

# Recruitment and Retention of Newly Qualified Teachers in Oxfordshire Schools

## Findings related to primary schools

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



Katharine Burn, Mary Wild,  
Emma Klose, Tracey Martin-Millward

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# Chapter 1: Summary of findings related to primary schools

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## 1.1 What attracts primary NQTs to work in Oxfordshire Schools?

### Local connections

Our data suggest that many of those choosing to take primary phase jobs in Oxfordshire often do so because they have a local or family-based connection here already. In many cases this existing connection includes the fact that they trained locally. In some cases the decision to train within the county or nearby was taken because they were already based here; in others they had moved to the area to train but then chose to stay because of the local knowledge and connections they had thereby established. In both cases, the evidence suggests that connections between local providers at the recruitment stage should be maximised.

It is worth noting that 'local' does not mean just Oxfordshire; the evidence suggests that the county borders are relatively porous in all directions. It is therefore also important in maximising recruitment to build links and advertise with other providers cross the region and to be aware of what other authorities or school partnerships in surrounding counties may be offering to attract teachers.

A sense of loyalty to particular schools recurred in interviews. Cultivating such loyalties early on e.g. during training as well as beyond might therefore support recruitment. Reinforcing continuities from training through to successful recruitment is worthy of further emphasis but this could conflict with Ofsted requirements for the training to be diverse in terms of types of school, age phase, etc.

### Economic factors

There is some evidence in relation to recruitment that what counts as 'local' is influenced not just by location, but by accessibility. Looking at factors such as typical commuting times and routes to the school and providing information about this might be helpful in recruitment, as might the provision of financial support with the costs of commuting.

Respondents did not directly mention economic factors (operating as a *disincentive*) as much as might have been anticipated. Nevertheless there was an emphasis in some interviews on the teachers' need to make rapid progression in their careers, in order that they could meet the high living costs they faced. It may therefore be important, particularly in recruiting those already committed to the local area to emphasise promotion prospects and the scope for professional development linked to career progression.

## 1.2 What obstacles are there to the effective recruitment of NQTs in Oxfordshire?

### **Size, locality and the demography of schools**

Some factors such as size and location of school could operate both positively and negatively. There was evidence that many primary teachers valued small, community-oriented schools where they had a more obvious presence and the ties of loyalty could be strong. However, for some respondents small schools were seen as being too isolated, in both personal and professional terms. They were thought to lack social opportunities and to provide insufficient scope to take on new career challenges or to develop new aspects of professional practice.

Although the data show that schools with higher than average numbers on roll and/or higher proportions of students eligible for FSM were more likely to have more vacancies and a high turnover of staff, there was not an inevitable linear link here. Some large schools with high proportions of FSM students were more likely than some smaller schools to hold on to staff. Responses from the interviews show that applicants have differing aspirations and operate with different imperatives in terms of the type of school they seek. Since it is in the interest of schools not only to attract but to retain staff in the longer term, it would seem sensible to highlight the particular positive experiences and opportunities that each school can offer, making a best fit between schools and applicants more likely.

A prevailing negative perception of a local area (of significant deprivation) was noted in the study as having a detrimental impact on recruitment. While it can be difficult to counter an existing and sometimes entrenched narrative of this sort, re-couching the elements of the story in terms of the opportunities for professional learning and the scope for leadership development that it presents could be beneficial at recruitment. In contrast, there was some indication that messages that over-emphasised the provision of support in such an environment could be construed as negative messages about the challenges facing a school and therefore proved counterproductive at the recruitment stage.

### **Economic factors**

As noted, there was *less* evidence than expected of housing costs or the cost of living being directly cited as a negative factor. Although a few references were made to such factors in accounting for colleagues who had left, it seems likely that our data sources may have masked the full extent of its influence (since respondents to the survey were more likely to recall NQTs who had stayed than those who had left). The indirect influence of housing costs as a factor was essentially evident in the fact that most of those interviewed (all of them teachers who had remained in their original post) had strong connections with the area – family links that could provide perhaps a home base or forms of support that helped to offset some of the expense.

## Professional and personal development

Teachers' responses generally gave a strong message that schools need to be clear at the recruitment stage about the specific opportunities for development that would be available to them. While teachers also wanted to be confident that they would receive support, there were some intriguing signs that simply being transparent about offering support in challenging circumstances was less effective than emphasising the development opportunities inherent in those kinds of context.

