Recruitment and Retention of Newly Qualified Teachers in Oxfordshire Schools

Findings related to secondary schools

Report of research undertaken by the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University for the Strategic Schools Partnership Board

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Chapter 2: Summary of findings related to secondary schools

2.1 What attracts secondary NQTs to work in Oxfordshire schools?

Local connections

Most secondary NQTs who take up posts in Oxfordshire have trained locally; in Oxford or Reading-based partnerships, with some from other nearby counties. They usually have specific reasons for seeking employment in the area, based on existing family relationships, including the employment or academic study of their partners. Unfortunately, while some teachers are prompted to apply for local posts because of their positive experiences in a particular school or because they are looking for some stability as they embark on their NQT year, this can mean that they have paid little attention to the cost of housing in relation either to their salary or other areas of the country and only come to consider these issues at a later point.

The limited influence of other features of local provision

While individual schools may prove attractive to those who undertake some of their training within them, few teachers were aware of any specific attractions or benefits of working within the county. The only distinctive feature of local provision mentioned by any respondents were the opportunities for professional development offered by engagement with the University of Oxford through partnership in the initial teacher education programme or through the Master's in Learning and Teaching.

This would suggest that schools should perhaps take more action to alert the NQTs that have joined them to the distinctive features of the particular school and of working in Oxfordshire. While the scope for professional learning offered through engagement with the local universities could be promoted as a distinctive strength, schools could also do more to develop and make teachers aware of a programme of professional development opportunities within the county linked to career progression.

2.2 What obstacles are there to the effective recruitment of secondary NQTs in Oxfordshire?

Subject differences

The problem of recruitment is such that two thirds of the secondary schools that participated in the survey had experience of at least one vacancy that remained unfilled for three months or more. Although we do not have enough data to draw robust comparisons between different subjects, such vacancies occurred most frequently in English, Maths, Computing and MFL.

The limited influence of levels of disadvantage

There was no evidence to suggest that schools serving more disadvantaged areas tended to have more difficulty recruiting or retaining NQTs than schools serving more advantaged populations. Although some individual schools with high proportions of students eligible for FSM did face particular difficulties, other individual schools in similar circumstances had very different recruitment patterns.

Economic factors

Induction tutors tended to attribute the difficulties of recruitment to the comparatively low level of teachers' salaries in relation both to the private sector and – in the case of Maths and Physics teachers – to the training bursary that they had previously received. The lack of any obligation to repay this bursary if a trainee failed to take up a position in a state-maintained school was seen as compounding this problem.

The difficulties of advertising in a competitive environment

While many schools clearly seek to cooperate with other schools where they can, by passing on the details of unsuccessful applicants once their own posts are filled, there is also an acute sense of competition between schools, which also prompts them to seek advantages over others, for example, by bringing forward planned interview dates.

The cost of advertising was regarded as a significant barrier to more effective recruitment and schools would clearly welcome initiatives (by both central government and OTSA) that would reduce these costs.

2.3 Why do many early career teachers in Oxfordshire secondary schools leave the schools to which they were recruited as NQTs?

The demands of teaching

The data seems to suggest two general trends in relation to teachers' decisions to leave the posts in Oxfordshire schools to which they were originally recruited. The first relates to decisions to leave within the first two years of teaching which seem to owe more to the workload pressures and stresses of the job than to specific concerns about accommodation costs in relation to earnings. The second pattern, reflected more in *established* teachers' explanations of their future intentions, relates to the cost of housing for teachers who are hoping to put down more permanent roots or to start a family. For those teachers who have family ties that keep them in the region, the same pressure pushes them to seek promotion as quickly as possible.

Although the sample of recent NQTs whose experiences were reported by schools in the survey included only 5% who had left teaching altogether, these departures were all attributed to the demands of the job. Another 5% followed a growing national trend in moving to independent schools (one of which was overseas). Among the slightly larger sample of those who continued

teaching in the state sector but left the county only one departure was attributed to the costs of living in Oxfordshire.

Specific characteristics of the school

While around a quarter of the established NQTs referred to colleagues who had left the school because of the cost of living, just as many emphasised specific policies or characteristics of their school that had compounded the pressures that their colleagues faced and driven them away. These specific features were quite varied; deriving, for example, from the split-site nature of certain schools to the imposition of a very particular teaching style or expectations of a commitment to continued professional learning that were thought to be excessive. The challenges of managing students' behaviour did *not* seem to be a significant cause of stress; it was alluded to in only one case.

While little can be done to combat the specific challenges created by a split site, it is important (as discussed more fully below) that the challenges associated with moving between classrooms are fairly shared – or preferably minimised for the newest teachers. While schools may pride themselves on their high expectations of staff, it may be important to check how those expectations are experienced and review the balance between praise and encouragement and the exhortation to do even better. In this respect, there may be much to learn from the practice of some of the special schools within the county.

Economic factors

In reflecting on the reasons why they had at some stage thought about leaving their job, the established NQTs tended to cite workload issues (with only one of them mentioning housing costs). In looking *forward*, however, only one teacher mentioned stress whereas a quarter of them cited the desire to buy a house and put down roots, with slightly more mentioning their interest in securing promotion.

This pattern of decision-making, with concerns about the cost of living having an impact rather later than workload pressures is borne out by the induction tutors' accounts of their experience. While they quickly emphasised the comparatively low pay of teachers, they acknowledged that the cost of housing in Oxfordshire only tended to impact some years into teachers' careers.

2.4 Why do some secondary teachers recruited as NQTs to Oxfordshire schools choose to continue working in the school and what might induce others to stay?

The quality of induction support

The first year of teaching is undoubtedly a very demanding one, essentially because of the increase in teachers' timetables (and the associated demands that go with this additional teaching) and the sense of responsibility for ensuring progression that necessitates a greater focus on medium and long-term planning and on appropriate forms of differentiation. Other factors that loomed large in the experience of current NQTs, but that were mentioned less by established teachers looking back,

were the challenges of dealing with poor behaviour (of individual students or specific classes) and the generation, recording and use of assessment data.

However, the teachers looking back on their experience generally claimed that they had been well prepared for the nature of the demands that they would face. The kinds of formal support that they received – a designated mentor, a 10% timetable reduction and a structured programme – essentially matched their expectations, although the value that the teachers attributed to it in retrospect varied significantly, with less than half rating it as essentially helpful. Suggestions made for improvements to this formal provision related to the same issues as those identified above: strategies for efficient and effective marking, differentiation for mixed ability classes and a greater emphasis on behaviour management. The teachers stressed the need to focus on the knowledge and expertise that they needed to do their job effectively rather than simply providing pastoral support for them. They also called for more developmental use of observation of their own teaching (rather than a focus on merely judging or documenting their competence) and more structured opportunities to observe other teachers.

Sustained support in the second year of teaching

There were marked differences between schools in terms of the provision that they made for second year teachers. Accounts of such provision ranged from an acknowledgment that such teachers were essentially '*dumped*' to details of programmes specifically designed for teachers at that stage. There was some evidence, however, that the assumptions about professional learning that underpinned the designs of these programmes also seemed to vary quite significantly.

In seeking to retain staff, it would seem sensible for those schools in which tailored support largely disappears in the second year, to pay careful attention to the different kinds of support that are being offered elsewhere. This is important not only in supporting those teachers who continue to experience difficulties and stresses associated with the demands of the job, but also in establishing the secure first steps along a professional development path aligned to the kind of aspirations for career progression (and financial reward) that will begin to drive many of the teachers once they have weathered the early difficulties.

Appropriate support for career progression

By the third year in teaching, most teachers had assumed some kind of additional responsibility and mentoring for these new roles assumed considerable importance. Induction tutors recognised the value of linking the programme of professional development that they offered to a clear model of career progression and some schools had begun to present a CPD menu that was clearly structured in this way.

Career progression was particularly important because of the financial pressures that teachers in Oxfordshire faced. While some use was being made of retention allowances, tutors expressed the hope that proposed changes to the national funding mechanism might result in additional funds for the county. More immediately, the pressures meant that teachers tended to seek promotion very early in their career, which heighted the importance of induction support for those new roles was extremely important (not least because the teachers might thereby lose out on other forms of early career professional development).

Professional collaboration and collegiality

Both teachers and induction tutors stressed the fundamental importance of collaboration and collegiality. While the culture and practices of individual departments were seen as crucial in this respect, evidence of the interest of senior management in the NQTs and scope for them to share practice with others across the school was also valued. A key feature of effective collaboration was located in departments' practice of providing effective online access to schemes of work, lesson plans and teaching resources, and engagement in joint planning. While it might be assumed that this would be the case in all departments, the experience of several of the induction tutors suggested that practice could prove quite variable. Ensuring that up-to-date schemes of work and teaching materials are shared and that new curricular planning is undertaken collaboratively could do much to ensure that NQTs are adequately equipped to take many of the new demands that they face.

Personal commitment: a sense of worth, enjoyment and agency

In addition to genuine collaboration and collegiality, the induction tutors identified two other features of informal support that they believed made a significant difference to teachers' commitment to the school. The first was reassuring the teachers that they were valued, not least by welcoming the expertise and innovative thinking that they brought with them from the university-based elements of their training, as well as demonstrating that they were investing in their future. The second was to provide scope for teachers' professional development, through opportunities for focused observation or by engaging with the local university (as a Master's student or by becoming a mentor within the OUDE Internship scheme). While promotion was eagerly sought by teachers who needed an increased salary to make housing costs more affordable, additional responsibilities or projects were also valued as another source of professional development and of the value attributed to them by the school.

