vary depending on the type of school. The desire to work with young people is most pronounced among staff in special schools (64%), compared to those in primary (53%) and secondary (47%) schools.

Meanwhile, staff in primary schools are more likely to prioritise flexibility around personal commitments (50%) than their counterparts in secondary (43%) and special schools (36%). This group is also more motivated by prior connections to the school. For instance,

22% of primary school support staff were previously volunteers at the school, a significantly higher proportion than in secondary (6%) or special schools (9%). Furthermore, 19% of primary staff chose to work there because they had a child attending the school, compared to just 10% in secondary and 3% in special schools.

The findings show that the motivations for working in a school vary significantly depending on the specific staff role. For those in child-facing positions, the primary driver is the desire to work with young people. This is the top motivator for health, pastoral, and welfare staff (74%) as well as for TAs and learning support staff (66%). Beyond the students, the school environment itself is a major draw for many, with about half of the staff in administrative and finance (54%), health, pastoral and welfare (54%), and TAs and learning support staff (58%) citing it as a key motivation.

Practical considerations also shape staff choices. Flexibility that fits around personal commitments is a crucial factor for nearly two-thirds of administrative and finance staff, as well as midday supervisors/assistants (both at 60%). For midday supervisors/assistants, this motivation is often directly linked to their own family, as 30% also have a child attending the school.

School business professionals are more likely than other support staff roles to be driven by career-oriented factors, such as being motivated by opportunities for career progression (10%) and an attractive salary (6%), though their greatest motivations remain a desire to work in the school setting (53%) and to have flexibility around other personal commitments (50%).

Findings from the school leader interviews indicate that younger support staff were seen as more likely to want to develop their careers, while older staff, especially those with longer tenure, were viewed as less likely to seek progression (see Chapter 11).

Employment status and contract types

Employment status, scope and contract type

The vast majority of school support staff (97%) are employed directly by a school, trust, or Local Authority. A very small proportion (1%) are employed by a governing body.

Moreover, the vast majority of school support staff work at one school (96%) while 4% work across multiple schools. Roles which are most likely to involve working across multiple schools are school business professionals (13%), site and catering staff (11%) and technical roles (10%).

In terms of contract types, the majority of school support staff are employed on a permanent contract (92%). Eight percent are on a temporary or fixed term contract, while a further 1% are employed on an ad hoc contract, hours as required. Secondary (96%) and

special school (95%) staff are more likely than primary school staff (90%) to be on permanent contracts.

Staff who are less likely to be on permanent contracts and more likely to be on temporary or ad hoc contracts are TAs and learning support staff (88% permanent, 12% temporary and 1% ad hoc), other support staff roles (89% permanent, 7% temporary and 4% ad hoc) and midday supervisors/assistants (90% permanent, 10% temporary and 4% ad hoc)

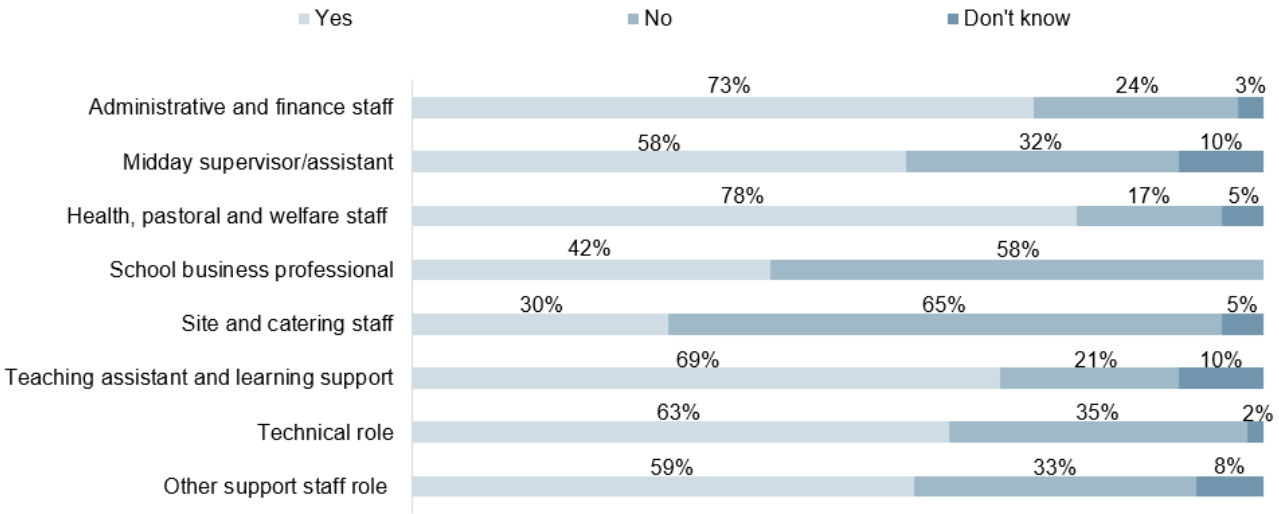
Term time contracts

Term time contracts are work arrangements where employees work only during school terms, when schools are operational, with time off during school holidays.

Around two thirds (64%) of school support staff are employed on a term time only contract, while 28% are not. Seven percent say they don't know what type of contract they are on. Primary school staff (66%) are more likely to report being on term time only contracts then secondary and special school staff (both 62%).

Health, pastoral and welfare staff (78%), administrative and finance staff (73%) and TAs and learning support staff (69%) are the most likely to say they are employed on a term time only contract, while site and catering staff (30%) and school business professionals (42%) are the least likely to say this.

Figure 3: Term time contract

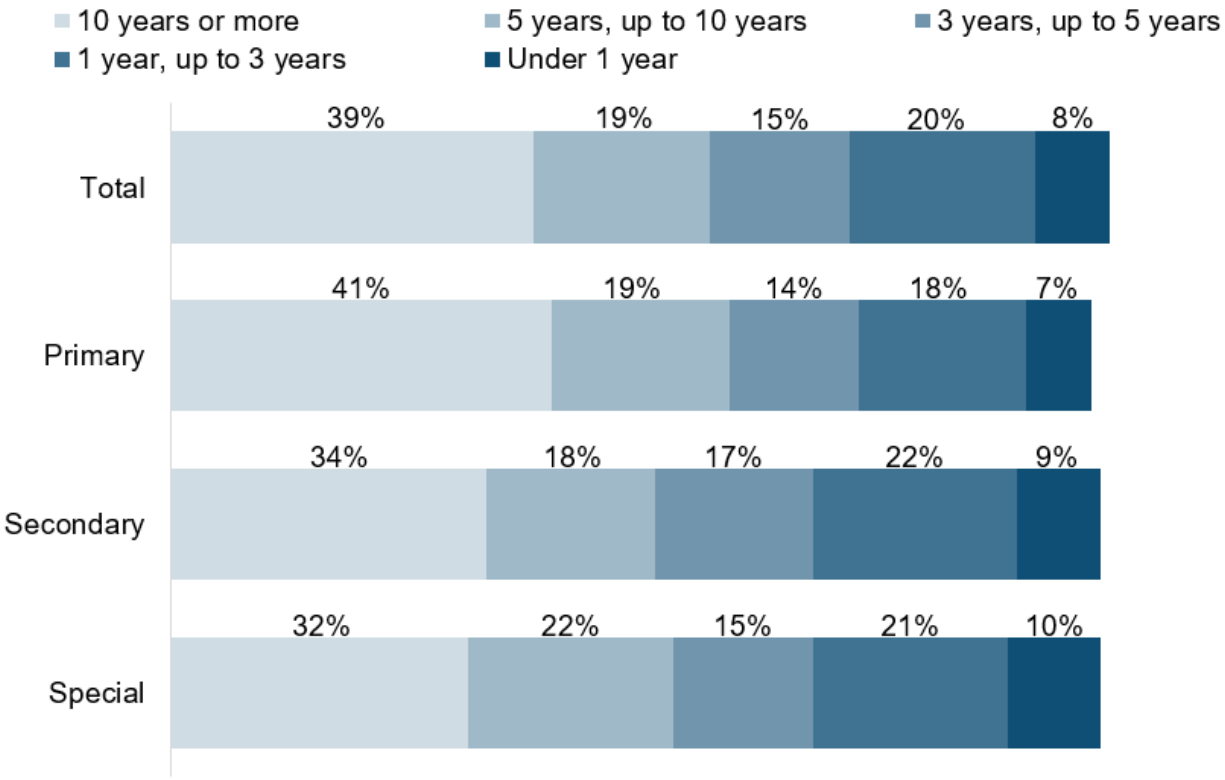


Source: Are you employed on a term time only contract? Base: All respondents: 9,626

Length of service

Almost three in five support staff (58%) have worked in their support staff role for five years or more (including 39% who have worked in their role for 10 years or more and 19% who have worked in it for between 5 and 10 years). Just 8% have worked in their role for under 1 year. Primary school support staff are most likely to have worked in their roles for over 10 years (41% compared to 34% of secondary school support staff and 32% of special school support staff).

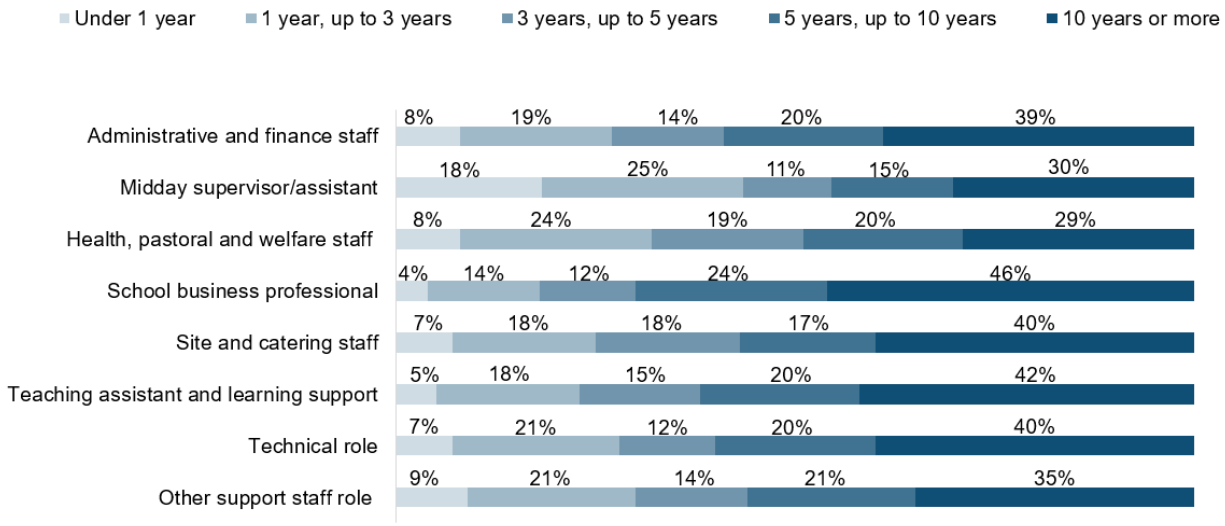
Figure 4: Length of service by total and school phase



Source: How long have you been working in this role type? Please think about total time, including time spent working in this role at other schools. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

In terms of differences by role, midday supervisors/assistants and health, pastoral and welfare staff have been in their roles for less time than staff in other roles. Almost one in five (18%) midday supervisors/assistants have been in their role for under 1 year and a quarter (25%) between 1 and 3 years. Among health, pastoral and welfare staff, 8% have been in their roles for under 1 year and almost a quarter (24%) between 1 and 3 years.

Figure 5: Length of service by support staff role



Source: How long have you been working in your role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Job satisfaction

Summary: Job Satisfaction

Three in five (63%) support staff report they are satisfied with their job, while one in five (19%) are dissatisfied. Job satisfaction is higher for support staff in special schools (69%), compared with those in mainstream schools (62%). Job satisfaction is highest among administrative and finance staff (71%) and midday supervisors/assistants (71%), and lowest among TAs and learning support staff (58%).

Staff in role for less than a year are the most satisfied (76%), while those in role for between 5 and 10 years are the least satisfied (57%).

In interviews, school leaders were keen to emphasise the value of support staff and the work they carry out, with some saying their school would cease to function without the effort of support staff. Despite this, the survey results indicate this appreciation is not always felt by support staff. Two thirds of support staff (67%) feel valued by teachers for the work they do, and three in five (60%) feel valued by senior leaders. Less than half (48%) of support staff feel valued by parents and carers, and less than one in ten (9%) feel valued by policy makers. There appears to be a strong link between overall job satisfaction and feeling valued by all of these groups.

Staff in special schools (77%) are more likely to have access to wellbeing support, compared with those in primary (60%) and secondary (67%) schools. Fifteen percent of support staff report that they are unable to access any form of wellbeing support.

Compared to earlier DISS studies, job satisfaction has declined. Across all three DISS waves (2004, 2006 and 2008), around 78% of staff were satisfied, and around 8% were dissatisfied.

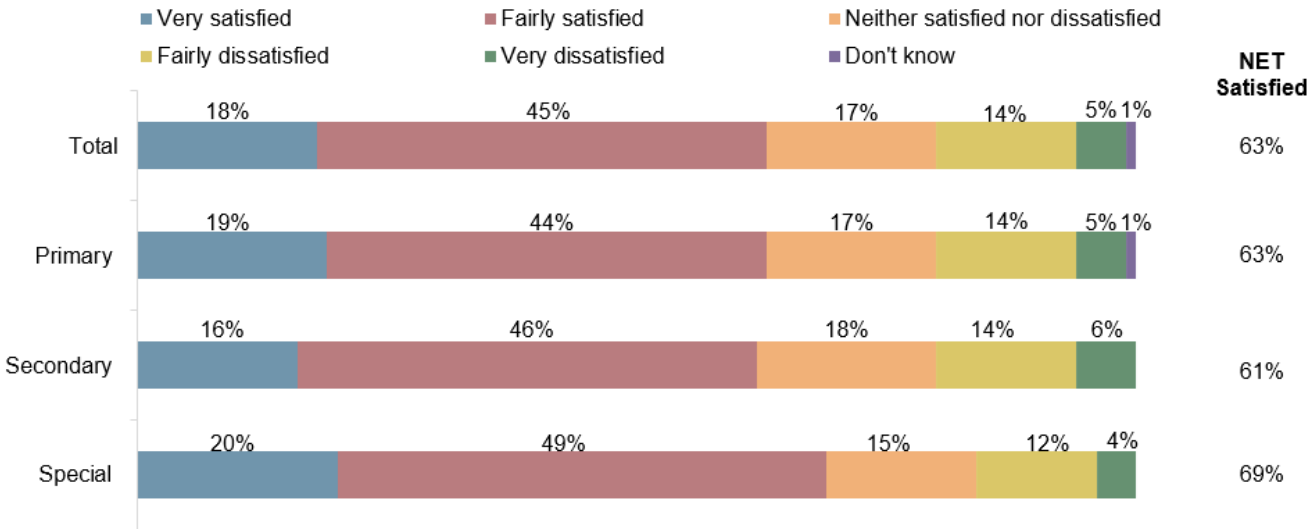
Perceptions of professional value have also declined over time. In all three waves of the DISS survey, seven in ten support staff reported that their school appreciated their work, with only one in ten feeling that their school did not appreciate their work.

Overall job satisfaction

Three in five (63%) school support staff report being satisfied with their job, with around one in five (18%) very satisfied and just under half (45%) fairly satisfied. One in five (19%) are dissatisfied. According to the school leader interviews, leaders believe this high level of satisfaction is a strong retention enabler, with staff staying because they enjoy their role and feel invested in their school and community. However, leaders also acknowledged the significant challenges that suggest why one in five staff are dissatisfied (see Chapter 11).

Job satisfaction is highest amongst support staff at special schools (69% are very or fairly satisfied), compared to primary (63%) and secondary schools (61%). As findings from Chapter 3 and the school leader interviews (Chapter 11) indicate, special school leaders often prioritise a candidate's potential, positive attitude, and aptitude over previous experience or formal training, a hiring approach that may contribute to a workforce that feels more valued and is therefore more satisfied.

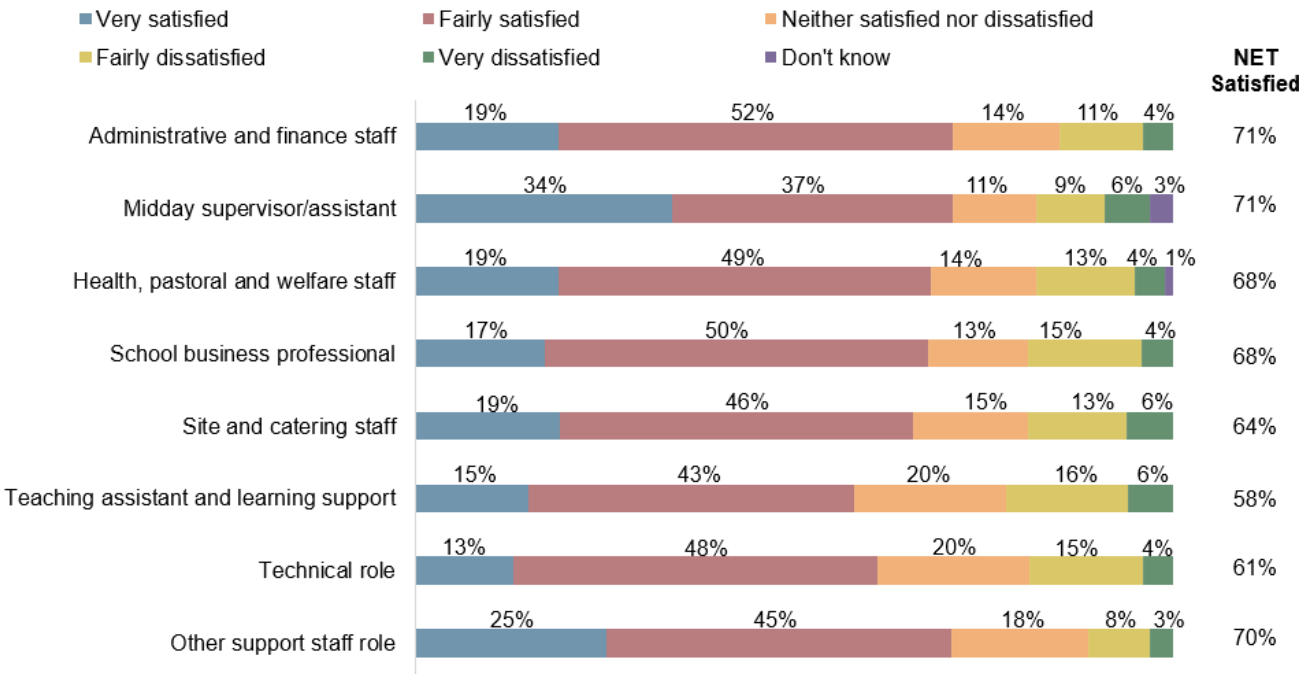
Figure 6: Support staff satisfaction with their present job by total and school phase



Source: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present job? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,535; Primary schools: 2,914, Secondary schools: 4,927, Special schools: 1,694

Job satisfaction varies considerably by role. It is highest amongst administrative and finance staff and midday supervisors/assistants (both 71%), other support staff (70%), health, pastoral and welfare staff and school business professionals (both 68%). It is lowest amongst TAs and learning support staff, where 58% are satisfied with their current job.

Figure 7: Support staff satisfaction with their present job by support staff role



Source: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your present job? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,535; Administrative and finance staff: 1,893, Midday supervisor/assistant: 165, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,058, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 526, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,023, Technical role: 920, Other support staff role: 525

There appears to be a link between job satisfaction and tenure (though tenure is impacted by job role which may be a confounding factor here). Three quarters (76%) of those who have been employed in their role for less than a year are satisfied. This decreases to two thirds (66%) for those employed between one and five years, and just over half (57%) of those employed for between five and ten years. Satisfaction increases slightly for those who have been in their role for ten years or more (62%).

Satisfaction with specific aspects of role

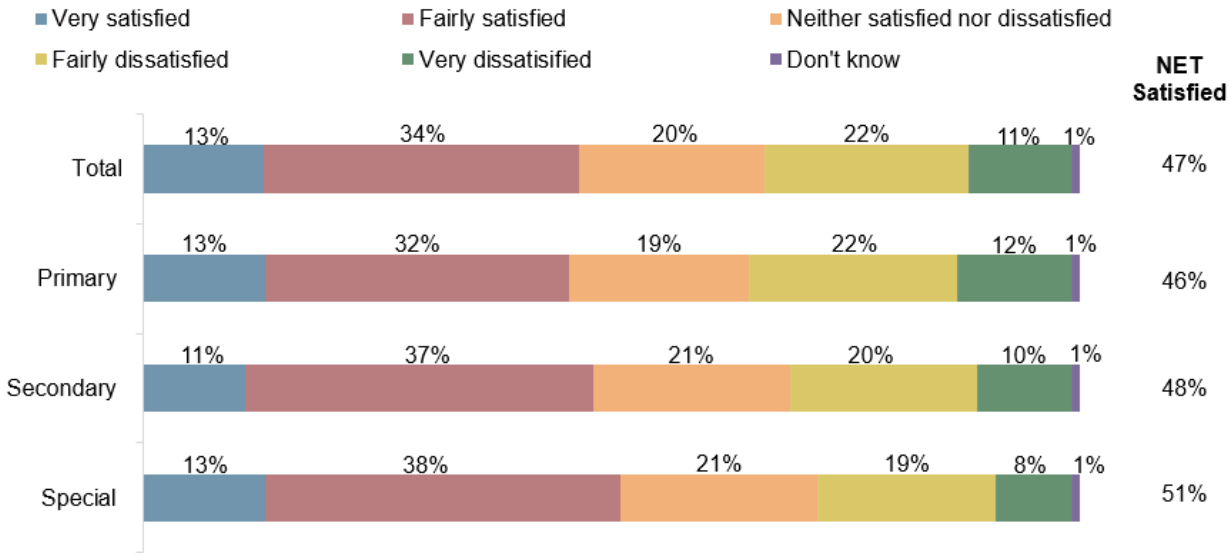
Satisfaction with contract and conditions of employment

Less than half of support staff (47%) are satisfied with their contract and conditions of employment, whilst a third (32%) are dissatisfied. One in five (20%) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Reflecting the pattern seen with overall job satisfaction (see section 4.1), school support staff satisfaction with their contract and conditions is slightly higher in special schools (51%) compared to primary (46%)[6].

[6] 48% of support staff at secondary schools are satisfied with their contract and conditions of employment, but this is not statistically significant when compared to primary or special support staff.

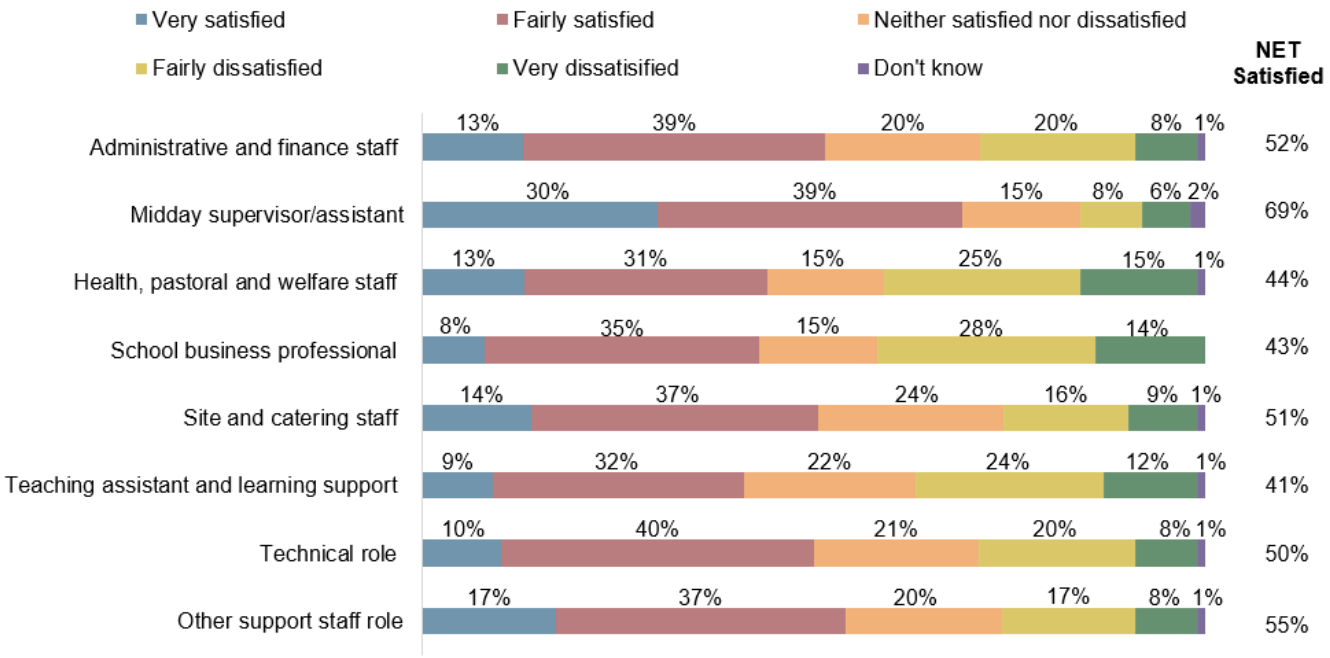
Figure 8: Satisfaction with contract and conditions of employment by total and school phase



Source: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your contract and conditions of employment? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,539; Primary schools: 2,921, Secondary schools: 4,923, Special schools: 1,695

Satisfaction levels with their contract and conditions are highest amongst midday supervisors/assistants (69%). Around half of administrative and finance staff (52%), site and catering staff (51%), and technical staff (50%) are satisfied with their contract and conditions of employment. Satisfaction is lowest amongst health, pastoral and welfare staff (44%), school business professionals (43%) and TAs and learning support staff (41%).

Figure 9: Satisfaction with contract and conditions of employment by support staff role



Source: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your contract and conditions of employment? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,539; Administrative and finance staff: 1,894, Midday supervisor/assistant: 167, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,062, School business professional: 424, Site and catering staff: 524, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,023, Technical role: 920, Other support staff role: 525

While the data shows a correlation between longer tenure and lower satisfaction with contract/conditions, this may be influenced by the different job roles within each tenure group. Satisfaction is highest among those in their role for less than 12 months (60%), before declining to 50% for those with 1-3 years of service and 44% for those with three or more years. This pattern could reflect that certain roles with higher satisfaction, such as midday supervisors/assistants, are more represented in the shorter-tenure group than roles with longer tenure, such as school business professionals

Satisfaction with working arrangements

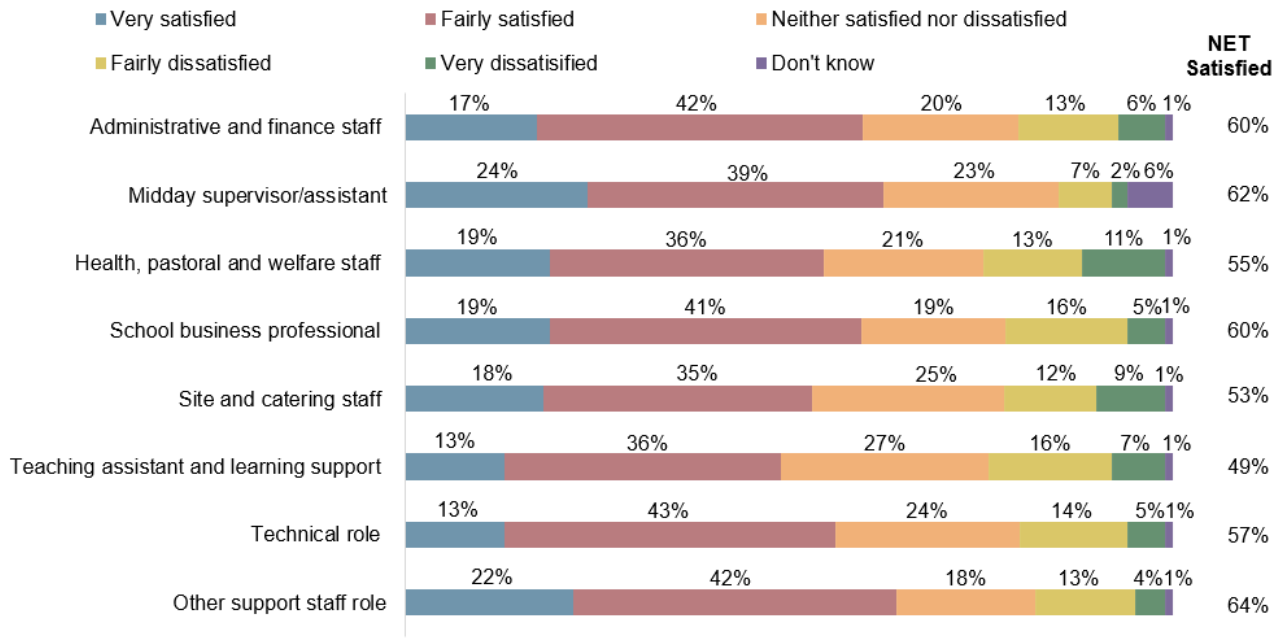
Satisfaction with working arrangements is higher than satisfaction with contracts and conditions, with over half of support staff (53%) reporting they are satisfied and one in five (21%) reporting they are dissatisfied.

In line with the other satisfaction measures, support staff working in special schools report higher levels of satisfaction with their working arrangements (58%, compared to 53% in primary schools and 54% in secondary schools).

As with the other domains of satisfaction, there is some variation by role, albeit relatively minor for this specific measure. Over three in five midday supervisors/assistants (62%),

administrative and finance staff (60%), and school business professionals (60%) are satisfied with their working conditions. Satisfaction is lowest amongst TAs and learning support staff, where half (49%) are satisfied.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with working arrangements by support staff role



Source: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the working arrangements for your post? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,532; Administrative and finance staff: 1,895, Midday supervisor/assistant: 168, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,060, School business professional: 424, Site and catering staff: 524, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,021, Technical role: 917, Other support staff role: 523

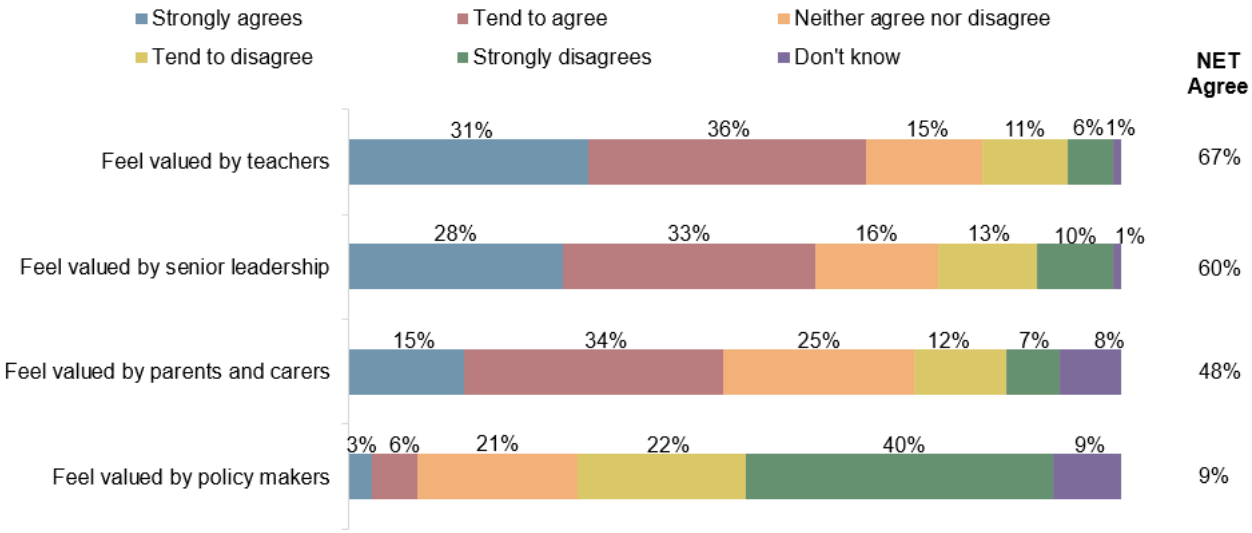
Similar to other satisfaction measures, satisfaction declines over time, with two thirds (66%) of those who have been in post for less than 12 months being satisfied, compared to around half of those who have been in post for three years or more. Similar to satisfaction with working arrangements, this could be impacted by the length of time in role according to different job roles.

Staff perceptions of professional value

To understand their sense of professional value, support staff were asked how valued they felt by four different groups: teachers, senior leaders, parents and policy makers.

Support staff feel most valued by teachers for the work they do (67%). Three in five support staff (60%) feel valued by senior leaders, while nearly half (48%) feel valued by parents and carers. Only one in ten (9%) feel valued by policy makers.

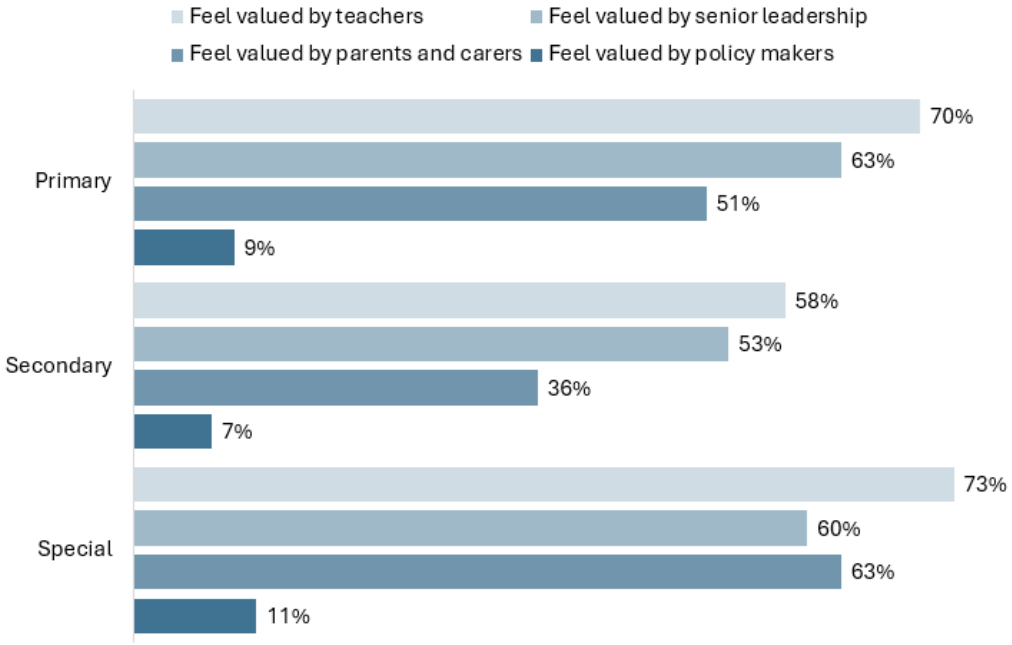
Figure 11: Staff perceptions of professional value



Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 'I feel valued by teachers at my school for the work I do': 9,561; 'I feel valued by senior leaders at my school for the work I do': 9,569; 'I feel valued by parents and carers for the work I do': 9,598; 'I feel valued by policy makers (i.e. the government) for the work I do: 9,584

Support staff in secondary schools feel the least valued by each group compared to staff in special and primary schools as shown in Figure 12. Support staff in special schools feel the most valued.

Figure 12: Staff perceptions of professional value by school phase – NET agree



Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 'I feel valued by teachers at my school for the work I do': 9,561, Primary schools: 2,935, Secondary schools: 4,936, Special schools: 1,690; 'I feel valued by senior leaders at my school for the work I do': 9,569, Primary schools: 2,935, Secondary schools: 4,935, Special schools: 1,699; 'I feel valued by

parents and carers for the work I do': 9,598, Primary schools: 2,946, Secondary schools: 4,949, Special schools: 1,703; 'I feel valued by policy makers (i.e. the government) for the work I do': 9,584, Primary schools: 2,937, Secondary schools: 4,947, Special schools: 1,700.

Staff perceptions of value vary by role. Perhaps linked to their increased opportunity for interactions, TAs and learning support staff and health, pastoral and welfare staff feel most valued by with teachers (73% and 68% respectively) and parents and carers (56% and 63% respectively).

Despite just over two thirds of technicians feeling valued by teachers (68%), they are much less likely to feel valued by senior leaders (47%), parents and carers (20%) and policy makers (4%).

School business professionals feel most appreciated by senior leaders, with three quarters (75%) feeling valued for the work they do. However, they are much less likely to feel valued by teachers (56%), parents and carers (26%) and policy makers (8%).

Site and catering staff feel the least valued across all groups.

Table 9: Staff perceptions of professional value by support staff role

	Feel valued by teachers: NET agree	Feel valued by teachers: NET disagree	Feel valued by senior leadership: NET agree	Feel valued by senior leadership: NET disagree	Feel valued by parents and carers: NET agree	Feel valued by parents and carers: NET disagree	Feel valued by policy makers: NET agree	Feel valued by policy makers: NET disagree
Administrative and finance staff	65%	17%	68%	16%	41%	22%	7%	55%
Midday supervisor/assistant	57%	18%	60%	15%	35%	17%	17%	28%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	68%	15%	70%	17%	63%	15%	10%	66%
School business professional	56%	26%	75%	14%	26%	35%	8%	71%
Site and catering staff	54%	26%	55%	26%	26%	20%	8%	52%
Teaching assistant and learning support	73%	13%	56%	26%	56%	17%	8%	70%
Technical role	69%	19%	47%	32%	20%	24%	4%	65%
Other support staff role	65%	15%	68%	17%	53%	12%	13%	52%

Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 'I feel valued by teachers at my school for the work I do': 9,561, Administrative and finance staff: 1,902, Midday supervisor/assistant: 164, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,064, School business professional: 424, Site and catering staff: 521, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,041, Technical role: 921, Other support staff role: 524; 'I feel valued by senior leaders at my school for the work I do': 9,569, Administrative and finance staff: 1,903, Midday supervisor/assistant: 168, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,066, School business professional: 423, Site and catering staff: 523, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,037, Technical role: 923, Other support staff role: 526; 'I feel valued by parents and carers for the work I do': 9,598, Administrative and finance staff: 1,910, Midday supervisor/assistant: 167, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,067, School business professional: 423, Site and catering staff: 529, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,052, Technical role: 924, Other support staff role: 526; 'I feel valued by policy makers (i.e. the government) for the work I do': 9,584, Administrative and finance staff: 1,905, Midday supervisor/assistant: 164, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,066, School business professional: 424, Site and catering staff: 526, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,050, Technical role: 923, Other support staff role: 526

There is an association between how valued support staff feel and their overall job satisfaction.