The second strategy that tutors proposed was concerned with exploiting the positive factors that remained at the heart of teachers' interest in the profession, a suggestion that resonated with teachers' own reasons for staying in the profession when they had considered leaving. Enhancing teachers' sense of professionalism could be achieved by acknowledging their subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching expertise and by respecting their agency in making appropriate pedagogical decisions.

The final strategy related to improving teachers' working conditions in order to maximise the time available to them for evaluating and developing their practice in the ways to which they aspired. While it might be difficult to provide adequate time, ensuring that newer teachers did not have to spend more time travelling between classrooms than their more experienced colleagues was seen as a basic issue of fairness. Limiting the number of different classes and subjects that they had to teach was also seen as an important issue in improving their basic conditions of employment.

Chapter 4: The design of the research

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 Research questions

The research was initially designed to address three key questions:

1. What attracts NQTs (in different subjects/phases; and from different training routes/ locations) to work in Oxfordshire schools?
2. Why do many early career teachers decide to leave Oxfordshire schools?
3. Why do some teachers recruited to Oxfordshire schools choose to continue working in the county and what might induce more to stay?

As the data was being analysed it became clear that a fourth question should be included to allow us to report on the extent of the problem of recruitment as it impacted in terms of unfilled vacancies and to reflect induction tutors' analyses of the difficulties that schools faced. An additional question was therefore inserted (which became Question 2):

- What obstacles are there to the effective recruitment of NQTs in Oxfordshire

4.1.2 Methods of data collection

The original research design included three key elements:

- a questionnaire survey sent to all state-funded primary and secondary and special schools asking about the appointment and subsequent employment trajectory of NQTs appointed within the last three years (target: responses related to 100 teachers; received responses related to 163 teachers);
- a series of interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs who had remained within the county for at least three years (target: 30 interviews; conducted interviews with 32 teachers) ; and
- a small number of group interviews with teachers from each sector who were responsible within school for induction support (target: interviews with at least 5 induction tutors in each case primary and secondary phase; achieved responses from 6 primary and 13 secondary tutors using a combination of group and individual interviews and individual written responses to the same questions).

It was also decided (at a point when recruitment to the survey was progressing very slowly) to invite a number of secondary NQTs who were attending an induction course at OUDE to complete a short

questionnaire providing relevant details about their own career trajectories and experience so far. Nine such questionnaires were completed and the data has been used, where relevant, particularly in fleshing out reports about the challenges of the NQT year and teachers' perceptions of different kinds of induction support.

All the data was collected during Terms 3 and 4 of the academic year 2015-16.

4.2 The questionnaire survey

An online survey (administered through Survey Monkey) was set up, with separate versions for state-funded primary, secondary and special schools within Oxfordshire, asking for information about the employment and career trajectory of any NQTs appointed to their school since 2012.

OTSA and Oxfordshire County Council both advertised the survey through their regular newsletters. Members of the research team in each university also used their existing contacts with teachers' responsible in school for initial teacher education and induction to encourage completion of the survey and direct it to the most appropriate person. The team also attended the Oxfordshire headteachers' conference in order to publicise it further.

The survey included two sections - a short series of questions about the number of NQTs employed by the school in the last three years, any unfilled vacancies in that period, and the number of teachers recruited as NQTs who had remained in post for more than three years. This final section was also used to invite the respondents to nominate appropriate teachers for the interview phase of the study.

The second section included a series of questions to be answered by senior leaders or administrative staff responsible for Human Resources (HR) in relation to each NQT appointed within the last three years. These questions relate to the NQTs' training route; their teaching qualification (e.g. subject specialism); the post to which they were recruited; and any subsequent moves/promotions within or beyond the school/county. While schools were invited to complete these questions for all relevant NQTs, those with very large numbers from which to choose were asked to provide details for a minimum of three teachers.

The aim was to secure survey responses for at least 100 teachers. Records from OTSA and Oxfordshire County Council suggested that in the last three years just over 1000 NQTs had been appointed (589 in primary schools, 455 in secondary schools and 10 in special schools), so this represented a minimum sample of approximately 10% of NQTs.

Questionnaire data was returned from 38 primary schools, with responses related to 87 teachers recruited as NQTs; from 19 secondary schools with responses related to 67 NQTs and from seven special schools with data related to eight NQTs. This meant that data was received in relation to 163 NQTs although some of these individual records were incomplete.

4.3 Telephone interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs who had remained in post for more than three years

Our original intention had been to conduct telephone interviews with 16 primary teachers, 12 secondary teachers and 2 teachers working in special school who were recruited as NQTs and who had remained in post for at least three years. This target was almost achieved in one case and slightly exceeded in the other two: 15 interviews were conducted with primary teachers, 13 with secondary teachers and four with teachers in special schools.

Potential participants were identified both through the school survey as explained above and by the Principal Investigator in each university asking colleagues working in partnership with local schools through their PGCE programmes to suggest further names of teachers known to them who were appointed as NQTs more than three years ago.

The research officers contacted potential participants by email initially providing details of the project and an opportunity to ask questions about it. Once consent had been given arrangements were be made for the telephone interview, which generally lasted between 15 and 20 minutes, at a mutually convenient time. All the interviews were recorded.

The interview questions asked both about the teachers' reasons for taking a post in Oxfordshire and for remaining in the school. They were asked about the support that they had received in their early years in teaching as well as the challenges that they had faced at different points and the particular factors that had prompted or might prompt them to consider leaving. Respondents (especially those recruited from ITE programmes based in the county) were also asked about any peers training with them who had chosen to seek work elsewhere and/or colleagues who had chosen to leave – asking what they thought the reasons were

4.4 Focus group/individual interviews with teachers responsible for NQT induction, supplemented by individual questionnaires

Our original intention had been to hold two focus group interviews with teachers responsible for induction - one primary and one secondary, involving a minimum of five participants. We had intended to hold these discussions in Oxford Brookes University and in the University of Oxford, respectively, scheduling them to follow existing meetings that brought such teachers into the university in connection with their work on the PGCE programmes.

In practice, it proved difficult to accommodate group interviews with the appropriate personnel. Although we succeeded in bringing together four induction tutors within the secondary phase, it was decided to increase the pool of responses by offering to conduct individual interviews with relevant senior leaders or to invite them to provide written responses to the same questions if that proved easier for them.

Eventually responses were obtained from 6 primary and 13 secondary teachers responsible for

induction.

4.5 Additional data sources

It was also decided (at a point when recruitment to the survey was progressing very slowly) to invite a small number of current NQTs to provide further details about their experiences. This additional data was collected as the opportunity presented itself and although it ultimately proved less important as we succeeded in recruiting to target we have chosen to include the additional insights gained from these sources where they are relevant.

At primary level, two newly-qualified teachers in one school were interviewed by telephone about the challenges that they were currently facing as NQTs and the training and support that they were receiving. They were also asked about the likelihood of leaving their current post within the next two or three years and any motives behind their response to this question.

At secondary level those NQTs who were attending an induction course at OUDE (as part of an OTSA/OUDE programme) were asked to complete a short questionnaire providing relevant details about their own career trajectories and experience so far. The NQTs were invited to respond to a paper-based survey that explored specific questions about the challenges that they were currently facing as NQTs and the training and support that they were receiving. They were also asked about the likelihood of leaving their current post within the next two or three years and the reasons behind their response to this question. Responses were received from nine NQTs: two teachers in each of the following subjects: Science, Maths, English and MFL, and one in history.

4.7 Full details of the data collected for the secondary survey

4.7.1 Survey responses from secondary schools [responses from 19 schools related to 67 NQTs]

Nineteen secondary schools provided data about one, two or three NQTs who had been recruited to their school during the course of the past three years. Specific data was provided for 67 individual teachers recruited across 11 different subjects. As Figure 4 shows, all districts within the county were represented, although the spread was somewhat uneven, Figure 5 shows that while some subjects (DT, Geography, Psychology) were only represented by one NQT, there were two or more teachers for each of the other subjects, with the highest numbers for Science (17, representing 24% of the sample), Maths (15, representing 22%) and English (11, representing 16% of the sample).
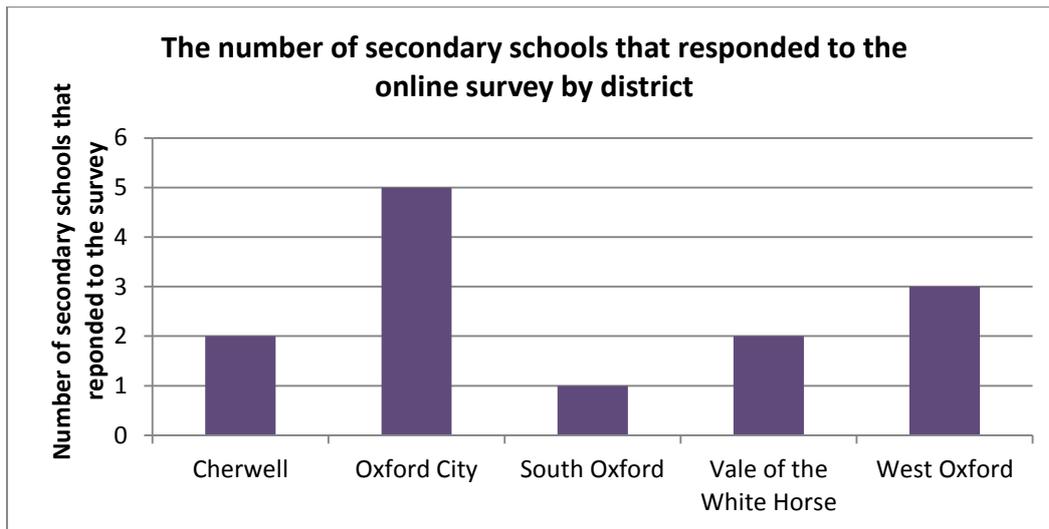
The number of secondary schools that responded to the online survey by district

Figure 4: The number of secondary schools that responded to the survey by district

The number of secondary NQTs (recruited 2012-15) teaching different subjects within the survey sample
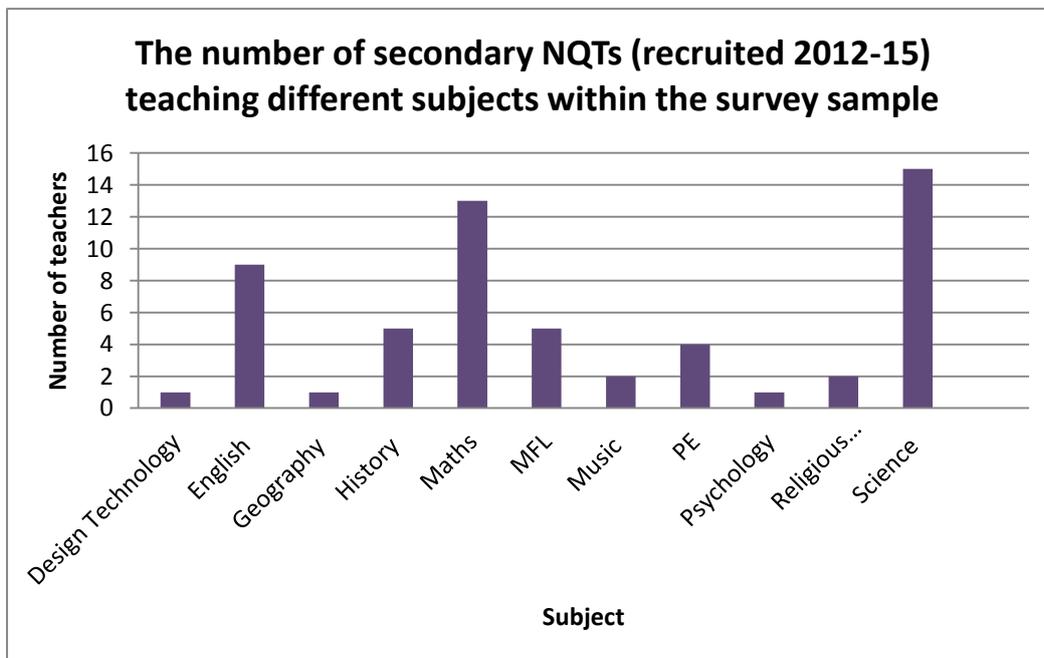
Figure 5: The number of NQTs (2012-15) within the secondary survey sample recruited to teach each subject.

4.7.2 Telephone interviews with secondary teachers recruited as NQTs who had remained in post for more than 3 years [13 interviewees]

Telephone interviews, lasting between 15 and 20 minutes in most cases were conducted with 13 secondary teachers, originally recruited to their schools as NQTs. Most of them had been nominated by the teacher who had completed the school survey, but one or two additional interviewees were suggested by subject tutors at OUDE in order to ensure inclusion of all the different districts within

the county and of a range of subjects. The group of 13 included three Science teachers, two teachers in each of English, Maths, History and MFL and one PE teacher.

4.7.3 A focus group discussion with teachers responsible for NQT induction, supplemented by individual responses to the same questions [13 respondents]

Only four teachers responsible for induction attended the focus group discussion that had originally been planned. To strengthen this data, tutors who were unable to attend the meeting were invited to complete a questionnaire that followed the same format as the focus group discussion. Nine questionnaires were completed which means that we have responses from teachers in 13 different secondary schools to questions about the career trajectories of NQTs recruited in their schools and the nature of the support that they provided for them along with questions about their perceptions of the challenges that such teachers faced, the effectiveness of the support offered and ways in which it could perhaps be improved.

4.7.4 A paper based survey completed by NQTs undertaking the OTSA-OUDE Induction programme [9 responses]

The newly-qualified teachers undertaking this programme were invited to respond to a paper-based survey that explored specific questions about the challenges that they were currently facing as NQTs and the training and support that they were receiving. They were also asked about the likelihood of leaving their current post within the next two or three years and the reasons behind their response to this question. Responses were received from two teachers in each of the following subjects: Science, Maths, English and MFL, and one response came from a history teacher.

Chapter 6: Detailed findings for secondary schools

6.1 What attracts secondary NQTs to work in Oxfordshire Schools?

6.1.1 Findings from survey data about the trajectories of recent NQTs

The survey, which was completed by senior teachers or administrative staff responsible for recruitment and induction arrangements, included data about the previous training of only 42 teachers originally recruited as NQTs. (Training routes for the other 25 NQTs included in the survey were unknown or not provided by those completing the survey.) As Figure 11 shows, of these 42 teachers, 33 (79%) had trained in Oxfordshire or Buckinghamshire. (These two counties were grouped together in order to accommodate the Graduate Teacher Programme which was run jointly across the two counties.) Another three had trained in directly neighbouring counties, such as Berkshire and Warwickshire, while two from other locations in the south (Bristol and Portsmouth). Only three were recruited from further north (one from Sheffield and two from Liverpool.[1] This pattern would seem to suggest that the vast majority of teachers who are recruited as NQTs to Oxfordshire schools are those who have **existing links with the area**. They may be staying simply because they are now familiar with the area through their initial teacher training programme; or they may have chosen to train locally because they have existing connections with the area.
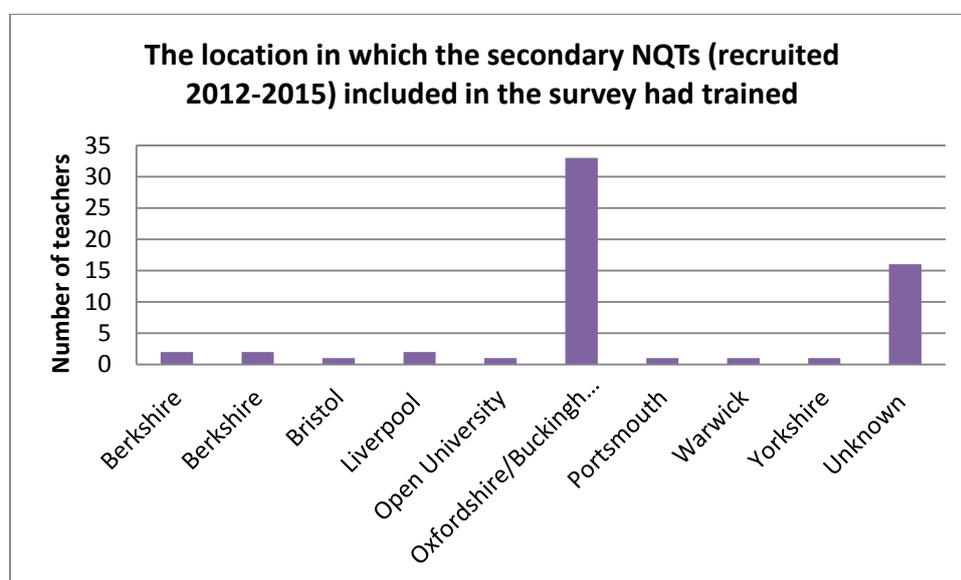

Figure 11: The locations (where known) in which the secondary teachers recruited as NQTs had trained

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[1] The location of the training of the one teacher who trained through the Open University is unknown.

Figure 12 sets out the different training routes that these teachers pursued, but it is obviously difficult to draw useful conclusions for the future from teachers' past trajectories in terms of the role that different training routes might play. The very recent and rapid expansion of School Direct means that its impact cannot yet be clearly seen.
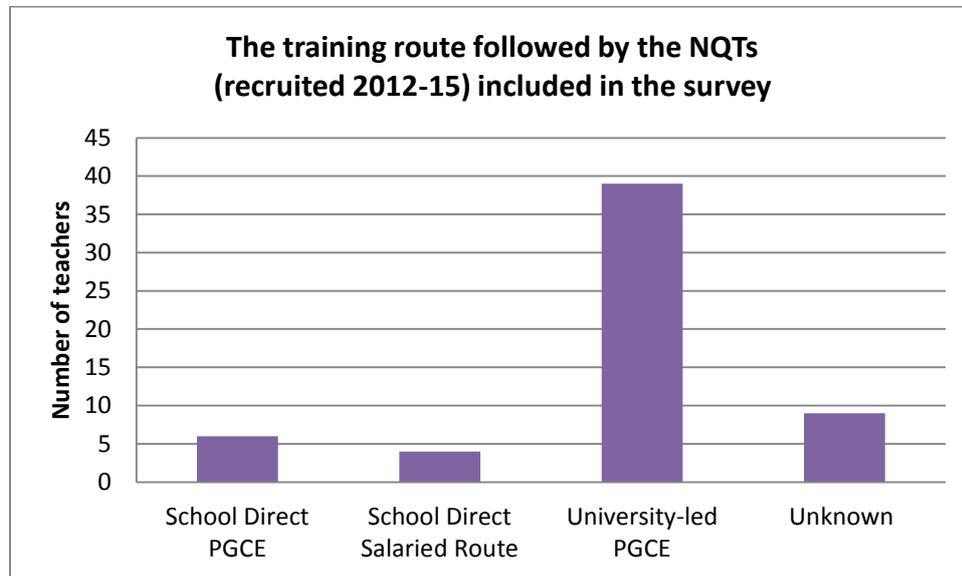

Figure12: The training route followed by the secondary NQTs included in the survey

6.1.2 Findings from interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs (still in post after 3+ years)

Of the 13 teachers interviewed, the vast majority had **trained locally** (six within the OUDE partnership, three with the OBU partnership and one within the Reading PGCE partnership). Those recruited from further afield had trained in Birmingham, Worcester and Durham.