Of those who feel satisfied with their job, the majority feel valued by teachers (80%) and senior leaders (77%). Over half (56%) feel valued by parents and carers, and one in eight (13%) feel valued by policy makers. For staff who feel dissatisfied with their job, these percentages are notably lower, with two in five (41%) feeling valued by teachers, 25% feeling valued by senior leaders, 34% feeling valued by parents and carers and 2% feeling valued by policy makers.

Access to wellbeing support

Two in five (40%) support staff are able to access mental health support (such as counselling) or an employee assistance programme or equivalent should they need wellbeing support. A further 16% are able to access staff wellbeing groups and activities. Fifteen percent of support staff said they were not able to access any form of support, while 22% answered don't know.

Support staff in special schools are most likely to have access to wellbeing support, whilst those in primary schools appear the least supported. Three in five (60%) primary school support staff have access to some form of wellbeing service, compared to two thirds (67%) of secondary school support staff and over three quarters (77%) of support staff in special schools.

Table 10: Access to wellbeing support by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
An employee assistance programme or equivalent	20%	18%	23%	23%
Professional supervision	4%	5%	4%	4%
Mental health support (including counselling)	20%	21%	19%	23%
Staff wellbeing groups and activities	16%	14%	19%	25%
Other	2%	2%	2%	2%
None of these	15%	17%	13%	8%
Don't know	22%	24%	20%	15%

Source: What forms of wellbeing support can you access in your current role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Access to wellbeing support is highest amongst those with typically more office-based roles, such as administrative and finance staff (69% have access) and school business professionals (85%), and amongst those in a health, pastoral and welfare role (78%). It is lowest amongst midday supervisors/assistants (36%) and site and catering staff (48%).

Interviews with school leaders showed that some schools use wellbeing support in their benefits packages to attract candidates, provide occupational health processes to manage staff health, and train mental health first aiders. Use and awareness of wellbeing support services is lower amongst those who are less likely to be office based.

Table 11: Access to wellbeing support by support staff role

	An employee assistance programme or equivalent	Professional supervision	Mental health support (including counselling)	Staff wellbeing groups and activities	Other	None of these	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	30%	1%	21%	15%	2%	11%	19%
Midday supervisor/assistant	7%	0%	18%	10%	1%	19%	45%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	26%	18%	18%	14%	2%	11%	11%
School business professional	50%	2%	15%	15%	3%	10%	4%
Site and catering staff	13%	0%	18%	15%	2%	19%	32%
Teaching assistant and learning support	16%	3%	22%	18%	2%	17%	21%
Technical role	18%	1%	22%	22%	2%	9%	25%
Other support staff role	21%	5%	22%	19%	2%	12%	20%

Source: What forms of wellbeing support can you access in your current role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Working practices and conditions

Summary: Working practices and conditions

On average, support staff are contracted to work 28 hours per week. Staff in secondary schools are contracted to work more hours on average (32 hours) than those in primary schools (26 hours) and special schools (30 hours).

However, support staff report actually working, on average, 30 hours in their most recent working week – 2 hours more than they are contracted. Staff in secondary schools report working the most hours in their most recent working week (35), followed by staff in special schools (32) and primary schools (28).

Nearly half of school business professionals (48%) report working 6 hours more in their most recent working week than contracted (40.7 vs. 34.3 hours), and health, pastoral and welfare staff report working 3 hours more than contracted (34.7 vs. 31.3 hours).

Despite the difference between contracted and worked hours, 35% of support staff receive additional pay for extra hours, and 24% can claim Time Off In Lieu (TOIL). A significant portion (32%) report receiving no compensation at all for overtime.

Interviews with school leaders show that most schools follow the NJC pay scales. The survey found that while 47% of support staff are aware of Spinal Column Points, 44% are not. Of the support staff who are aware of Spinal Column Points, just over half (54%) report not knowing which point they are on. Regardless of this, the majority of support staff express dissatisfaction with their salaries, with TAs and learning support staff reporting the highest levels of dissatisfaction (85%). The interviews additionally show that school leaders believe support staff should be paid more, and low pay is a key barrier to recruiting support staff.

Just under half (49%) of support staff report not using formal flexible working arrangements. The school leader interviews found that the in-person nature of certain support staff roles restricts the types of flexible working arrangements schools can offer. However, seven in ten support staff do make use of informal flexible working arrangements. Informal arrangements are most common in secondary schools, and least common in special schools.

The most common type of informal flexible working arrangement is having time off during term time (60%), with a further 23% of staff being able to start late or finish early on request. School business staff, administrative staff, and technical staff are the most likely to use informal flexible working arrangements, while 35% of TAs are unable to use such arrangements.

Support staff who work more hours than usual, are dissatisfied with their pay and do not use informal flexible working arrangements are more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs.

Hours worked and overtime

Contracted hours

On average, support staff are contracted to work 28 hours per week. However, the number of contracted hours varies significantly among the respondents. Nearly half (49%) are contracted to work between 31 and 40 hours per week, making this the most common arrangement. Around a third of staff (28%) have contracts for 21 to 30 hours per week, and a smaller group (20%) work between 1 and 20 hours.

Contracted hours differ by school phase and the specific role of the staff member. Staff in secondary schools are contracted to work more hours on average (32 hours) compared to those in primary (26 hours) and special schools (30 hours).

Table 12: Number of hours support staff are contracted to work per week by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
1-10	9%	13%	2%	3%
11-20	11%	13%	7%	9%
21-30	28%	32%	20%	20%
31-40	49%	39%	69%	63%
41-50	1%	1%	1%	1%
Don’t know	2%	2%	2%	4%
Mean	28	26	32	30

Source: How many hours are you contracted to work per week? Please enter the time to the nearest hour.
Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

School business professionals and technicians report the longest contracted workweeks, averaging 34 and 33 hours, respectively. Staff in administrative and finance, as well as health, pastoral and welfare staff follow closely, with an average of 31 contracted hours. TAs and learning support staff are contracted to work an average of 28 hours a week though there is more variation in hours contracted for this role compared to others (43% are contracted for 31 to 40 hours, while 39% are contracted for 21 to 30 hours per week). Midday supervisors/assistants are contracted to work the fewest hours, with an average of 9 contracted hours per week.

There are no significant differences by employment status, the number of schools a member of support staff works across, or type of employment.

Hours worked in last week

The findings show a discrepancy between contracted hours and the reported time support staff spend working. While the average contract specifies 28 hours per week, support staff report working an average of 30 hours in their most recent working week.

Support staff in secondary schools reported working the most hours (35 hours in their most recent working week), compared to those in primary schools (28) and special schools (31). Those in secondary schools are more likely to report working over 40 hours (19%) in their most recent working week compared to support staff in primary (9%) and special (9%) schools. Conversely, support staff in primary schools are more likely to report working fewer hours.

Nearly half (47%) of support staff in primary schools reported working 30 hours or less in the most recent working week, compared to around one in four support staff in secondary (25%) and special (27%) schools. Support staff in special schools are more likely to report working between 31 and 40 hours in their most recent working week (59%), compared to support staff in primary (41%) and secondary (55%) schools.

Table 13: Number of hours support staff worked in their most recent working week by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
1-10	8%	12%	2%	3%
11-20	9%	10%	6%	7%
21-30	22%	25%	17%	17%
31-40	46%	41%	55%	59%
41-50	11%	9%	18%	8%
51+	1%	0%	1%	1%
Don’t know	12%	3%	1%	4%
Mean	30	28	35	32

Source: Thinking of your most recent working week in your school, how many hours did you work that week? Please enter the time to the nearest hour. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

A discrepancy exists between contracted and reported working hours for several staff groups. School business professionals report working the most overtime in their most recent working week, averaging approximately 6 extra hours. In fact, nearly half (48%) of these professionals report working between 41 and 50 hours, with an additional 5% working over 50 hours. Similarly, staff in health, pastoral and wellbeing, and other support roles report working an average of 3 extra hours in their most recent working week.

Table 14: Number of contracted and worked hours in their most recent working week by support staff role

	Contracted hours mean	Worked hours mean	Hours worked above contracted hours
Administrative and finance staff	31.4	34	2.6
Midday supervisor/assistant	8.7	9.2	0.5
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	31.3	34.7	3.4
School business professional	34.3	40.7	6.4
Site and catering staff	30.2	31.7	1.5
Teaching assistant and learning support	27.9	29.8	1.9
Technical role	32.5	33.9	1.4
Other support staff role	27.9	31.1	3.2

Source: Thinking of your most recent working week in your school, how many hours did you work that week? Please enter the time to the nearest hour. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Recent working week level of intensity

Two thirds (66%) of support staff believe they have worked about the same as usual in their most recent working week, while nearly a third (31%) believe they have worked more than usual. Five percent believe they have worked less than usual.

Over a third (35%) of administrative and finance staff and site and catering staff believe they have worked more than usual in their most recent working week.

Two thirds (67%) of school business professionals said they worked the same as usual in their most recent working week. Given school business professionals had the biggest discrepancy between contracted (34.3) and worked (40.7) hours, this suggests working beyond contracted hours is a regular pattern for school business professionals.

There appears to be a correlation between hours worked and job satisfaction, as support staff who are dissatisfied with work are more likely to believe they have worked more than usual in their most recent week (37%), compared to satisfied support staff (29%).

Overtime compensation

When working overtime, a third of support staff (35%) receive additional pay for the extra hours worked, making it the most common form of compensation. The second most common method is claiming or receiving Time Off in Lieu (TOIL), which 24% of support staff receive. However, a significant portion of support staff (32%) report receiving no compensation for their overtime.

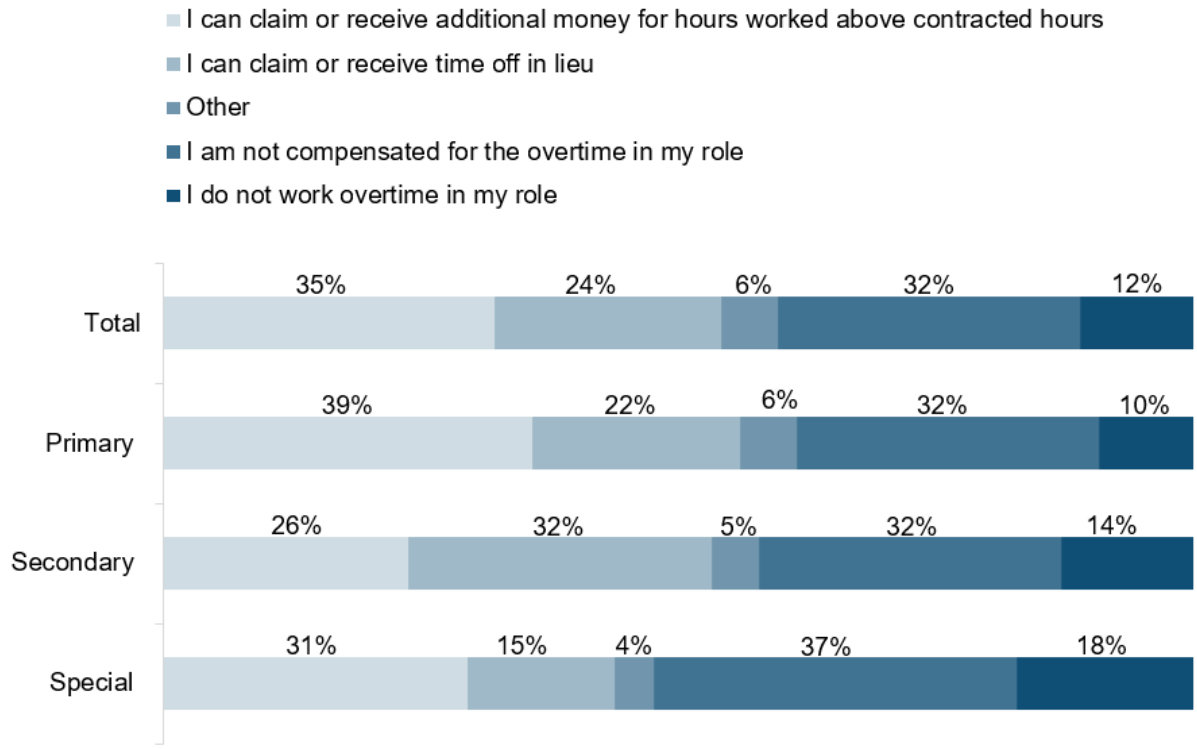
This is supported by findings from the school leader interviews, which revealed that only a small number of leaders provide overtime pay for tasks carried out beyond normal duties or outside of the typical school day. Leaders said support staff were compensated on specific occasions, including for attending (online) training sessions outside of school, and paying staff more hours when they help put up displays around the school (see Chapter 11).

Overtime compensation for support staff varies significantly depending on the school type. In primary and special schools, staff most commonly receive additional pay for extra hours, with 39% of staff in primary and 31% in special schools reporting this. This method is less common in secondary schools, where 26% of support staff receive it.

The most common compensation method in secondary schools is TOIL. Nearly a third (32%) of support staff in secondary schools claim TOIL, compared to 22% in primary schools and just 15% in special schools.

Support staff in special schools are the most likely to report receiving no compensation for their overtime (37%), compared to 32% in both primary and secondary schools. Support staff in special schools are more likely to report they don’t work overtime in their role (primary: 10%, secondary: 14%, special: 18%) and, as shown in section 5.1.2, have the smallest discrepancy between contracted (29.7) and reported (31.4) hours, which could mean fewer formal compensation mechanisms are in place for those who do work overtime.

Figure 13: Overtime compensation by total and school phase



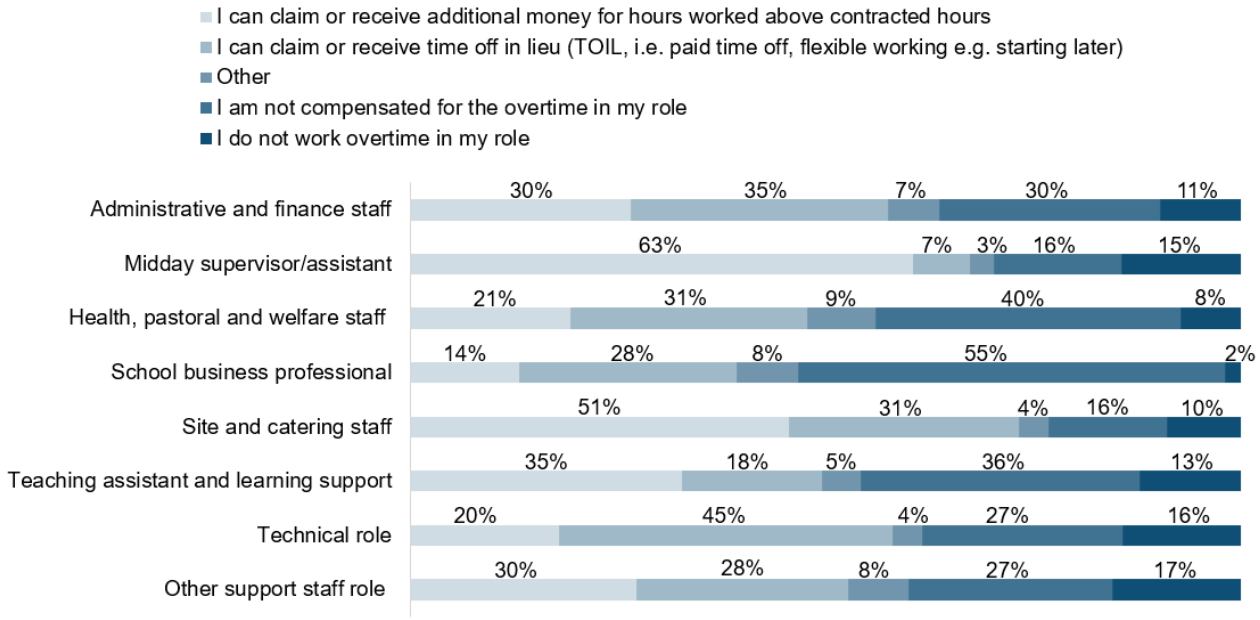
Source: How, if at all, are you compensated for overtime? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

The methods of compensation for overtime work differ significantly across support staff roles. For many, receiving additional pay is the most common practice. About two thirds (63%) of midday supervisors/assistants and half of site and catering staff (51%) report being paid for extra hours. This method is also the main form of compensation for over a third of TAs and learning support staff (35%).

For other roles, TOIL is the more prevalent form of compensation. Nearly half of technical staff (45%) and 35% of administrative and finance staff primarily receive TOIL to compensate for any overtime they work.

Most notably, the roles that report the largest discrepancies between contracted and reported hours are the most likely to receive no compensation at all. Over half (55%) of school business professionals and 40% of health, pastoral and welfare staff report that they are not compensated for their overtime. While over a third (35%) of TAs report being paid for extra hours, 36% state they are not compensated for their overtime.

Figure 14: Overtime compensation by support staff role



Source: How, if at all, are you compensated for overtime? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

A correlation exists between job satisfaction and compensation for overtime. The findings show that support staff who are dissatisfied with their job are significantly more likely to receive no compensation for their extra hours (47%) compared to those who are satisfied (27%). Satisfied staff also more frequently report receiving tangible rewards: 38% receive additional pay for overtime, compared to only 26% of dissatisfied staff, and 26% of satisfied staff receive TOIL, a benefit only 17% of their dissatisfied counterparts report receiving.

Pay and benefits

Spinal Column Points (SCPs)

The National Joint Council (NJC) for local government services pay and conditions maintain pay spines which cover all staff, including school support staff, who are subject to their collective bargaining. Individual employers assess which pay spine point applies to the each of their employees, using the NJC job evaluation guidance, and renumerates accordingly. NJC regularly reviews the pay spine points and agrees on increases, which then apply to employees covered by them. Interviews with school leaders indicate that most schools adhere to the NJC for local government services. Employers who have not signed up to NJC may also choose to follow these pay spines.

Nearly half (47%) of support staff are aware of the NJC SCPs, whilst 44% are not aware of it. School support staff in secondary schools are more likely to be aware of the SCPs (53%) compared to those in primary (46%) and special (43%).

Of those who are aware of the system, over half (54%) report not knowing their own specific point on the scale. Among the 46% of support staff who know their SCPs, nearly one in five (19%) are on a pay scale up to 10, and one in ten (10%) are on a 11-20 pay scale. An additional 8% are on a 21-30 pay scale, and 4% on a 31-43 pay scale. One percent report being on a pay scale of 44 or higher, which is applicable for some roles with greater responsibilities, allowing employers to opt for extended pay spines to reflect this. Five percent are on a different pay scale to that negotiated by the NJC.

Staff in primary schools are the least likely to know their SCP (58% being unaware), followed closely by those in special schools (54%). Staff in secondary schools are the most likely to know their point, with only 46% being unaware.

Table 15: Spinal Column Points category by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
1-10	19%	19%	19%	17%
11-20	10%	10%	10%	9%
21-30	8%	7%	9%	10%
31-43	4%	3%	5%	4%
44+	1%	0%	2%	1%
I am on a different pay scale to that negotiated by the NJC	5%	4%	9%	5%
Don’t know	54%	58%	46%	54%

Source: What Spinal Column Point (SCP) are you on? Base: All who were aware of the NJC spinal column points (excl. non applicable): 4,918; Primary schools: 1,429, Secondary schools: 2,699, Special schools:790

Site and catering staff, TAs and learning support, health, pastoral and welfare staff, and other support staff are the least likely to know what SCP they are on (66%, 65%, 53% and 47% respectively), despite being aware of what these are. In contrast, the majority (92%) of school business professionals know what SCP they are on, and over one in four are on the 21-30 or 31-43 pay scales (27% and 28%, respectively).

Three in five (61%) administrative and finance staff know their SCP and over one in five (21%) are on the 1-10 pay scale. Similarly, over half (55%) of staff in technical roles know their SCP, and over one in five (23%) are on the 1-10 pay scale.

Table 16: Spinal Column Points category by support staff role

	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-43	44+	I am on a different pay scale to that negotiated by the NJC	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	21%	16%	12%	5%	1%	7%	39%
Midday supervisor/assistant	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	82%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	17%	12%	10%	2%	0%	7%	53%
School business professional	5%	7%	27%	28%	8%	16%	8%
Site and catering staff	15%	8%	7%	2%	0%	2%	66%
Teaching assistant and learning support	22%	7%	2%	0%	0%	3%	65%
Technical role	23%	12%	7%	3%	0%	9%	45%
Other support staff role	16%	10%	15%	5%	0%	6%	47%

Source: What Spinal Column Point (SCP) are you on? Base: All who were aware of the NJC Spinal Column Points (excl. non applicable): 4,918; Administrative and finance staff: 1,198, Midday supervisor/assistant: 32*, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 566, School business professional: 389, Site and catering staff: 250, Teaching assistant and learning support: 1,631, Technical role: 556, Other support staff role: 296

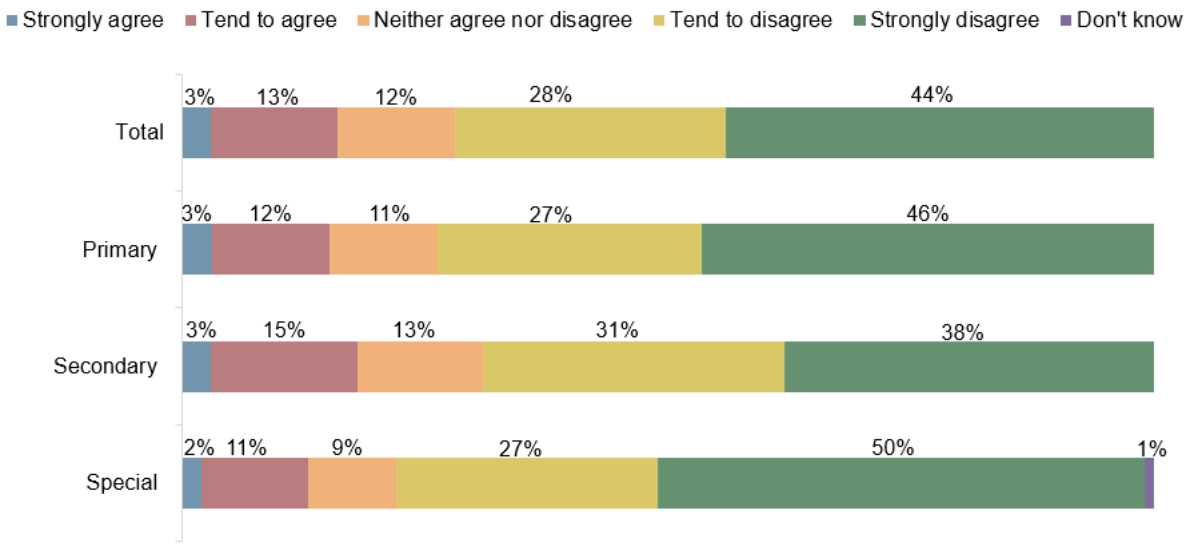
Satisfaction with salary

Few (16%) support staff agree they are satisfied with the pay they receive for the work they do, and nearly three-quarters (72%) disagree with the statement.

Findings from the school leader interviews suggest that dissatisfaction with pay among support staff was a major barrier to both recruitment and retention. School leaders acknowledged that salaries are often uncompetitive with other sectors, such as retail, and do not fairly match the workload. This led many leaders to express significant concern that their support staff are not being compensated appropriately for the work they do (see Chapter 11).

The highest levels of dissatisfaction with pay are found in special schools (77%), followed by primary schools (73%) and secondary schools (68%). Staff in special schools and primary schools also express the strongest disagreement, with 50% and 46% respectively stating they 'strongly disagree' that their pay is satisfactory, compared to 38% in secondary.

Figure 15: Satisfaction with salary by total and school phase

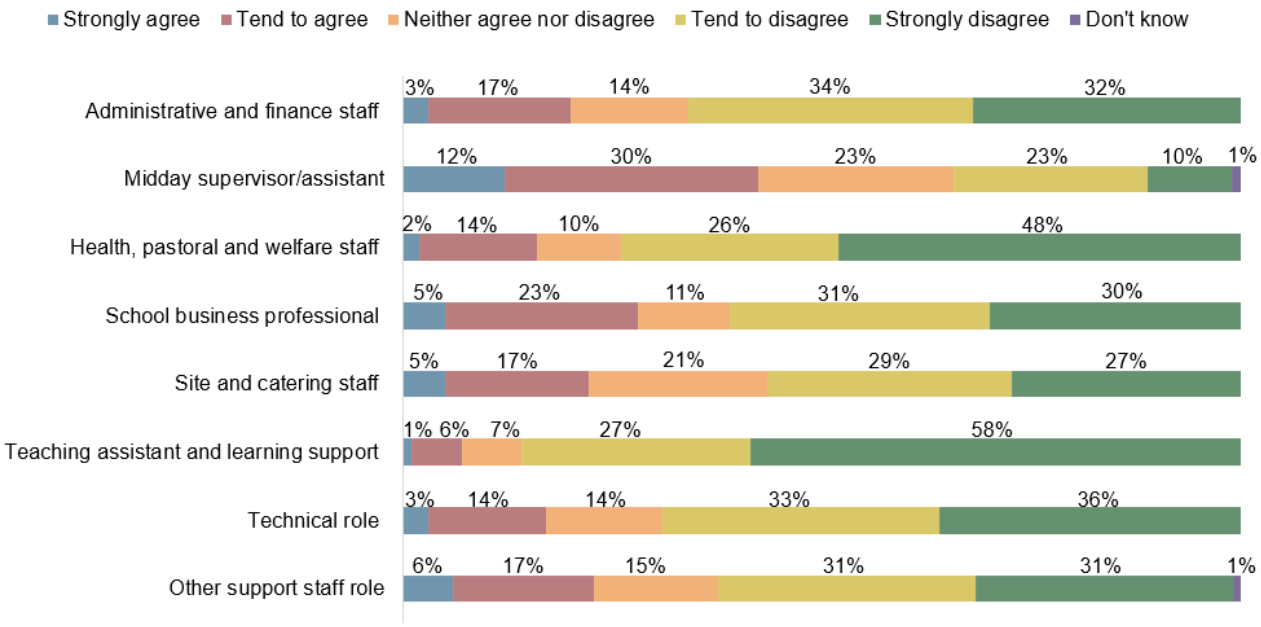


Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I am satisfied with the salary I receive for the work I do'? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,521; Primary schools: 2,921, Secondary schools: 4,906, Special schools: 1,694

TAs and learning support staff express the highest levels of dissatisfaction, with 85% disagreeing they are satisfied with their pay (58% strongly disagreeing). The second most dissatisfied group is health, pastoral and welfare staff, where nearly three-quarters (74%) disagree with the statement (48% strongly disagree). Technical staff are the third least satisfied group with their pay, with 69% disagreeing they are satisfied with their pay (36% strongly disagreeing).

In contrast to the trends seen across other roles, midday supervisors/assistants report a significantly higher level of satisfaction with their pay. This group stands out as the most satisfied, with 42% of them agreeing that they receive satisfactory pay for the work they do, and 33% disagreeing.

Figure 16: Satisfaction with salary by support staff role



Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I am satisfied with the salary I receive for the work I do'? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,521; Administrative and finance staff: 1,885, Midday supervisor/assistant: 168, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,061, School business professional: 423, Site and catering staff: 521, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,031, Technical role: 913, Other support staff role: 519

The findings suggests that dissatisfaction with pay contributes to general job dissatisfaction. The vast majority (92%) of staff who report being dissatisfied with their job also disagree that they are satisfied with their salary, compared to 62% of staff who are satisfied with their job.

A comparison with the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools (DISS) survey provides a broader context for these findings, suggesting that dissatisfaction with pay has been a growing trend over time. The DISS survey noted a decline in overall pay satisfaction among staff, with the proportion of satisfied employees falling from 51% to 44% between the first and final survey waves. During the same period, the share of dissatisfied staff rose from 32% to 40%. Furthermore, the DISS survey similarly identified TAs and technicians as being among the least satisfied roles in its conclusion. In that survey, 51% of TAs and 41% of technicians reported dissatisfaction with their pay.

Contribution to workplace pension scheme

The majority of support staff report are currently paying into their workplace pension scheme (95%), and only 5% said they have opted out of the scheme.

Participation in workplace pension schemes is extremely high among all support staff roles. In particular, those in administrative and finance staff and school business professionals are the most likely to be paying into their scheme, with 97% of them currently contributing.

In contrast, some groups are somewhat more likely to have opted out of the pension scheme. Midday supervisors/assistants are the most likely to do so, with 10% of staff in this role reporting they have opted out. There are no significant differences in pension participation based on school phase, overall job satisfaction, or employment status.

Over half (58%) of those who have opted out report that they cannot afford the contributions from their salary. A further 15% state they do not see the value in joining the scheme, while the remaining 28% cite other reasons.

There are no significant differences based on school phase, role types, or employment status.

Flexible working arrangements

Formal flexible working arrangements

This section relates to the additional flexibility offered within an average 30-hours-per-week contract, which often aligns with term time. It specifically outlines how these contracted hours can be arranged flexibly to accommodate the needs of school support staff.

Flexible working arrangements are not a widespread practice for support staff, with nearly half (49%) reporting not working in any of the common flexible options cited. Support staff in secondary schools are the least likely to work flexibly, with over half (56%) reporting they do not use any of the options cited. The most prevalent arrangement is part-time work, which is utilised by 31% of the support staff workforce[7].

Part-time arrangements are considerably more common in primary schools (35%) than in secondary or special schools (22% for both). Staggered hours (different start and finish times for staff) are used more frequently in secondary schools (8%) compared to primary and special schools (4%), while annualised hours (total hours spread across a year) are most common in special schools (9%), compared to primary (6%) and secondary (7%).

Table 17: Formal flexible working arrangements by total and school phase

[7] This is lower than the percentage of support staff recorded as part-time in the SWFC (79%). This could've been due to interpretation differences of "part-time" between respondents in the survey and the SWFC.

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
Part-time within my role	31%	35%	22%	22%
Job share	2%	2%	2%	1%
Annualised hours	6%	6%	7%	9%
Staggered hours	5%	4%	8%	4%
Phase retirement	1%	1%	1%	1%
Compressed hours	2%	1%	2%	2%
None of the above	49%	45%	56%	52%
Don't know	8%	8%	6%	11%

Source: Do you currently work in the following ways? Base: All respondents: 9626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Midday supervisors/assistants are a notable exception to the general trend, with a majority (60%) working part-time. In contrast, staff in most other roles are more likely to not work in the cited flexible arrangements. School business professionals report the least flexibility, with 63% stating they do not use any of the listed flexible working arrangements. Findings from the school leader interviews show that while leaders want to offer flexible working arrangements, leaders often find them difficult to implement. The primary reason cited is the on-site nature of many support staff roles, particularly for TAs and learning support and site and catering staff, which makes arrangements like remote working inherently challenging (see Chapter 11).

Finally, the employer type also influences the potential for support staff to work flexibly. Staff employed by an agency are the most likely to report not working in the cited flexible arrangements (66%). Staff employed directly by a governing body or a school / trust / Local Authority are more likely to be working part-time (27% and 31% respectively), indicating more established flexibility within direct employment structures. There are no significant differences based on job satisfaction.

Table 18: Formal flexible working arrangements by support staff role

	Part-time within my role	Job share	Annualised hours	Staggered hours	Phased retirement	Compressed hours	None of the above	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	33%	5%	5%	6%	1%	3%	49%	4%
Midday supervisor/assistant	60%	2%	4%	2%	1%	0%	21%	12%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	26%	1%	5%	3%	2%	2%	58%	6%
School business professional	19%	1%	7%	6%	2%	8%	63%	0%
Site and catering staff	25%	0%	6%	14%	0%	2%	48%	6%
Teaching assistant and learning support	29%	2%	7%	4%	1%	1%	49%	10%
Technical role	23%	3%	5%	9%	1%	2%	56%	5%
Other support staff role	24%	1%	11%	6%	0%	2%	52%	7%

Source: Do you currently work in the following ways? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Informal flexible working arrangements

Informal flexible working arrangements are more common than formal ones, with the ability to take time off during term time on request (60%) the most prevalent. The second most common arrangement is the ability to start late or finish early on request, used by 23% of staff. Despite this, a significant portion of the workforce, nearly a third (30%), report not using any informal flexible arrangements.

The use of these arrangements varies by school phase, with secondary schools tending to be the most flexible. In secondary schools, 64% of staff can take time off on request, and 29% can start late or finish early. In contrast, special schools are the least flexible, with 34% of staff reporting they do not use any informal arrangements, compared to 30% in primary and 27% in secondary schools. Support staff in primary schools are more likely to be offered a wellbeing day (15%) than in secondary (8%) and special (9%).

Table 19: Informal flexible working arrangements by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
Ability to start late or finish early on request	23%	21%	29%	20%
Ability to take time off during term time on request	60%	60%	64%	55%
Flexibility to work from home on request	7%	6%	8%	7%
Flexibility to complete specific tasks off school site	7%	7%	7%	7%
Take a wellbeing day	12%	15%	8%	9%
None of the above	30%	30%	27%	34%
Don't know	3%	3%	3%	4%

Source: And do you currently work in any of these ways? Base: All respondents: 9626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Informal flexibility also differs by role. School business staff report the most use of informal arrangements, with 73% able to take time off on request and 48% able to start late, finish early, or work from home. Technical and administrative staff also report high levels of informal flexibility. Roles such as midday supervisors/assistants and TAs and learning support staff have the most rigid arrangements, with 35% of them reporting they do not use any of the informal flexible arrangements.

Table 20: Informal flexible working arrangements by support staff role

	Ability to start late or finish early on request	Ability to take time off during term time on request	Flexibility to work from home on request	Flexibility to complete specific tasks off school site	Take a wellbeing day	None of the above	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	36%	71%	14%	10%	13%	20%	2%
Midday supervisor/assistant	17%	56%	1%	4%	9%	35%	7%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	28%	63%	14%	10%	15%	27%	2%
School business professional	48%	73%	48%	40%	16%	15%	0%
Site and catering staff	35%	60%	3%	5%	13%	27%	5%
Teaching assistant and learning support	12%	56%	0%	3%	11%	35%	3%
Technical role	44%	72%	8%	10%	11%	19%	2%
Other support staff role	33%	67%	16%	17%	12%	23%	3%

Source: And do you currently work in any of these ways? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Finally, use of informal flexibility arrangements appears to be linked with job satisfaction. Dissatisfied support staff are significantly more likely to report having no flexible arrangements (40%) compared to their satisfied colleagues (26%). There is no evidence of significant differences in the availability of these arrangements based on employment status or an employee's time in their role.

Support staff key tasks and activities

Summary: Support staff key tasks and activities

The tasks and responsibilities support staff undertake vary considerably. This chapter describes the everyday activities performed by support staff across a range of roles. In addition to the predefined responsibility options, support staff could also add other responsibilities that were not included in these options.

In terms of office-based staff, administrative staff handle general administrative tasks (97%) and communication (95%), while admissions staff and HR staff have specific administrative functions. Under 'other responsibilities', 3% of HR staff report managing staff absences. Around three in five finance staff are responsible for managing financial procedures and systems (60%) and reporting (58%). Around four in five school business professionals manage contracts (85%), staff (85%), facilities (84%), and lead or support income generation (78%). Nearly three-quarters (73%) help develop policies and procedures (i.e. on child protection, health and safety, data protection). Three in five (60%) handle school marketing and communications, and 58% develop training opportunities. IT technicians ensure the technical infrastructure runs smoothly by resolving issues and managing support requests (100%), and maintaining hardware, software, and networks (99%). Meanwhile, food, science, art, and design technicians focus on preparing resources and equipment for lessons (99%) and managing supplies and equipment for lessons (97%).

In terms of pupil-facing staff, the majority of teaching assistants and learning support staff support individuals and groups inside (90%) and outside (85%) the classroom, and support teachers in monitoring, assessing and recording pupil progress/activities (77%). Almost seven in ten (69%) TAs supervise classes in the teacher's absence. Cover supervisors also supervise learning in the absence of a teacher (92%), and 4% report marking/assessing pupil work. Almost three quarters (73%) of behaviour management staff assess pupils' needs, and over half (51%) train other staff on behaviour management. Just over two-thirds (68%) of attendance and family support staff develop links with pupils transferring into the school. Over half (55%) of pupil wellbeing staff develop and monitor individual action plans, with about a third (35%) providing support packages for pupils following an exclusion or absence.

Eighty six percent of midday supervisors manage behaviour, and three in five (60%) encourage healthy eating. Half (50%) liaise with colleagues on meeting pupil needs, and over two in five (42%) plan and organise breaktime activities. Under 'other responsibilities', 3% report carrying out health and safety tasks. Early years staff support personal care and development needs (e.g. mealtimes, toileting) (93%), and behaviour (84%). Over half are involved in monitoring children's progress (56%) and planning (51%), though fewer contribute to the design of activities (46%) and individual education plans, including for children with SEND (24%).

Of staff providing other forms of support, site staff focus on maintenance, compliance, and security, while catering staff concentrate on meal preparation and safety. Both handle health and safety and ordering/procurement tasks. Nearly half (46%) of site staff assist with school lettings. Over half (57%) of catering staff plan balanced menus, factoring in dietary needs, budget constraints, and special needs.

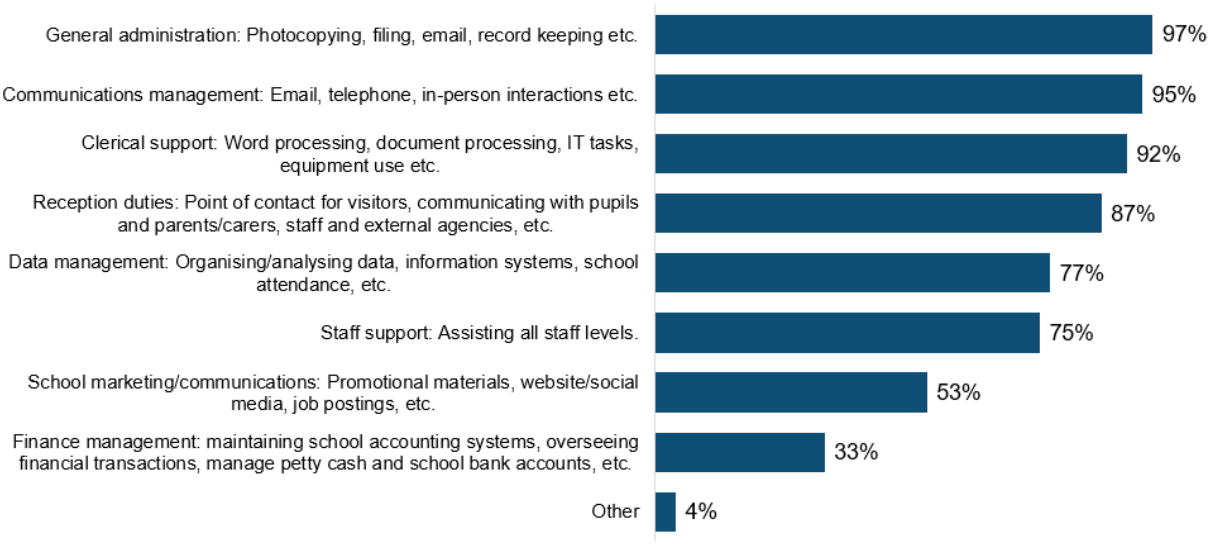
Over two in five (21%) of food and science technicians assess pupils' work on using equipment/conducting experiments. Library and resource centre staff manage facilities and resources, with 30% reporting 'other' duties, such as running book clubs and events.