The specific reasons for two of these three teachers moving into the area related to previous or **family connections** to the area (undergraduate study at Oxford or a partner's family living in the county). The third was attracted by the relative ease of access to London where their social life was largely located, but without the challenges of which they had apparently been warned in London schools.

The attractions of the area for those who had been based in Oxford or Reading for their training included an existing family base in the area, previous undergraduate study at Oxford, their current partner's academic study or local employment and a desire not to move again for those who had only recently come to the city for their PGCE programme. In three cases the teachers knew the specific school in which they took up their post, either through their training placement or previous work there as a teaching assistant. In one case a teacher with *all* these kinds of links (a previous TA role and undergraduate study in the city and the chance to share a house with existing friends) seemed to express some regret about not paying more attention at the time of his job application to the longer term financial challenges and the fact that there were probably '*better opportunities elsewhere*'. However, none of the teachers suggested that they had any real reservations about

taking up a post in the county and only one mentioned an early concern about how expensive it was – a characteristic that was associated with the south east in general and not specifically with Oxfordshire.

6.1.3 Findings from additional questionnaires completed by NQTs (undertaking the OTSA-OUDE Induction programme)

The same basic pattern of recruitment was found among the nine NQTs who reported on their experiences in response to a paper-based survey. Only two had trained outside the area: one in Bristol and one at UEA (Norwich), both of whom had followed 'university-led' PGCE programmes. Among the seven who had trained locally, five teachers had followed PGCE programmes – four with OUDE and one with OBU – and two had completed the School Direct salaried programme with the Cherwell OTSA SCITT.

6.1.4 Findings from induction tutors' focus group and questionnaires

The induction tutors' reflections tended to echo the findings from the survey and NQT questionnaires that the reasons why NQTs chose to apply for work in Oxfordshire schools had **little to do with specific features of the schools**, except in relation to applicants' familiarity with them (through their training placements or previous experience as a teaching assistant). It was essentially acknowledged that teachers who applied to schools in the region tended to have other reasons for staying or moving into the area; reasons associated with **family commitments or previous connections**. Unfortunately, it was also suggested that the lack of any more specific motive tended to mean that such early career teachers had little to keep them there once they felt more confident in their teaching abilities and had begun to examine the financial realities of their position.

6.2. What obstacles are there to the effective recruitment of NQTs in Oxfordshire?

6.2.1 Findings from survey data about the trajectories of recent NQTs

It is clear that schools in Oxfordshire are experiencing sustained difficulties in recruiting teachers to fill all their vacancies. As Figure13 shows, across the 19 secondary schools, 11 reported that they had recent vacancies that had remained unfilled for more than 3 months. Five of those schools had experienced two such vacancies and three schools had experienced three (the maximum number reported). The most common difficulties were in English, which accounted for five of the vacancies, and Maths, which accounted for four of them. Geography and IT/Computing each accounted for three unfilled vacancies and there were two in MFL. Two-thirds of these vacancies could be addressed with relatively stable measures, providing some consistency for students, but this appeared to be more difficult for vacancies lasting more than six months. These prolonged vacancies that could only be addressed with changing forms of provision over time occurred twice in IT/Computing and MFL and once in Maths and English. There was no obvious pattern in their distribution with multiple vacancies occurring both in the city and across the county.
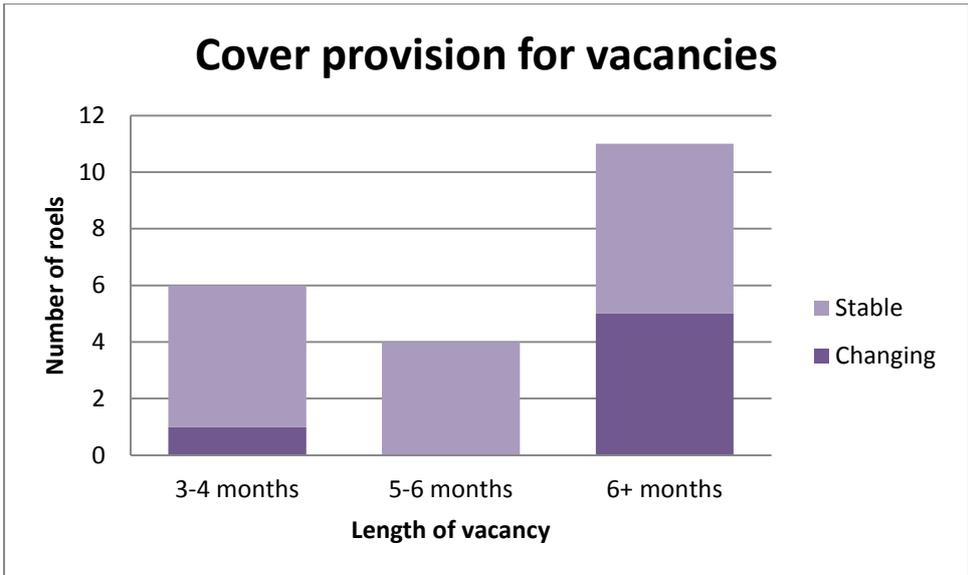
Figure 13: Cover provision for vacancies lasting 3 months or more

In order to determine whether new teaches were seeking out schools with low levels of deprivation in order to avoid teaching in more challenging circumstances, the mean number of NQT appointments that schools made each year were plotted in relation to the proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM). While it is not possible to use data from only 19 schools to establish with confidence whether there is such a correlation, our findings, shown in Figure 14, do *not* appear to endorse the suggestion that secondary schools serving a more disadvantaged population have more difficulties retaining new staff. There are no significant trends across the data, although the patterns of recruitment do highlight some important individual cases that may merit more detailed investigation - either to explore why staff turn-over is so high in a school in which the proportion of FSM students is below the national average, or to examine why staffing is so stable despite the apparently challenging circumstances of schools in which the proportion of FSM students is more than twice the national average.
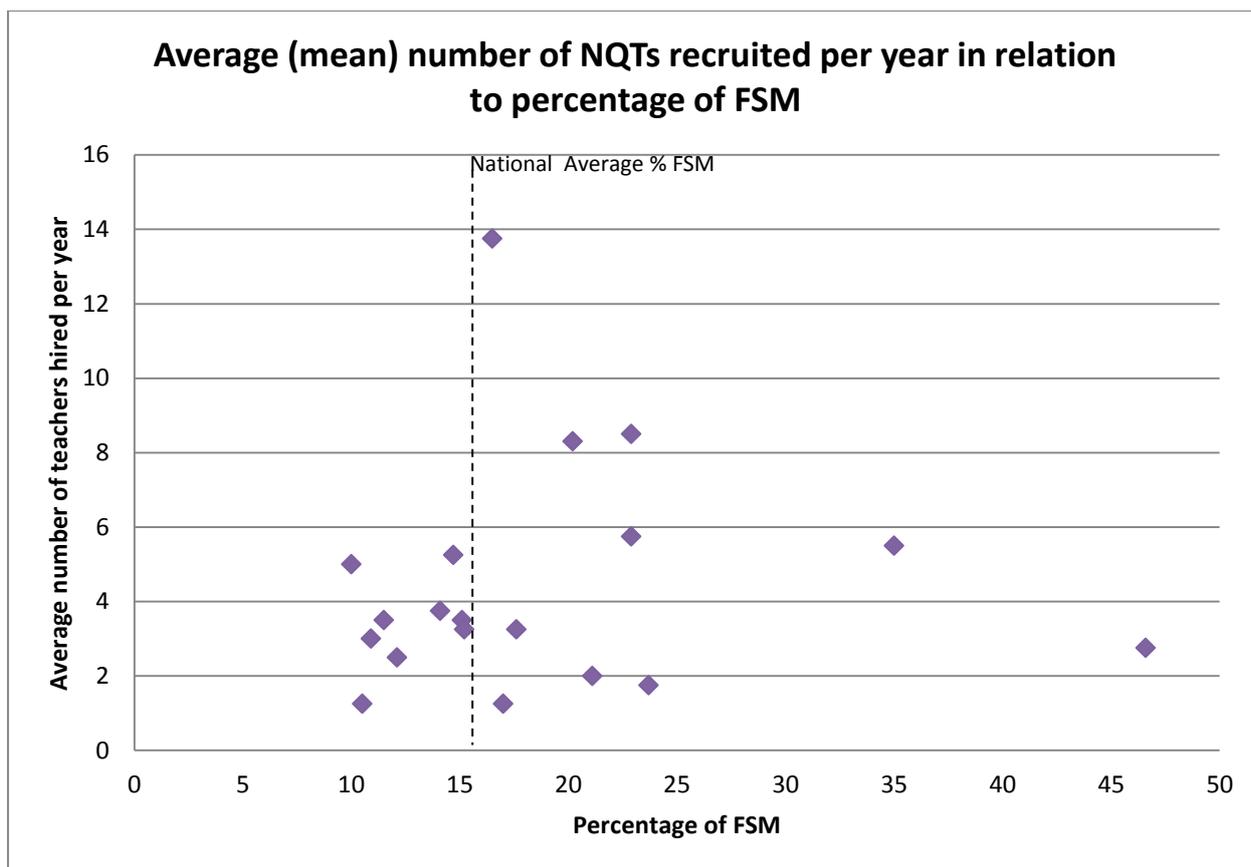
Figure 14: *The average (mean) number of NQTs appointed annually in each school over the period 2012-15 in relation to the proportion of FSM students (% FSM)*

6.2.2 Findings from induction tutors' focus group and questionnaires

The induction tutors tended to assume that newly qualified teachers were deterred from making applications in Oxfordshire because of the **low salary** received by teachers after seven years of wage restraint, comprising two years of pay freeze and five years with increases of no more than 1%. One teacher contrasted the starting salaries for the state sector with the offer that a current trainee had recently received for a post at Rugby School offering *'£38,000 a year plus free boarding as an NQT'* which equated to more than double the salary that they could offer.

Teachers' starting salary was also contrasted unfavourably with the bursary payment that Physics and Maths teachers received during the course of their training. Considerable frustration and anger was expressed about training bursaries of £24,000 (rising to £30,000 next year) that failed to include any kind of tie-in clause committing new teachers to work in the profession and to remain within the state sector. The tutors recognised that the bursary attracted individuals who had no intention of going into teaching, or who abandoned the idea once they discovered what the starting salary would be.

Induction tutors reported on the strategies that they used to try to make their recruitment as effective as possible and also shared accounts of practices that were both collaborative but also highly competitive in the attempt to maximise their chances of recruiting effectively within a

shrinking pool of applicants. These included advertising without a defined closing date in order to extend the numbers of applicants, and passing on details of unsuccessful applicants to other local schools known to be recruiting; but also involved deliberately interviewing early, *before* the advertised closing date, in order to get in ahead of other schools that had advertised a similar post.

The problems of recruiting were compounded for schools by the **costs of advertising**, with some schools concluding that for temporary appointments, such as a maternity cover, it was prohibitively expensive, at £2000, to advertise nationally through the *Times Education Supplement.* It was clear that there would be strong support both for OTSA's proposal to provide an advertising service and for the subsequent white paper proposal to provide web-tools that would allow schools to advertise vacancies for free along with a national teacher vacancy website.

6.3 Why do many early career teachers in Oxfordshire secondary schools leave the schools to which they were recruited as NQTs?

6.3.1 Findings from survey data about the trajectories of recent NQTs

Respondents to the survey, who were asked to provide information about up to three NQTs recruited to their school within the past three years, gave details about 67 individual NQTs, but in only 58 cases did they confirm both when they had been recruited and whether or not they were still teaching in the school. Of those 58 teachers, 44 (or 76%) were still teaching in the school and 14 had since left. In one case the respondent did not say *when* the teacher had left, but among those for whom reasons were given five had left within one year of starting at the school, seven had left after two years at the school and only one had left after three years in post. While this is obviously a very small sample, it is notable that the **proportion of NQTs leaving within the first year (9%) or second year (12%) is much higher than that leaving after a third year (2%) in the role**. This data alone, however, can provide few clear messages about the reasons for teachers' departure from their first school.

Half of the 14 NQTs who left the school within three years went on to other teaching posts, but only two of these were within Oxfordshire; the other five went to teach in maintained schools elsewhere. Three of the original NQTs went to teach in independent schools, one of which was overseas, and three left teaching altogether. (The destination of the other leaver was unknown.)

The main reason given for all three of those who left teaching was that they were unhappy with the **nature or demands of their job**. Where reasons were given for moving to the independent sector (at home and abroad) the teachers were merely said to be seeking experience of a different school context. Among the five teachers who remained in teaching but left the county a range of reasons was given, only one of which related explicitly to the cost of living in Oxfordshire (as well as to seeking promotion). One cited **family reasons and** the other two were only on one-year contracts. This also applied to one of the two teachers who moved to another maintained school *within* the county. In the other case, the move was motivated by the desire to reduce **commuting distance**.

6.3.2 Findings from telephone interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs

6.3.2.1 Reports on their colleagues' reasons for leaving

All of the 13 teachers interviewed (who had taken up their first posts between 2006 and 1012 and remained in the school) were aware of other NQTs who had subsequently left and two of them referred to the very high turnover of teachers in their school. Only about a quarter of respondents gave reasons for their colleagues' departure that were particular to the Oxfordshire context (the cost of living), but another quarter of responses also identified features that were associated with the **nature or practices of specific schools.** A growing national trend for qualified teachers to take up posts in the **independent sector** (often overseas) is also reflected in the data.

Among the anecdotal evidence that these 13 teachers gave about their colleagues' reasons for leaving, four references were made to issues associated with the **high cost of living in Oxfordshire**, citing several teachers' decisions to move somewhere cheaper (which might include moving back to their family home). The cost of living was also mentioned in one case as driving the search for promotion after a teacher's NQT year.

Some issues were mentioned that were clearly related to the **characteristics of particular schools or to specific policies** or changes in the schools concerned. These included the demands of working in a split-site school, the prevailing teaching style within the school, demands for a strong commitment to the reading involved in further professional learning and changes that were being made to the distribution of responsibility allowances for particular roles.

In three cases, teachers referred to colleagues who had moved to take up posts in selective or independent schools (at home and abroad).

The recurring negative reasons that applied to teaching *per se* (although they might take particular forms in particular schools) were those related to the **demands of the teachers' workload**: the need for long hours of work after school and at weekends and the stress and pressure that such demands could create. This was sometimes related to a teacher's decision that teaching simply was not appropriate for them.

More positively (although this could be connected to the financial imperative noted above) some teachers left the school for promotion elsewhere (most often as a head of department). Other reasons for moving that would be relevant in any context include the ending of a temporary contract and the decision to join or follow a partner who was in employment elsewhere.

The only alternative to teaching that was specifically mentioned was a decision made in two cases to return to academic study.

3.2.2 Reports on their own reasons for considering leaving

All but one of these 13 teachers reported that they themselves had *considered* leaving the school at some point. Obviously the reasons that they gave had not ultimately pushed them to make this decision, but they are worth noting, not least because seven of the teachers stated that they had at

some point thought of giving up teaching *altogether* while 11 of them thought it was likely that they would leave that particular school within the next two years.

In terms of their *general* reasons for thinking about leaving teaching itself only one teacher mentioned the cost of housing, stating that it would not be possible to buy a home in the south-east on a teacher's salary. In all other cases the focus was on the **demands and stress of the job.** While this was frequently expressed in terms of time demands – for example, '*working 7am-9pm every day*' (Interview 12), or working every evening, or the lack of a work-life balance or scope for a social life, the impossibility of combining teaching with having children on one's own – there were also concerns about the way in which the culture of schools compounded this stress, creating '*unreasonable expectations'* (Interview 7) and a '*culture of martyrdom and overwork'*(interview 2). Other concerns about how the demands were managed were expressed in terms of '*a lack of understanding from senior leadership teams*' and '*a lack of open dialogue, making stress contagious*' (Interview 13). Alongside problems of stress and ill-health derived from the extent of their workload teachers also reported the frustration of being constantly diverted from what they really wanted to do – time consumed in '*marking books, setting homework and filling in reports rather than getting people to love a subject*'(Interview 7). Others referred to conflicting ideas and competing pressures or to the difficulties of balancing different roles within school. One reference was made specifically to the rate of change in education.

It is perhaps worth noting that in only one case was specific mention made of students' poor behaviour (one particularly difficult class) as a source of stress.

In looking ahead, however and explaining why they thought it likely that they might leave their current school *within the next two years* (a claim made by 11 of the 13 teachers), only one referred to the '*incredibly stressful*' nature of teaching, expressing an interest in simply '*slowing down and taking some breathing time*'. In looking forward, the most commonly cited reasons for contemplating leaving the school were either related to the **search for promotion or to financial issues** (specifically related to the costs of buying a house) and the two were sometimes linked, with promotion an important element in being able to afford housing.

Five of the teachers specifically mentioned their interest in seeking promotion, sometimes as head of department, sometimes in broader terms related to '*more challenge*' or '*professional development'*. In some cases there was thought to be some prospect of such a role arising within their current school. In another case, a more general desire to gain more '*varied experience'* and different perspective, enriching their understanding and experience, was not necessarily linked to promotion.

Four of the teachers cited their desire to buy a house, wanting to '*set down roots*' or to provide for their (actual or putative) children. While one of those interviewed was aware of the city-council equity-share scheme and was '*looking into it'* (Interview 12) another had concluded that it was simply not '*economically viable to stay'* and found it '*heart-breaking'* to contemplate leaving a city about which she '*cared deeply' (I*nterview *5)*.