Administrative staff

The vast majority of administrative staff[8] are involved in general administration (97%), and the majority are involved in communication management (95%), clerical support (92%), and reception duties (87%). Around three quarters are also involved in data management (77%) and staff support (75%). Over half of staff are involved in school marketing / communications (53%), and a third in finance management (33%).

[8] Receptionist, office support, personal assistant to the head teacher and admissions support

Figure 17: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Administrative staff

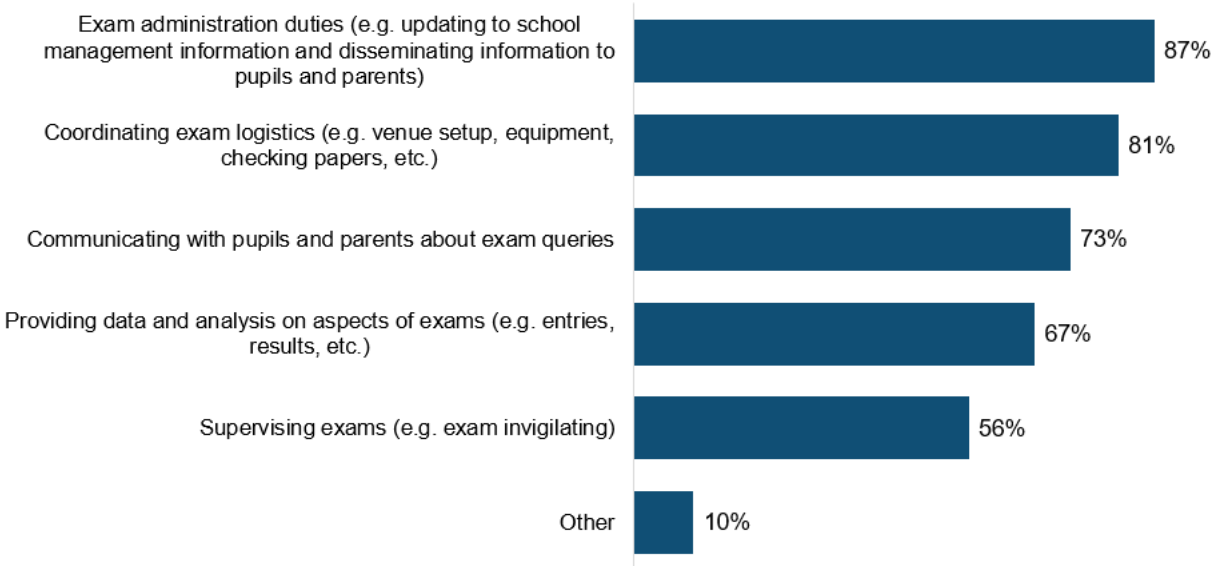


Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Administrative staff: 1,187

Exam-related staff

The key responsibilities of those with examination-related tasks include exam administration duties (87%) and coordination of exam logistics (81%). Over seven in ten are also involved in communicating with pupils and parents about exam queries (73%) and two thirds in providing data and analysis on aspects of exam such as entries and results (67%). Over half are involved in supervising exams (56%).

Figure 18: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Exam-related staff

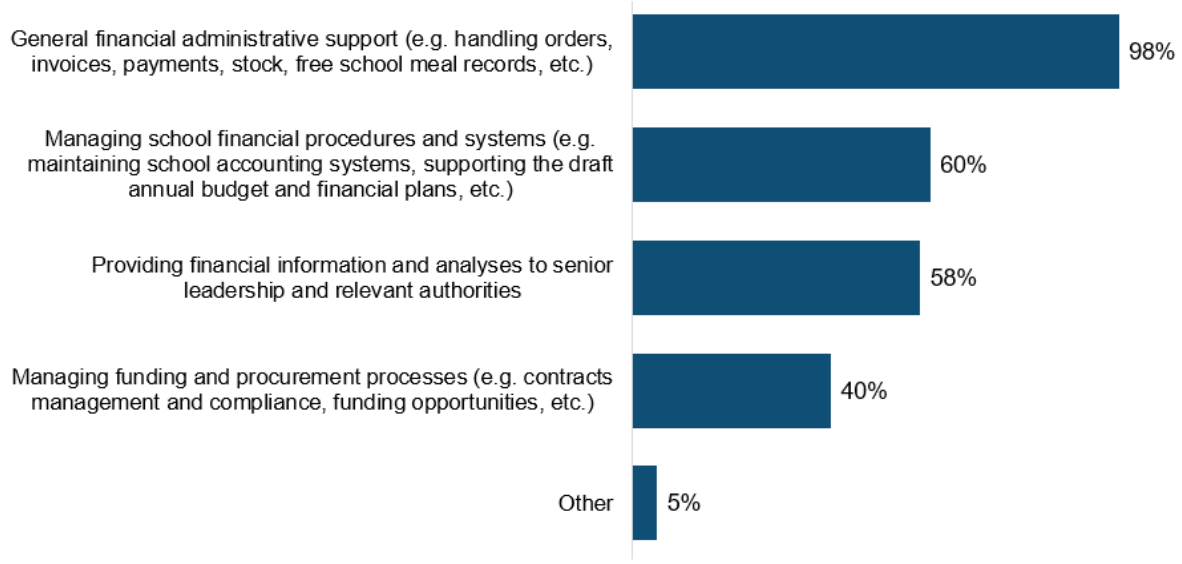


Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Exam-related responsibilities: 165

Finance-related staff

The vast majority of those with finance-related responsibilities[9] are responsible for or involved in general financial administrative support (98%). The second most common responsibility is managing the school's financial procedures and systems (60%), followed by providing financial information and analyses to senior leadership and relevant authorities (58%), and managing funding procurement processes (40%).

Figure 19: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Finance-related staff



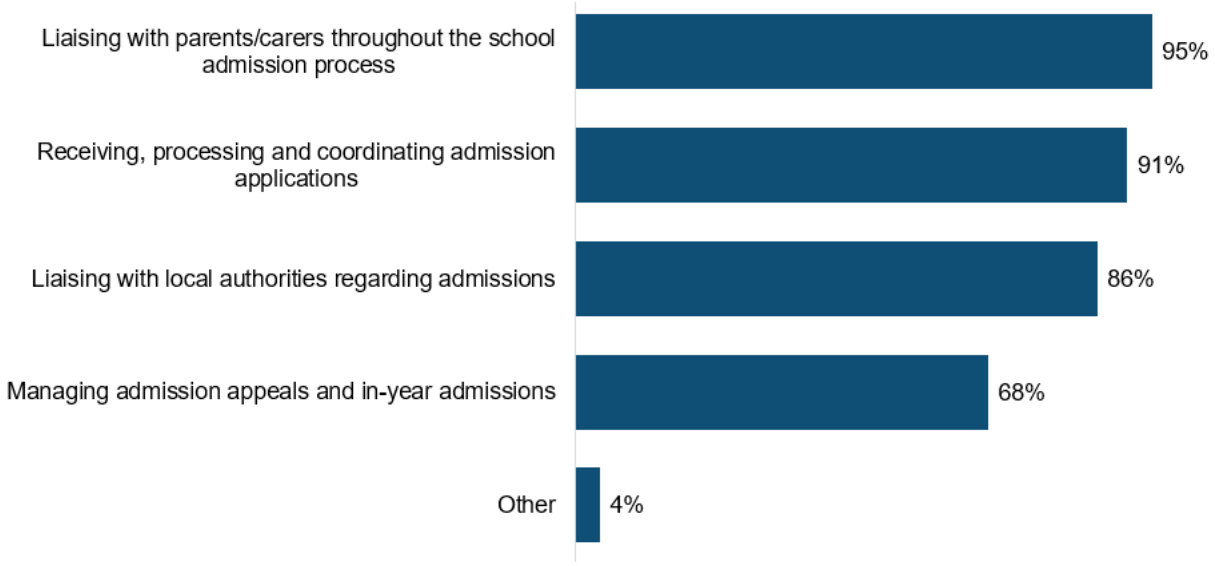
Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Finance-related responsibilities: 466

[9] Finance support and bursar

Admissions staff

The majority of admissions staff are liaising with parents/carers throughout the admission process (95%), receiving, processing, and coordinating admission applications (91%) and liaising with Local Authorities regarding admission (86%). Over two thirds manage admission appeals and in-year admissions (68%).

Figure 20: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Admissions staff



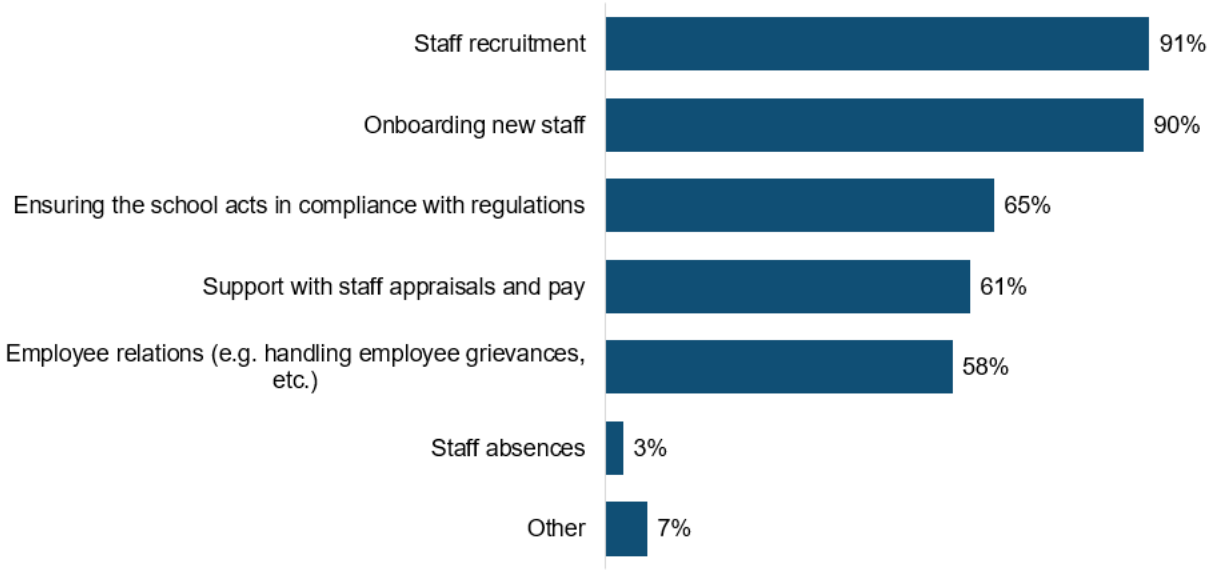
Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Admissions staff: 311

HR staff

The majority of HR staff are involved in staff recruitment (91%) and onboarding new staff (90%). Fewer HR staff are involved in ensuring the schools acts in compliance with regulations (65%), supporting with staff appraisals and pay (61%) and handling employee relations (58%).

Support staff had the option to add any additional tasks that weren't included in the pre-coded answer options. Three percent of HR staff report being involved in managing staff absences.

Figure 21: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – HR staff



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: HR and administrative staff: 226

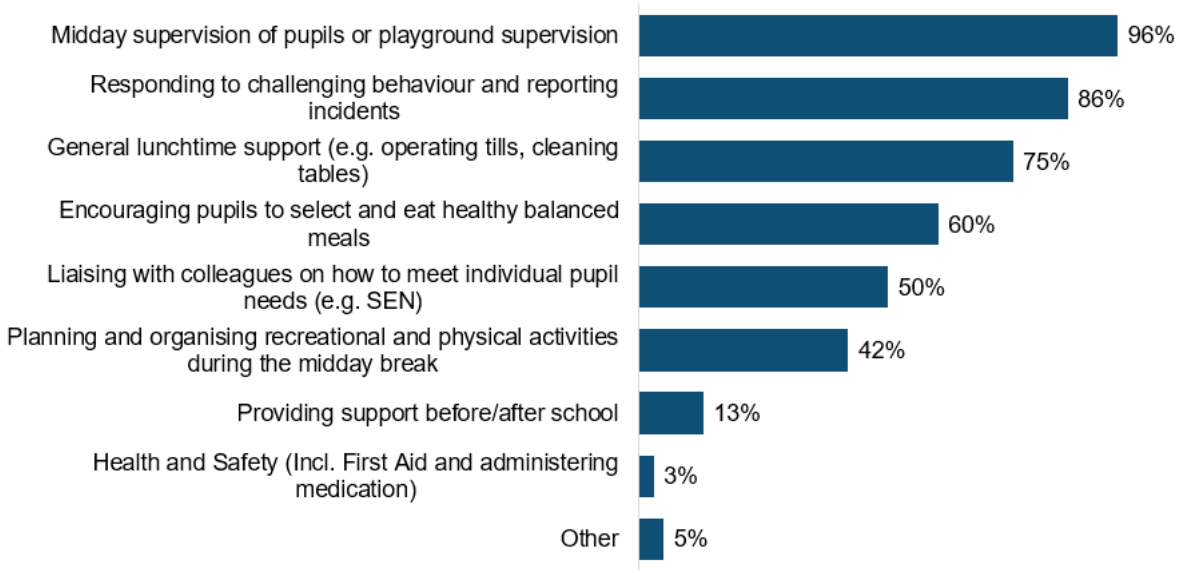
Midday supervisor/assistant

The vast majority of midday supervisor/assistants are involved in or responsible for midday supervision of pupils or playground supervision (96%). This is closely followed by responding to challenging behaviour and reporting incidents (86%) and providing general lunchtime support (75%).

Three in five are involved in encouraging pupils to select and eat healthy balanced meals (60%), half liaise with colleagues on how to meet individual pupil needs (50%), and over two in five plan and organise recreational and physical activities during the midday break (42%). Fewer midday supervisors/assistants provide support before/after school (13%).

Three percent of midday supervisors/assistants report an additional task that wasn't included in the answer options, which is to carry out health and safety related tasks.

Figure 22: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Midday supervisors/assistants



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Midday supervisors/assistants: 274

Health, pastoral and welfare staff

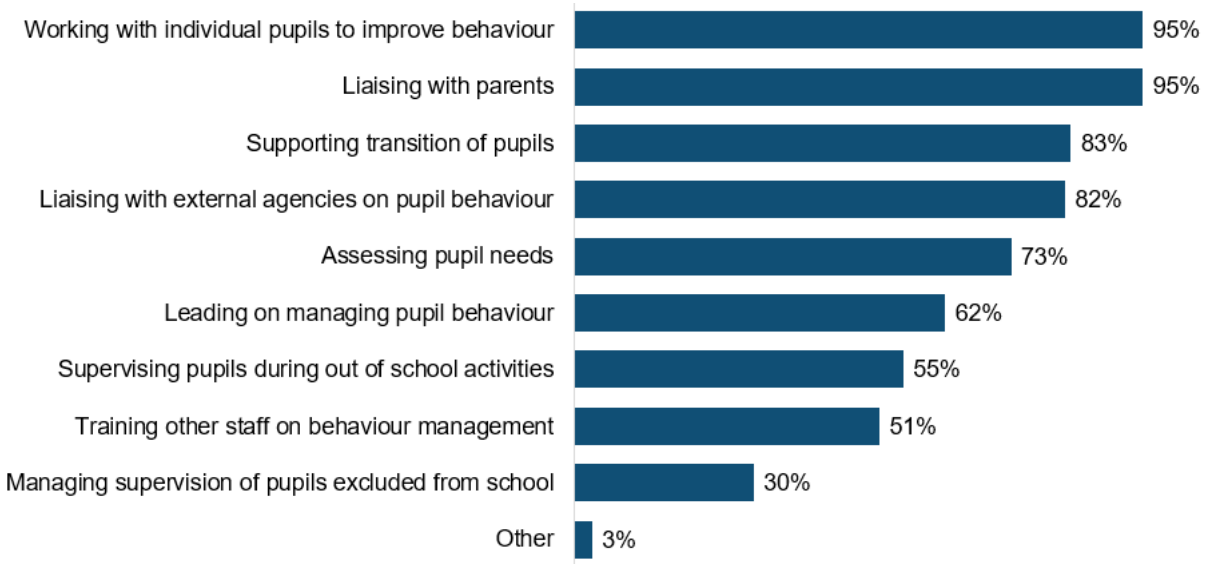
In this section, the responsibilities of four types of health, pastoral and welfare staff are covered in detail. These include behaviour management staff, learning mentors, school attendance and family support staff, and pupil wellbeing management staff.

Occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, and school nurses were also surveyed, but the base sizes for these groups are too small for analysis.

Behaviour management staff

The majority of behaviour management staff work with individual pupils to improve behaviour and liaise with parents (both 95%). Over four in five support the transition of pupils (83%) and liaise with external agencies on pupil behaviour (82%). Almost three quarters of these staff are involved in assessing pupils' needs (73%) and over three in five lead on managing pupil behaviour (62%). Over half supervise pupils during out of school activities (55%) and train other staff on behaviour management (51%). Fewer staff are involved in managing supervision of pupils excluded from school (30%).

Figure 23: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Behaviour management staff

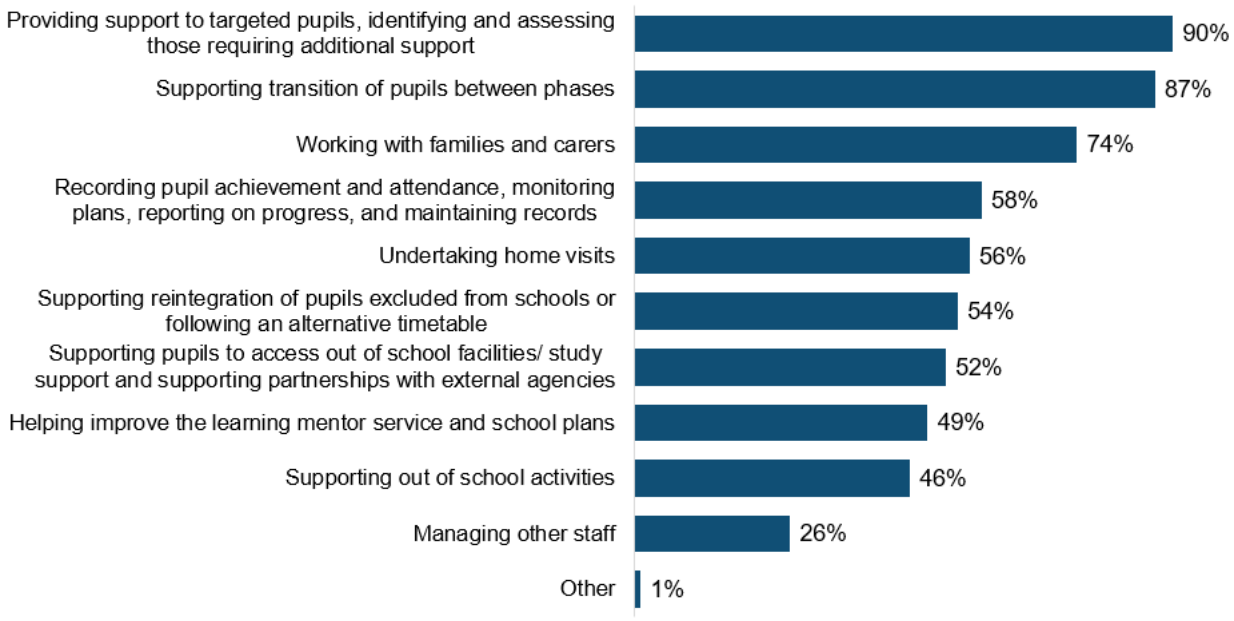


Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Behaviour management: 333

Learning mentors

The majority of learning mentors provide support to targeted pupils and identify and assess those requiring additional support (90%), support the transition of pupils between phases (87%), and work with families and carers (74%). Over half record pupil achievement and attendance, monitor plans, report on progress, and maintain records (58%), undertake home visits (56%), support reintegration of pupils excluded from schools or following an alternative timetable (54%), and support pupils to access out of school facilities/study support and support partnerships with external agencies (52%). Nearly half of these staff help improve the learning mentor service and school plans (49%) and support out of school activities (46%). Fewer learning mentors are responsible for managing other staff (26%).

Figure 24: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Learning mentor



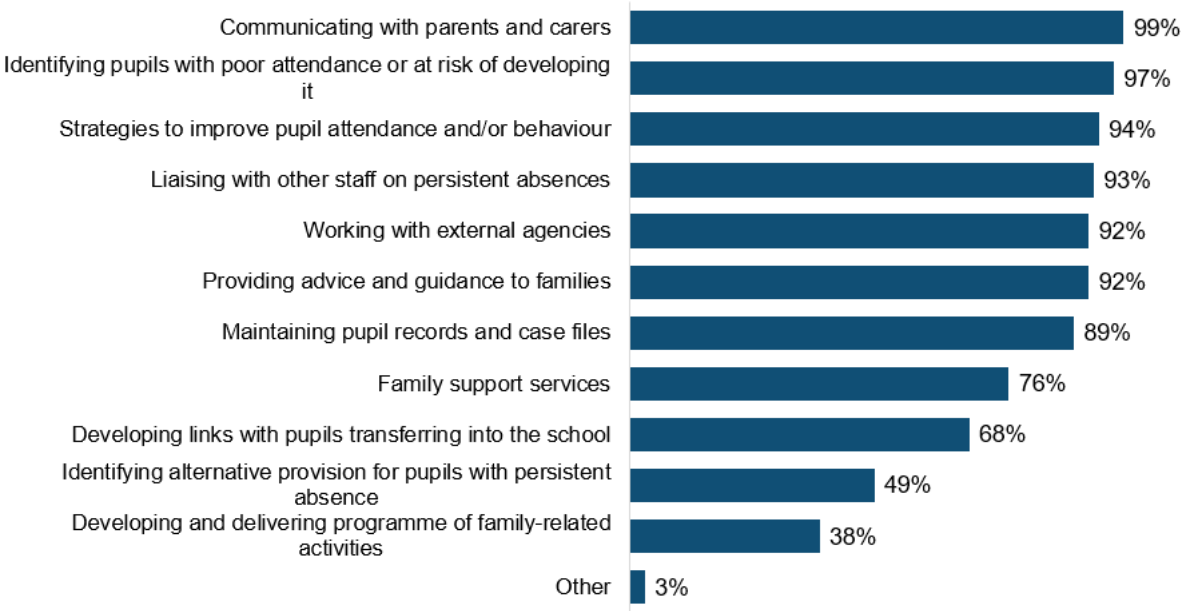
Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Learning mentor: 139

School attendance and family support staff

Staff involved in school attendance and family support have several key responsibilities. Almost all are communicating with parents and carers (99%), and the vast majority are identifying pupils with poor attendance or at risk of developing it (97%), and most are designing strategies to improve pupil attendance and/or behaviour (94%), liaising with other staff on persistent absences (93%), or providing advice and guidance to families and working with external agencies (both 92%). Nearly nine in ten work with external agencies and maintain pupil records and case files (89%), and over three quarters provide family support services (76%).

Over two thirds of these staff develop links with pupils transferring into the school (68%), and nearly half identify alternative provision for pupils with persistent absence (49%). Fewer staff develop and deliver a programme of family-related activities (38%).

Figure 25: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – School attendance and family support staff



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: School attendance and family support: 414

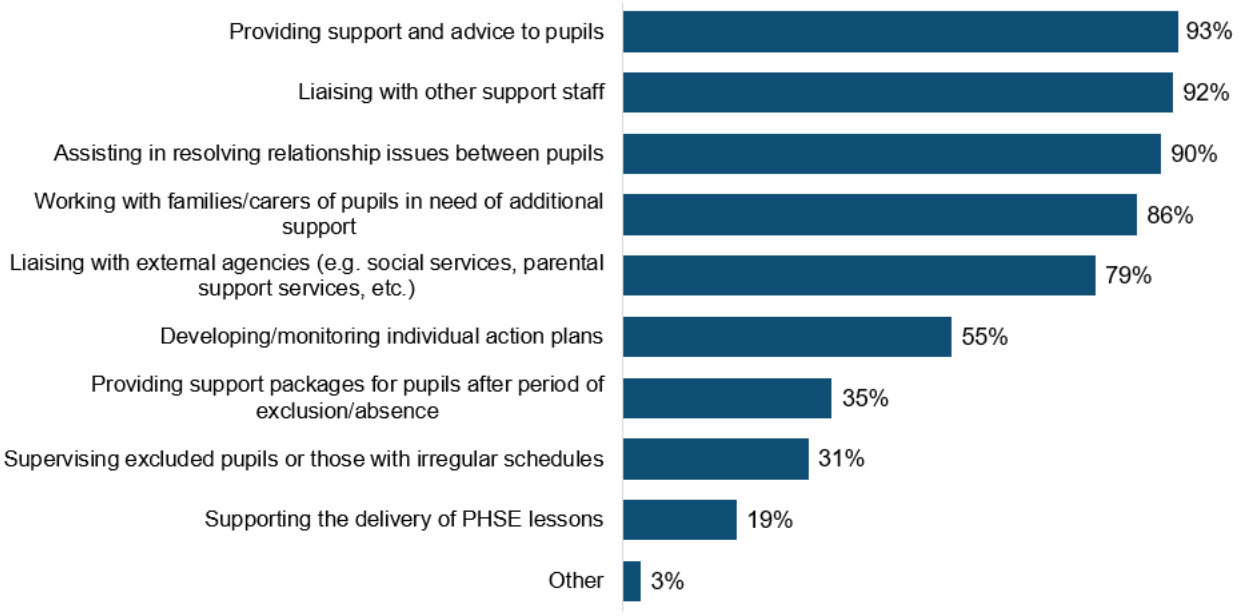
Pupil wellbeing management staff

Staff involved in pupil wellbeing management[10] are mostly providing support and advice to pupils (93%), liaising with other support staff (92%), assisting in resolving relationship issues between pupils (90%), working with families / carers of pupils in need of additional support (86%), and liaising with external agencies such as social services (79%).

Over half are developing and monitoring individual action plans (55%), and about a third are providing support packages for pupils after period of exclusion / absence (35%) and supervising excluded pupils or those with irregular schedules (31%). Fewer of these staff are also supporting with the delivery of PHSE lessons (19%).

[10] Pupil wellbeing support, pastoral support and mental health support.

Figure 26: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Pupil wellbeing management staff



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Pupil wellbeing management: 712

School business professional

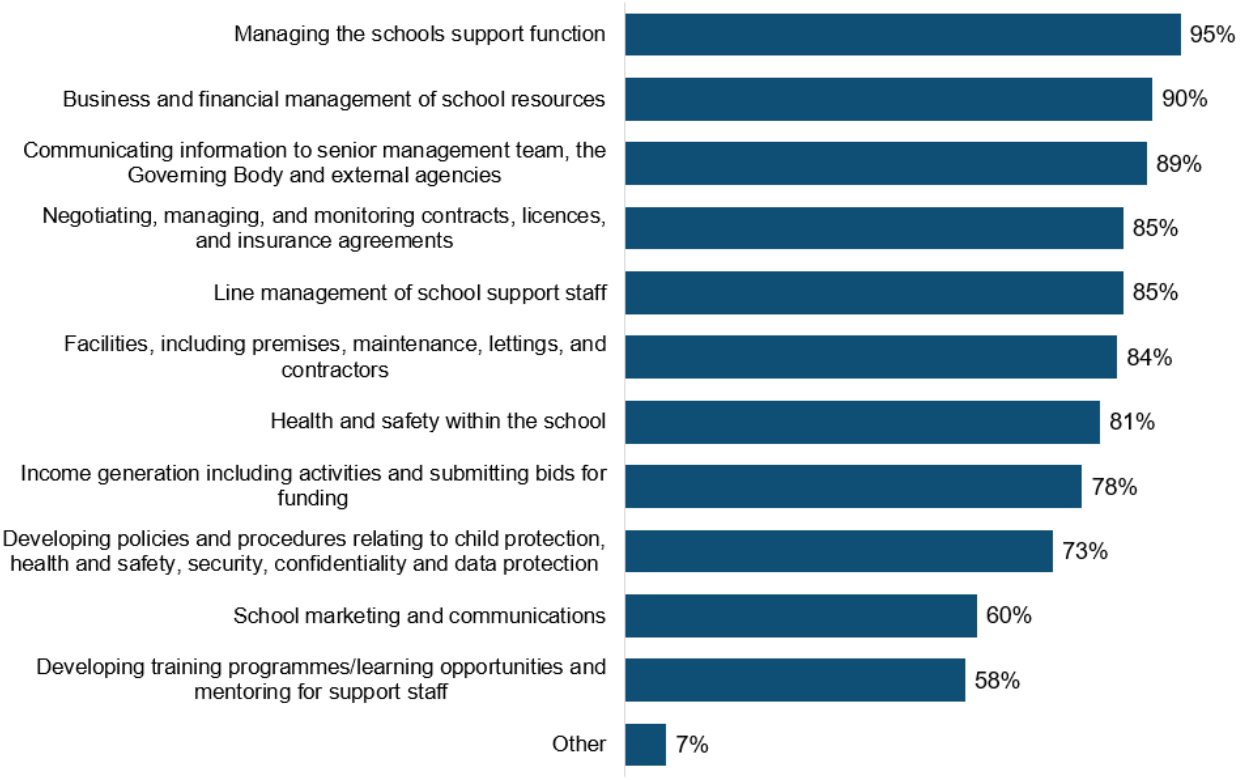
The majority of school business professionals are responsible for or involved in managing the schools support function (95%), business and financial management of the school (90%), and communicating information to senior management team, the governing body, or external agencies (89%).

Over four in five are line managing school support staff (85%), negotiating, managing, and monitoring contracts, licenses, and insurance agreements (85%), taking care of facilities, including premises, maintenance, lettings, and contractors (84%) or responsible for health and safety within the school (81%).

Around three quarters are responsible for or involved in income generation including activities and submitting bids for funding (78%) and developing policies and procedures relating to child protection, health and safety, security, confidentiality and data protection (73%).

Three in five school business professionals are involved in school marketing and communications (60%) and nearly three in five are involved in developing training programmes / learning opportunities and mentoring for support staff (58%).

Figure 27: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – School business professionals



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: School business professionals: 424

Site and catering staff

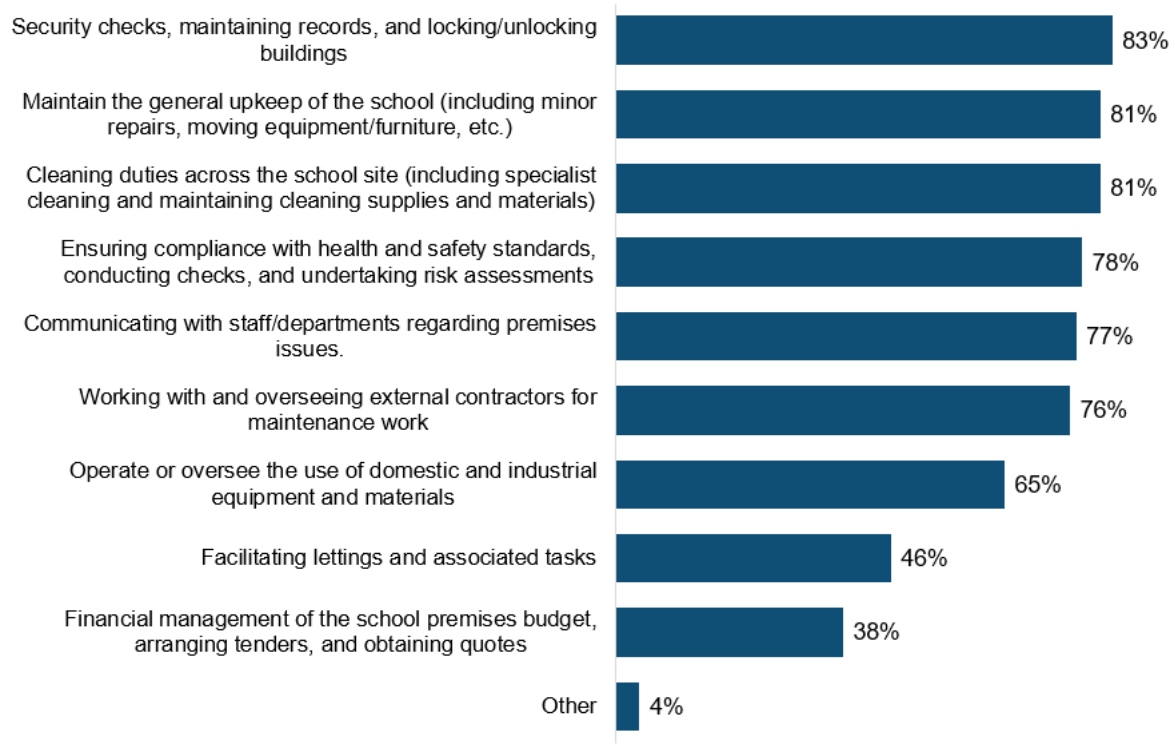
Site staff

Site staff are mostly responsible for or involved in security checks, maintaining records, and locking/unlocking buildings (83%), maintaining the general upkeep of the school (81%), and undertaking cleaning duties across the school site (81%).

Over three quarters of site staff ensure compliance with health and safety standards, conduct checks, and undertake risk assessments (78%), communicate with staff/departments regarding premises issues (77%), and work with and oversee external contractors for maintenance work (76%). Nearly two thirds are involved in operating or overseeing the use of domestic and industrial equipment and materials (65%).

Site staff are also involved in facilitating lettings and associated tasks (46%) and financial management of the school premises budget, arranging tenders, and obtaining quotes (38%).

Figure 28: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Site staff

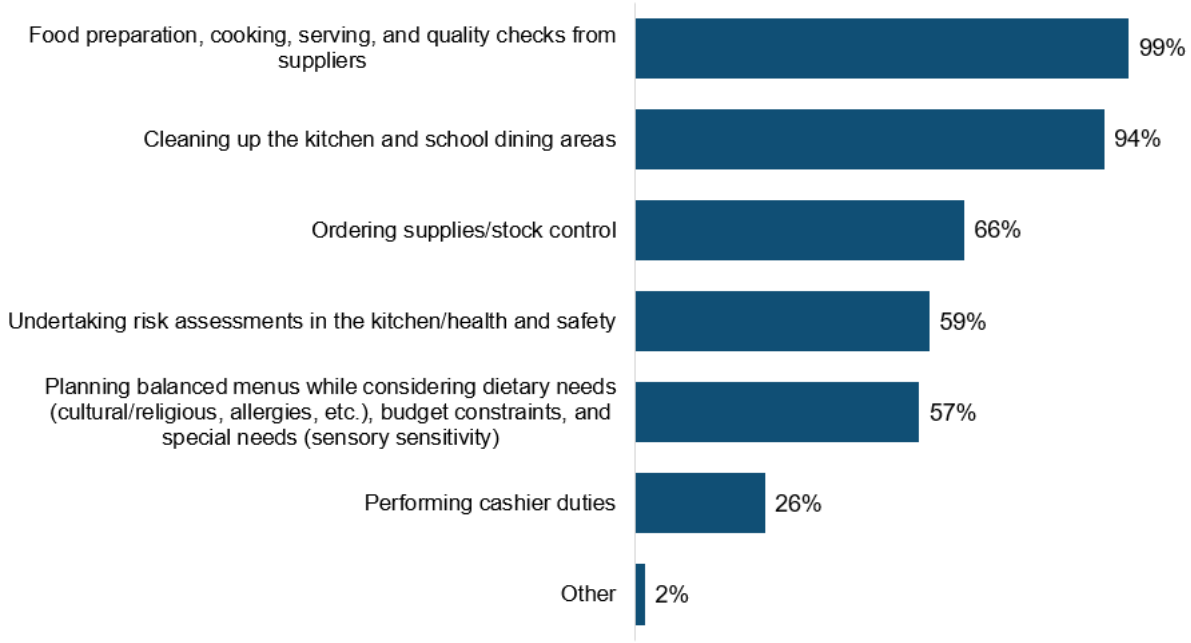


Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Site staff: 394

Catering staff

Almost all catering staff are involved in or responsible for food preparation, cooking, serving, and quality checks from suppliers (99%) and the majority are involved in cleaning the kitchen and school dining areas (94%). Two thirds are involved in ordering suppliers or stock control (66%). Almost three in five are undertaking risk assessments in the kitchen / health and safety (59%) and planning balanced menus while considering dietary needs, budget constraints, and special needs (57%). A quarter (26%) are involved in performing cashier duties.

Figure 29: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Catering staff



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Catering staff: 129

Teaching assistants (TAs) and learning support

This section covers the specific responsibilities of TAs and additional support needs assistants, cover supervisors, and those involved in supporting early years.