Other, more individual, reasons for contemplating leaving were linked either to highly specific developments within the school that might change the nature of their current role or to family considerations, such as a partner's potential move.

6.3.3 Findings from additional questionnaires completed by NQTs

When asked whether they thought it likely that they would leave their current school within the next two to three years, two of the nine NQTs who completed short questionnaires gave emphatic replies that they would indeed leave and *all* of the others expressed some uncertainty about whether they would stay. Three of the responses pointed to the **demands of the job** – making one of the NQTs question '*whether I have a life or even should have a life* (NQT 6)'. A sense of disillusionment with teaching was expressed in another's lack of conviction that '*the effort is worth it'* (NQT 8) or that they were actually valued. One respondent was considering leaving to work in the charity sector.

Five others gave answers that emphasised the importance of **securing promotion**, but they tended to emphasise their own ambition and interest in assuming further responsibilities rather than any specific need to earn more money.

Just one of these NQTs reflected the interest noted elsewhere in teaching abroad. Here it was seen as a way of combining enjoyment of teaching with a desire to travel.

6.3.4 Findings from induction tutors' focus group and questionnaires

Induction tutors' reflections on NQTs' destinations on leaving echoed the specific details reported in the survey, including movement to different areas for financial reasons or to accompany a partner and individuals' decisions to teach in the independent sector, which offered a much higher salary and accommodation (either in the UK or overseas).

In explaining why early career teachers left, the most commonly stated reasons were related to **teachers' salaries and to the relationship between salaries and housing costs in Oxfordshire** and the south-east more generally. Some tutors referred to a north-south split while others specifically highlighted the problem of house prices with no compensation equivalent to London weighting. The tutors also reflected more generally on the consequences of seven years of wage restraint and on the budget cuts in the public sector that gave schools little room for manoeuvre. The consequences of low pay were thought to be exacerbated by misleading advertising that seemed to imply that all teachers would rapidly be earning £60,000 and by the specific problem of training bursaries in Maths and Physics that were higher than the salaries that the teachers received when they were fully qualified. Since there was no obligation to repay such bursaries, it was thought to be very easy for teachers in such shortage subjects simply to walk away once the demands of the job or drop in salary became evident. It was also suggested that whereas previous generations of teachers might have been more willing to invest their time out of a sense of vocation, those born more in more recent decades expected financial rewards for their commitment.

It was noted that the issue of Oxfordshire house prices, which might well deter many teachers from applying to the county, only tended to have an **impact after some time in their career,** as teachers began to think about settling down. In this context, the fact that some teachers chose their first job for no other reason than that they were already familiar with the area meant that they only made a

more deliberate decision *after* they had completed the NQT year and felt sufficiently confident to contemplate moving somewhere less familiar.

The lack of **scope for promotion** for those who wanted it was also raised by several of the induction tutors, particularly those working in very small schools.

The tutors also acknowledged the **demands of teaching**, expressed not simply in the hours worked, but in the extraordinary pressures created by curriculum change at *all* key stages and the lack of agency or professional autonomy that followed from the extent of current prescription in education. They were also alert to some of the specific ways in which heads of department sometimes added to the pressures on NQTs through their timetabling decisions; for example by giving them a preponderance of Key Stage 3 classes thereby increasing the number of different classes that the NQT taught, or by requiring them to move from room to room rather than providing them with a consistent teaching base. While restricting their teaching of examination classes might be seen as an appropriate induction measure, the induction tutors were also aware that preventing early career teachers from taking on A level classes tended to communicate a lack of confidence in the quality of their teaching, which could be profoundly discouraging or provoke resentment.

The induction tutors also recognised that a few teachers also left simply because their temporary contract (often for maternity cover) had come to an end. They also pointed out that occasionally teachers left the profession because they were actually **unable to teach effectively**. One tutor referred to a new teacher who was never able to feel comfortable leading from the front of the class; another mentioned the difficulties that two teachers had in considering their subject from the learners' perspective.

6.4 Why do some secondary teachers recruited as NQTs to Oxfordshire schools choose to continue working in the school and what might induce others to stay?

6.4.1 Findings from telephone interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs

6.4.1.1 Nature and extent of the challenges that they faced (including the extent to which they were prepared for the challenges)

Extent of the challenge: In reporting on the extent of the challenge that they had faced as NQTs only two of the 13 teachers interviewed reported that the change had essentially been manageable or well within their capabilities. Half of the teachers described their experiences as '*quite'* or '*very'* challenging, while two more rated it as '*extremely challenging*'. One teacher compared it to a roller-coaster and another referred to it as the hardest thing that they had ever done.

Nature of the challenge: The most commonly mentioned elements in describing the nature of that challenge were related to the **increase in teaching time** (compared with their training year) which had a variety of consequences: the fact that they were teaching more consecutive full days; an increased planning and marking load and problems of time management or difficulties in determining priorities. Not only were they juggling different aspects of the job they were struggling

to secure any kind of sustainable work/life balance. Their more extensive teaching commitments also result in an increase in associated administrative or paper work.

The second most common type of demand derived from their **increased responsibility** for ensuring progression in students' learning, which necessitated more medium- and long-term planning. This sense of responsibility for their own classes also seemed to focus greater attention on differentiation and on the challenges of '*applying subject knowledge in such a way that all students can access it'* (Interview 8). While they felt a considerable pressure to meet the expectations that others had of them, they were also aware that they were actually lacking the regular evaluation of their practice that they had experienced as trainees, which made improvement more difficult.

The other specific challenges, each mentioned by just one of the teachers who were interviewed, were the need to familiarise themselves with specific curricula that were new to them, dealing with students' inappropriate behaviour and dealing with parents.

The extent to which NQTs felt prepared for the challenges that they faced: Despite the specific challenges that the teachers had enumerated and their characterisation of those challenges as making teaching extremely difficult, the majority of those interviewed declared that they felt well-prepared by their initial training programme to be able to face them. Most interviewees not only identified particularly positive features of their training but also pointed out that some aspects of the job could *only* be learned in situ. Some teachers, however, did suggest that they could have been better alerted to the sheer range and extent of the demands that they would face.

6.4.1.2 The nature and effectiveness of support in their NQT year

Support that they had expected: Most of the 13 teachers interviewed had expected a package of support for their NQT year, with **designated personnel** and some kind of **structured programme**, with regular sessions on different aspects of the school. Their views about who would be nominated to support them varied (from a designated CPD mentor or coach to their head of department or named colleague within their own subject to informal '*buddies'* in another subject area), but one or two individuals referred simply to the importance of having people to go to ask for help. A few of the teachers expected that they would be required to keep some kind of learning log or portfolio.

Most of the teachers also expected that the demands made of them would be less than those of more experienced teachers. They expected a lighter timetable, with a **10% reduction in contact time** that would give them the opportunity either to focus on their specific interests or to plan collaboratively with colleagues. In addition to this structured programme, a few teachers mentioned the idea of more **specific, tailored opportunities**, addressing their specific concerns and with small '*tweaks and a push'* (Interview 3) in the right direction. One teacher assumed that he would not be given the most challenging classes in his first year.

The teachers ranged quite widely in their expectations of where the support would be focused. Just one teacher referred to '*support with behaviour'* while others mentioned support for subject knowledge development, for general pedagogy and guidance on effective marking strategies and on

ways of developing more student independence. One teacher had expected to be offered ways of reflecting on their own teaching so that they could identify how to improve it.

It should be noted, however, that not everyone welcomed the idea of a carefully structured programme of NQT support. One teacher made it clear that she had expected very little and simply wanted to be left alone.

Support that they had received: The same three kinds of support were all mentioned by the former NQTs in looking back on their induction year. In terms of **designated personnel** six of them referred to a mentor within their subject, two of them mentioned regular meetings with their head of department and only one referred to a *'buddy'* drawn from another subject area.

Different elements of a **formal support programme** were referenced by all 13 teachers that we interviewed, including regular meetings specifically for NQTs (11); other kinds of CPD sessions - open to NQTs and others (4); different forms of observation (one mentioned peer observation, while two others referred to formal observation) and the support of a Professional Tutor. Only one of the teachers referred to external support provided at the county level, with one formal induction meeting at the start of the year and lots of online support.

Only one of the teachers referred to tailored provision, mentioning the opportunity they had to attend further externally provided CPD responsive to their particular needs and interests. This included five specialist sessions on managing students' behaviour offered through the local authority.

Value attributed to that support: While just under half of the teachers claimed to have found the support that they received *'helpful'* - mainly through the camaraderie developed through meeting other NQTs and the reassurance of further guidance if needed - others were much less effusive. Two teachers could remember little about it, and of those who found it unhelpful, one suggested that this was perhaps because they were not actually struggling, while the other found sessions too generic with nothing that could be applied to their own practice. This same teacher suggested that they would have welcomed more contact with a local authority advisor. Three of the teachers emphasised the **variable** quality of the provision, especially timetabled sessions. In most cases the support provided met or exceeded their expectations (although the latter applied to only one teacher). In two further cases their expectations were largely met, but one teacher claimed that there was simply no help available when they requested it: *'It went quite badly, as when I wanted to ask for help, there wasn't really any there. Ask, ask, ask for help and it didn't really appear when I found it really difficult*' (Interview 3).