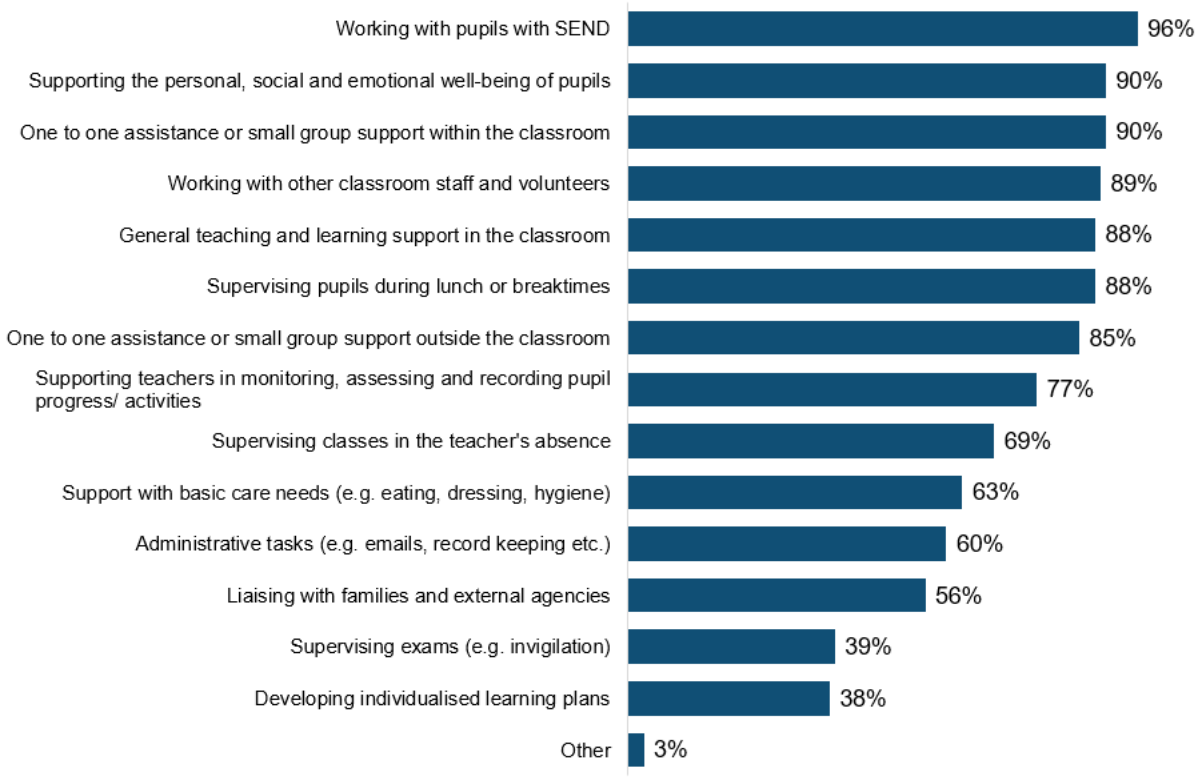
TAs assistants and additional support needs assistants

TAs and additional support need assistants are involved in a wide range of tasks. The vast majority of TAs and additional support need assistants work with pupils with SEND (96%), and the majority support the personal, social and emotional wellbeing of pupils (90%), provide one to one assistance or small group support within the classroom (90%), work with other classroom staff and volunteers (89%), have general responsibilities for teaching and learning support in the classroom (88%), supervise pupils during lunch or breaktimes (88%), and provide one to one assistance or small group support outside the classroom (85%).

Over three quarters of these staff support teachers in monitoring, assessing and recording pupil progress / activities (77%), whilst almost seven in ten supervise classes in teachers' absence (69%). Around three in five support with basic care needs such as eating, dress or hygiene (63%), and undertake administrative tasks (60%).

Over half are also liaising with families and external agencies (56%) and fewer are involved in supervising exams (39%) and developing individualised learning plans (38%).

Figure 30: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – TAs assistants and additional support needs assistant



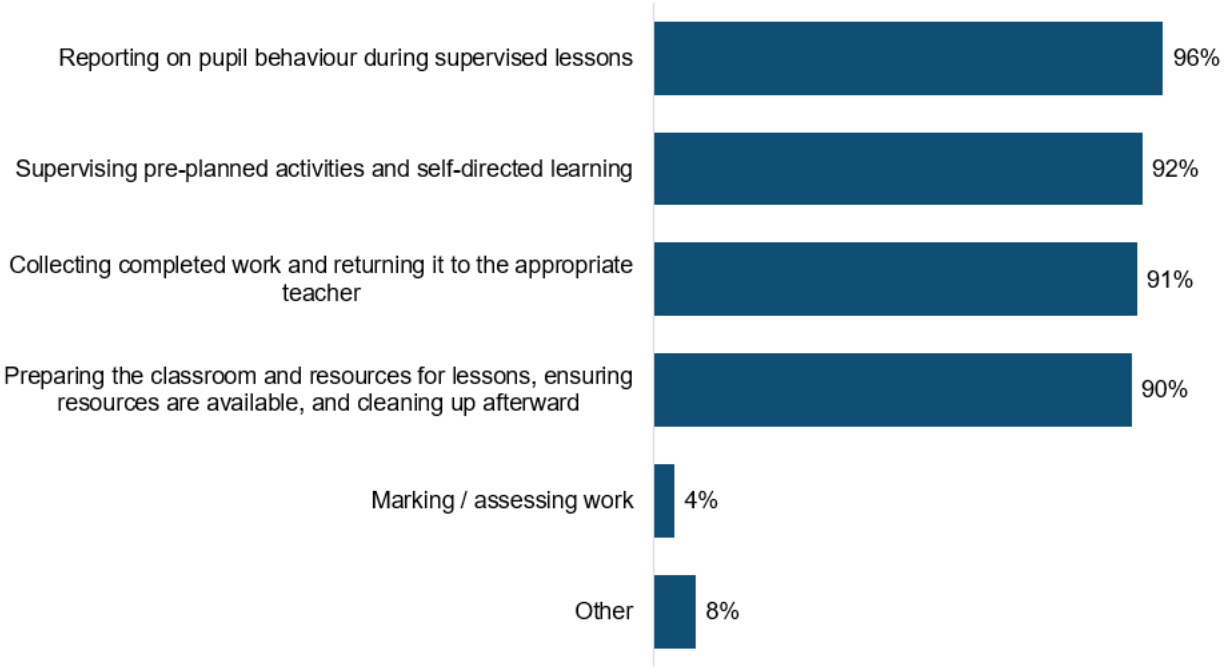
Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Teaching assistant and additional support needs assistant: 3,647

Cover supervisors

The vast majority of cover supervisors are involved in reporting on pupil behaviour during supervised lessons (96%), and the majority are involved in supervising pre-planned activities and self-directed learning (92%), collecting completed work and returning it to the appropriate teacher (91%), and preparing the classroom and resources for lessons, ensuring the resources are available, and cleaning up afterwards (90%).

Four percent of cover supervisors also mark/assess work, an additional task that wasn't included in the original answer options.

Figure 31: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Cover supervisors



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Cover supervisor: 217

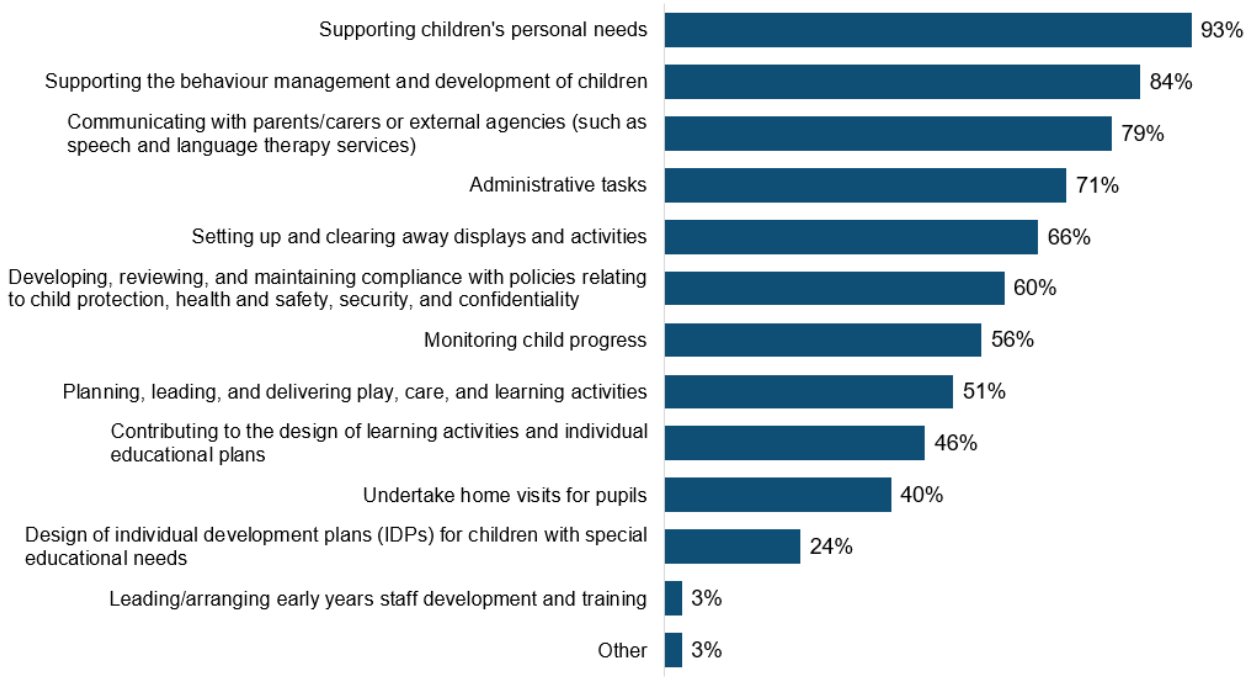
Early years staff

The majority of early years staff are responsible for supporting children's personal needs such as helping with mealtimes and toileting (93%). They also support the behaviour management and development of children (84%), communicate with parents / carers or external agencies (79%), and do administrative tasks, such as updating children's records (71%).

Two thirds are responsible for setting up and clearing away displays and activities (66%), and 60% are responsible for developing, reviewing, and maintaining compliance with policies relating to child protection, health and safety, security and confidentiality. Over half are involved in monitoring children's progress (56%) and planning, leading, and delivering play, care, and learning activities (51%). Fewer staff contribute to the design of learning activities and individual education plans (46%), undertake home visits for pupils (40%), or contribute to the design of individual development plans (IDPs) for children with special educational needs (24%).

Three percent of early years staff also report on leading/arranging early years development and training, a task that wasn't included in the original answer options.

Figure 32: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Early years staff



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Early years: 62

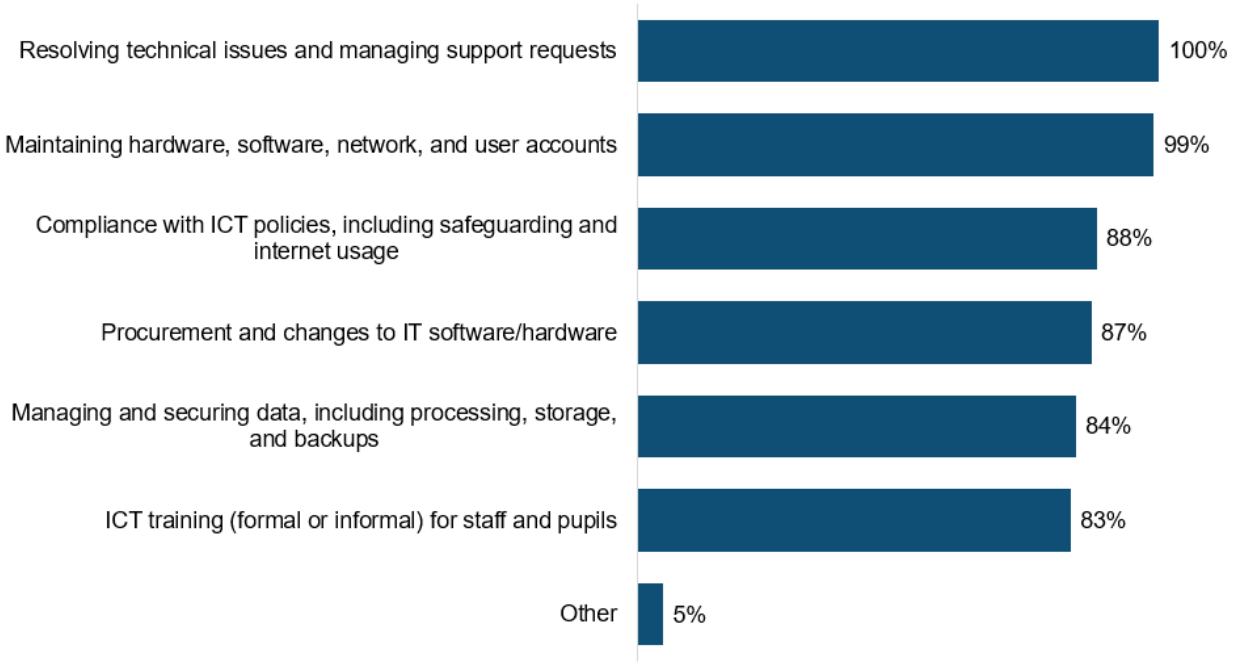
Technical role

In this section, the specific responsibilities of three types of technical roles are outlined in detail. These include IT technicians, technicians relating to food, science, art and design, as well as technicians with library or resource centre-related responsibilities.

IT technicians

All IT technicians are responsible for or involved in resolving technical issues and managing support requests (100%) and almost all maintain hardware, software, network, and user accounts (99%). This is followed by working on compliance with ICT policies, including safeguarding and internet usage (88%), procurement and changes to IT software/hardware (87%), managing and securing data, including processing, storage, and backups (84%), and providing formal or informal ICT training for staff and pupils (83%).

Figure 33: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – IT technician



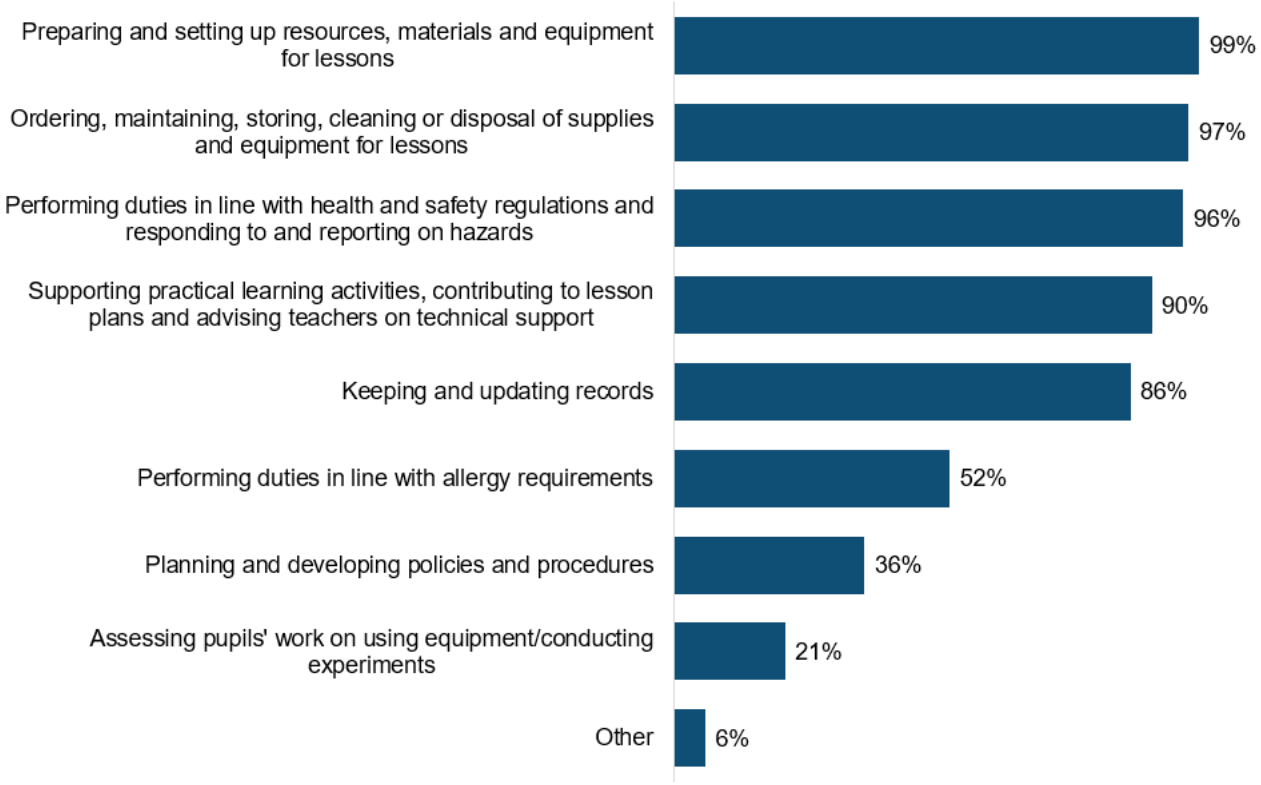
Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: IT technician: 248

Food and science technicians

Technicians relating to food, science, art and design are involved in a variety of tasks. The vast majority of are involved in preparing and setting up resources, materials, and equipment for lessons (99%), ordering, maintaining, storing, cleaning or disposal of supplies and equipment for lessons (97%), and performing duties in line with health and safety regulations and responding to and reporting to hazards (96%). The majority of food and science technicians are also involved in supporting practical learning activities, contributing to lesson plans, and advising teachers on technical support (90%), and keeping and updating records (86%).

Just over half are also responsible for performing duties in line with allergy requirements (52%). Fewer technicians are responsible for planning and developing policies and procedures (36%) and assessing pupils' work on using equipment/conducting experiments (21%).

Figure 34: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Food and science technicians



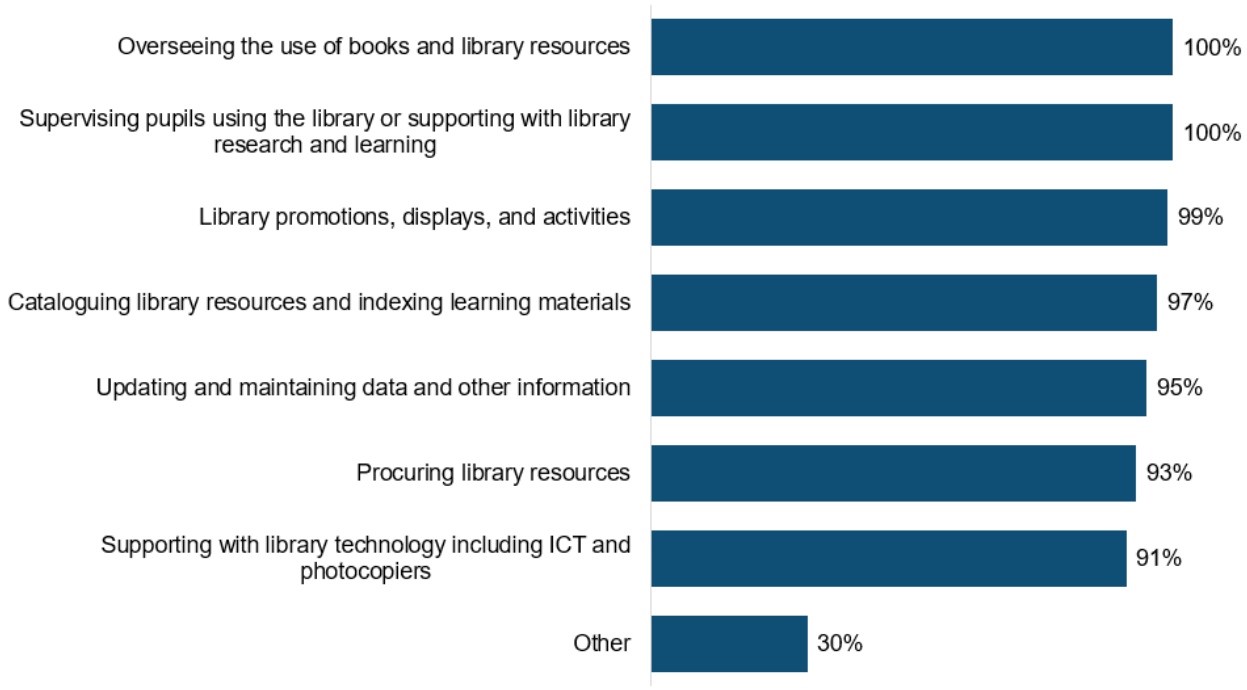
Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Technician (food, science, art and design): 478

Library and resource centre-related staff

All technicians with library or resource centre-related responsibilities are involved in supervising pupils using the library or supporting with library research and learning (100%) as well as overseeing the use of books and library resources (100%). Almost all are also doing tasks such as library promotions, displays, and activities (99%), and the vast majority are cataloguing library resources and index learning (97%), and updating and maintaining data and other information (95%). Procuring library resources (93%) and supporting with library technology (91%) are also two very common responsibilities.

A further 30% of librarians report carrying out tasks and responsibilities not included in the original answer options. Some examples are arranging author events, running book clubs, recruiting, training and managing volunteer student library assistants, and running reading interventions.

Figure 35: Specific work tasks and responsibilities – Library and resource centre-related staff



Source: Thinking about the tasks you carry out in your working day. Which of the following tasks specific to your role are you involved in or responsible for? This may include assisting, supporting or managing? Base: Library/resource centre-related responsibilities: 104

Workload and work-life balance

Summary: Workload and work-life balance

While just under three in five (57%) support staff report feeling able to manage their current workload, one in four (24%) say they cannot. School business professionals (43%), health, pastoral and welfare staff (52%), and TAs and learning support staff (54%) are the least likely to report being able to manage their workload, while midday supervisors/assistants (77%) and technical staff (69%) are the most likely to say they can manage. Seven in ten (71%) support staff who are satisfied with their job feel able to manage their workload, but this drops to three in ten (28%) among those who are dissatisfied with their job.

The majority (85%) of support staff in each school phase assist with extracurricular school activities, such as performances, fairs, sports events and, most commonly, events and trips. Over a quarter (27%) of support staff assist with parents' evening, and one in five (19%) assist with after-school clubs. Nine in ten TAs and learning support staff, and health, pastoral and welfare staff say they assist with at least one extracurricular activity.

The majority of support staff (80%) report carrying out tasks that they believe are outside the job description for their role for at least some of the time. A quarter of staff in mainstream schools and 29% of those in special schools report undertaking such tasks most or all of the time.

The majority (85%) of those who report taking on tasks outside their job description like doing so at least a little, while one in eight (12%) do not like it at all. Interviews with school leaders show that leaders value support staff flexibility, saying it is essential for schools to function effectively and keep pupils safe.

The majority (83%) of support staff report working directly with pupils in their most recent working week. One in ten (11%) staff rarely work with pupils, and 6% say they never do. Limited involvement with pupils was most common among school business professionals and site and catering staff. Secondary staff were less likely than those in primary and special schools to work with pupils.

Manageability of current workload

Just under three in five (57%) support staff report being able to manage their current workload, with one in six (17%) strongly agreeing that they are able to do so. One in four (24%) feel that they cannot manage their workload. While there is some variation by phase, with support staff in secondary schools feeling better able to manage their workload compared to those in primary schools (60% vs 56% respectively), role type appears to be a bigger driver.

The majority of midday supervisors/assistants (77%) and those in a technical role (69%) or other support role (68%) feel able to manage their workload. This compares to around half of TAs and learning support staff (54%), health, pastoral and welfare staff (52%) and fewer school business professionals (43%). Interviews with school leaders suggested increased workload for support staff was connected to recent increases in the number and type of responsibilities they are expected to carry out.

Table 21: Manageability of current workload by support staff role

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	NET agree	NET disagree
Administrative and finance staff	16%	44%	15%	18%	7%	0%	60%	25%
Midday supervisor/assistant	44%	33%	16%	5%	1%	1%	77%	5%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	10%	42%	16%	22%	9%	0%	52%	32%
School business professional	10%	33%	16%	26%	14%	0%	43%	41%
Site and catering staff	22%	37%	21%	14%	6%	0%	59%	20%
Teaching assistant and learning support	14%	40%	20%	20%	6%	0%	54%	26%
Technical role	19%	50%	16%	11%	4%	0%	69%	15%
Other support staff role	21%	47%	15%	11%	6%	0%	68%	17%

Source: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'I am able to manage my current workload'. Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,550; Administrative and finance staff: 1,895, Midday supervisor/assistant: 167, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,057, School business professional: 424, Site and catering staff: 521, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,034, Technical role: 925, Other support staff role: 527

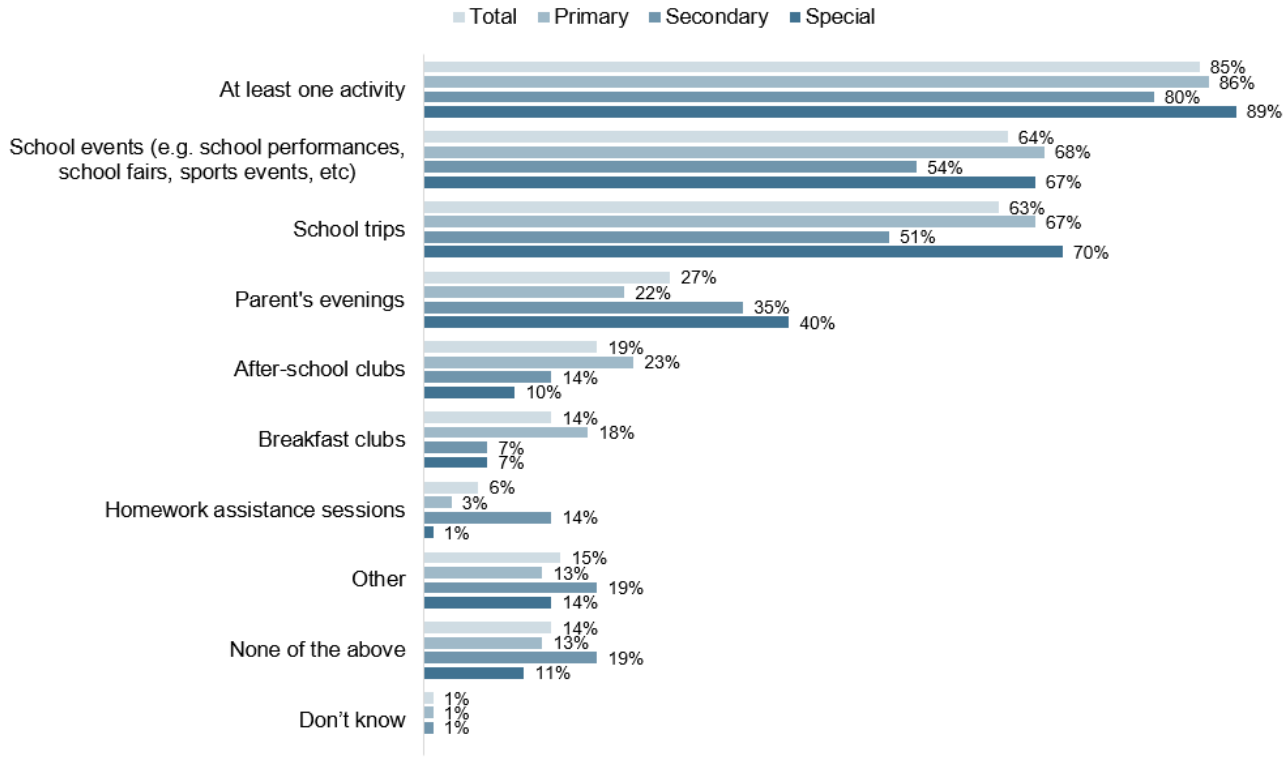
Job satisfaction and workload management appears to be positively correlated. Of the support staff who are satisfied with their job, seven in ten (71%) feel able to manage their workload. This compares to three in ten (28%) of those who are dissatisfied with their job.

Extracurricular involvement of support staff

The majority (85%) of school support staff assist in extracurricular activities. The most common activities include school events, such as school performances, school fairs, sports events (64%) and school trips (63%). Over a quarter (27%) of school support staff also assist with parents' evenings. One in five (19%) support staff assist with after-school clubs, and one in seven (14%) assist with breakfast clubs.

Involvement in these activities varies by both school phase and role type. Support staff at special and primary schools are slightly more likely to assist in at least one activity compared to those in secondary schools (89% in special, 86% in primary schools, compared to 80% in secondary).

Figure 36: Extracurricular involvement of support staff by total and school phase



Source: Which, if any, of the following activities do you assist with in your support staff role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Involvement in extracurricular activities is highest amongst TAs and learning support staff, and health, pastoral and welfare staff, where the majority (95% and 90% respectively) assist in at least one activity. Over four in five (82%) school business professionals assist

with extracurricular activities. For all role types, the most common activities are school events or school trips.

Whilst they are the least likely to assist with these activities, half (50%) of midday supervisors/assistants take on at least one type of extracurricular activity.

Table 22: Extracurricular involvement of support staff by support staff role

	School events	School trips	Parents' evenings	After-school clubs	Breakfast clubs	Homework assistance sessions	Other	None of the above	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	57%	43%	39%	16%	12%	1%	21%	22%	1%
Midday supervisor/assistant	28%	20%	1%	12%	8%	0%	13%	47%	3%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	66%	67%	43%	17%	17%	5%	15%	10%	0%
School business professional	70%	43%	39%	20%	16%	2%	27%	18%	0%
Site and catering staff	57%	24%	41%	14%	15%	1%	12%	29%	1%
Teaching assistant and learning support	75%	86%	20%	23%	14%	10%	12%	5%	0%
Technical role	58%	50%	25%	27%	4%	9%	27%	14%	1%
Other support staff role	49%	46%	27%	23%	15%	4%	23%	19%	1%

Source: Which, if any, of the following activities do you assist with in your support staff role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912 Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Frequency of performing tasks outside of job description

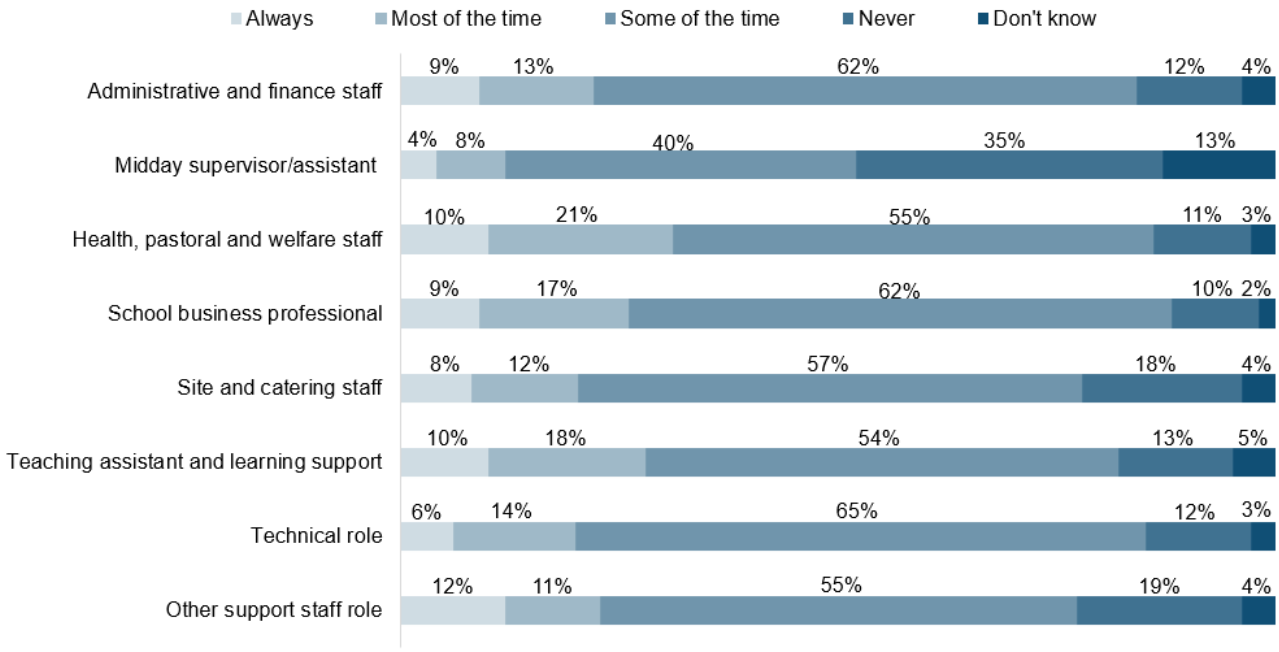
The majority of school support staff (80%) carry out tasks that they believe to be outside of their job description at least some of the time. A quarter of support staff (25%) do so most or all of the time.

While those in secondary schools are marginally more likely to carry out additional tasks at least some of the time (82% compared to 79% for primary and special schools), those in special schools are more likely to do this most or all of the time (29% compared to 25% in primary and 24% in secondary schools).

Interviews with school leaders suggested some variation in how flexibly they viewed different support roles. TAs were described as ‘highly flexible’, as they carry out responsibilities associated with other staff roles, such as providing pastoral support. However, leaders generally viewed administrative staff as having more ‘fixed’ roles, meaning they are less likely to work beyond their job description, compared with support staff in other roles (see Chapter 11).

Despite these interview findings, apart from midday supervisors/assistants, there was little variation in the survey data across the proportion of support staff who said they performed tasks outside of their job description, with at least three quarters carrying out tasks outside of their job description at least some of the time. Midday supervisors/assistants are less likely to, with over a third (35%) never performing tasks outside their job description.

Figure 37: Frequency of performing tasks outside of job description by support staff role



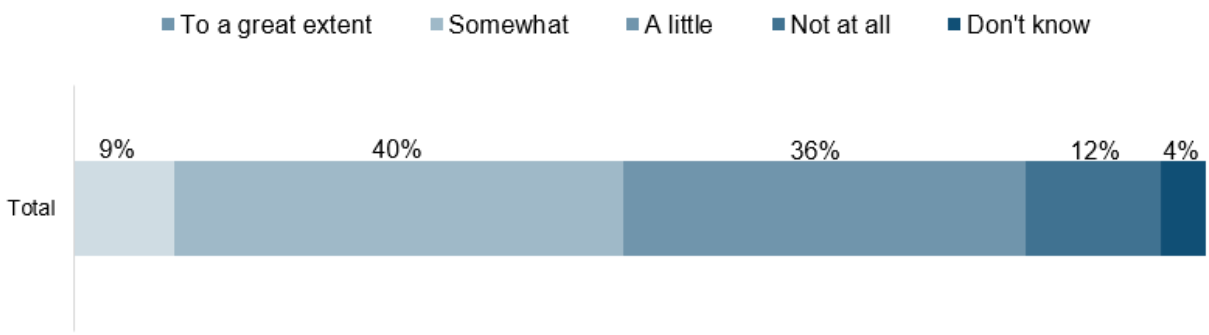
Source: How often, if at all, do you carry out tasks that you to believe to be outside your support staff role job description? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912 Midday

supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Whether support staff like completing tasks outside of role

Those who reported taking on additional tasks outside of their job description at least some of the time (80%) were asked to what extent they liked completing these tasks. The majority (85%) like completing tasks outside their role at least a little. Less than one in ten (9%) like it to great extent, a further 40% to some extent, and just over a third (36%) said a little. One in eight (12%) do not like completing additional tasks at all.

Figure 38: Whether support staff like completing tasks outside of role



Source: To what extent, if at all, do you like completing tasks outside your support staff role? Base: All respondents who complete tasks outside their role: 7,858

There is little variation by school phase and support staff role in terms of how much they like completing tasks outside of their role.

Interviews with school leaders showed leaders valued the flexibility of their support staff workforce, viewing it as essential for schools to function effectively and keep pupils safe. Several leaders said role flexibility gave their school greater resilience when managing staff absence and pupil need. Leaders of smaller schools said that having fewer staff overall increased the need for staff to work flexibly.

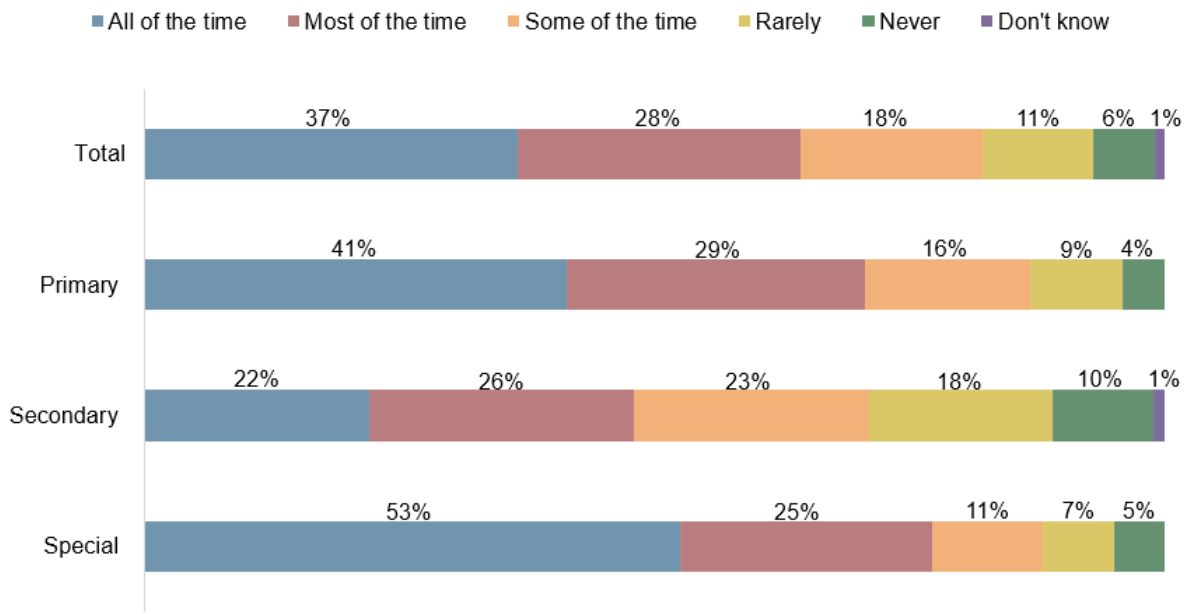
Among support staff who are dissatisfied with their present job, just under three quarters (72%) still say they liked completing tasks outside their job description at least a little. This compares with 91% of support staff who are satisfied with their present job.

Working with pupils

The majority (83%) of support staff reported working directly with or supporting pupils in their most recent working week. Over a third (37%) spent all their time on this. An additional 28% of staff spent the majority of their time in this role, while 18% spent at least some of their time doing this. Around one in ten (11%) rarely worked with pupils, and only 6% never did.

Support staff in primary (86%) and special schools (88%) spent more time directly working with or supporting pupils than those in secondary schools (71%).

Figure 39: Working with pupils by total and school phase



Source: In your most recent working week, approximately how much time did you spend directly working with or supporting pupils in your role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

All TAs and learning support staff (100%) and the vast majority of midday supervisors/ assistants and health, pastoral and welfare staff (both 96%) spent at least some of their time working directly with or supporting pupils. Conversely, school business professionals and site and catering staff were less likely to spend their time this way, with 68% of school business professionals and 62% of site and catering staff rarely or never spending time directly working with or supporting pupils.

Table 23: Working with pupils by support staff role

	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	2%	7%	41%	35%	15%	0%
Midday supervisor/assistant	60%	24%	12%	3%	0%	1%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	22%	43%	31%	3%	1%	0%
School business professional	1%	2%	29%	48%	20%	0%
Site and catering staff	3%	5%	26%	34%	28%	3%
Teaching assistant and learning support	60%	36%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Technical role	4%	18%	42%	28%	7%	1%
Other support staff role	31%	27%	22%	13%	6%	1%

Source: In your most recent working week, approximately how much time did you spend directly working with or supporting pupils in your role? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912 Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Working with pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

Summary: Working with pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

The majority (85%) of support staff who work with pupils spend at least some of their time directly supporting those with SEND, while one in five (21%) spend all of their time doing this. Seven in ten (71%) TAs and learning support staff, a third (34%) of health, pastoral and welfare staff, and 24% of midday supervisors/assistants spend all or most of their time supporting pupils with SEND. Staff in site and catering roles (62%), school business professionals (54%), and administrative and finance staff (54%) are more likely to rarely or never support pupils with SEND.

Interviews with school leaders showed that, in response to recent increases in both the number of pupils with SEND and the complexity of need, schools have moved TAs away from providing general classroom assistance towards a more SEND-focussed model of deployment. In some cases, TAs' working hours have been allocated to specific pupils with an EHC (Education, Health, and Care) plan.

Over half (54%) of support staff who spent at least some time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week agree that they have enough information and training to support pupils with SEND, including those with an EHC plan. Despite this, around half of these support staff say greater access to specialist training (51%) and relevant resources (45%) would further improve their ability to work with pupils with SEND. Primary school support staff are slightly more likely to say they need greater access to training and resources, while those in special schools are less likely.

Support staff who spent at least some time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week report a range of barriers to providing support for these pupils, with most common being the increasing number of pupils with different needs (60%), followed by a perceived lack of funding for appropriate resources/staff (48%), and lack of time (34%). Around a quarter (24%) of special school staff report no current barriers to them providing support for pupils with SEND, though only 7% and 12% of primary and secondary staff say the same.

Over half of all support staff (54%), had received training in the last three years on supporting pupils with SEND. Staff in special schools (85%) are more likely to have received such training, and primary and secondary school staff less likely (53% and 42% respectively). TAs and learning support staff (74%) and health, pastoral and welfare staff (66%) were the roles which were more likely to have received SEND training in the last three years.

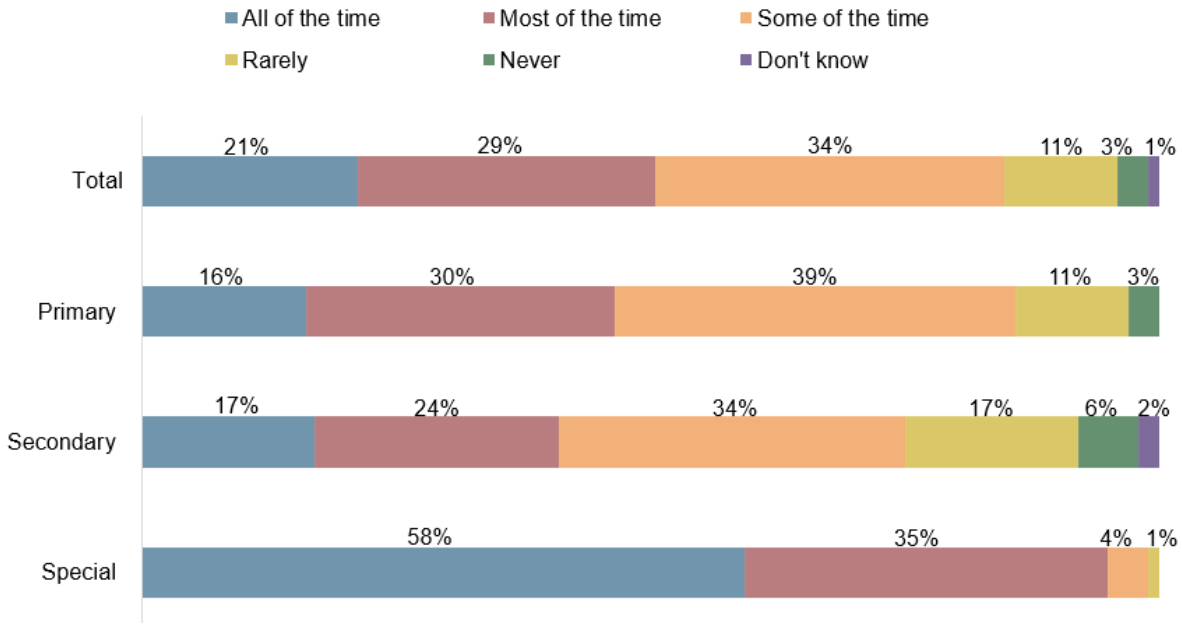
Time spend supporting pupils with SEND

The majority (85%) of school support staff who work with pupils spend at least some of their time directly supporting pupils with SEND. One in five (21%) support staff who work with pupils devote all of their time to supporting pupils with SEND. An additional 29% of staff spend the majority of their time in this role, while 34% spend at least some of their time directly supporting these pupils. Around one in ten (11%) rarely support pupils with SEND, and 3% never do so.

Almost all staff working with pupils in special schools spend the majority of their time supporting pupils with SEND (58% all of the time, 35% most of the time) which is expected given the nature of the provision.

Staff in primary schools spend more of their time supporting pupils with SEND (16% all of the time and 30% most of the time) than staff in secondary schools (17% all of the time and 24% most of the time).

Figure 40: Approximately how much time school support staff spend directly supporting SEND pupils



Source: In your most recent working week, approximately how much time did you spend directly supporting pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) in your role? Base Staff who spent some time directly working with or supporting pupils in their most recent working week: 7,258; Primary schools: 2,450, Secondary schools: 3,446, Special schools: 1,362

The amount of time spent supporting pupils with SEND varies greatly by role. Almost a third (32%) of TAs and learning support staff dedicate all of their time, with a further 39% of TAs and learning support staff spending most of their time directly supporting pupils with SEND. A third (34%) of health, pastoral and welfare staff and 24% of midday

supervisors/assistants also dedicate all or most of their time directly supporting pupils with SEND.

Interviews with school leaders showed that recent increases in both the number of pupils with SEND and the complexity of need have prompted schools to change how they deploy TAs. Rather than providing general classroom assistance, TAs are now being deployed more directly to meet SEND-related needs. In practice, this has often meant assigning TAs to work closely with individual pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or to provide targeted small-group support. Leaders said they had either redeployed their existing TAs or recruited additional TAs to meet EHCP requirements. Furthermore, several leaders reported either increasing the hours of support staff in other roles or recruiting new support staff to support pupil need. These roles included: pastoral staff, health support assistants, parent support advisors, safeguarding leads, midday supervisors, and educational welfare officers.

Staff working in site and catering (62%), business professional (54%) and admin and finance (54%) roles report that they rarely or never spend time supporting pupils with SEND.

Table 24: Approximately how much time school support staff spend directly supporting SEND pupils

	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	0%	6%	38%	41%	13%	2%
Midday supervisor/assistant	13%	11%	41%	26%	8%	2%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	6%	28%	54%	11%	1%	0%
School business professional	0%	3%	42%	38%	16%	1%
Site and catering staff	1%	6%	29%	41%	21%	3%
Teaching assistant and learning support	32%	39%	26%	2%	0%	0%
Technical role	1%	4%	46%	34%	11%	5%
Other support staff role	17%	23%	41%	11%	6%	1%

Source: In your most recent working week, approximately how much time did you spend directly supporting pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) in your role? Base: Staff who spent some time directly working with or supporting pupils in their most recent working week: 7,258; Administrative and finance staff: 824, Midday supervisor/assistant: 156, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,005, School business professional: 121, Site and catering staff: 150, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,035, Technical role: 570, Other support staff role: 396

Perceptions of information and training for supporting pupils with SEND

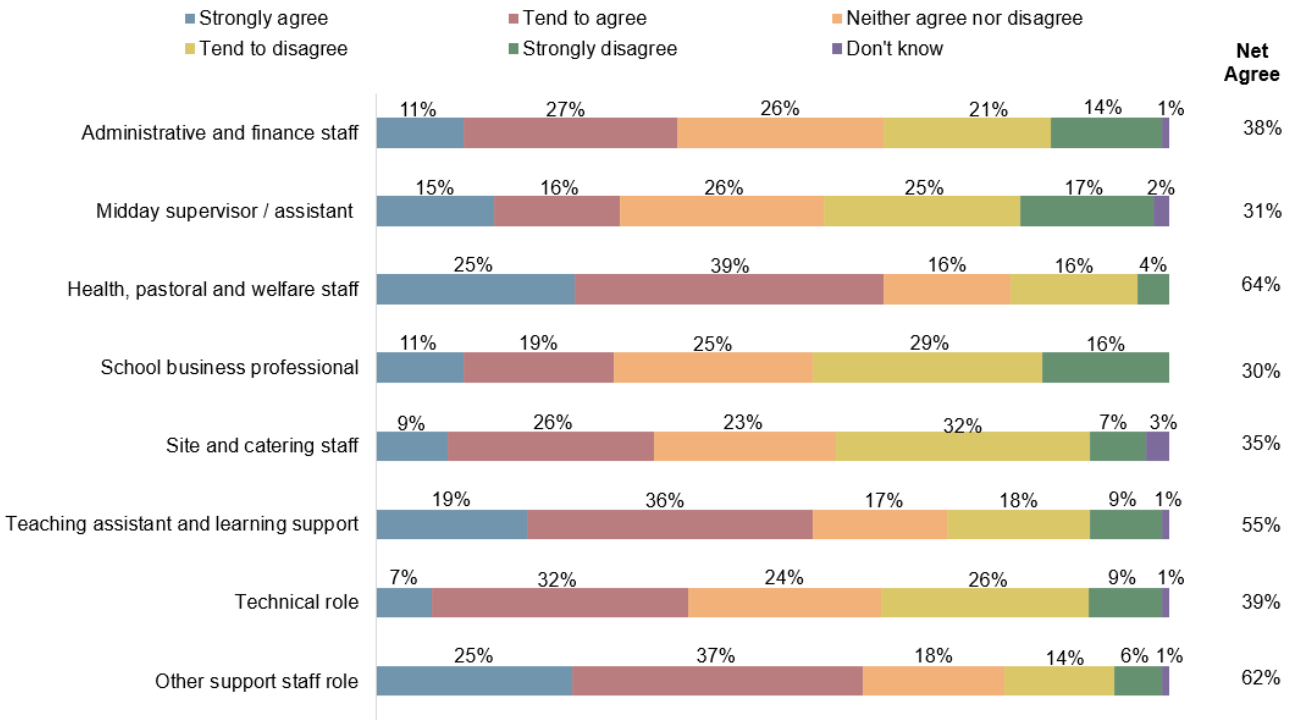
Over half of support staff who spent at least some time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week (54%) agree that they have enough information and training to support these pupils, including those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

This is particularly true for special support staff (83%), compared to their counterparts in primary (49%) and secondary (54%) schools.

Health, pastoral and welfare staff, alongside other support staff, are the most likely to agree they have enough information and training to support pupils with SEND, including those with an EHC plan (64% and 62%, respectively). However, school business professionals (45%), midday supervisors/assistants (42%), and site and catering staff (39%) are most likely to disagree with the statement.

Midday supervisors/assistants (26%), administrative and finance staff (26%), school business professionals (25%) and technical staff (24%) are most likely to neither agree nor disagree.

Figure 41: Perceptions of information and training for supporting pupils with SEND, including those with an EHC plan



Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally feel you have enough information and training to support pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability), including those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan? Base: Staff who spend at least some time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week: 5,950; Administrative and finance staff: 361, Midday

supervisor/assistant: 110, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 879, School business professional: 52, Site and catering staff: 58, Teaching assistant and learning support: 3,899, Technical role: 283, Other support staff role: 308

Ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND

Around half of support staff (51%) who spent time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week feel greater access to specialist training would improve their ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND, followed by greater access to relevant resources (e.g., assistive technology or visual aids) (45%), and development resources (35%).

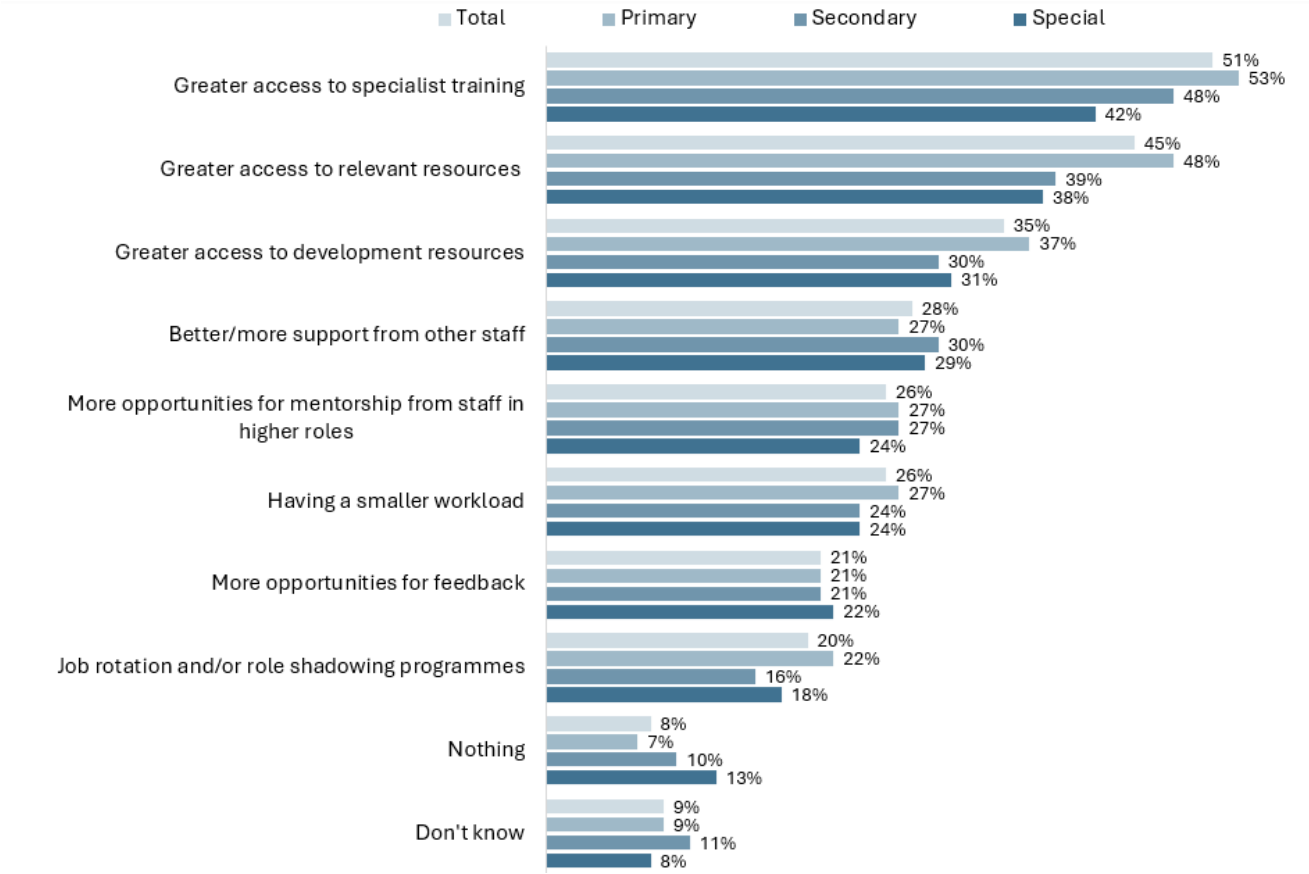
Many support staff feel that informal support to develop their skillset would also improve their ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND. Over a quarter feel better/more support from other staff (28%) or mentorship from staff in higher roles (26%) would be beneficial, while around one in five think more opportunities for feedback (21%) or role rotation/shadowing (20%) would improve their ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND.

Support staff based at primary schools are the most likely to say they need greater access to specialist training (53%), relevant resources (48%), and development resources (37%).

Those based at special schools are least likely to say they needed more specialist training (42%), although this was still the most commonly mentioned intervention.

In interviews school leaders reported that schools across all phases provide training on assisting pupils with SEND. Special school leaders emphasised that this training is critical due to the increasing complexity of support staff roles, necessitating a diverse range of training. This includes positive behaviour management, autism and ADHD awareness, and specific medical needs management courses tailored to supporting pupils with complex requirements, such as gastroscopy and ventilator support (see Chapter 11).

Figure 42: Interventions identified as most likely to improve ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND by total and school phase [responses over 5%]



Source: Which of the following do you think would most improve your ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND? Base: All respondents who spend time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week: 6,880; Primary schools: 2,369, Secondary schools: 3,155, Special schools: 1,356

TAs and learning support staff are the most likely to say that all the potential interventions would improve their ability to support pupils with SEND, followed by those in health, pastoral and welfare roles.

Midday supervisors/assistants highlighted that specialist training would be particularly useful for them (51%), with less need for relevant (24%) or developmental resources (24%).

Staff in administrative and finance (20%), site and catering (20%), school business professionals (16%) and those in technical roles (15%), are the most likely to feel that nothing would improve their ability to work effectively with these pupils.

Table 25: Interventions identified as most likely to improve ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND [responses over 5%]:

	Greater access to specialist training	Greater access to relevant resources (e.g. assistive technology, visual aids, etc.)	Greater access to development resources	Better/more support from other staff	More opportunities for mentorship from staff in higher roles
Administrative and finance staff	29%	19%	14%	16%	15%
Midday supervisor/assistant	51%	24%	24%	25%	27%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	44%	44%	30%	29%	20%
School business professional	31%	22%	19%	13%	13%
Site and catering staff	35%	9%	10%	19%	18%
Teaching assistant and learning support	57%	54%	43%	31%	30%
Technical role	37%	34%	21%	18%	20%
Other support staff role	38%	34%	23%	26%	19%

	Having a smaller workload	More opportunities for feedback	Job rotation and/or role shadowing programmes	Other	Nothing	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	20%	6%	10%	1%	20%	23%
Midday supervisor/assistant	5%	21%	13%	0%	10%	15%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	28%	16%	14%	1%	8%	9%
School business professional	28%	3%	8%	3%	16%	23%
Site and catering staff	14%	16%	11%	0%	20%	28%
Teaching assistant and learning support	30%	26%	26%	2%	6%	5%
Technical role	21%	11%	8%	1%	15%	16%
Other support staff role	18%	16%	12%	3%	14%	10%

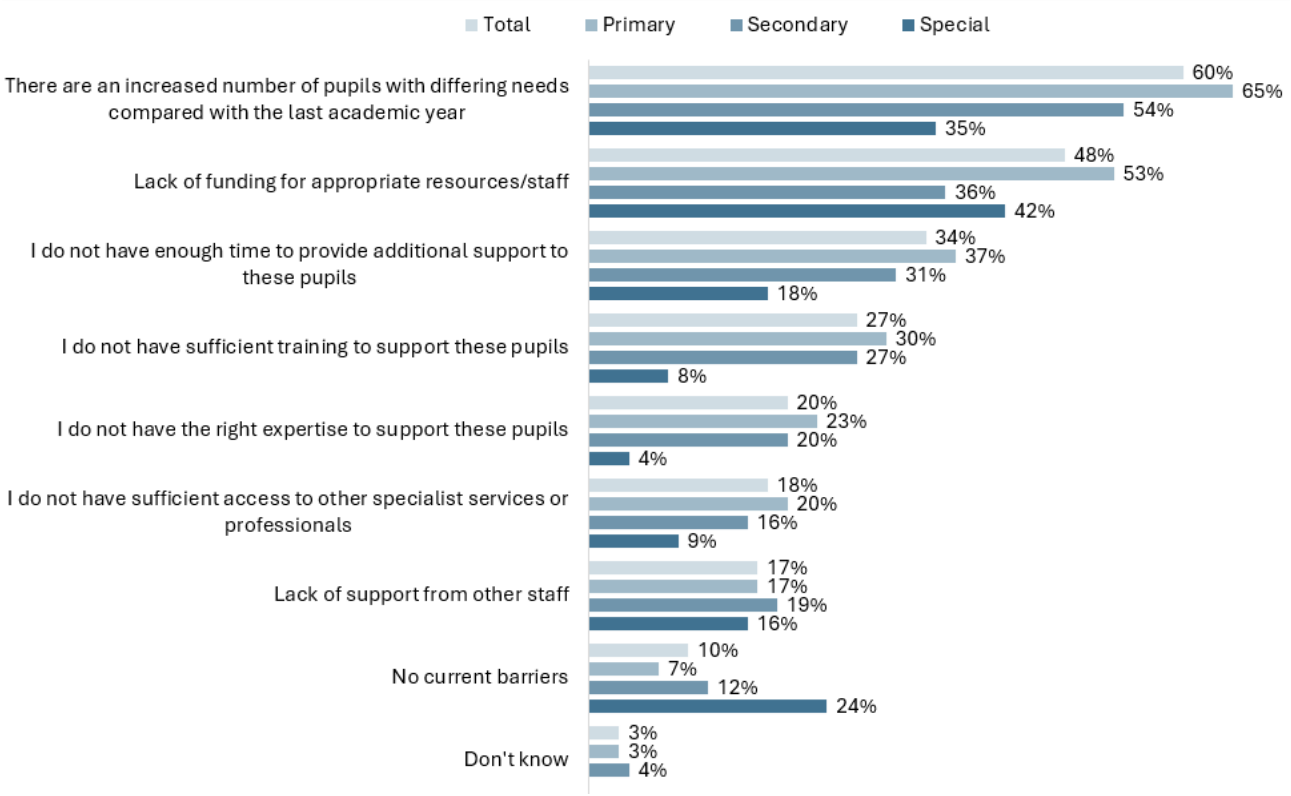
Source: Which of the following do you think would most improve your ability to work effectively with pupils with SEND? Base: All respondents who spent time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week: 6,880; Administrative and finance staff: 680, Midday supervisor/assistant: 142, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 987, School business professional: 102, Site and catering staff: 114, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4011, Technical role: 480, Other support: 364

Barriers to effectively providing support for pupils with SEND

Support staff who spent time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week feel there are a wide range of barriers to them effectively providing support for pupils with SEND. The largest perceived barrier is the increasing number of pupils with differing needs (60%), followed by a perceived lack of funding for appropriate resources/staff (48%), and lack of time (34%). A lack of training (27%) and personal expertise (20%) were also seen as a barrier for many, followed by insufficient access to specialist services/professionals (18%) and support from other staff (17%). One in ten staff feel there are no current barriers to them effectively providing support for pupils with SEND.

Staff in primary schools more commonly cited increased pupil needs (65%), perceived lack of funding for appropriate resources/staff (53%) and lack of time (37%) as barriers. Staff based in special schools however are more frequently cited funding (42%) than other potential barriers and are the least likely to report lack of training (8%) or expertise (4%) as barriers to them effectively providing support for pupils with SEND. They are also the most likely to say they are not facing any barriers (24%) than those in secondary (12%) or primary (7%) schools.

Figure 43: Barriers to effectively provide support for pupils with SEND by total and school phase



Source: Which of the following, if any, are currently barriers to you effectively providing support for pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability)? Base: All respondents who spend time directly

supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week: 6,889; Primary schools: 2,373, Secondary schools: 3,160, Special schools: 1,356

TAs and learning support staff, as well as health, pastoral and welfare staff, are most likely to have concerns about increasing pupil needs (70% and 61%, respectively) and a perceived lack of funding for appropriate resources/staff (57% and 51%). By contrast, midday supervisors/assistants (49%), school business professionals (37%), site and catering staff (34%) and those in technical roles (37%) are most likely to feel lack of training is a barrier.

Those in administrative and finance roles (15%), technical roles (18%) or other support staff roles (16%) are most likely to say they do not face barriers to providing effective support to pupils with SEND.

Table 26: Barriers to effectively provide support for pupils with SEND by support staff role

	There are an increased number of pupils with differing needs compared with the last academic year	Lack of funding for appropriate resources/staff	I do not have enough time to provide additional support to these pupils	I do not have sufficient training to support these pupils
Administrative and finance staff	34%	24%	25%	31%
Midday supervisor/assistant	26%	16%	15%	49%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	61%	51%	35%	22%
School business professional	46%	46%	33%	37%
Site and catering staff	34%	21%	15%	34%
Teaching assistant and learning support	70%	57%	38%	25%
Technical role	34%	22%	26%	37%
Other support staff role	51%	32%	20%	21%

	I do not have the right expertise to support these pupils	I do not have sufficient access to other specialist services or professionals	Lack of support from other staff	No current barriers	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	33%	9%	7%	15%	3%
Midday supervisor/assistant	31%	14%	14%	8%	7%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	17%	18%	17%	12%	2%
School business professional	40%	16%	11%	8%	3%
Site and catering staff	28%	15%	13%	7%	5%
Teaching assistant and learning support	17%	20%	20%	9%	3%
Technical role	27%	11%	9%	18%	5%
Other support staff role	14%	14%	10%	16%	4%

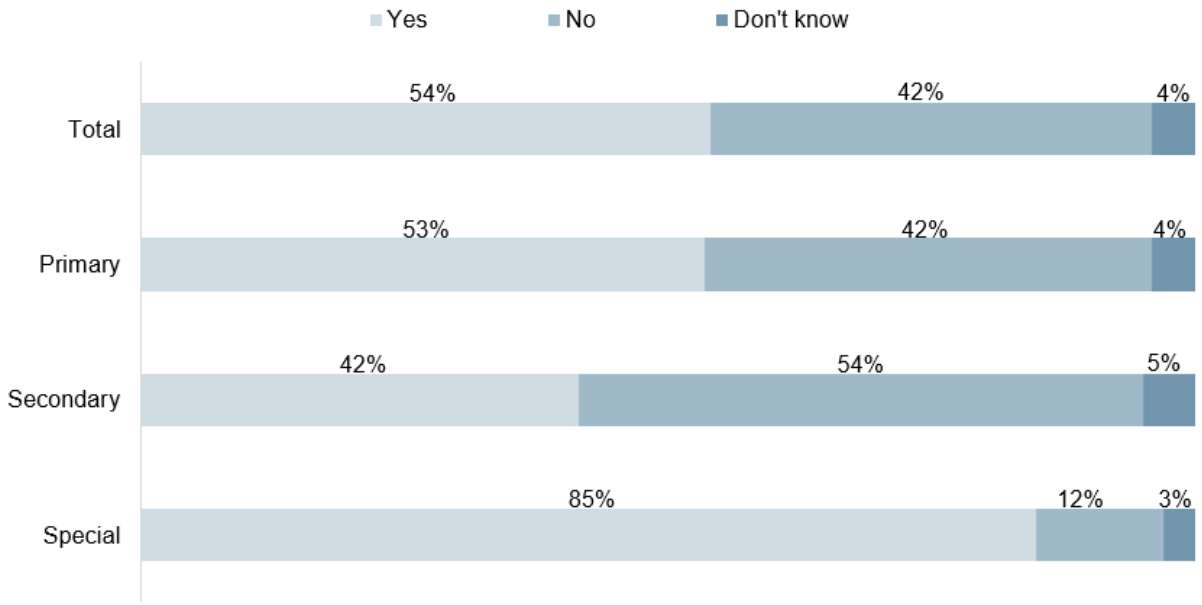
Source: Which of the following, if any, are currently barriers to you effectively providing support for pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability)?
Base: Staff who spend time directly supporting pupils with SEND in their most recent working week: 6,889, Administrative and finance staff: 686, Midday supervisor/assistant: 142, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 988, School business professional: 102, Site and catering staff: 115, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,011, Technical role: 480, Other support: 365

Training received on supporting pupils with SEND

Over half of all support staff (54%) had received training in the last three years on supporting pupils with SEND in their role.

Support staff at special schools are more likely to have received training (85%) than those in primary (53%) or secondary schools (42%).

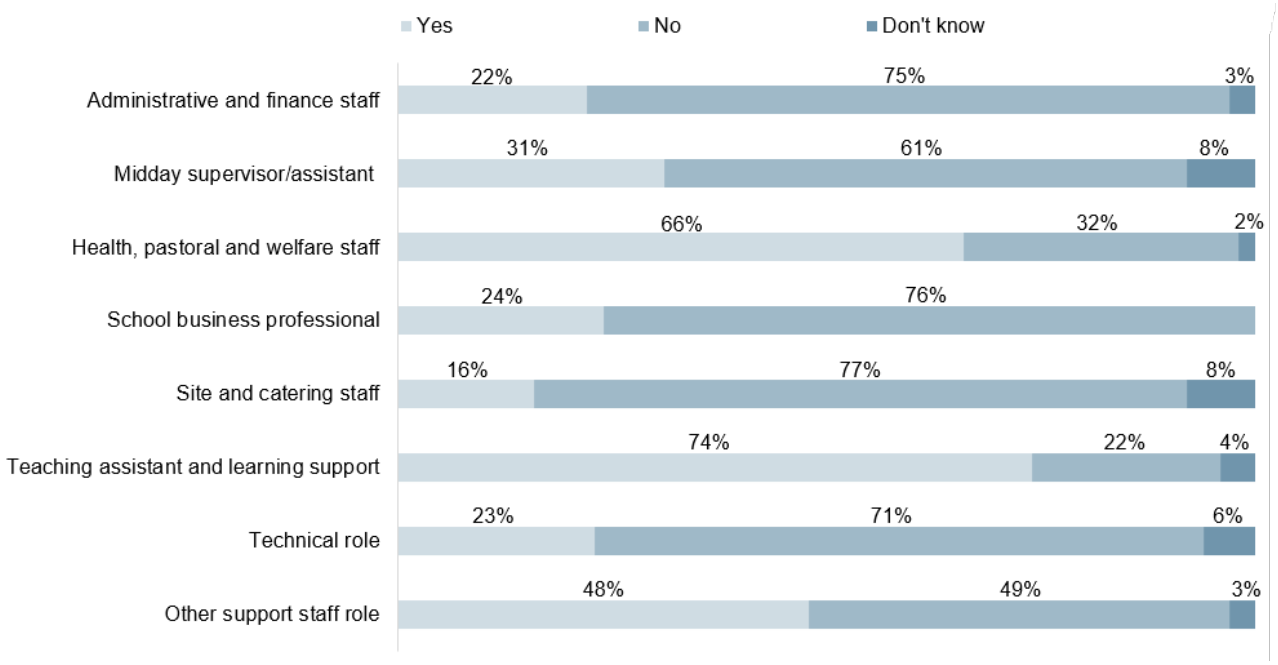
Figure 44: Received training on supporting pupils with SEND in role in last three years by total and school phase



Source: Have you received training on supporting pupils with SEND in your role within the last 3 years?
Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Three-quarters (74%) of TAs and learning support staff, two-thirds (66%) of health, pastoral and welfare staff, and nearly half of other support staff (48%) had received training in the last three years on supporting pupils with SEND. By contrast, less than a quarter of school business professionals (24%), technical roles (23%), administrative and finance staff (22%), and site and catering staff (16%) had received this training over that time period.

Figure 45: Received training on supporting pupils with SEND in role in last three years by support staff role



Source: Have you received training on supporting pupils with SEND in your role within the last 3 years?
Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support: 530

Training

Summary: Training

The vast majority (98%) of support staff report that their school has provided formal training, most commonly in the context of general all staff training. Around half of staff in mainstream schools have received training specific to their day-to-day role, while in special schools, 64% have received such training. Three in ten (30%) staff have received training specific to their personal development.

Training specific to day-to-day role varies, with school business professionals and site and catering staff (both 72%) and health, pastoral and welfare staff (63%) the most likely to have received such training, and TAs and learning support staff (40%) and midday supervisors/assistants (32%) the least likely.

Just over half of support staff (55%) are satisfied with the training available to them, while one in five (20%) are dissatisfied. Satisfaction with training is highest among special school staff (70%) and highest among school business professionals (67%) and health, pastoral and welfare staff (64%), and lowest among technical staff (40%).

While nine in ten (89%) support staff are interested in training related to their role, the common barriers to undertaking training are limited opportunities (37%), time (31%), and funding (30%). Almost a fifth (18%) say that training is not prioritised for support staff in their school – a sentiment echoed by interviews with school leaders.

A quarter (24%) of support staff report that they are interested in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher, including 11% who report being ‘very’ interested. Interest is highest among staff in special schools (30%), and TAs and learning support staff (34%).

The main barriers to training to become a qualified teacher among those expressing interest are concerns about the cost (72%), workload (46%), the length of the programme (37%), and uncertainty around support from their school (37%).

Almost three quarters (72%) of interested support staff believe that being able to stay in their current school while undertaking their training would make it easier for them to undertake teacher training, while 69% say greater access to financial support would help.

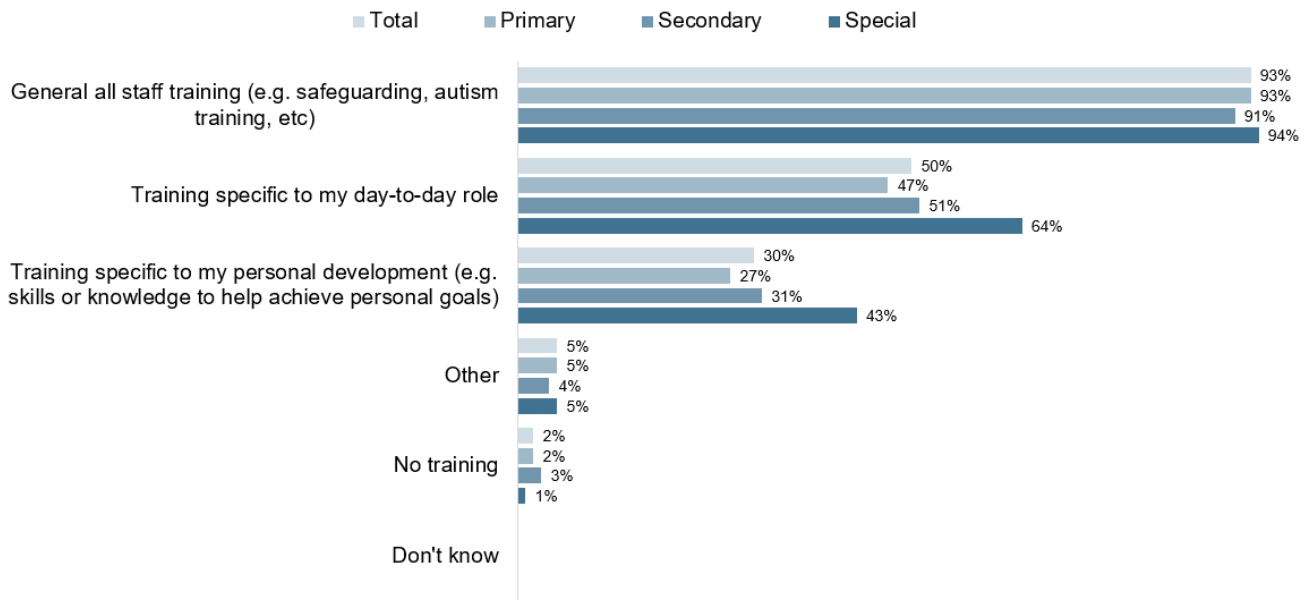
Training received and satisfaction

Formal training provided by school

The vast majority (98%) of support staff report they have been provided with formal training by their school. The most common type of training is general all staff training (e.g. safeguarding training, autism training etc) (93% of support staff). This mirrors the type of training school leaders described in interviews. Half of staff (50%) have been provided with training specific to their day-to-day role, while 30% have been provided with training specific to their personal development. Five percent of support staff report having received other forms of training.

Staff working in special schools are most likely to have been provided with training specific to their day-to-day roles and their personal development (64% and 43%, respectively), followed by secondary school staff (51% and 31%) and primary school staff (47% and 27%). Interviews with school leaders revealed staff appetite to undertake training and the needs of the school were central considerations when deciding which training to provide for support staff. For example, support staff (particularly TAs) in special schools received specialist training on a range of medical needs (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, and gastroscopy feed), while other schools provided leadership training and hosted action research groups on the use of AI (see Chapter 11).

Figure 46: Training received by total and school phase



Source: Since starting your current role, what types of formal training have you been provided from your school? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

General all staff training is most commonly reported by health, pastoral and welfare staff, school business professionals and TAs and learning support staff (all 95%) and least commonly by staff and catering staff (83%) and midday supervisors/assistants (86%).

The provision of training specific to the day-to-day role of support staff varies across role, with 72% of school business professionals and site and catering staff reporting they had been provided this training by their school, alongside 63% of health, pastoral and welfare staff, 40% of TAs and learning support staff and 32% of midday supervisors/assistants. School business professionals and health, pastoral and welfare staff are again more likely to have received training specific to their personal development (44% and 43% respectively). Just one in ten (10%) midday supervisors/assistants report having received this type of training.

Table 27: Training received by support staff roles

	Training specific to my day-to-day role	Training specific to my personal development	General all staff training (e.g. safeguarding, autism training, etc)	Other	No training
Administrative and finance staff	56%	26%	93%	5%	3%
Midday supervisor/assistant	32%	10%	86%	5%	5%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	63%	43%	95%	5%	1%
School business professional	72%	44%	95%	6%	1%
Site and catering staff	72%	26%	83%	5%	2%
Teaching assistant and learning support	40%	29%	95%	4%	2%
Technical role	50%	29%	91%	6%	5%
Other support staff role	50%	31%	92%	8%	2%

Source: Since starting your current role, what types of formal training have you been provided from your school? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

There is a clear link between the provision of training specific to role and personal development and job satisfaction. Support staff who are satisfied with their job are more likely than those who are dissatisfied to report having received training specific to their day-to-day role (55% versus 39%) and their personal development needs (35% versus 18%).