6.4.1.3 The value attributed to the support received in their NQT year

For most of the teachers interviewed, the informal support networks on which they drew were highly significant and in some cases it was because of the quality of support and advice that they received on an informal basis that they did not see any particular value in the timetabled programme provided for them. For some, this support was firmly located within their subject department and its **subject specific nature** was stressed as something that made it particularly

valuable to them. For others, the emphasis was as strongly placed on a **supportive community that extended across the school**. A few teachers (the most positive ones) tended both elements:

> *My school went above and beyond what might be expected. It's in the nature of schools that teachers help each other a lot. Because the school isn't massive there is a level of informality there; it's easy to approach other practitioners about aspects of teaching and learning. The school has made progress in that area. I can talk to my head of department. My line manager, who is incredibly supportive and very experienced, was brilliant at supporting me with difficult classes, without undermining me, but giving me a whole range of strategies to try and implement. I bonded really well with teachers in the department and other practitioners too. People always know who are the good teachers in a school, so they always say 'Oh, why don't you go and talk to this person because they are good, for example, at differentiation. I had a lot of resources in that way.* (Interview 2)

In addition to talking through specific difficulties (both subject-specific challenges in teaching particular topics, or particularly *'difficult'* students) and being encouraged to observe other teachers, the other kinds of support that were valued included the **exchange of teaching resources** and the chance to check on a teaching idea that they had begun to develop as well as genuinely collaborative planning. Many of the teachers welcomed colleagues just checking that they were basically OK (especially in the first few months up to Christmas.) Several teachers mentioned the friendly concern shown by senior leaders. In one case the NQTs all got together on a regular basis, effectively running their own additional support meetings - with the encouragement of their school.

6.4.1.4 Nature and effectiveness of support in their <u>second</u> year of teaching

Support that they had received: Only three of the 13 teachers interviewed referred to any kind of special provision made for teachers in their second year. The experience of the other ten was essentially similar to that reported below, even if there were still lots of development opportunities within the school:

> *At the time, the thing I found a bit frustrating, post NQT, was that there was no formalised support. In the September, the expectation was that your induction year is done now. There were still lots of opportunities to develop in the school, but there was no formal programme to help you develop up to a full timetable. I now know that is a crucial time for a lot of people, because by that point, you are only observed three times a year.* (Interview 13)

The three who had received some specific consideration as second-year teachers had respectively enjoyed a regular meeting with their mentor that they used for collaborative planning (although the fact that both of them were free at the same time and chose to continue meeting may not have been formally arranged); an additional non-contact period each week to ease the transition to a full timetable; and a specific '*NQT+1*' programme that involved specific goals and prevented them from '*resting on their laurels*'.

Where they were just treated as regular teachers, most of those in their second year had access to different kinds of CPD provision, alongside the *'standard observations'* , regular INSET schedule and ongoing informal support from their departments. Many took part in specific programmes that their schools encouraged them to attend; such as moving from 'good' to 'outstanding' teaching or teaching high-attaining/ 'top-set' students. Several of them attended exam-board sessions related to GCSE or A-level.

Value attributed to that support: Most of the teachers welcomed the opportunities that they had been given and positive evaluations were offered of provision of all kinds. School-based CPD sessions - or at least some of them - were seen as relevant and practical, while external sessions were valued for the chance to talk to teachers from other contexts. Some input - such as a course on A-level teaching - were recognised as enduring influences on their teaching.

Criticisms were also expressed in relation to both the range of opportunities offered (where these focused more on leadership and less on continuing development in relation to classroom practice) and the nature of certain school-based CPD sessions (condemned for their *'information overload'* and the lack of time to implement the ideas presented). In one case a teacher who had participated (in the final term of their second year) in an enquiry-based programme for 2nd and 3rd year teachers offered by their local teaching alliance reflected that it had proved unsuccessful precisely because of the action research element, at a career stage when they thought more structured input was needed.

The teacher who had taken part in a specific NQT+1 training programme really valued the fact that the structured support had continued into the second year.

6.4.1.5 Nature and effectiveness of support in their third year of teaching

Support that they had received: By their third year of teaching eight of the 13 teachers interviewed had taken on some kind of **responsibility beyond their own classroom** (as second in department/pastoral team or subject leaders for a particular key stage) and many of them had received specific support related to that responsibility. Various forms of **mentoring** were offered in relation to the role, which tended to mean regular meetings or close liaison with their team leader (head of faculty/house). The one teacher who had been promoted by that point to Head of Year met weekly with their line manager within the senior leadership team. Several of the teachers had participated in a course for middle leaders, as part of which they had a specific project on which to work.

Limited reference was made to **subject-specific training** with one mention of a A-level training course and another referring to a Prince's Trust teaching course (run over six Saturdays in London) focused on the teaching of different topics. Another specialist course was directed towards eventual qualification to run the Duke of Edinburgh programme.

Reference continued to be made to **generic CPD sessions**, with one teacher reflecting that provision by this point tended to be much more internally focused.

Value attributed to that support: All the teachers' reflections on the support that they had received were essentially positive, with just one exception. Appreciation was expressed for support/guidance of many different kinds including **mentoring** by colleagues, **observation**, **discussion** and **collaborative action**. A gradual approach to mentoring - whereby it became progressively less directive and more about allowing them to check their ideas as they developed - was welcomed. Observation of more senior colleagues was valued for learning new roles, while meetings with senior leaders allowed for effective discussion of ideas. Collaboration seemed to support teachers in identifying and working effectively on issues that had been highlighted by Ofsted.

While most courses were seen as relevant and well-targeted to their teachers' needs, the one negative comment made echoes the importance of relevance since it refers to a course actually intended for NQTs that had been undertaken as a second-year teacher, by which point they felt that it was essentially redundant.

6.4.1.6 Other kinds of support that they would have welcomed in their first 3 years of teaching

When asked about any additional support that they would have welcomed in their first three years of teaching, there was a strong call from some of the teachers for **more** extensive support. Among the requests that were made were suggestions for more mentoring, more regular meetings with their mentor or other colleagues and more information meetings addressing particular aspects of school policy. There was also a request for more opportunities to observe colleagues.

The specific issues on which they would have liked such provision to focus included **strategies for effective and efficient marking; differentiation** for mixed-ability classes; and a greater emphasis on **behaviour management**. There was one suggestion that CPD should run as a drop-in session with staff offered the opportunity to seek advice on specific issues.

On teacher was particularly concerned to emphasise the need to focus on the core issues of teaching and learning - providing focused guidance rather than simply offering pastoral support. The teachers resented observations that were seen essentially as judgements of their competence, or merely the collection of necessary evidence of that competence. They wanted **observations to be genuine development opportunities** with scope for effective coaching.

In welcoming a focus on the needs of teachers in their second and third year of practice, the teachers were concerned that there should be greater monitoring of the **workload** of early career teachers, allowing them time to devote to development and **reflection** and the space to talk about improvement priorities in a more **responsive** way.

6.4.1.7 Specific factors that induced them to stay when they had contemplated leaving teaching

As noted in section 3.2.2. seven of these 13 teachers had at some point contemplated leaving teaching. The reasons that they gave for staying focused overwhelmingly on the positive aspects of their role, although four of them did also acknowledge the **downsides of trying to seek alternative**

employment (more limited holidays and lower pay; a dislike of office work; and fears that they would not know what else to do; the waste of the investment that they had made in securing effective behaviour management that now required a minimal effort to maintain).

At the heart of their commitment was their **enjoyment** of the role and generally of the context in which they worked and a sense of motivation rooted in enabling others to succeed. Stripped of *'all the bureaucratic things*' (Interview 7) teaching was regarded as *'enjoyable'* and *'rewarding'*; teachers enjoyed *'being in the classroom'* and '*interacting with students' (*Interview 10*)*. They were motivated by the *'sense of satisfaction in helping other people do better*' (Interview 6) and seeing *'what differences that makes for their life chances*' (Interview 8). The teachers claimed both to *'like the kids'* and '*love the people'* (interview 5); they found that time flies when they are in the classroom and regard the school as *'a nice place to work'* (interview 12).

In one case this general sense of enjoyment was reinforced by a specific **sense of obligation** or commitment to a particular cohort of students - the tutor group for whom they had assumed responsibility in Year 7 and would like to see through to the end of their GCSEs.

In only one case had a teacher taken any action to improve their particular situation, making the job more feasible by switching to part-time work. The teacher concerned felt that the discussion of her request played an important role in alerting the school to her value, as well as helping the senior leadership to understand better what mattered to her.

4.1.8 Specific factors that induced them to stay when they had contemplated moving elsewhere

Twelve of the 13 teachers interviewed had at some point considered leaving the school, but in only four of those cases had they been considering moving outside the county. A strong reason for staying, cited by three teachers was the **reputation** that they had established, which made it *'easier to stay*' because the *'kids have a lot of respect'* for them and their teaching. In one case the teacher's allegiance to the school was similarly rooted in their **shared history**: *'I have been on the journey [to achieving an 'outstanding' judgement] with them and I feel like part of the community'* (Interview 8).

The particular features of their current school that four teachers cited as important were related to **support collaboration and challenge** at the school and/or department level - all brought together in this particular explanation: *'It's a friendly, strong collaborative department that challenges and develops me, so I don't become stagnant in my teaching*' (Interview 7) .