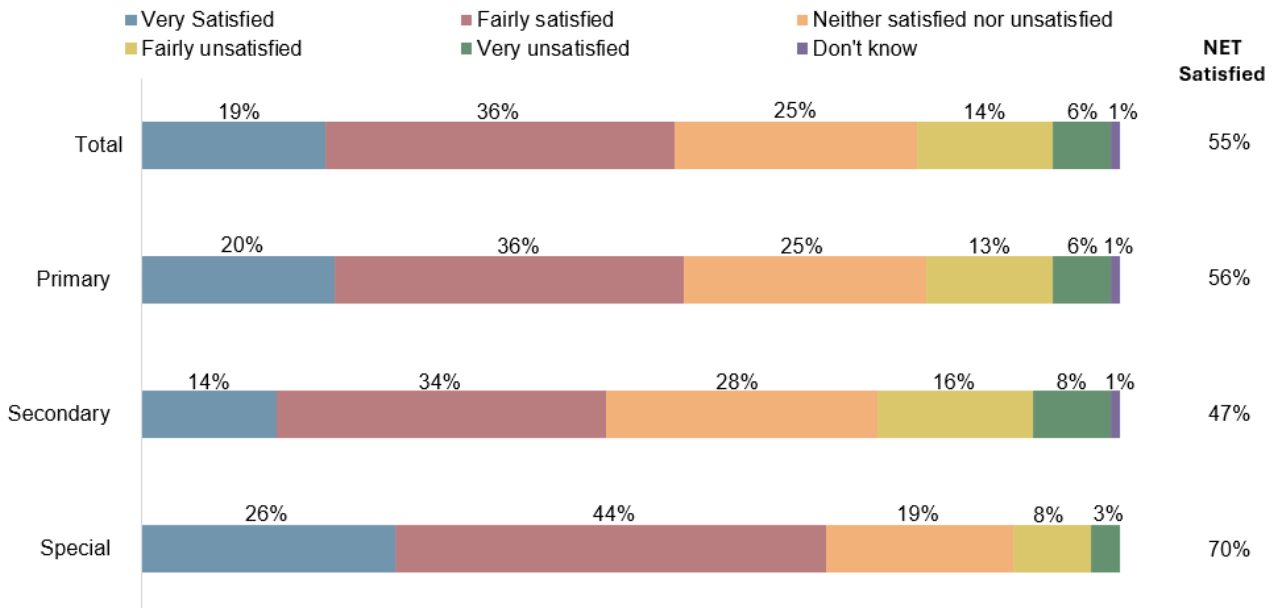
Receipt of training generally increases with time in role. This was particularly true for general all staff training, which increases from 81% of those in post under a year to 95% of those in post for more than 10 years, and training specific to personal development (23% among those in post under a year versus 31% of those in post for 3-5 years, 32% of those in post 5-10 years and 31% of those in post more than 10 years). For training specific to the day-to-day role, however, there is no variation by time in post.

Satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to support staff

Just over half of support staff (55%) are satisfied with the training available to them (19% 'very' and 36% 'fairly'). A further quarter (25%) of support staff report being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied while 20% are dissatisfied (14% 'fairly' and 6% 'very').

Special school support staff are most likely to be satisfied (70%) while primary school support staff are also more satisfied than secondary school support staff (56% versus 47%).

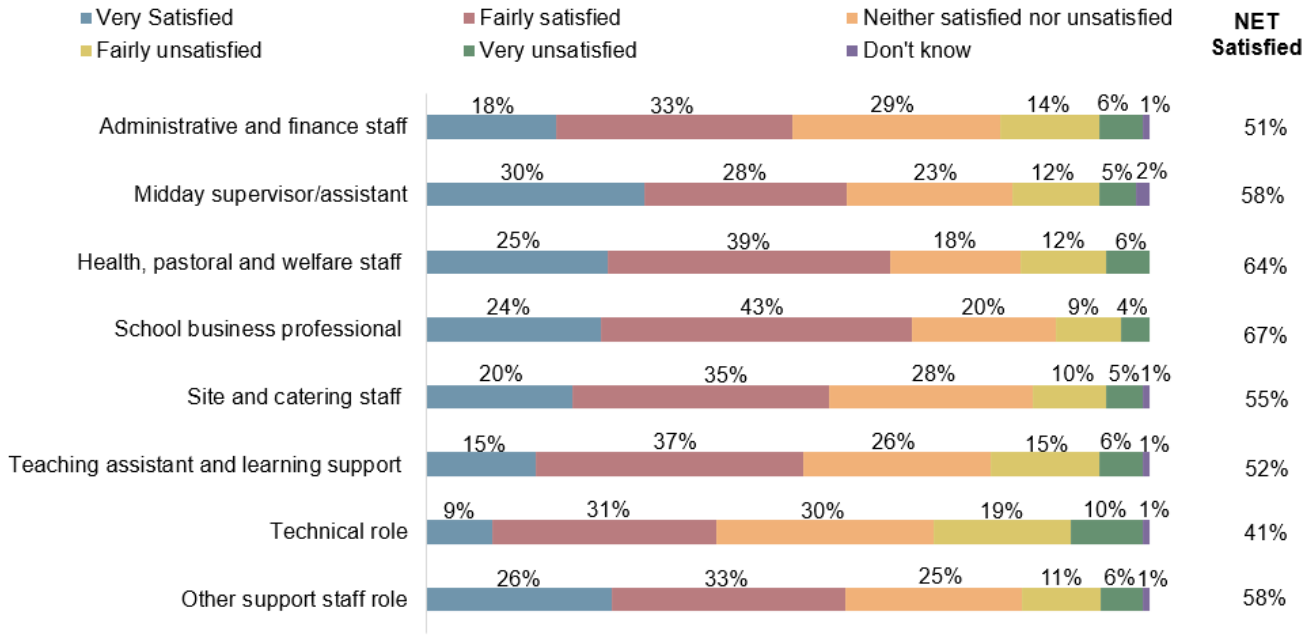
Figure 47: Satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to support staff by total and school phase



Source: To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with any training and development opportunities available to you? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,558; Primary schools: 2,922, Secondary schools: 4,934, Special schools: 1,702

Satisfaction with training also varies by role, with school business professionals (67%) and health, pastoral and welfare staff (64%) being more satisfied than other groups. Satisfaction is lowest among staff working in technical roles (40%).

Figure 48: Satisfaction with training and development opportunities available to support staff by support staff role

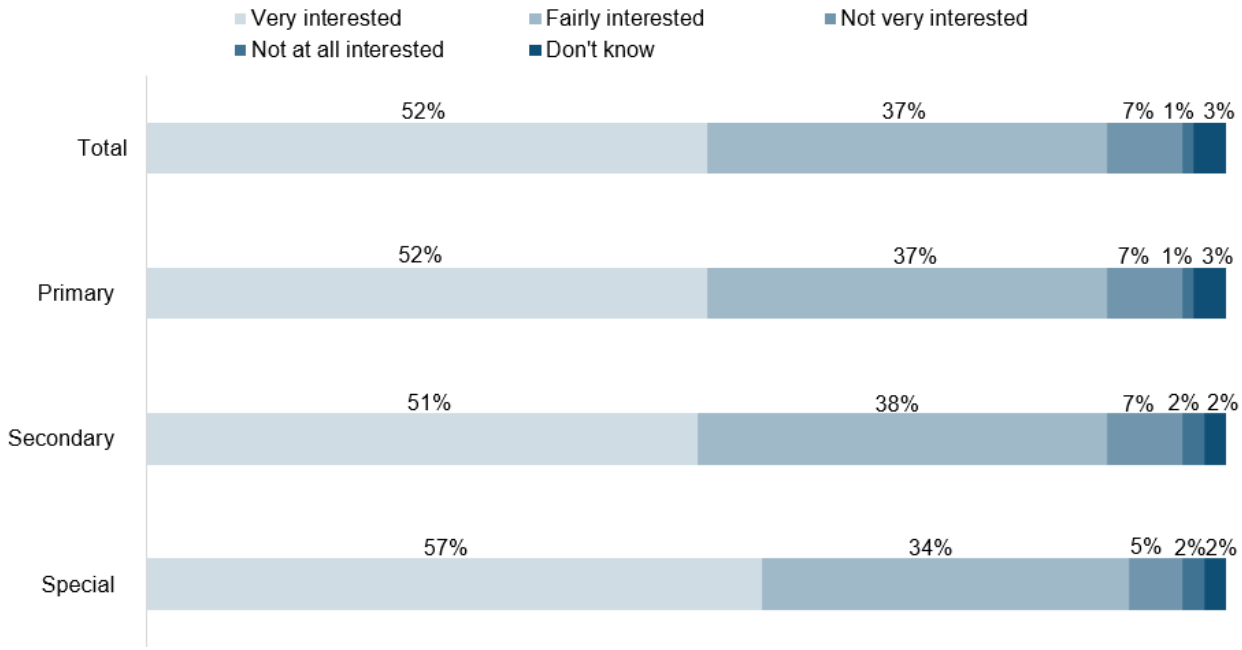


Source: To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with any training and development opportunities available to you? Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,558; Administrative and finance staff: 1,900, Midday supervisor/assistant: 164, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,062, School business professional: 425; Site and catering staff: 523, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,043, Technical role: 918, Other support staff role: 523

Interest in further training and development

There is a great deal of interest among support staff in undertaking more training directly related to their role, with 89% interested (52% ‘very’ and 37% ‘fairly’). Just 1% of support staff are not at all interested in doing this. Interest in training varies little by phase. However, support staff working in special schools (57%) are more likely to say they are very interested in training related to their role than those working in primary (52%) and secondary (51%) schools.

Figure 49: Interest in further training and development by total and school phase



Source: How interested, if at all, would you be in undertaking more training directly related to your role?
Base: All respondents: 9,626. Base: All respondents 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Interest in training is greatest among health, pastoral and welfare staff (95% interested including 67% ‘very’ interested) and lowest among site and catering staff (76% interested, 35% ‘very’ interested), administrative and finance staff (82% interested, 37% ‘very’ interested) and midday supervisors/assistants (84% interested, 47% ‘very’ interested).

Table 28: Interest in further training and development by support staff role

	Very interested	Fairly interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	37%	45%	12%	2%	4%
Midday supervisor/assistant	47%	37%	6%	2%	8%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	67%	28%	3%	1%	1%
School business professional	38%	50%	10%	1%	1%
Site and catering staff	35%	40%	15%	4%	5%
Teaching assistant and learning support	57%	36%	5%	1%	2%
Technical role	47%	39%	10%	2%	2%
Other support staff role	54%	33%	7%	1%	5%

Source: How interested, if at all, would you be in undertaking more training directly related to your role? Base: All respondents: 9,626. Base: All respondents 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff 1,068, School business professional 425; Site and catering staff 531, Teaching assistant and learning support 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

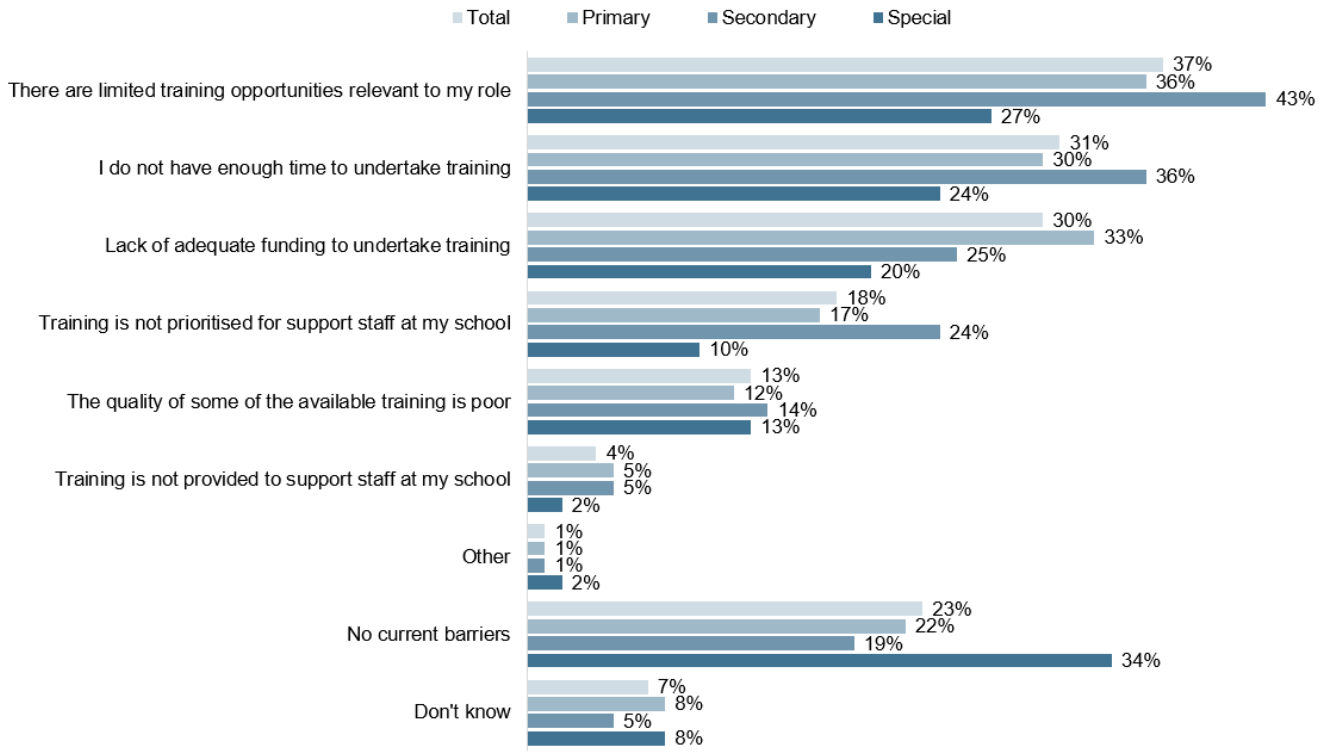
Barriers to undertaking training

Support staff perceive a number of barriers to undertaking training, most commonly, having limited opportunities relevant to their role (37%), not having enough time (31%) and a lack of adequate funding for training (30%). Almost one in five (18%) support staff felt that training was not being prioritised for support staff in their school. This sentiment was echoed by some interviews with school leaders, where a small number of schools said they prioritised training for teachers over support staff due to limited resources (see Chapter 11). Other perceived barriers include the quality of the available training being poor (13%) and no training for support staff being provided at the school (4%). However, around one in four (23%) report that they have no current barriers to training.

Barriers to training are least prevalent among special school support staff (34% reporting no barriers), followed by primary school support staff (22%) and secondary school support staff (19%).

Having limited training opportunities is more commonly reported as a perceived barrier by secondary school support staff (43%) than primary school support staff (36%) and special school support staff (27%). The same pattern exists for not having enough time to undertake training (36% in secondary schools, 30% in primary schools and 24% in special schools) and training for support staff not being prioritised in the school (24% in secondary schools, 17% in primary schools and 10% in special schools). A lack of adequate funding for training, however, is a greater perceived barrier for primary school staff (33%) than secondary school staff (25%) and special school staff (20%).

Figure 50: Barriers to undertaking training by total and school phase



Source: Which of the following, if any, are currently barriers to you undertaking training in your support staff role? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

The biggest perceived barrier for technical staff (49%), midday supervisors/assistants (39%), and site and catering staff (38%) is having limited opportunities. TAs and learning support staff cite both limited opportunities and a perceived lack of funding to undertake training (both 37%) as their greatest perceived barriers to training. For administrative and finance staff, it is time (42%) and limited opportunities (41%), and for school business professionals, it is predominantly time (53%). Health, pastoral and welfare staff report time (35%), funding (33%) and limited opportunities (31%) as the main perceived barrier to training.

Interviews with school leaders found that the structure of the school day, was a key barrier to providing training opportunities for support staff, due to the limited time available in the day, partnered with existing support staff workload. Several leaders, most notably of primary schools, reported making use of online training resources for support staff, as the continuous access helped to work around the issue of limited time (see Chapter 11).

Table 29: Barriers to undertaking training by support staff role

	There are limited training opportunities relevant to my role	I do not have enough time to undertake training	Lack of adequate funding to undertake training	Training is not prioritised for support staff at my school
Administrative and finance staff	41%	42%	19%	20%
Midday supervisor/assistant	39%	3%	8%	13%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	31%	35%	33%	17%
School business professional	34%	53%	35%	15%
Site and catering staff	38%	23%	17%	8%
Teaching assistant and learning support	37%	32%	37%	21%
Technical role	49%	33%	31%	32%
Other support staff role	35%	29%	23%	15%

	The quality of some of the available training is poor	Training is not provided to support staff at my school	Other	No current barriers	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	7%	5%	1%	24%	3%
Midday supervisor/assistant	3%	6%	2%	28%	22%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	19%	3%	3%	26%	4%
School business professional	12%	3%	0%	21%	0%
Site and catering staff	8%	2%	1%	28%	9%
Teaching assistant and learning support	15%	5%	1%	20%	7%
Technical role	11%	8%	3%	15%	5%
Other support staff role	10%	3%	2%	30%	6%

Source: Which of the following, if any, are currently barriers to you undertaking training in your support staff role? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff 1,068, School business professional 425; Site and catering staff 531, Teaching assistant and learning support 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

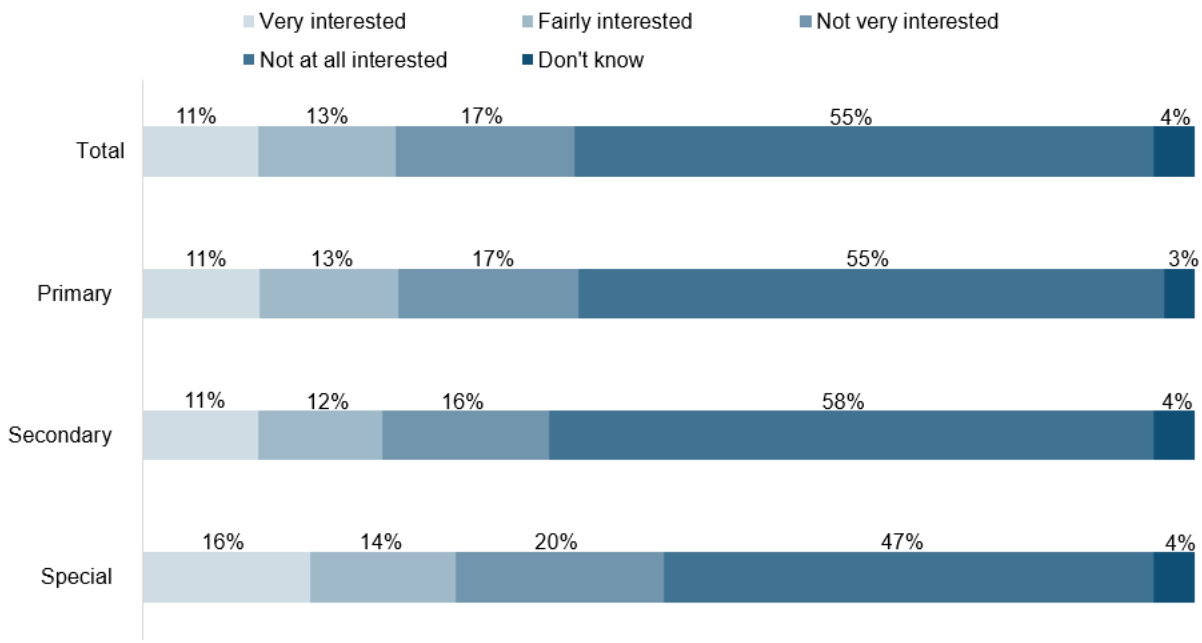
Interest and barriers in teacher training

Interest in training to become a qualified teacher

Around a quarter (24%) of support staff are interested in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher (11% 'very' interested and 13% 'fairly'). Almost three quarters (72%) are not interested in doing this, with most being 'not at all' interested (55%).

Support staff working in special schools are more interested in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher than those in other phases (30% were interested, compared to 24% in primary schools and 23% in secondary schools).

Figure 51: Interest in training to become a qualified teacher by total and school phase



Source: How interested, if at all, would you be in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Interest in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher varies by role. Consistent with interviews with school leaders (see Chapter 11), TAs and learning support staff are most likely to want to do this (34%), followed by midday supervisors/assistants (24%), health, pastoral and welfare staff (21%) and other support staff (19%). Staff working in technical roles (15%) and site and catering staff (13%) are also more interested in this than administrative and finance staff (9%) and school business professionals (5%).

Table 30: Interest in training to become a qualified teacher by support staff role

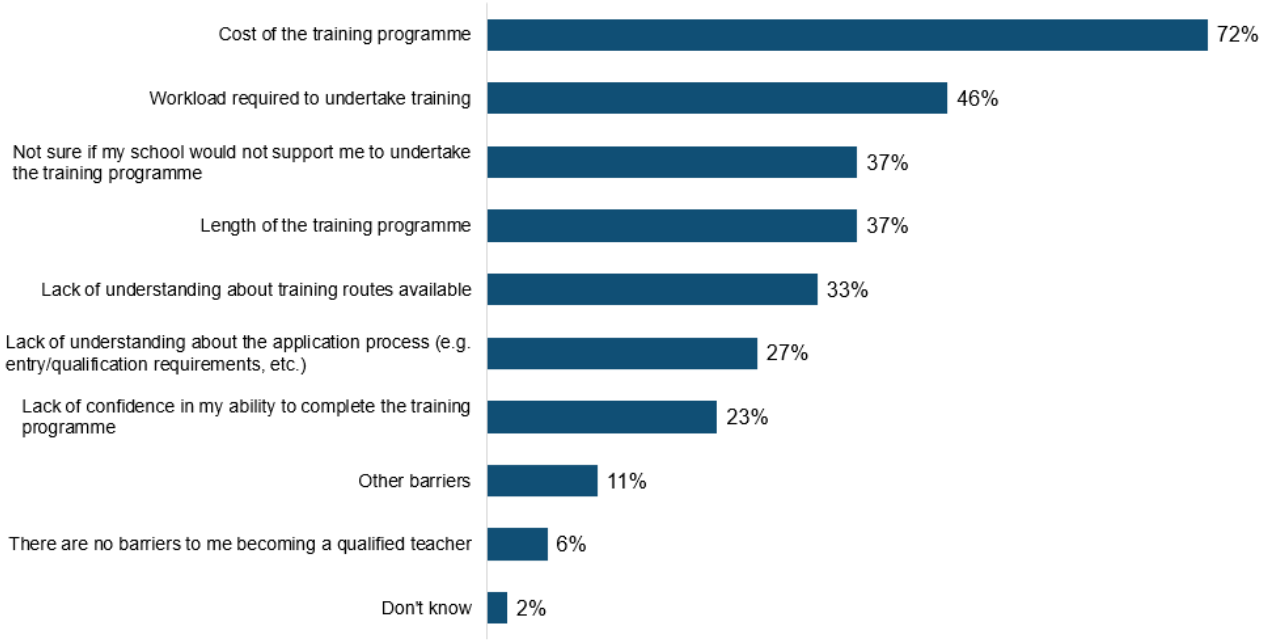
	Very interested	Fairly interested	Not very interested	Not at all interested	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	3%	6%	11%	78%	2%
Midday supervisor/assistant	12%	12%	24%	48%	4%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	8%	14%	15%	60%	3%
School business professional	1%	4%	11%	82%	2%
Site and catering staff	5%	8%	15%	69%	3%
Teaching assistant and learning support	17%	17%	19%	42%	4%
Technical role	6%	9%	18%	63%	5%
Other support staff role	8%	12%	18%	58%	5%

Source: How interested, if at all, would you be in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff 1,068, School business professional 425; Site and catering staff 531, Teaching assistant and learning support 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Barriers to undertaking training to becoming a qualified teacher

Support staff who were interested in training to become a qualified teacher noted several perceived barriers, with the cost of the training programme (72%) by far the most frequently reported barrier. This is followed by workload required to undertake training (46%), uncertainty around whether the school would support them to undertake training (37%), the length of the training programme (37%), and a lack of understanding about training routes available (33%). Other perceived barriers are a lack of understanding about the application process (27%) and a lack of confidence in ability to undertake the training programme (23%). Just over one in ten support staff (11%) report another barrier while 6% said they face no barriers.

Figure 52: Barriers to undertaking training to become a qualified teacher



Source: Which of the following, if any, do you think would be barriers to you training to become a qualified teacher? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents who are interested in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher: 2,272

Factors facilitating participation in teacher training

Support staff who are interested in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher listed a number of factors that would make it easier for them to do this. Three main themes are: stability, finance and information.

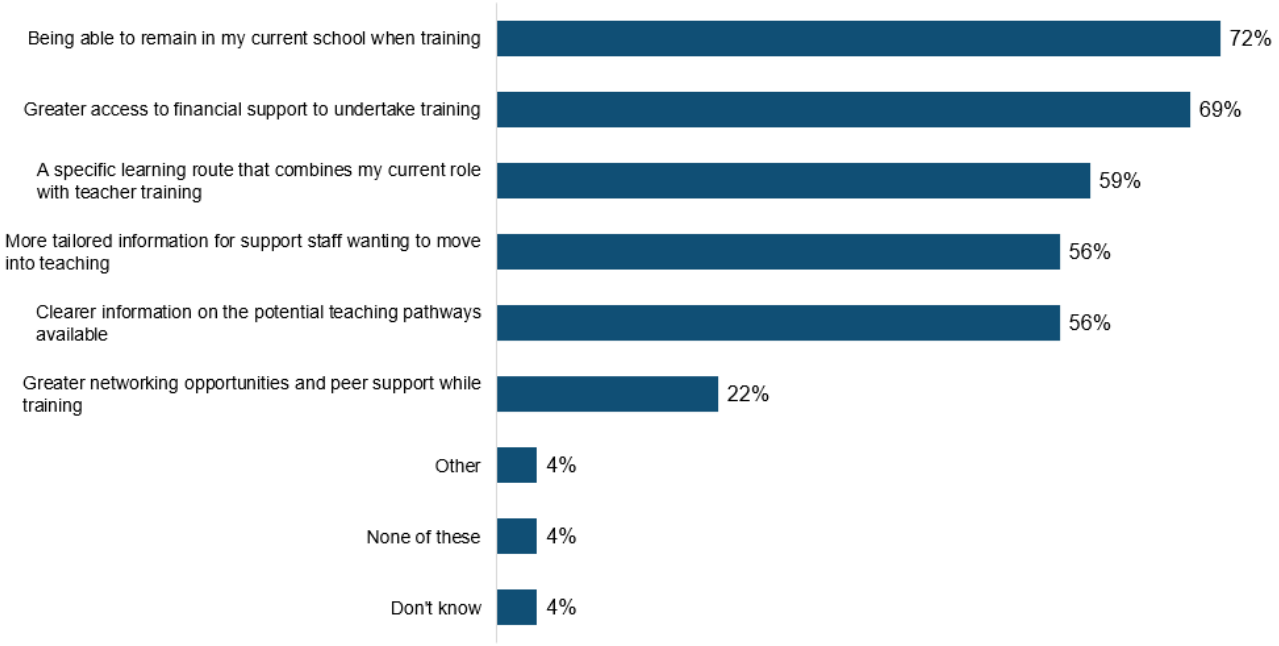
In relation to stability, almost three quarters (72%) said that being able to stay in their current school while undertaking their training would help, while 59% believe having a specific learning route that combines their current role with teacher training would be beneficial.

Linked to the financial barrier reported above, seven in ten (69%) say greater access to financial support would make it easier to undertake teacher training.

Support staff would also welcome more tailored information for support staff wanting to move into teaching and clearer information on the potential teaching pathways available (both 56%).

Around one in five (22%) say greater networking opportunities and peer support while training would make it easier to participate in teacher training. A smaller proportion suggested another facilitator, believe that none of the listed options would make it easier or said that they did not know (all 4%).

Figure 53: Factors facilitating participation in teacher training



Source: Which of the following, if any, do you think would make it easier for you to participate in teacher training? Please select all that apply. Base: All respondents who are interested in undertaking training to become a qualified teacher: 2,272

Career progression, recruitment and retention

Summary: Career progression and retention

Most support staff (70%) had not received a promotion within their school, while 30% had. Of those promoted, one in five (20%) were promoted to a higher-level position within their support role type, and one in ten (10%) were promoted to a different support role on higher pay.

One in five (20%) support staff agree that there are opportunities for them to progress their career in their school or trust, whilst half (50%) disagree. Staff in special schools are more positive about career progression opportunities than those in mainstream schools. Technical staff (65%) school business professionals (56%) and site and catering staff (54%) are most likely to report a lack of progression opportunities.

Support staff, particularly school business professionals, are slightly more optimistic about the availability of career progression opportunities outside their school or trust. Again, technical staff are the least optimistic.

Support staff would like more support in three key areas to help with career progression: training and development, career pathway clarity, and support and resources. Key concerns include 46% desiring more training, 44% seeking more progression routes, and 37% seeking greater clarity about existing progression routes.

Two in five (39%) support staff feel a lack of clear career progression routes are a barrier to career progression, and around a third feel school structure (33%), a lack of funding (32%), and limited training opportunities (30%) provide additional obstacles. Support staff in secondary schools, and technical staff in particular, seem most effected by the barriers to career progression. Two in five school business professionals (40%) cite increases in workload as preventing career progression. Interviews with school leaders also found that school structure, funding, and workload are key obstacles to progression.

One in five (22%) support staff are considering leaving the state school sector in the next 12 months, with one in ten (12%) thinking about moving to a different support role or a different state school. Technical staff (30%) are the most likely to consider leaving altogether. Seven percent of support staff are considering retirement.

Of the support staff contemplating leaving the state sector, nearly three-quarters (73%) cite dissatisfaction with pay as a reason. Half (50%) highlight a lack of progression opportunities, and 45% mention high workload as a factor influencing their decision. Two in five (39%) support staff overall, and over half (56%) of TAs and learning support staff, cite pupil behaviour as a driving factor.

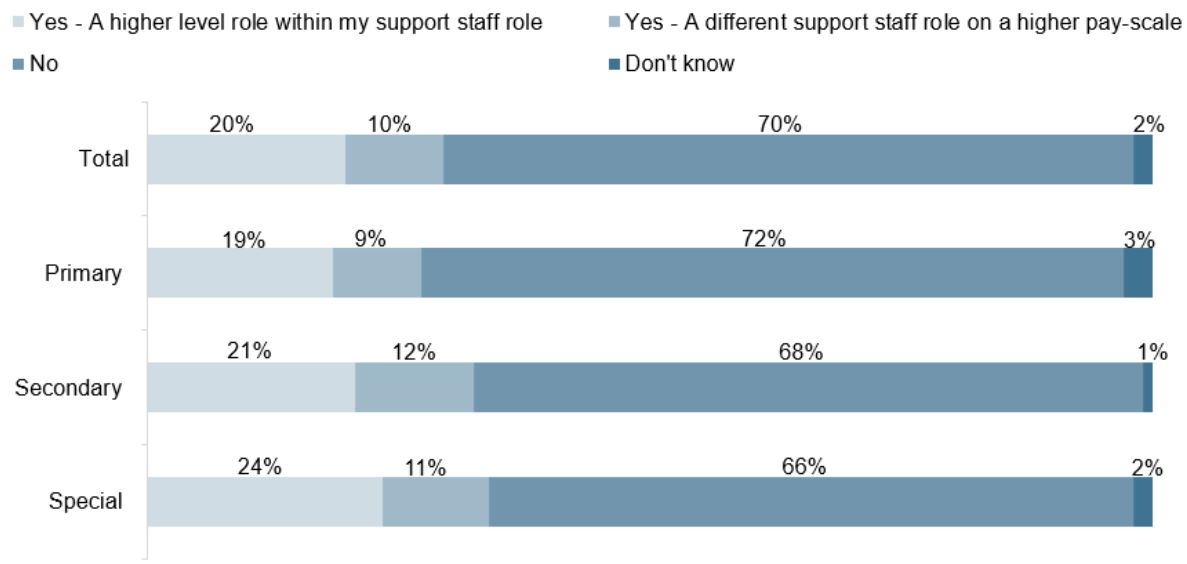
Promotion and career advancement opportunities

Career progression and mobility within schools

The majority of support staff (70%) had not received a promotion within their school, while three in ten (30%) had. One in five (20%) were promoted to a higher-level role within their support staff role and one in ten (10%) were promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale.

Staff in special (35%) and secondary (33%) schools are more likely to have received some type of promotion than staff in primary schools (28%). Support staff in special schools (24%) are more likely than staff in secondary (21%) and primary (19%) to have been promoted to a higher level within their support staff role. Support staff in secondary schools (12%) and special schools (11%) are more likely than staff in primary schools (9%) to have been promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale.

Figure 54: School support staff who had been promoted by total and school phase



Source: Have you received a promotion (i.e. moved to a role with higher pay and/or greater responsibility) within your school? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

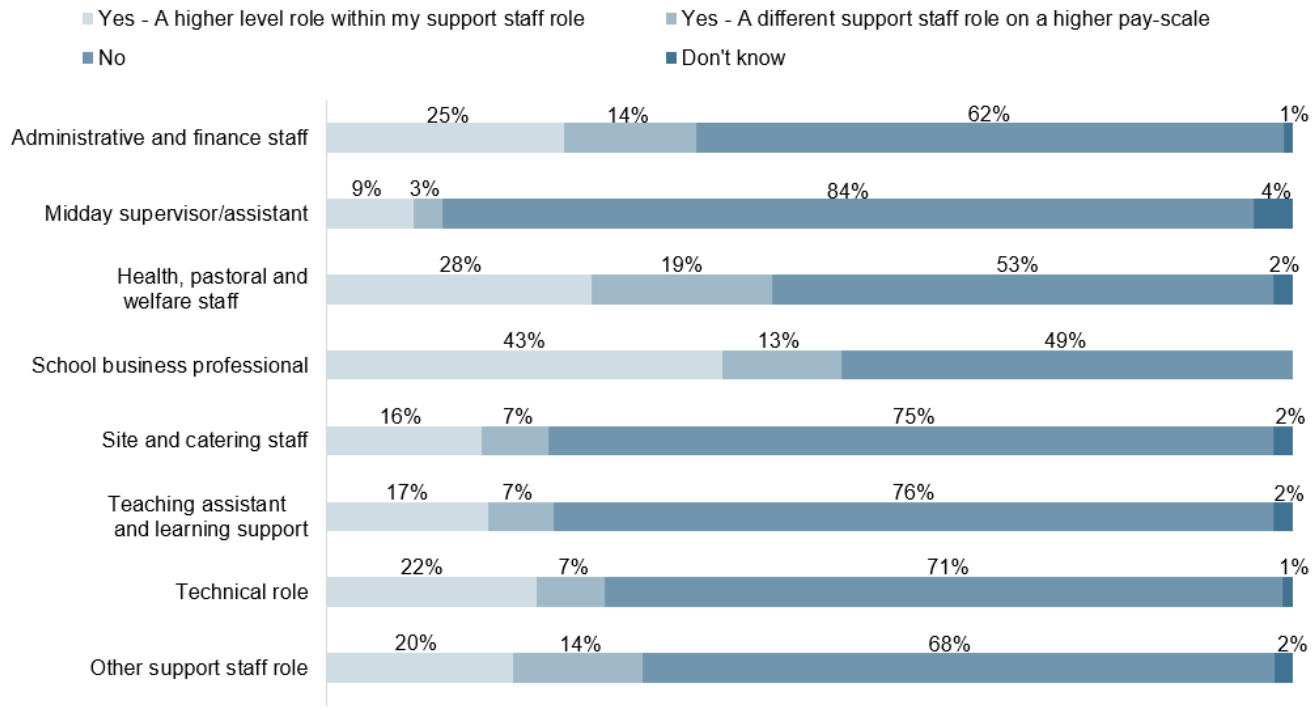
The support staff most likely to receive some sort of promotion are school business professionals (56%), followed by health, pastoral and welfare staff (47%) and administrative and finance staff (39%).

School business professionals are the most likely to have been promoted to a higher level while staying in their support staff role (43%).

Health, pastoral and welfare staff are the most likely to be promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay scale (19%), followed by administrative and finance staff and other support staff roles (both at 14%), and school business professionals (13%).

Conversely, 84% of midday supervisors/assistants, 76% of TAs and learning support, 75% of site and catering staff, and 71% of technical staff had not received a promotion within their school.

Figure 55: Promotion by support staff role



Source: Have you received a promotion (i.e. moved to a role with higher pay and/or greater responsibility) within your school? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support: 530

Interviews with school leaders showed that support staff appetite for career development is largely considered to be dependent on individual circumstances. Influential factors include age, job satisfaction, and family commitments. Leaders perceive younger support staff as more inclined towards career development, whereas older staff, especially those long-tenured in their roles, are seen as less likely to pursue advancement. Some leaders noted that staff with specific family commitments might prefer roles that suit their current lifestyle, making them hesitant to disrupt established work patterns for career progression. Despite the emphasis on individual aspirations, TAs are commonly identified as the most likely group to seek career progression, facilitated by clear progression routes within the schools and turnover in higher TA roles, which encourages internal promotions (see Chapter 11).

Previous role in school

Of staff who had been promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale, over half (55%) had been in a TA and learning support role previously in their school. One in five (19%) were previously in administrative and finance roles and nearly one in ten (9%) in a health, pastoral and welfare staff role.

In primary and special schools, two thirds (66%) of staff who had been promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale had come from a TA and learning support staff role. While for secondary staff, under a third (30%) came from a TA and learning support staff role. The most common previously held role in secondary schools was administrative and finance (32%).

Table 31: Previous role in school by total and school phase

	Total	Primary	Secondary	Special
Administrative and finance staff	19%	13%	32%	14%
Midday supervisor/assistant	3%	4%	2%	3%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	9%	6%	15%	10%
School business professional	1%	1%	2%	1%
Site and catering staff	8%	9%	8%	4%
Teaching assistant and learning support	55%	66%	30%	66%
Technical role	2%	0%	7%	1%
Other support staff role	1%	0%	2%	1%

Source: What type of role best matches the previous role you held in your school? Base: All respondents who have been promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale: 1,050; Primary schools: 238, Secondary schools: 607, Special schools: 205

For most school support staff who have been promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale, career progression meant moving to higher pay-scales within the same occupational area. Nearly nine in ten (89%) TAs and learning support staff were promoted to a different role on a higher pay-scale while remaining in a TA and learning support position. A similar trend was also seen for administrative and finance staff (74%), technicians (59%) and, to a lesser extent, health, pastoral and welfare staff (22%) and school business professionals (15%).

Among those who did change occupational pathways, 66% of those in a health, pastoral and welfare role were previously working as TAs or learning support staff, and 61% of school business professionals were previously working in administrative and finance roles.

Interviews with school leaders found that while linear progression is fairly commonplace (e.g. TAs moving from Level 3 to Level 4), some schools additionally operate a system of non-linear progression; that is, promoting staff to different support roles (e.g. a TA becoming a pastoral manager). Non-linear progression was more commonly mentioned in secondary schools, with leaders describing it as a way to better match individuals' skillsets to support roles (see Chapter 11).

Table 32: Previous role in school by support staff role

	Current role: Administrative and finance staff	Current role: Midday supervisor/ assistant[11]	Current role: Health, pastoral and welfare staff	Current role: School business professional
Previous role: Administrative and finance staff	74%	-	10%	61%
Previous role: Midday supervisor/assistant	3%	-	0%	0%
Previous role: Health, pastoral and welfare staff	2%	-	22%	3%
Previous role: School business professional	0%	-	0%	15%
Previous role: Site and catering staff	1%	-	0%	4%
Previous role: Teaching assistant and learning support	14%	-	66%	12%
Previous role: Technical role	4%	-	0%	3%
Previous role: Other	1%	-	1%	3%

[11] Figures suppressed as base size for midday supervisor/assistant is 5.