One teacher referred specifically to having '*built a life in Oxfordshire'* (Interview 2), but the only distinctive feature within the county that was mentioned was the link to the University of Oxford Department of Education, described as '*a big draw'*, which had allowed one of the teachers to undertake the Masters in Learning and Teaching - a process that had *'sparked my brain about teaching'* (Interview 13). The result was not only that the teacher was *'loving my classes a lot more'* but also that it had *'re-injected loads of ideas into my classroom practice*'.

In three cases, the prospect or reality of a promoted post was also a powerful incentive, either when a particular post became available, or when the teacher was generally encouraged by their school to begin applying for promoted posts. One teacher who had previously been attracted by the role of

Professional Tutor (within initial teacher education) was unsure whether there would be similar posts available elsewhere. Other specific actions taken by the schools included opportunities to participate in particular kinds of CPD and the financial incentive of a recruitment and retention allowance – which had helped the teacher concerned in saving up to buy a house

Another change that had made a difference to one teacher's plans was the appointment of a new head of department, whom they found much more congenial. Factors beyond the control of the school also played a part such as a teacher's partner securing a new job locally

6.4.1.9 Specific factors that they believed <u>might induce</u> them to stay longer

As noted previously (Section 3.2.2), 11 of the 13 teachers suggested that they might leave their current school within the next two years. When asked what might induce them to stay longer two of them referred to prospects for **promotion or opportunities for career progression**. Three others emphasised the scope for professional development although these were not explicitly tied to formal promotion or increased pay. The teachers referred to the scope for growth and sustained opportunities for professional development or to practitioner research.

Two of the teachers simply emphasised their need for **more income** - essentially to enable them to 'function' - arguing for wages that were proportionate to their living expenses. A third teacher specifically stressed the problem with local house prices, suggesting that they could only be induced to stay if prices were reduced by about 30%, bringing them into line with national averages. For another teacher that there were no realistic options: it was simply *'a move that I have to make'* (Interview 7*)*.

One or two teachers pointed to other aspects of school life that might operate positively or negatively, (although not all of them could be influenced by senior managers, since they might depend simply on friendships with other teachers). Involvement in extra-curricular drama was a key source of interest and enjoyment for one teacher; while another felt that they would persist with the job provided that '*they don't let bureaucracy get in the way of teaching and learning'* (Interview 8).

6.4.2 Findings from induction tutors' focus group and questionnaires

6.4.2.1 Extent of difference between support in NQT and 2nd year of teaching

Responses from the induction tutors asked about their provision for teachers in the first and second year of their careers revealed a wide **disparity of practice** ranging from schools that have recognised a need to provide further tailored support for the second year of teaching, and those that acknowledge that in the second year, the teachers are effectively '*dumped*' (Tutor 4). Four tutors reflected that there was effectively no specific provision for the second year (although, of course, the range of provision made for all staff obviously encompassed them.) At the other extreme, are schools that run a formal NQT+1 programme of their own or that ask teachers to engage with established programmes. The approaches of such programmes vary considerably with some offering

sessions based on '*Teach like a Champion'* (Doug Lemov, 2010), others offering the Improving Teacher Programme (developed by OLEVI), which focuses on the leadership of learning, and others encouraging teachers to engage in specific small-scale enquiries into issues of concern to them in their practice. While some of the schools allocate specific support time to second year teachers each week, most suggest that their second year programme is '*less all encompassing*' (Tutor 2) than that provided for NQTs and that it is much more tailored to the individual's needs. In occasional cases, even where formal support is not routinely offered in the second year, arrangements may be made to continue provision for a teacher who is still struggling.

While some schools had already mapped out a programme of professional development opportunities clearly related to various stages of career progression, others were just beginning to pay serious attention to the particular needs of early career teachers. One induction tutor reported on the fact that they now had an early practitioner learning team that was starting to look at the particular needs of staff with less than five years' experience – which was also drawing attention to the fact that some relatively new teachers were very quickly in positions of responsibility and that such promotions might actually deprive them of the further support they might otherwise receive.

6.4.2.2 Induction tutors' reports on strategies <u>already</u> employed that impact positively on retention

All of the induction tutors could cite specific policies and characteristics of their school culture that they thought contributed to the retention of early career teachers. The four themes that emerged in response to this question were the importance of a **supportive or collaborative culture**; ensuring that teachers **felt valued** (even if they could not be financially rewarded); **scope for professional learning** (which could be provided in a variety of ways) and effective **routes to promotion**.

Collaboration and collegiality were seen as fundamental to the creation of a supportive context and induction tutors recognised the importance of subject departments in this respect. Well-maintained, online collections of lesson plans and resources linked to clearly presented schemes of work were identified as making a profound difference to the experience of new teachers. Effective departments promoted both the sharing of existing resources and collaborative planning.

Reassuring new teachers that they were valued was seen as depending both on an effective induction period – in which they were not left to work things out for themselves but had systems and procedures carefully explained to them – and on appreciation for what the teachers brought with them. As one tutor noted, '*many of our NQTs have come from a year of high-level thinking, so cashing in on their ideas is the way they can bring new thinking to us from the university'* (Tutor 2). While the prospect of rewarding effective second teachers with a promoted post that carried a TLR was seen as ideal, tutors also stressed the value of entrusting such teachers with specific projects even if it was not possible to attach a financial reward to them.

Scope for professional learning could be provided in quite simple ways, such as encouraging new teachers to observe other teachers more regularly – focusing not necessarily on the '*star'* teachers but on those whose practice might seem more accessible. Giving early career teachers the chance to become a mentor was seen as valuable not only in sustaining their engagement with the university and thus their connection to new ideas, but also because of the way in which mentoring itself fostered the creation of a collaborative environment. Engagement with the university –

supporting teachers' interest in their continued learning could also be achieved by providing support for their engagement with the Masters in Learning and Teaching.

By mapping their professional development opportunities to a model of career programme, schools also felt that they were encouraging teachers to see the value of what was being offered to them and to feel that the school was investing in their future.

6.4.2.3 Induction tutors' ideas about how to <u>improve</u> retention

The suggestions that tutors made about possible strategies for improving retention could be grouped in three broad areas: addressing the **financial difficulties** that teachers faced in finding accommodation; finding other ways to make them **feel valued**; and giving them additional time where possible by reducing certain sorts of demands.

In terms of funding, one tutor was hoping that changes in government financing of schools to ensure fairer distribution across the country might make it possible to offer more support to teachers moving into the area. Another proposed providing NQTs with reduced-price accommodation for the first year (of, say £400 per month) in premises shared with other NQTs in order to provide additional support. The final proposal (related only to attracting rather than retaining new staff) was that schools should offer them relocation expenses.

The tutors recognised, however, that any money that could be offered would not be enough. More should be done to emphasise both the moral purpose inherent in teaching – and the fun to be found in the role. Positive commitment, it was suggested, could also be generated by promoting pride in teachers' subject knowledge and their expertise in subject-specific pedagogy, which was connected to many teachers' core identity. In this respect one of the induction tutors cited evidence from Philippa Cordingley's research syntheses, and from strategies reported by Pearson that drew on experience in Singapore. Again, the professional tutors stressed the importance of a collaborative culture, citing evidence put forward by Mary Bousted of ATL. In this respect the tutor also highlighted the importance of teacher agency: encouraging greater discussion of their practice and more autonomy in professional decision about appropriate pedagogy. As a mark of trust and inclusion, early career teachers should be encouraged rather than excluded from taking examination classes. While some departments might assume that it would be helpful to restrict NQTs' timetables to just two key stages, the induction tutor regarded such a decision as '*crazy thinking*' (Tutor 3) because of the lack of trust it seemed to convey.

Finally the tutors suggested investing funds wherever possible in teachers rather than in other kinds of staff, ideally so that all of them could have enough time for reflection, which was seen as a fundamental duty . A particular priority in relation to NQTs was that the distribution of classes should be seen to be '*fair*', so that they were not given a disproportional number of low sets or a greater number of different classes than a more experienced colleague. Nor should they have to move between classrooms while more experienced teachers retained their own rooms. One induction tutor was appalled to discover that one teacher in their third year was required to teach 18 different classes, spanning four different subjects and teaching in five different rooms.

6.4.3 Findings from additional questionnaires completed by NQTs (undertaking the OTSA-OUDE Induction programme)

These questionnaires offer a few additional insights into the most challenging aspects of the NQT year, as it was happening. The issues most frequently mentioned were those that have already been extensively discussed that relate to the nature of the workload that they faced: **the extent of that workload** – because of their increased timetable which required more time to be spent on planning and on the additional administrative tasks associated with it – and the associated challenges of simply managing their time and struggling to achieve any kind of work-life balance. Specific reference was also made to the demands of the new GCSE curriculum; the number of after-school meetings that they had to attend, the pressures of involvement in after school clubs; and time lost when they were required to cover lessons.

A third of the NQTs referred to issues of **student behaviour**: focusing specifically on concerns with specific students or with low set groups.

The other element of particular concern to several NQTs, however, was the **generation, recording and use of assessment data**. Reference was made to specifically to marking and to the process of predicting grades; to the challenges of data management and the sheer amount of data required across all years groups.

Two specific issues were mentioned as matters of concern by just one student each. The first related to pastoral responsibilities as an additional feature of their workload. While they found the pastoral work expected of them in relation to liaison with parents helpful, it consumed considerable *'personal time and energy'* (NQT 5), The other was a lack of support in school for specific kinds of professional learning since it seemed that they could not attend courses that would require any cover in school and that there was no support from their school for them to undertake the OUDE Master's in Learning and Teaching.