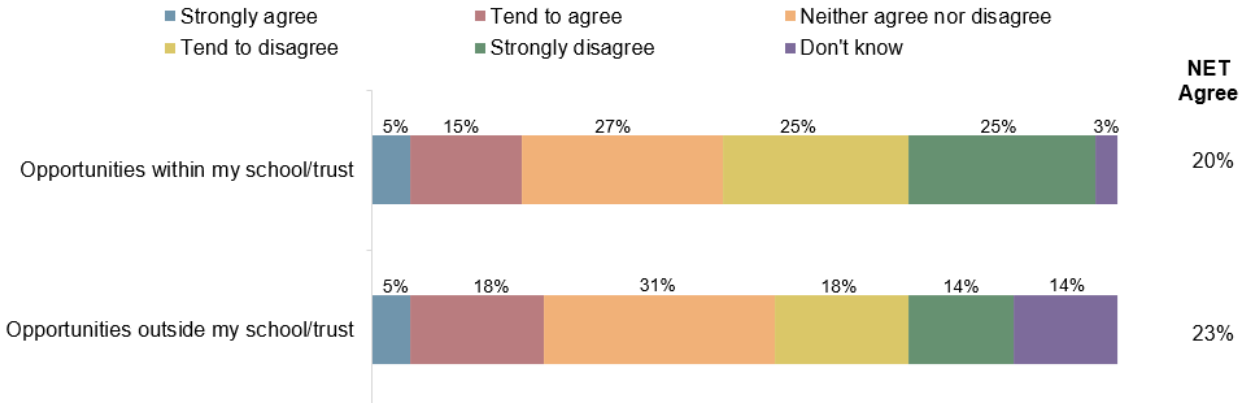
	Current role: Site and catering staff	Current role: Teaching assistant and learning support	Current role: Technical role	Current role: Other support staff role
Previous role: Administrative and finance staff	2%	2%	4%	25%
Previous role: Midday supervisor/assistant	7%	4%	3%	2%
Previous role: Health, pastoral and welfare staff	0%	3%	0%	6%
Previous role: School business professional	2%	0%	0%	0%
Previous role: Site and catering staff	88%	0%	8%	1%
Previous role: Teaching assistant and learning support	2%	89%	22%	42%
Previous role: Technical role	0%	0%	59%	6%
Previous role: Other	0%	1%	0%	11%

Source: What type of role best matches the previous role you held in your school? Base: All respondents who have been promoted to a different support staff role on a higher pay-scale: 1,050; Administrative and finance staff: 292, Midday supervisor/assistant: 5*, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 201, School business professional: 63, Site and catering staff: 39, Teaching assistant and learning support: 309, Technical role: 64, Other support: 77

Opportunities to progress career inside and outside of current school

Around one in five (20%) support staff agree that there are opportunities for career progression within their school or trust, and 23% believe there are opportunities outside their current school.

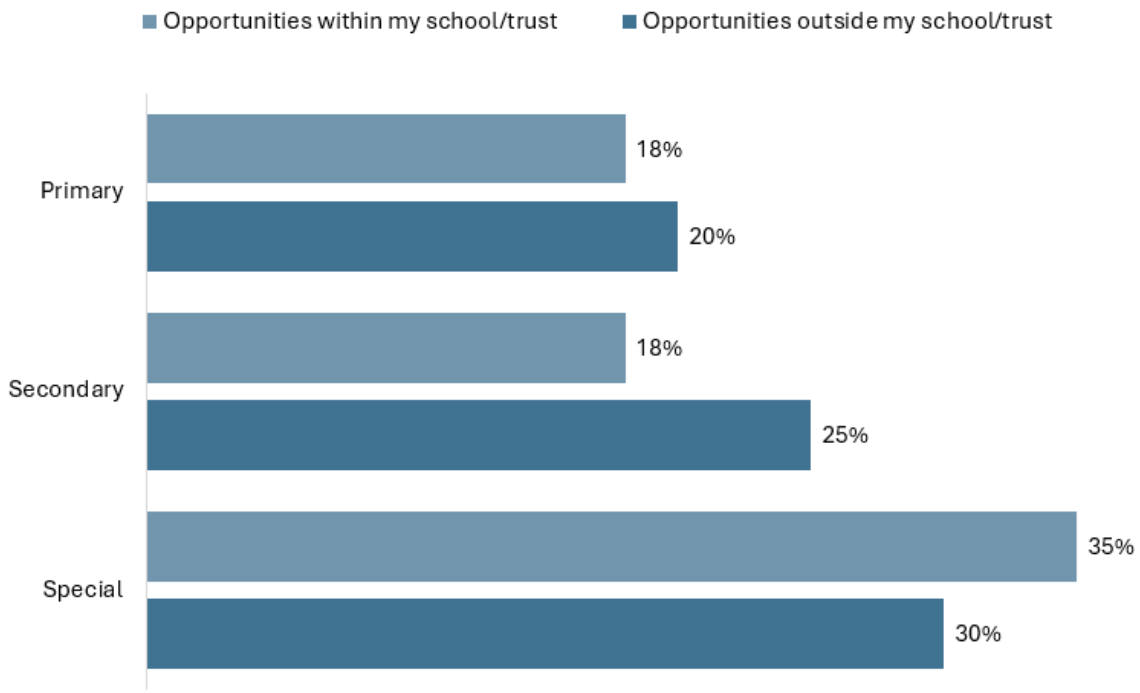
Figure 56: Opportunities to progress career within and outside of current school/trust



Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'There are opportunities for me to progress my career within my school and/or trust' and 'There are opportunities for me to progress my career as a school support staff member outside my school/trust' Base: All respondents: 9,626.

Special school support staff are the most positive about both internal and external progression opportunities. For internal progressions, 35% of special school staff agree opportunities exist, compared to 18% in both primary and secondary schools. This pattern continues for external opportunities, with 30% of special school support staff agreeing they exist, compared to 25% in secondary and 20% in primary schools.

Figure 57: Opportunities for career progression by total and school phase – NET agree



Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'There are opportunities for me to progress my career within my school and/or trust' and 'There are opportunities for me to progress my career as a school support staff member outside my school/trust' Base: All respondents (excl. prefer not to say): 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Perceptions of career advancement opportunities vary among different staff groups. Midday supervisors/assistants (24%) and other support staff (23%) are the most likely to agree there are internal opportunities within their current school. In terms of external opportunities, school business professionals are the most likely to agree with the statement (42%). Technical staff are the most likely to disagree there are opportunities to progress their careers both inside (65%) and outside (41%) of their schools. Additionally, 56% of school business professionals and 54% of site and catering staff disagree there are internal opportunities to progress their careers, with 37% of site and catering staff also disagreeing there are external opportunities.

Interviews with school leaders found that a small number of leaders used non-linear progression[12] as a mechanism for retaining talented support staff where limited opportunities to progress were available. For example, schools promoted TAs who had reached the top of their pay-scale into pastoral roles. This approach was particularly valuable in smaller schools with limited senior positions, allowing leaders to retain staff by creating alternative career pathways when traditional advancement was not available (see Chapter 11).

[12] Non-linear progression involves moving staff sideways into different role areas rather than traditional upward progression.

Table 33: Opportunities for career progression in support staff roles by school support role

	Opportunities to progress my career within my school/trust: NET Agree	Opportunities to progress my career within my school/trust: NET Disagree	Opportunities in support staff roles outside my school/trust: NET Agree	Opportunities in support staff roles outside my school/trust: NET Disagree
Administrative and finance staff	19%	52%	26%	28%
Midday supervisor/assistant	24%	36%	22%	22%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	21%	53%	30%	31%
School business professional	19%	56%	42%	31%
Site and catering staff	13%	54%	17%	37%
Teaching assistant and learning support	21%	49%	19%	34%
Technical role	12%	65%	22%	41%
Other support staff role	23%	45%	25%	26%

Source: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Base: All respondents: ‘There are opportunities for me to progress my career within my school and/or trust’ and 'There are opportunities for me to progress my career as a school support staff member outside my school/trust’: 9,626, Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,046, Technical role: 926, Other support staff role: 530

Support for career progression

Training and development is the primary area staff wanted more support with in order to progress their careers, with 46% wanting more training opportunities, 25% seeking greater access to development resources and 17% suggesting leadership development programmes would help.

Career pathway clarity is the second key area, with 44% of staff wanting more progression routes to be made available and 37% wishing for greater clarity about existing routes. This is complemented by 16% who would like job rotation and role shadowing opportunities.

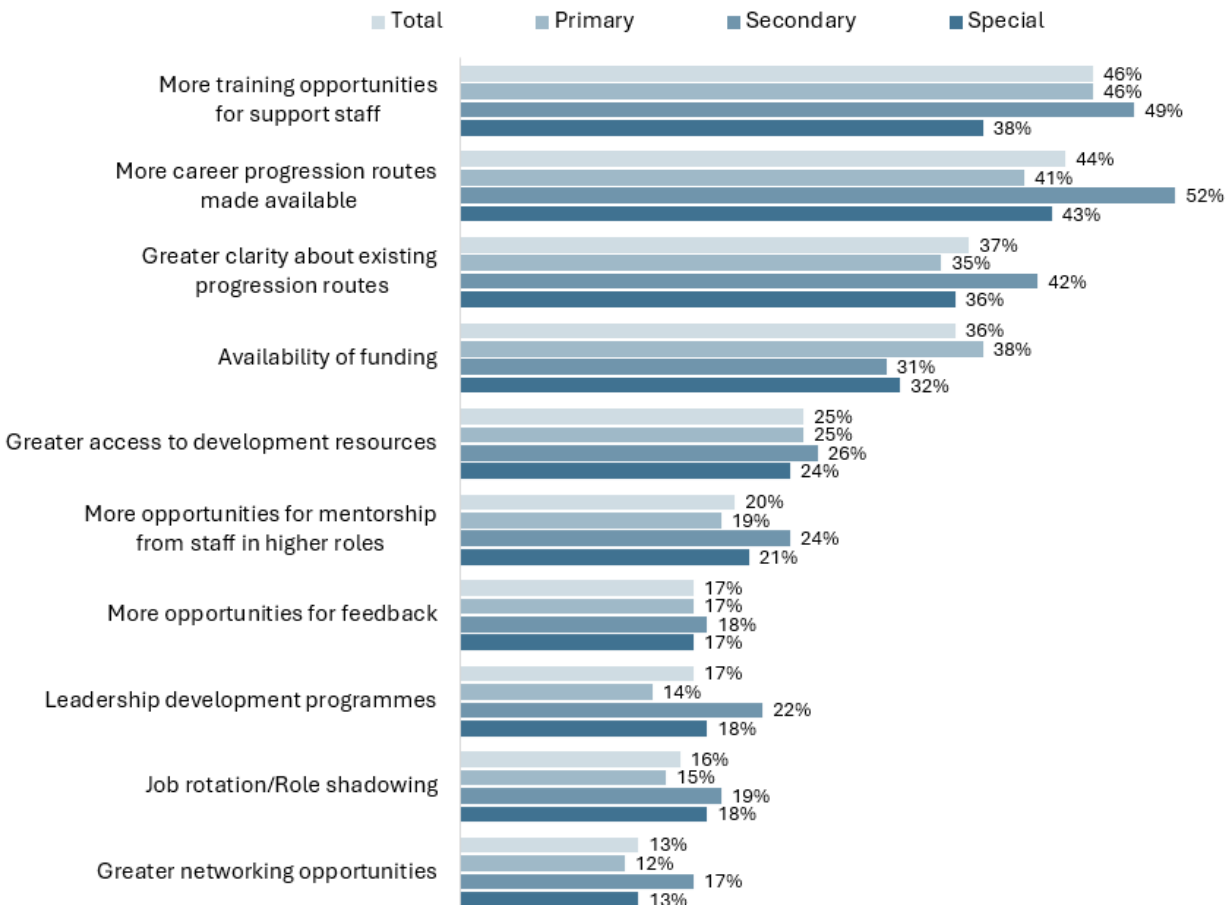
The third area centres on support and resources, with over one in three (36%) perceiving that availability of funding would support them to progress. Personal support mechanisms are also valued, including mentorship opportunities from senior staff (20%), regular feedback opportunities (17%), and enhanced networking opportunities (13%).

Secondary school staff express the broadest range of support needs across all school phases. Over half (52%) would like greater career progression and nearly half (49%) would like more additional training opportunities.

Primary school support staff show more focused priorities, with nearly half (46%) highlighting the need for more training opportunities. Over a third (38%) would value more funding availability.

Special school support staff demonstrate similar interests to secondary colleagues but at lower levels, with 21% valuing mentorship opportunities from senior staff and 18% perceiving both leadership development programmes and job rotation or role shadowing programmes as beneficial for their career progression.

Figure 58: Career progression support by total and school phase



Source: In your opinion, what could be done to better support you to progress your career? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Support staff have differing priorities when it comes to what they believe could be done to better support them progress their career.

TAs and learning support staff (55%) and technical staff (50%) are the most likely to want more training opportunities for support staff, while health, pastoral and welfare staff (54%) and technical staff (53%) are the most likely to want more career progression routes made available. Additionally, school business professionals show a distinct preference for leadership development programs, with 32% expressing interest in such opportunities.

Table 34: Career progression support by school support role

	More training opportunities for support staff	More career progression routes made available	Greater clarity about existing progression routes	Availability of funding (e.g., accessible bursaries)	Greater access to development resources
Administrative and finance staff	40%	41%	36%	22%	20%
Midday supervisor/assistant	41%	21%	23%	18%	15%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	40%	54%	40%	40%	25%
School business professional	35%	42%	33%	37%	23%
Site and catering staff	31%	30%	26%	18%	14%
Teaching assistant and learning support	55%	49%	41%	45%	31%
Technical role	50%	53%	42%	33%	26%
Other support staff role	36%	42%	33%	31%	17%

	More opportunities for mentorship from staff in higher roles	More opportunities for feedback	Leadership development programmes	Job rotation/ Role shadowing programmes	Greater networking opportunities	None of these	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	17%	13%	15%	17%	13%	17%	15%
Midday supervisor/assistant	9%	18%	3%	16%	6%	21%	19%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	21%	16%	28%	14%	15%	8%	9%
School business professional	19%	8%	32%	11%	21%	16%	7%
Site and catering staff	13%	13%	11%	11%	10%	28%	14%
Teaching assistant and learning support	25%	20%	15%	19%	14%	9%	9%
Technical role	18%	16%	16%	14%	22%	11%	11%
Other support staff role	17%	16%	19%	16%	14%	20%	12%

Source: In your opinion, what could be done to better support you to progress your career? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support: 530

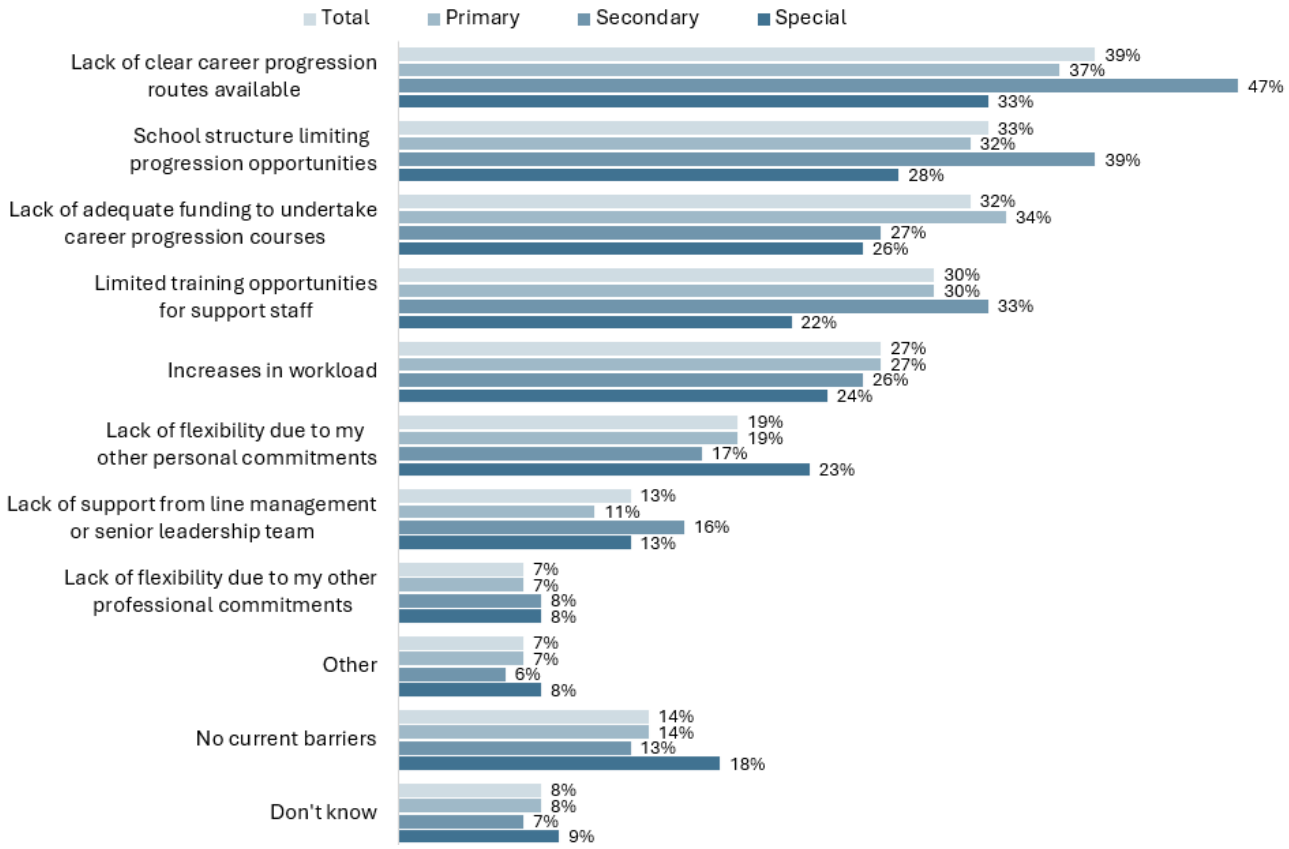
Barriers to career progression

Nearly two in five (39%) support staff perceive that a lack of clear career progression routes is a barrier to them progressing their career. This is followed by the school structure limiting progression opportunities (33%), a perceived lack of adequate funding to undertake career progression courses (32%) and limited training opportunities for support staff (30%).

Support staff across different school phases face different barriers to career progression:

- Secondary school staff believe they face the most extensive barriers overall, with nearly half (47%) citing unclear career progression routes as an obstacle. They are also more likely to feel limited by school structures (39%).
- Over a third (37%) of primary school staff believe that unclear career progression routes present a barrier to career progression, as well as inadequate funding for career progression courses (34%).
- 23% of special school staff see a lack of flexibility due to personal commitments as a barrier to their progression, compared with 19% of primary school staff and 17% of secondary school staff.

Figure 59: Barriers for career progression by total and school phase



Source: Which of the following, if any, are currently barriers to progressing your career? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Staff in technical roles report the most significant structural barriers to career advancement. Over half (55%) feel a lack of clear career progression routes is their primary obstacle, whilst nearly half (47%) think the school structure itself limits their progression opportunities and over a third (36%) cite limited training opportunities.

Health, pastoral and welfare staff similarly face multiple structural challenges. Over half (51%) reported facing a lack of clear career progression routes, whilst 44% feel constrained by school structures that limit progression opportunities. Over a third (35%) perceive inadequate funding for career progression courses as a barrier.

TAs and learning support staff experience a comprehensive range of barriers. Two in five perceive both a lack of clear career progression routes (40%) and inadequate funding for progression courses (40%) as key obstacles. Over a third (36%) face a perceived lack of training opportunities, whilst 30% point to increases in workload as a barrier.

School business professionals report facing two primary barriers: nearly half (47%) feel limited by school structures, whilst two in five (40%) cite increases in workload as preventing career progression.

Interviews with school leaders highlighted challenges schools face around providing career progression pathways (see Chapter 11). School structure and/or school size was the most frequent obstacle, as it limited the number and type of roles that were available. Low pay and limited school budgets were also cited as barriers, with several leaders saying that without adequate compensation, support staff may find higher level roles, and the increased responsibility and workload they tend to carry, less attractive.

Table 35: Barriers for career progression by school support role

	Lack of clear progression routes available	School structure limiting progression opportunities	Lack of adequate funding to undertake career progression courses	Limited training opportunities for support staff	Increases in workload
Administrative and finance staff	37%	40%	21%	26%	29%
Midday supervisor/assistant	23%	10%	14%	31%	5%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	51%	44%	35%	25%	29%
School business professional	35%	47%	25%	19%	40%
Site and catering staff	31%	24%	16%	20%	20%
Teaching assistant and learning support	40%	33%	40%	36%	30%
Technical role	55%	47%	29%	36%	24%
Other support staff role	39%	30%	25%	22%	24%

	Lack of flexibility due to my other personal commitments	Lack of support from line management or senior leadership team	Lack of flexibility due to my other professional commitments	Other	No current barriers	Don't know
Administrative and finance staff	19%	11%	6%	7%	16%	7%
Midday supervisor/assistant	17%	7%	3%	7%	25%	18%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	12%	11%	9%	6%	12%	5%
School business professional	15%	7%	6%	11%	15%	3%
Site and catering staff	10%	13%	5%	8%	23%	11%
Teaching assistant and learning support	24%	15%	8%	6%	11%	7%
Technical role	15%	16%	6%	9%	11%	5%
Other support staff role	18%	10%	9%	9%	19%	9%

Source: Which of the following, if any, are currently barriers to progressing your career? Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support: 530

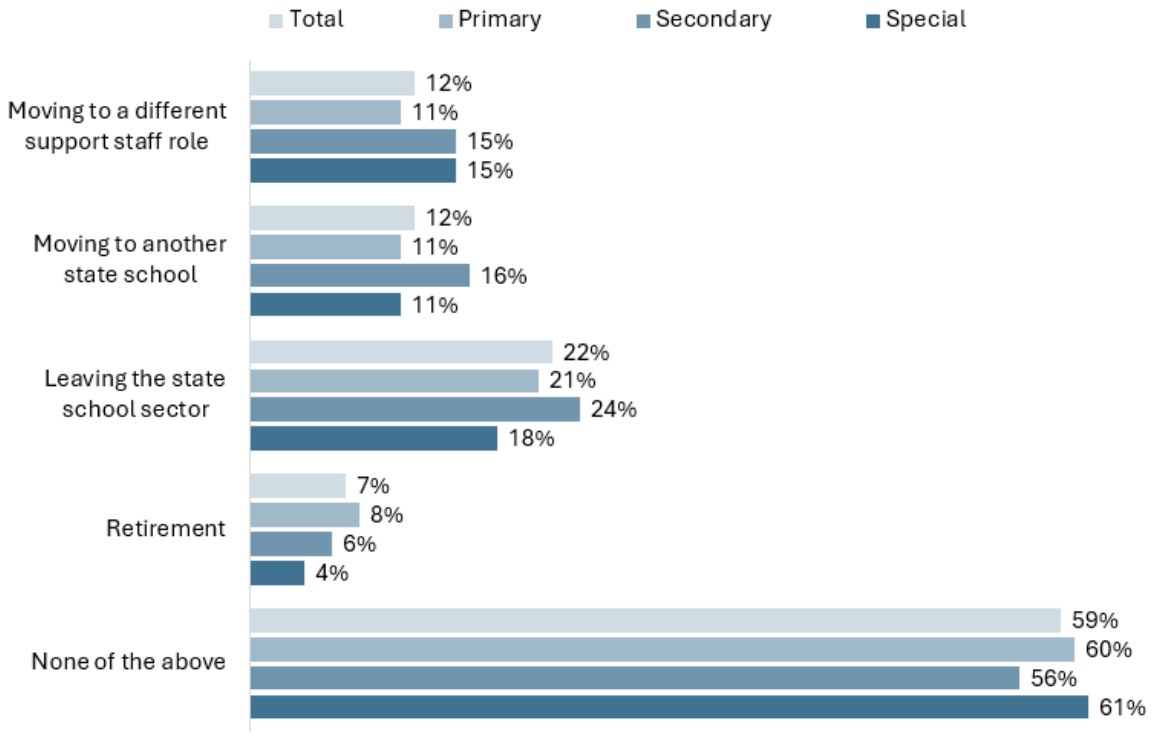
Future career intentions

The majority of support staff across all school phases (59%) are not actively considering any changes to their employment over the next 12 months. However, over one in five (22%) support staff are considering leaving the state school sector (for a reason other than retirement) in the next 12 months and 12% are thinking about moving to a different support staff role or moving to another state school. Seven percent are considering retirement.

Nearly a quarter of staff in secondary schools (24%) are considering leaving the state school sector entirely (for a reason other than retirement), the highest proportion across all phases. They are also the most likely to consider a move to another state school (16%) or to a different support staff role (15%).

Around one in five primary school staff (21%) are considering leaving the state school sector. Staff in primary schools are less likely to be considering moving to a different staff role (11%) than secondary (15%) and special school staff (15%).

Figure 60: Future career intentions by total and school phase



Source: In the next 12 months, are you considering any of the following? Please select any/all of those you are considering, even if you haven't taken any concrete steps towards it just yet. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Primary schools: 2,953, Secondary schools: 4,965, Special schools: 1,708

Support staff career intentions for the next 12 months show significant variations across roles, with technical staff and health, pastoral and welfare staff the most likely to consider departing from their current positions.

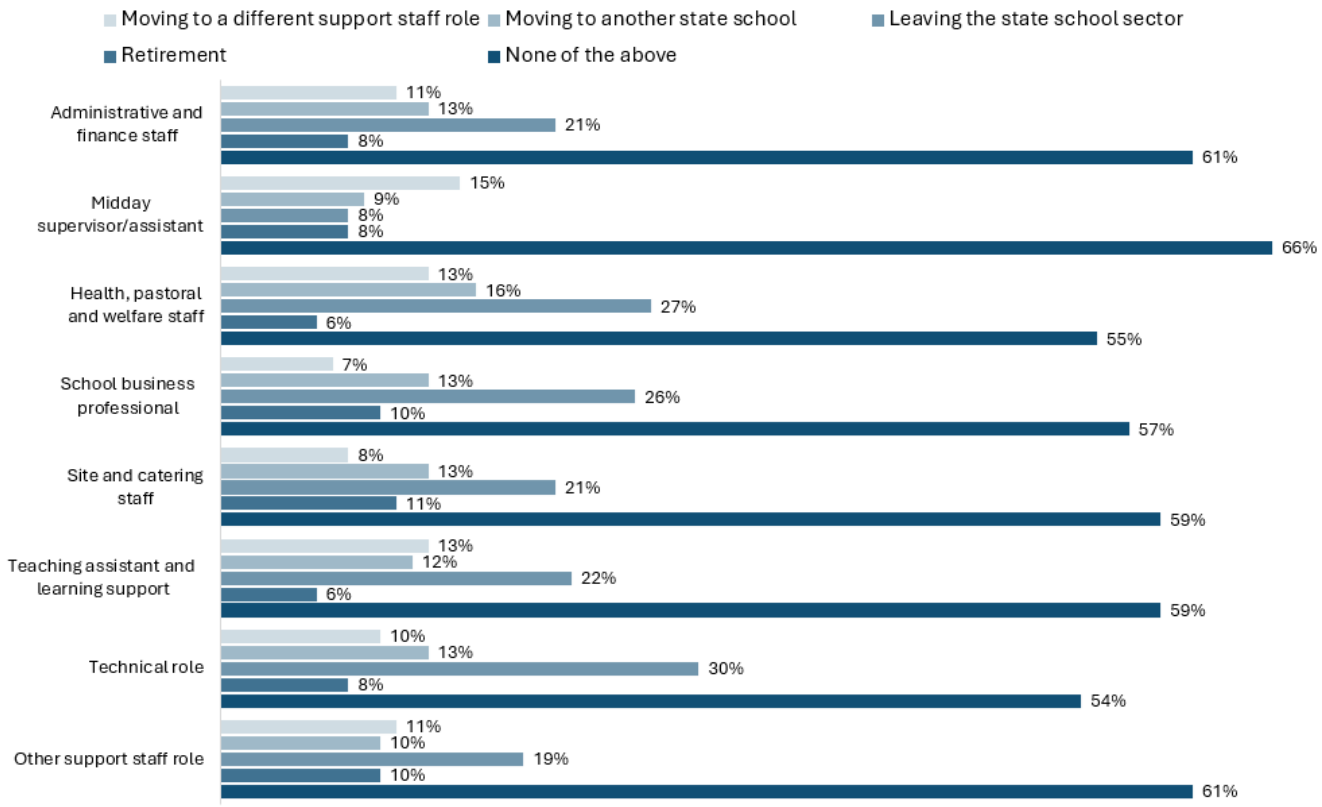
Technical staff are most likely to consider leaving the state school sector entirely (30%), followed by health, pastoral and welfare staff (27%) and school business professionals (26%). Over one in five TAs and learning support staff (22%), administrative and finance staff (21%), and site and catering staff (21%) are similarly considering leaving state education.

Health, pastoral and welfare staff are most likely to consider moving to another state school (16%).

Retirement considerations are relatively consistent across roles, with site and catering staff (11%) showing the highest proportion, followed by school business professionals and other support staff (both 10%).

The majority of support staff across all roles are not actively considering any changes though this varies considerably. Midday supervisors/assistants are the least likely to be considering a move (66%). Three in five administrative and finance staff (61%), other support staff (61%), TAs and learning support staff (59%) and site and catering staff (59%) similarly indicate no plans.

Figure 61: Future career intentions by school support role



Source: In the next 12 months, are you considering any of the following? Please select any/all of those you are considering, even if you haven't taken any concrete steps towards it just yet. Base: All respondents: 9,626; Administrative and finance staff: 1,912, Midday supervisor/assistant: 170, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 1,068, School business professional: 425, Site and catering staff: 531, Teaching assistant and learning support: 4,064, Technical role: 926, Other support: 530

Future career outside of state sector

The majority of support staff contemplating leaving the state school sector pinpoint dissatisfaction with pay as a reason, with nearly three-quarters (73%) expressing this concern. Half (50%) of those looking to depart highlight a lack of advancement opportunities, while almost half (45%) report high workload as influential in their decision. These findings correspond with earlier feedback regarding limited career pathways and increasing work demands.

Behavioural and interpersonal challenges also significantly influence intentions to leave. Nearly two in five (39%) cite pupil behaviour as a factor, while over a quarter (28%) report insufficient support from superiors. One in five (20%) indicate that difficulties in dealing with pupils' parents and carers as influencing their decision.

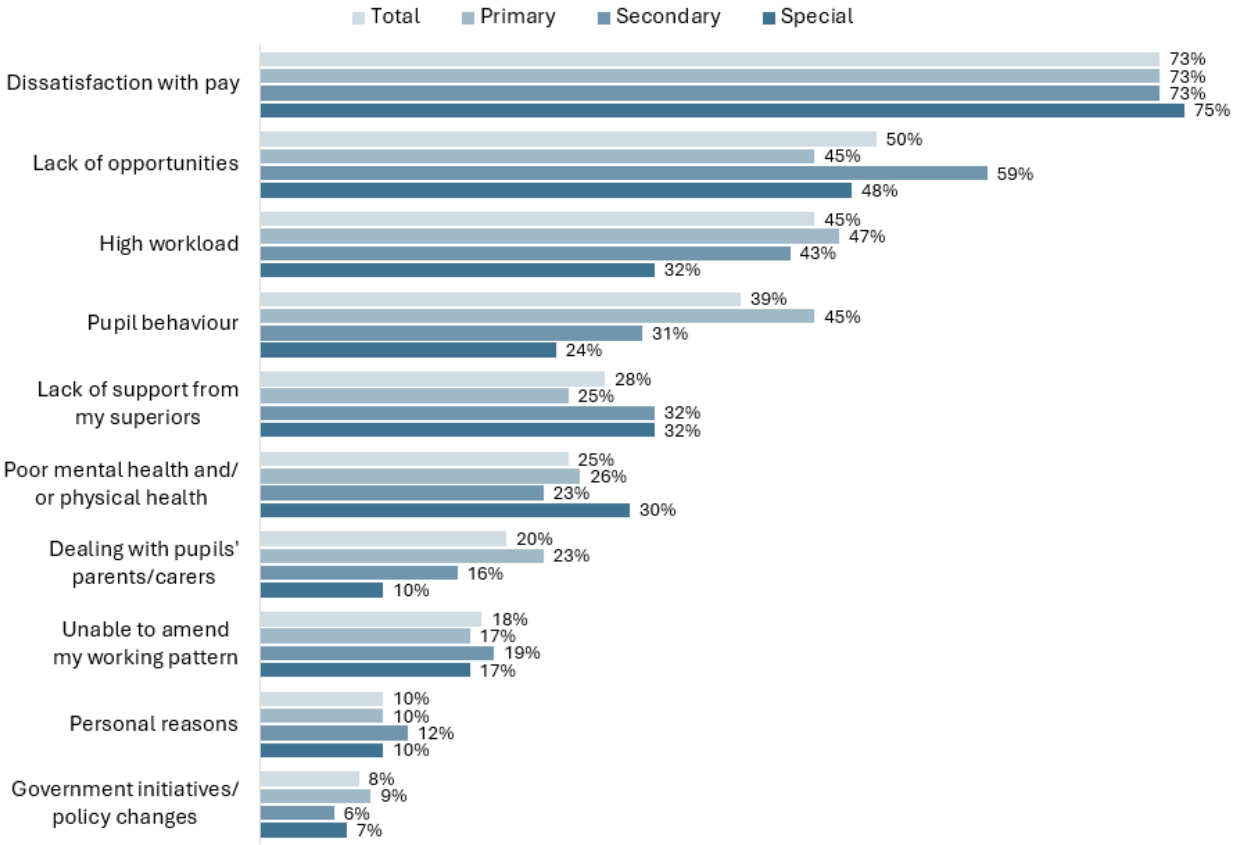
A quarter (25%) of staff considering departure report poor mental and/or physical health as a contributing factor. Nearly one in five (18%) cite inability to amend their working pattern, such as reducing or increasing hours, indicating that inflexibility in working arrangements is pushing some staff towards leaving the sector.

While dissatisfaction with pay is consistently given across school phase as the main reason for considering leaving the state school sector, other reasons vary by school phase. Nearly three in five (59%) secondary school support staff cite lack of opportunities for progression as a reason for considering leaving, notably higher than primary (45%) and special (48%). A third cite a lack of support from superiors (32%) as a contributing factor.

Primary school support staff are more likely to emphasise operational and behavioural challenges as reasons for considering leaving the sector. Nearly half (47%) cite high workload as a factor (compared to 43% in secondary and 32% in special). This is closely followed by pupil behaviour (45% vs. 31% in secondary and 24% in special). Nearly a quarter (23%) also identify dealing with pupils' parents and carers as a contributing factor, reflecting the closer parent engagement typical of primary settings.

Special school support staff focus on different challenges, as they are notably less likely to report high workload and pupil behaviour as reasons for considering departure, but are more likely to cite poor mental and/or physical health (30%) than primary (26%) and secondary staff (23%).

Figure 62: Reasons for leaving the state school sector by total and school phase



Source: Why are you considering leaving the state school sector? Base: Staff considering leaving the state school (excluding retirement): 2,155; Primary schools: 671, Secondary schools: 1,187, Special schools: 297

TAs and learning support staff cited the widest range of reasons for considering leaving the sector. Pay dissatisfaction affects four in five (80%) of these staff, the highest proportion across all roles. Over half (56%) cite pupil behaviour as a factor in their decision making and around a quarter (23%) report struggling with managing relationships with parents and carers. Additionally, nearly a third (32%) report that poor mental and/or physical health as a reason for considering departure. A similar proportion (30%) feel unsupported by their superiors.

Health, pastoral and welfare staff similarly note their dissatisfaction with pay (77%) alongside operational challenges. Half (50%) cite high workload as a factor, 30% identify pupil behaviour as problematic. Over a quarter (27%) report challenges in dealing with pupils' parents and carers, reflecting the front-line nature of their pastoral responsibilities.

Technical staff have two primary concerns. Over three-quarters (76%) are dissatisfied with pay, whilst seven in ten (71%) report a lack of opportunities for progression as driving their departure intentions.

School business professionals predominantly cite high workload (67%) as their reason for considering departure.

Administrative and finance staff highlight workload and flexibility concerns, with nearly half (46%) citing high workload and nearly a quarter (24%) reporting inability to amend their working patterns as factors in their departure considerations.

Site and catering staff experience multiple reasons, with nearly half (47%) citing high workload and two in five (40%) reporting lack of support from superiors. Nearly a quarter (24%) also view inflexibility in working patterns as problematic.

Table 36: Reasons for leaving the state school sector by school support staff role

	Dissatisfaction with pay	Lack of opportunities for progression	High workload	Pupil behaviour	Lack of support from superiors
Administrative and finance staff	66%	52%	46%	18%	23%
Midday supervisor/assistant	13%	22%	22%	34%	36%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	77%	53%	50%	30%	21%
School business professional	60%	49%	67%	17%	16%
Site and catering staff	65%	49%	47%	19%	40%
Teaching assistant and learning support	80%	47%	42%	56%	30%
Technical role	76%	71%	30%	27%	27%
Other support staff role	74%	57%	34%	28%	36%

	Poor mental and/or physical health	Dealing with pupils' parents/ carers	Unable to amend my working pattern	Personal reasons	Government initiatives/ policy changes
Administrative and finance staff	13%	19%	24%	13%	7%
Midday supervisor/assistant	45%	23%	32%	11%	1%
Health, pastoral and welfare staff	19%	27%	16%	11%	4%
School business professional	22%	21%	6%	3%	17%
Site and catering staff	19%	2%	24%	12%	8%
Teaching assistant and learning support	32%	23%	16%	10%	9%
Technical role	22%	8%	18%	12%	6%
Other support staff role	22%	12%	15%	9%	5%

Source: Why are you considering leaving the state school sector? Base: Staff considering leaving the state school (excluding retirement): 2,155; Administrative and finance staff: 399, Midday supervisor/assistant: 14, Health, pastoral and welfare staff: 305, School business professional: 103, Site and catering staff: 113, Teaching assistant and learning support: 841, Technical role: 278, Other support: 102.

Leader Interview Report

DfE conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with school leaders across primary, secondary and special schools in England, between February and April 2025. The interviews were conducted online, using Microsoft Teams, and a thematic analysis was subsequently undertaken using the qualitative analysis software NVivo to assess and classify the interview data into distinct thematic codes. More information about the methodology can be found in Section 2.3.

Support staff workforce structures

Across the sample of interviewed schools, leaders listed a large variety of support staff roles working in their schools, with workforce numbers ranging in size from extensive to relatively small. Most commonly, leaders mentioned having teaching assistants (TAs), administrative roles, health, pastoral, and welfare roles, and school business professional and finance roles in their school. Typically, workforce structure and size was linked with the size of the school. Special school leaders specifically were more likely to say that their school employed specialist staff to support pupil needs, including speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and therapy assistants.

Several leaders outsourced certain support staff roles which is where roles are carried out by individuals who are employed by companies or contractors instead of the school. Some leaders had centralised certain support staff roles, which is where roles are carried out by individuals who are directly employed at the LA or trust level and work across more than one school within the LA or trust.

While both LA maintained schools and academies used outsourced roles, academies reported more frequently used centrally employed staff than LA maintained schools. Cleaning and catering roles were the most commonly outsourced roles, whilst IT, finance and administrative roles more likely to be centrally employed. One primary school leader said centralising finance roles was beneficial, as it helped office managers and school business professionals at their school better concentrate on the day-to-day running of the school.

Influences on support staff workforce structures

Leaders said school budgets and pupil need held the largest influence over their school workforce structures. Most said staffing decisions around recruitment, retention and workforce reductions were highly dependent on school finances. In general, when budgets were tight, leaders preferred to reduce their support staff numbers. The specific roles being reduced varied by school, though TA was the most commonly mentioned role. Leaders who reported reducing the number of TAs in their school cited a variety of approaches to manage these decisions, including not replacing roles after individuals

leave (i.e. ‘natural wastage’) to manage staffing cost, only having TAs for pupils with an EHCP due to budget constraints, and reducing TA numbers down to pre-2020 levels following an increase in TAs to support pupil need during the COVID-19 pandemic, supported by the COVID Recovery grant.

Other roles leaders mentioned reducing were personal assistants, office support workers, catering, community support workers, IT technicians, school business managers, behaviour support workers and speech and language therapists. A handful of primary and secondary school leaders reported using national benchmarking to inform their school’s budget spend in a number of specific areas, including attendance management and SEND resource.

Pupil need was another highly influential factor on schools’ workforce structure, with the majority of leaders describing how their school used support staff to support pupils with SEND. Several leaders said both the number of pupils with SEND and the complexity of pupil need has increased in recent years, which has prompted them to make changes to their workforce structure. Most typically, leaders said they had either reassigned their existing TAs or recruited additional TAs to further support pupils with SEND. Most frequently this was to meet the EHCP requirements of particular pupils and ensure all safeguarding needs were met.

Several special schools also tried to meet specific pupil-staff classroom ratios to ensure there were a sufficient number of staff in the classroom to address the needs of pupils. One special school leader said they had reduced administrative staff at their school to increase classroom-based staff, and that classroom staff now represent around 85% of the school’s budget spend. A primary leader said making changes to the classroom-based workforce presents greater challenges than other areas of the school workforce, as it is highly dependent on pupil need which can alter every year, so is therefore harder to predict and plan for effectively. In addition to TAs, several leaders had either increased the hours of other existing support staff at their school or recruited other support staff positions to support pupil need. These positions included pastoral staff, EHCP coordinators, health support assistants, parent support advisors, safeguarding leads, midday supervisors, and educational welfare officers.

> “…with a special school, [we have] children with complex, profound, multiple learning difficulties… children with autism dysregulation, so we're highly reliant upon our teaching and learning assistants”. – Leader, Special school

LA and trust involvement

Most leaders of LA-maintained schools suggested the LA had minimal to no involvement in their school’s support staff workforce structure and recruitment. When leaders did provide examples of LA involvement, this tended to be financial, such as providing funding for support staff recruitment and school resource bases, which are specialist units in

mainstream schools that provide specific support for pupils with SEND. However, one primary leader said their LA does probe on their workforce structure to maintain oversight of how sustainable the workforce is for the future. Compared to LA schools, leaders of academies were more likely to say their trust had involvement in their support staff workforce structure. Examples varied, including increasing the number of centralised roles, redeploying staff within the trust, providing financial and human resources (HR) advice, giving permission to schools to spend on specific staff roles, and encouraging schools towards a 'preferred' structure or greater consistency of roles across the trust. A small number of leaders said their trusts are not involved in decisions on support staff but do give the authorisation to schools to recruit new support staff.

> "Some of the core support services have overtime become centrally provided and then recruitment and management of them has gone from the school to the trust. Examples are finance team, IT and there may be others like HR that go in the longer term." – Leader, Secondary school

Support staff deployment

When leaders were asked how they use different support staff, they typically reflected on three support staff groups: TAs; health, pastoral and welfare staff; and administrative staff. This section will therefore concentrate on these three groups.

The use and responsibilities of TAs

Leaders generally said pupil need was the largest factor influencing support staff use and that this affected how they used TAs the most. While some leaders still use TAs for general classroom assistance, many reported a move away from this model, basing their use of TAs on specific pupil needs. One primary school leader said the role of TA had recently undergone a 'paradigm shift' away from supporting the teacher and towards supporting the needs of pupils. That leader said in their school TA working hours were allocated to specific pupils, instead of the teacher or overall class. Some leaders said this targeted use of TAs was motivated by a need to support pupils with EHCPs. Although schools received additional funding for supporting pupils with EHCPs, a small number of leaders said it made deployment more difficult, as their TAs are increasingly having to work one-to-one with pupils.

> "Historically schools have been able to afford additional classroom support for the teacher and then additional TAs to support additional needs. The classroom TA role is no longer affordable. The changes are you can only have a TA for EHCP pupils [and] that person is deployed to different pupils, so you're not getting an adult for a class, you're getting one for a child. For secondary, that's how it's always been but for primary that's a very different approach." – Leader, Primary school

A small number of leaders said TAs are now working with a number of pupils across the school day, as opposed to working in one area of the school with one pupil. The benefits of this are a more varied workload for TAs and less pupil reliance on specific TAs. However, others said this created challenges such as TAs having to work with multiple teachers and pupils not having as strong a relationship with TAs. In addition to providing individual support, most leaders said TAs were responsible for a broad variety of responsibilities in their role, including small group support and providing pastoral support and interventions. They would also take on ad-hoc responsibilities as needs arise, such as providing first aid, communicating with parents, and supporting with school trips and school clubs.

Special school leaders frequently said the increasing complexity of pupil need has placed higher expectations on special schools in relation to safeguarding and social care, which affects their use of TAs. One leader said their school previously might have had one pupil with behavioural needs in a class of ten, but now they might have eight pupils. TAs in special schools undertake a variety of specific responsibilities to help manage this increase in pupil need complexity, including responding to intimate care needs, handling the physical demands of assisting with pupil mobility and behaviour management, providing therapy, and working with external professionals, such as speech and language professionals. Leaders of special schools also said TAs receive a range of specialist training on medical needs (such as diabetes, epilepsy, and gastroscopy feeds) in order to support pupils with medical needs.

Most leaders who mentioned HLTAs said their role was to cover classes in the event of teacher absence or when teachers were using their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. Some HLTAs had more specific responsibilities, such as working with families and fulfilling safeguarding roles. One special school created the role of ‘Head TA’, which carries out all HTLA responsibilities, but is also a member of the school’s senior leadership team and oversees the professional development and supervision of all TAs in the school.

Leaders frequently described TAs as highly flexible workers that also carry out responsibilities associated with other staff roles, such as providing pastoral support and break and lunchtime supervision. Break and lunchtime supervision was a common responsibility for TAs in primary schools, as primary school leaders often said they used TAs in this role instead of dedicated midday supervisors. These leaders said using TAs in this way was particularly effective for managing pupil behaviour as, unlike midday supervisors, TAs step into the role informed with the contextual knowledge of school day and typically share more established relationships with pupils. One primary leader also said using TAs for break and lunchtime supervision provided an efficient alternative to recruiting for midday supervisor roles that are difficult to fill due to the limited working hours available in the role.

> “So, teaching assistants jack of all trades, so they will be..., supporting the teacher in their role... for example [creating] displays, photocopy and that type of thing supporting the children with their learning and working in with small intervention groups. Break duties. Lunch duties. Pastoral or support dealing with first aid. Supporting on school trips. And driving the minibus, running clubs.” – Leader, Primary school

The use and responsibilities of pastoral, health and welfare staff

Leaders reported using a number of health, pastoral and welfare staff such as pastoral and behaviour assistants and leaders, personal care assistants, family liaison officers, learning mentors, safeguarding leaders, SEN coordinators (SENCOs), health support assistants, non-teaching year leads and pastoral administrators. These roles covered a wide variety of functions, including supporting mental health and attendance (including emotional based school avoidance), working with families, safeguarding, and classroom behaviour support.

A small number of leaders mentioned pastoral staff were performing tasks previously done by teachers. This mainly included the use of non-teaching year leads who provided pastoral support to year groups. Additionally, some leaders use their pastoral staff to support EHCP admin and processes. Two secondary school leaders said they use health, pastoral and welfare staff in ‘reflection’ rooms, which are part of an internal suspension provision for pupils who display dysregulated behaviour that doesn’t warrant a full suspension but does warrant a sanction. Health, pastoral and welfare staff who carry out this responsibility help remove dysregulated pupils from classrooms, supervise pupil time in the reflection room and help pupils with accessing work.

Several leaders said the responsibilities of health, pastoral and welfare staff were flexible. One secondary leader suggested that this flexibility was caused by a shift away from academic mentoring towards supporting pupil social, emotional and mental health needs and providing greater engagement in safeguarding processes and their documentation. A special school leader said health, pastoral and welfare staff are more susceptible to sudden increases in workload and responsibility change, as their roles are highly dependent on pupil need, especially when additional aspects are added to pupil EHCPs. As discussed in the section on support staff workforce structures earlier in this report, some special schools and a small number of primary schools said they use specialist staff to assist specific pupil needs. These specialist staff include speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and therapy assistants.

The use and responsibilities of administrative staff

Leaders generally acknowledged administrative staff was a broad category and covered a number of roles including receptionist, office manager, finance and payroll manager, data

officer, attendance officer, administrative assistant and exams officer. Leaders generally viewed the work of administrative staff as more 'fixed' when compared to TAs and health, pastoral and welfare staff which were more flexible. Leaders listed a number of responsibilities carried out by administrative staff, including general administrative work, occupying the front desk, communicating with parents, managing information systems, undertaking safeguarding work, writing documents, and organising exams. Some leaders also listed responsibilities less intuitively associated with the role, such as maintaining the school's social media and website, performing first aid, undertaking break/lunchtime supervision, cleaning the school premises and organising school clubs. One secondary school leader said their administrative staff were more likely to take on the responsibilities of 'newer' tasks (such as maintaining the school's social media page), as they are viewed as having greater work capacity than other support staff roles because they do not typically work directly with pupils.

Role flexibility in support staff positions

The majority of leaders said that support staff roles had become more flexible in recent years in terms of the responsibilities they are expected to carry out. Leaders generally said this had affected the work of TAs the most, largely as a result of attending to increasing pupil needs. However, primary and special leaders generally said that all their support staff roles were flexible to a degree, and leaders across all school phases mentioned other support staff roles at their school that they viewed as flexible, including administrative staff, health, pastoral and welfare staff, school business professionals, technicians, and, in limited instances, site staff.

A small number of leaders suggested that school and workforce size is directly linked to support staff role flexibility, as smaller schools generally have less staff working in each area of the school which heightens the need for staff to work flexibly and support one another. One primary leader said their school has a member of administrative staff who also works as a TA, oversees health and safety, coordinates educational visits and conducts wraparound care. The same leader said that at times their school business professionals have had to supervise a pupil while also undertaking their school business manager responsibilities.

Leaders largely viewed this flexibility as essential for schools to function effectively and keep pupils safe. More specifically, several leaders said role flexibility was highly relevant in the face of staff absence, with one special school leader saying when workforce numbers are lower due to staff absence, the school get their non-classroom-based staff to work in classrooms, to ensure pupil safety. Additionally, role flexibility allows schools to effectively react to the highly dynamic school environment with continuously shifting priorities throughout the day.

While many leaders said support staff flexibility had coincided with increased workload, leaders were largely supportive of having a flexible workforce, with certain leaders noting

benefits such as staff having a greater understanding of different support staff roles, and a greater resilience when managing staff absence and pupil need. For some leaders, flexibility is a trait that they actively assess in candidates at recruitment. These leaders use interview questions to identify candidates comfortable with undertaking tasks outside of those commonly associated with the role, when receiving appropriate support.

> "All roles require adaptability. If you don't have adaptability, then [you] won't succeed in any of the school's roles. The school start with clear expectation from outset that they need to be multi-hatted." – Leader, Secondary school

Support staff recruitment

Leaders generally said that the main reasons for recruiting support staff were to support the wider growth of the school and to better support pupils with SEND and medical needs. When asked what types of support staff had recently been recruited, leaders most commonly mentioned TAs, pastoral, health and wellbeing staff and midday supervisors. Leaders had mixed experiences when recruiting support staff - whilst some leaders did not report having difficulties others found recruitment a challenge.

Recruitment enablers

Some leaders spoke positively about their experiences recruiting support staff, with a small number saying support staff roles can suit the lifestyle of those applying. These leaders viewed support staff roles as being suitable for individuals with young families, as the working hours of certain roles can fit around family commitments, and the time off support staff receive in the school holidays can help mitigate the need to organise and potentially pay for childcare during that period. One leader provided an example of a cleaner who worked hours later in the day so that they could share childcare responsibilities with their partner who worked earlier in the day. Another leader said support staff roles that have a low number of working hours, such as exam invigilators, provide beneficial opportunities for retired individuals who live in the local area and want to pick up some work.

Special school leaders often mentioned prioritising the 'potential' of candidates during recruitment. Positive attitude and aptitude are character traits they typically look for. These leaders believed that a natural ability to work with children and an alignment with school cultural values were important for establishing an effective workforce and creating meaningful relationships between staff and pupils. One leader also suggested that recruiting young individuals who display aptitude for support staff roles but have no previous work experience creates greater staff loyalty within their workforce, as these individuals highly appreciate the opportunity to work as a member of support staff.

> “A lot of the time it is trying to see the potential in people, so we acknowledge that they might not have all the experience, or they might not have all the training that we would want them to have, but we try and judge whether their vision and values and their kind of ethical stance and their morals fit with how we approach things” - Leader, Special school

Recruitment challenges

Other leaders said support staff recruitment has recently become more difficult, largely because of a decreasing number of candidates applying for roles. Low quality candidates was another factor making recruitment difficult, as several leaders said a substantial number of candidates lacked the necessary skills and experience for the role they were applying for. This issue was most prevalent for the TA role. In addition to a lack of quality candidates, several leaders said they thought the complexity of the role and its pupil-facing nature makes the role less attractive to potential candidates.

Leaders also frequently said low support staff pay made recruitment challenging. Most leaders suggested the pay support staff receive does not match the workload of their roles and is uncompetitive compared to other sectors, such as retail. An increased desire to work flexibly following the COVID-19 pandemic was another factor making recruitment difficult, as several leaders said the desire for flexible working arrangements, specifically remote working, has made roles in schools which require employees to be physically present less attractive. Location, workload and the types of contracts offered to support staff were also raised as reasons for recruitment difficulty, but to a lesser extent.

> “It’s been a bit up and down recently because over the last few years recruiting support staff has been really difficult. I think the expectations of the role compared to the pay and conditions are not in line…” - Leader, Special school

Recruitment strategies

Leaders reported using a variety of strategies to help improve support staff recruitment, including using job sites and social media sites, targeting university graduates for roles, creating new roles or dual roles, offering temporary roles that can become permanent (‘temp-to-perm roles’), promoting the school’s learning and development offer and emphasising the school’s staff benefits package (e.g. wellbeing support, flexible working opportunities, etc.).

Some leaders had used agency staff to fill support staff positions when roles were difficult to fill or when the school required a larger workforce at a particular time of the year. While the use of agency staff helped leaders temporarily fill certain support staff roles, agency staff generally represented a more expensive alternative to recruiting permanent support staff. A smaller number of leaders used recruitment agencies to help them recruit support staff. Leader views on the use of recruitment agencies were generally mixed, as some

leaders felt agency fees provided an additional cost to the recruitment process without necessarily adding value, while others said once they had identified recruitment agencies that they trusted, the recruitment agencies made the process easier, quicker, and provided support staff who were better suited for the role they were applying for.

Support staff retention

Leaders generally had mixed experiences of retaining support staff. Some leaders had positive experiences of retaining support staff at their school, while others reported difficulties.

Retention enablers

Where retention was discussed more positively, leaders said the support staff they had retained enjoyed their role and that they had staff who had worked at the school for a long time. Leaders also mentioned various aspects of positive school culture as factors contributing to successful retention, such as having an open-door policy with staff, making sure staff built good relationships with one another, staff feeling appreciated for the work they do, and staff wanting to invest time and effort into their school and community. A smaller number of leaders also attributed successful support staff retention to the school actively investing in support staff continual professional development (CPD), resulting in staff becoming upskilled and feeling proud to be part of the school and profession.

Retention challenges

Leaders who described support staff retention as more challenging said pay was the largest negative influence. Generally, leaders viewed support staff pay as uncompetitive and suggested support staff could leave for roles outside the education sector that they believed offered greater pay for a less demanding workload. Leaders also regularly discussed how a lack of role clarity in support staff job descriptions contributes to negative retention outcomes. Some leaders had employed support staff who left shortly after starting the role because the total workload and variety of the role did not align with their expectation. Special school leaders generally suggested that new starters may initially underestimate the workload of support staff and complexity of pupil need in special schools and therefore decide to leave in their first couple of weeks in the role.

> “We have had in the past few weeks somebody who was working with adults who had had strokes so they had an understanding of dysregulated behaviour and they thought working with children with learning difficulties wouldn’t be too dissimilar. But I think the reality of coming in and seeing how that can translate to children with learning disabilities and social and emotional needs... You might think you’ve got the understanding but when you come to the reality of it actually it’s just too much all in one day for the pay you get.” - Leader, Special school

Lack of career progression opportunities was another factor influencing retention, as a small number of leaders said support staff may look to progress their career elsewhere if better paid roles are not available to them within their school's current school's workforce structure. A small number of leaders said support staff roles can be viewed as temporary 'stepping stone positions', which results in individuals only staying in a support staff role for a short amount of time before applying for other jobs. Higher-level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) were most frequently cited as the most challenging support staff to retain. Several leaders attributed this difficulty to the advanced skillset of HLTAs which often leads them to seek better paid opportunities.

Support staff pay and working arrangements

NJC pay scales and slight variations

The majority of school leaders said their school follows the National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales when setting support staff pay. A small number said they follow the pay scales set by their local authority or council, which are typically akin to the NJC pay scales. However, schools displayed slight variations in how they implement the NJC pay scales in practice. A small number of leaders use the upper pay band limits or pay just over this limit for certain roles, and another small group of leaders use higher role pay bands for specific members of their support staff. Decisions to use higher pay bands generally related to recognising additional role responsibilities being carried out by staff and trying to increase the quality of applications when advertising for roles. One leader specifically created a new role within their workforce structure so that they could pay a member of support staff more for the additional responsibilities they were undertaking.

A small number of leaders provide overtime pay to support staff who carry out tasks that are either additional to the support staff member's role or undertaken outside of the typical school day. More specifically, overtime pay was provided for a limited number of reasons, including compensating staff for attending (online) training sessions outside of school, and paying staff more hours when they help put up displays around the school.

Flexible working opportunities and challenges

The majority of leaders talked about having part-time contracts when asked about flexible working arrangements for support staff. They largely viewed part-time contracts as beneficial for support staff, as they allow them to work in a way that best suits their needs and lifestyle. However, to manage pupil need, some leaders said their part-time support staff were expected to coordinate their working patterns to ensure a stable workforce capacity throughout the week. Leaders also mentioned adjusted start and finish times and varied working hours. Similar to part time contracts, leaders typically granted these flexible working arrangements so that support staff could better balance their work and lifestyle commitments, such as dropping off and picking up their children from school or childcare, studying for qualifications and undertaking training at home. Several 'ad-hoc' requests for

agreed time off were also granted by leaders for a range of personal reasons, including attending close family weddings, supporting children's school events such as nativity plays, and providing increased work flexibility for support staff to care for unwell family members.

> "I mean we always support part-time working. So, we've got a number of TAs and support staff that are on… part-time agreements. We have occupational health processes so we're just supporting a couple of TAs back into full time work. One's coming back into full-time work. One has applied for flexible working in terms of a temporary reduction in hours, but to be able to come back in and do what's manageable for them… while managing their heath. …wherever possible, we look to balance the needs of the school against any requests for flexible working approaches. I've not turned any down yet." – Leader, Primary school

While leaders typically expressed a desire to provide flexible working opportunities to their support staff, roughly a third of leaders said they found it to be difficult to implement. Leaders largely attributed this difficulty to certain support staff roles having to be on the school site when working, making flexible working arrangements such as remote working and adjusted hours challenging to provide. Remote working was mentioned less frequently by leaders, but when it was offered, it tended to apply to roles with responsibilities that could be carried out effectively outside of the school, such as administrative roles and school business manager roles. Leaders said the work pattern of TAs and site staff was inherently less flexible due to their in-person work responsibilities carried out on a daily basis. These roles were therefore less associated with flexible working arrangements that allow staff to spend less time on the school site.

> "It's very difficult to be totally flexible because you need the people in the daytime. So, there are very few people, including teachers who work at home because we need to be here and that's the same with support staff. We do get challenged by it every now and again, but we try to think about the support staff, but equally we have to run a service." – Leader, Secondary School

Support staff training

The majority of leaders across all phases said mandatory training (such as training on safeguarding, fire safety, health and safety, data protection, etc.) was the most frequent type of training support staff receive. This type of training is typically conducted in 'all staff' environments. Continuous professional development (CPD) training and training described as more 'role specific' were also available to support staff across the majority of schools. Examples provided by leaders included accounting courses for financial support staff, manual handling and asbestos training for site staff, training in speech and language

support, maths, phonics, and the physical handling of children for TAs, and online marketing training for communication officers.

For CPD and role specific training, support staff appetite and the needs of the school were central considerations when leaders decided what training their support staff should receive. Leaders across all school phases also provided a variety of miscellaneous training opportunities to all support staff, ranging from leadership training to specific 'development days' and 'action research groups' on the use of Artificial Intelligence. While leaders did not reach a clear consensus on the type of training they thought would be most beneficial for support staff to receive more of, they did commonly say roles categorised as 'child-facing', such as TAs and pastoral, health and welfare roles, would benefit the most from greater training opportunities.

> "In last few years, we've tried to ensure parity between teachers and support staff. Whenever we have an inset day, we are very careful to make sure there is parity. If we have a session dedicated to the teaching staff, then we will also have a slot dedicated to support staff. Normally this is based on whole-school priority, and we will try and make sure there is CPD offered around this – e.g. team building, generic skills." - Leader, Secondary School

Specific SEND and medical needs training

Several leaders across all phases, primarily those who worked in special schools, said they provide training on assisting pupils with SEND. The growing complexity of support staff responsibilities was a significant factor, with many special school leaders saying that members of their support staff had undertaken training on behaviour management and complex medical needs to assist pupils. This training was varied, ranging from topics such as positive behaviour management, autism and ADHD awareness, mental health first aid, and pupil de-escalation, to training on medical needs, such as CPR, diabetes, gastroscopy, physiotherapy, epilepsy and ventilator support. Leaders did not always say the type of support staff who undertake training on medical needs, but when they did mention roles, TAs were typically mentioned.

> "We've done a lot of training, so we have team teach training, which is kind of positive physical interventions and managing behaviour, de-escalation. We have a lot of medical training, so all of our staff are epilepsy trained. We have people that gastroscopy trained, diabetes trained. We've got first aiders that is an option that people can choose to do. We've got mental health first aiders. We train so everybody has performance management targets and we try and link. …So we've had people before that have gone to some of the educational psychology training on emotion coaching because it linked to their performance management." - Leader, Special school

Training availability and resource

To provide support staff training, leaders use inset days and extend specific school days to provide dedicated training sessions. However, in several cases the structure of the school day was a significant barrier to providing training to support staff, due to the limited time available in the day, partnered with existing support staff workload. Another factor stated as negatively affecting support staff training opportunities is school resource. A small number of leaders said limited resources had led them to prioritise training for teachers over support staff when training opportunities became available. Because of these challenges, several leaders across all phases, but most notably primary, make use of online training resources. These leaders generally said that online resources were advantageous for schools, as they provide support staff with continuous access to training materials and give them greater autonomy over their learning and development, due to the large number of training options available. Leaders viewed the continuous access provided by online resources as a key benefit of their use, as they believed it helped their schools work around the limited time available for training within the school day.

> “We also have an online platform, the National College, and do lots of training through there, e.g. fire warden training. …[it‘s an] online platform which is accessible to staff at all times. …There are lots of different individual training courses that staff have accessed. There's mandatory things they have to do, which I share with them. But there's a whole range of things on there which they can access.” – Leader, Secondary school

Support Staff Career Progression

Factors influencing career progression appetite

Leaders generally said support staff appetite to develop their career is largely dependent on the individual, with their age, the extent to which they enjoy their job, and their different family commitments having the largest influence over decisions to progress. Leaders typically viewed younger support staff as more likely to want to develop their career, and older support staff, especially those who have worked in their role for a longer period, as less likely.

Some leaders suggested that staff who have specific family commitments may work in their support staff role because it suits their current lifestyle and therefore be more reluctant to disrupt their work pattern to develop their career. Despite leaders commonly placing emphasis on individual aspiration, several leaders did suggest TAs were the most likely to pursue career progression pathways. A clear progression route in most schools (i.e. level 1 TA to level 3 TA) and turnover at level 4 and 5 TA roles were given as the main reasons why schools looked to internally promoting TAs.

> “I think it’s probably more about personal need and aspiration, so that then transcends all groups, including teachers. I think I can think of examples of people who really don't want any further progression in teaching and in non-teaching… but I can also think of people who are hungry for further progression in all of the different groups. And long may that remain. …to me that would be an indicator of culture being right… it's driven by the personal aspirations of the individuals regardless of their group to which they belong.” – Leader, Secondary school

Different types of career progression routes

The majority of leaders said career progression was available for support staff roles, and that opportunities were available in both ‘linear’ (i.e. progression within the same role type) and ‘non-linear’ (i.e. progression into a role area not directly related to previous role) trajectories. Linear level progression for TAs (e.g. level 2 to level 3) is generally available in schools and this progression route is regularly undertaken. Leaders often said progression routes into teaching were available and largely suggested that TAs were the most frequent type of support staff taking this route, although cover supervisors were also mentioned. Several leaders had other linear progression routes available at their school, including routes for HR staff (HR advisor to HR officer to HR manager), school business support workers (school business support to school business manager) and pastoral team workers (leaning mentor to pastoral support manager).

Some leaders, most commonly in secondary schools, discussed how they had provided non-linear progression opportunities to support staff. Examples of non-linear progression ranged from a TA being promoted from to a pastoral manager, to a cleaner being promoted to a TA. Leaders said decisions to promote support staff in this way were typically made to better match the skillset of support staff with roles deemed more appropriate. A smaller number of leaders used non-linear role progression as a mechanism for retaining talented support staff when only limited opportunities were available for progression within their existing school structure.

> “One of the things that we've done in recent years is look at our structure and sort of put together posts that are kind of fairly similar and try to build a pathway up the scale. It doesn’t work everywhere but what we’ve tried to do is build career paths so that once you get the right person, even if they start in a lower path, there’s somewhere for them to go [beyond their current role].” – Leader, Secondary school

Challenges to providing career progression

While most leaders offered support staff progression opportunities at their school, several noted challenges when providing progression pathways. School structure and/or school size was the most frequent obstacle as it limited what roles were available. Low support

staff pay, and limited school budgets also created challenges for support staff career progression. Several leaders said support staff may find higher level roles unattractive if they believe these roles do not adequately compensate for the increased responsibility and workload they carry. Additionally, low support staff appetite for progression was a barrier for those who had been in their role for a long period or who had family circumstances to attend to and therefore may not want to progress their career.

> "I would say that [setting up career pathways] is a much harder thing to realistically do. I mean it's not inconceivable that support staff could become a teacher. But, there's a [low] likelihood that they'd be able to do all of that at our school. I'd say it's slim. …I mean, it's more of an opportunity within [the] trust. So [support staff would] move schools." – Leader, Primary school

Leader Perspectives on the SSSNB

Leaders were asked about the benefits and concerns on setting up the SSSNB.

The most cited concerns were support staff pay and role clarity as their main concerns about what the SSSNB will do, as well as the main benefits they would like it to provide.

Leaders generally saw potential support staff pay increases as a benefit of the SSSNB, as many said support staff are not paid fairly for the work they do, and thought an increase in pay would provide a positive first step in addressing this. However, whilst leaders generally believed their staff should receive pay rises, they were concerned unfunded pay rises could create more strain on already tight budgets, which could potentially make it harder for schools to retain support staff.

> "My biggest concern for support staff is having their skilled work recognised financially. I think it is not recognised appropriately at the moment. But then I guess my concern if that happens is then [whether] the schools will be funded properly to be able to support them financially. So, I feel that is the right thing that should happen, but I don't want to do it at the expense of having to lose a lot of support staff…" – Leader, Special school

Several leaders thought providing clarity over support staff roles would be a benefit of the SSSNB. They thought more standardised role expectations would reduce the amount of ad-hoc work carried out by support staff and believed role clarity would enable prospective candidates to make more informed decisions about the roles they apply for, making it more likely schools would receive applications from individuals whose skills and expectations align with the role. A small number of leaders also thought improved role clarity would help raise the profile of support staff workers by better outlining the work they carry out in their roles. However, others thought setting standardised role expectations

would be a potential negative consequence of the SSSNB and were concerned this could limit their ability to use their staff flexibly.

> “I think it would be useful if they [the DfE] could … standardise some of the roles and requirements as well …I think something I'd be worried about is… anything that is done in terms of job descriptions…being too rigid. Because it's very, as we've said, very cohort dependent, very context dependent and schools need to meet the needs of their communities and their context. So, anything that that wasn't flexible within that would be really hard to work within.” – Leader, Primary school

Differences in experiences by role type, phase and across time

The findings from this research indicate commonalities in experience between different support staff roles and across the school phases. However, they also demonstrate several differences in their experiences and the wide variety of tasks support staff cover. Meanwhile comparisons with the DISS survey shows how the experience of support staff has changed over time. This chapter explores some of these differences.

Role summaries

Administrative and finance staff manage various administrative functions that support the educational environment. Their duties typically involve handling clerical tasks, managing communication, supporting and coordinating with other staff, and ensuring financial operations run smoothly. They maintain accurate records and support the school's management team. They report some of the highest levels of job satisfaction and generally feel valued by teachers and senior leaders for the work they do. However, these staff members often experience challenges related to salary satisfaction, a common issue across many support roles. Opportunities for career advancement within schools tend to be limited, impacting long-term job satisfaction and motivation.

Health, pastoral, and welfare staff support the wellbeing of students within educational settings in a variety of different ways. Their key responsibilities include providing emotional support, ensuring the welfare and safety of students, managing behaviour and attendance, and liaising with external agencies to coordinate comprehensive care. These staff contribute significantly to fostering a supportive environment that caters to the social and emotional needs of pupils, often working closely with families and other educational staff to address complex cases. Support staff in these roles are amongst those most satisfied with the job, feel valued by teachers, and parents and carers, and are afforded some flexibility in their working arrangements on an informal basis. They are also generally satisfied with the training on offer. While they are one of the most likely to be promoted from a different staff role, staff in these roles also note that there is a lack of clear progression routes available and are one of the most likely to consider leaving the state school section altogether.

Midday supervisors/assistants maintain order and safety during lunchtime, supervising pupils, managing challenging behaviour, and ensuring student well-being. They generally report high job satisfaction and are among the most satisfied with their current salary. Despite working relatively fewer hours than other school support staff, they often engage in responsibilities beyond their official job description, such as managing the health and safety of pupils (including first aid and administering medication) and offering one-to-one support and contributing to overall school operations. Satisfaction with role-specific training is moderate, but there is strong interest in further training and development.

However, career advancement opportunities are limited, with few available pathways for progression.

School Business Professionals (SBPs) are typically responsible for managing the school's support function, financial management, and liaising with external agencies. They handle a broad range of responsibilities such as negotiating contracts, overseeing facilities, and developing policies. While they report working approximately six hours more than their contracted time weekly, which aligns with their extensive responsibilities, they are among the least likely to use formal flexible working arrangements. Instead, they are most likely to use informal flexible working arrangements, such as starting late, finishing early, and working from home. There is a notable dissatisfaction with salary relative to workload, yet they report relatively high job satisfaction. SBPs receive relevant training for their role; however, access to personal development training is varied. Many express interest in further development and increasing leadership skills. Opportunities for career advancement outside their school are seen as slightly more available than within, with workload being a significant factor affecting retention as many seek roles offering higher pay, better work-life balance or progression opportunities.

Site and catering staff maintain the operational efficiency and environmental safety of educational institutions. Site staff are tasked with the upkeep of school facilities, which includes maintenance duties, security checks, and ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations. Catering staff are responsible for food preparation, ensuring the nutritional standards of meals, and maintaining hygiene standards in dining areas. Site and catering staff have moderate levels of job satisfaction but feel the least valued compared to other support staff and are the most likely to mention not feeling valued as a reason for considering leaving. They often encounter challenges regarding pay satisfaction, reflecting broader trends in support roles. Career progression within the school setting is perceived as limited for these roles.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) and learning support staff provide support to both teachers and students, especially students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Driven by a desire to work with young people, they play a role in both classroom support and extracurricular activities, often working beyond their contracted hours and undertaking tasks they believe are outside of their job description. TAs and learning support staff have a very flexible role, but certain responsibilities are more consistent, such as working with pupils with SEND, supporting the personal, social and emotional well-being of pupils, and providing one to one assistance or small group support within classroom. Despite feeling valued by teachers and parents, TAs experience low job satisfaction, very limited informal flexible working arrangements, and are amongst the least likely to be satisfied with their pay. Training opportunities are limited, with many TAs eager for professional development, particularly in pursuing qualifications to become teachers. However, they face limited career advancement opportunities.

Staff in technical roles within schools include IT technicians, food, science, art and design technicians, as well as technicians with library or resource centre-related responsibilities. Their responsibilities include managing equipment and resources, resolving technical issues, supporting practical learning activities, and ensuring compliance with school health and safety policies. Technical staff feel valued by the teachers they support, and many benefit from informal flexible working arrangements. However, they frequently report low levels of job satisfaction, along with dissatisfaction with pay. This is compounded by a perceived lack of career advancement opportunities within schools, in addition to limited training availability and professional development tailored to their specific needs. Notably, technical staff are the highest qualified support staff group yet report the highest level of intention to leave the sector. Nonetheless, there is a strong interest in receiving more training, particularly that which directly relates to their technical role and personal development.

School phase summaries

Staff in special schools employ a higher concentration of teaching assistants and specialised personnel such as speech and language therapists, reflecting the additional needs of the pupils they support. TAs in special schools undertake a variety of specific responsibilities to help manage the increase in pupil need complexity, including responding to intimate care needs, and handling the physical demands of assisting with pupil mobility and behaviour management. TAs in special schools also receive a range of specialist training on medical needs (such as diabetes, epilepsy, and gastroscopy feeds) in order to support pupils with medial needs. Staff members in special schools tend to have structured career paths, supported by more frequent and specialised role-specific training compared to mainstream schools. Special school staff report higher job satisfaction levels and feel most valued for the work they do. However, staff have less flexible working arrangements than secondary schools, and are the least likely to be satisfied with their pay or to state that they can manage their workload.

Primary school staff help create a supportive educational environment through diverse roles such as teaching assistants, midday supervisors, and administrative support. They generally feel valued for the work they do, but face challenges related to compensation and limited career advancement opportunities, reflecting broader trends across educational support roles. There is a significant interest among primary school staff in pursuing further training and professional development, particularly focusing on enhancing role-specific skills and career progression opportunities.

Secondary schools employ a diverse range of staff, including teaching assistants, administrative, technical, and pastoral personnel, to support a varied student body with different needs. Training opportunities are typically more generalised and less frequent compared to special schools, yet there is a strong interest in professional development among staff. Job satisfaction levels in secondary schools are generally lower than in special and primary schools, and staff are least likely to feel valued for the work they do.

While secondary schools tend to offer more flexible working conditions, challenges persist, including limited career advancement, dissatisfaction with pay, and workload concerns.

Change over time: job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and feeling valued

To place the 2025 survey findings in context, it is useful to compare them with results from the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) study[13], which surveyed support staff in 2004, 2006, and 2008.

The 2025 survey indicates that dissatisfaction with pay is a major driver of wider job dissatisfaction: over nine in ten (92%) of those dissatisfied with their job are also dissatisfied with their pay. Comparison with the DISS study suggests that pay dissatisfaction has grown over time. Between the first and final waves of the DISS survey, the proportion of staff satisfied with their pay fell from 51% to 44%, while the share who were dissatisfied rose from 32% to 40%. As in 2025, the DISS study found that TAs and technicians were among the least satisfied, with over half of TAs (51%) and two in five technicians (41%) dissatisfied with pay by 2008.

In the DISS study, satisfaction with contracts, conditions of employment, and working arrangements remained consistently high across the three waves, with around 78% satisfied and only 8% dissatisfied. By contrast, the 2025 survey points to a decline: around half of support staff now report satisfaction with their contracts (47%) and working arrangements (53%).

Overall job satisfaction also appears to have declined. In 2025, three in five (63%) support staff report being satisfied, and nearly one in five (19%) dissatisfied. The pattern observed in the DISS study persists: job satisfaction is higher in special schools (69%) than in mainstream schools (62%), and varies by role, being highest among administrative and finance staff and midday supervisors (71%), and lowest among TAs and learning support staff (58%).

Satisfaction also varies with length of service. Three-quarters (76%) of staff in their role for less than a year report high satisfaction, compared with just 57% of those in post for between five and ten years. This may reflect the nature of roles as well as tenure.

Finally, while the DISS surveys found that seven in ten staff consistently felt appreciated by their school, the proportion of special school staff reporting this fell from 78% in 2004 to 67% in 2008 — highlighting a trend that continues to resonate in the 2025 findings, where support staff often feel under-recognised beyond their immediate colleagues.

[13] More information on the DISS study can be found https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-deployment-and-impact-of-support-staff-in-schools-research-brief

Department for Education

© Department for Education copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.
Reference: RR1607
ISBN: 978-1-83870-763-7

For any enquiries regarding this publication, contact www.gov.uk/contact-dfe.

This document is available for download at www.gov.uk/government/publications.