The pressures facing teachers, including those connected to policy changes and to inspection requirements, were noted by some respondents. While little can be done to remove these external forces, perhaps more could be done *before* trainees seek employment – i.e. during their training – and continuing into the early stages of their careers, to reinforce teachers' ability to withstand these pressures and to offer them advice on coping strategies. In keeping with the previous point regarding unintentional messages, keeping this guidance realistic but also positive is a key challenge.

## 1.3 Why do many early career teachers in Oxfordshire primary schools leave the schools to which they were recruited as NQTs?

### Locality and economic factors

Overall, just under a third of the primary NQTs (31% or 27 teachers) who were reported upon in the survey (87 teachers in total) had left the school that had recruited them, which means that two-thirds of them (69% or 60 teachers) had stayed. Over 60% of the 27 teachers who had left after their first year (17 teachers) went to another school; ten of which were outside of the county, while seven who went to other Oxfordshire schools. Whether moving within or beyond the county, the most commonly cited explanation for a move was '*family reasons*'. Although the cost of living in Oxfordshire was only cited as a main factor in just two cases, it is possible that moving to be nearer family may mask an underlying economic rationale, especially if the family's location is in a less expensive region. The importance of family as a reason for moving further underlines the significance of existing personal ties in determining the career choices of many teachers and suggests that finding ways to build on an underlying commitment to the region where it already exists may yield benefits in terms of retention.

### The demands of teaching

The data show that the greatest attrition point came at the end of the first year (which is when 44% of those reported as leaving their school had departed), although this was predominantly to move to another school or area. Eight teachers chose to leave the profession altogether. While this is not a large proportion overall, there was some indication that unhappiness with the job and its demands was emphasized as a key factor in their decision. Interestingly, in the teacher interviews, which were of course with those who had stayed in the profession, the majority (9 out of 12) had

considered leaving teaching at some point but had persevered. This emphasises the need to try to reinforce teachers' resilience during their training and early career stages.

There was a sense that some new teachers had felt unprepared for the challenges they would face as NQTS. They tended to couch this in terms of the sheer demands of the job rather than specific areas of knowledge or expertise that had been covered in their training. The more general sense of juggling too many competing demands, managing workload and responding to external pressures such as policy changes and Ofsted were noted by many of those interviewed as factors that had weighed them down as new teachers. For many of the respondents there was a sense of feeling unprepared for the multi-faceted nature of the demands that they faced. It may therefore be helpful to acknowledge the impact of these demands and, if possible, provide more ring-fenced non-contact time for teachers in the very early stages of their careers.

There is an argument that teacher training should not only reinforce the personal and professional resilience of those trying to teach but should equally seek to ensure that those trainees for whom a decision *not* to enter the profession is more suitable are actively counselled into other career directions. However, this has concomitant implications for the selection of teacher training candidates in the first instance and the accountability that is expected of providers in regard to retention and course completion rates for trainees.

### **Limited induction support**

While most of those interviewed felt they had received good internal support from their school, in a number of instances teachers reported that the support that they had expected had not materialised. This concern was particularly acute in relation to dedicated mentoring. However, there was also some evidence that teachers would have welcomed more scope to develop those aspects of their practice that gave them a particular sense of professionalism and expertise, in relation to their subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy.

### **Specific challenges**

Specific pedagogic challenges cited in the first years of teaching included the need for some continued support around behaviour management and SEN. However this tended to be mentioned when teachers had been allocated to classes where there was a critical mass of challenges in relation to behaviour or significant numbers of children with designated needs, rather than reflecting more general uncertainty or concerns associated with these issues.

### **Personal and professional relationships**

There was also some evidence in the interviews to suggest that interpersonal dynamics and relationships can be crucial in determining whether teacher chose to leave their schools. Arguably the flip-side of close professional communities in primary schools, particularly smaller ones, is that interpersonal tensions might be exacerbated. Making some form of *external* mentoring available might be helpful in counteracting this. It might also provide a forum in which staff could consider wider sector issues and practices, since some respondents cited a desire for further challenges and

experiences beyond the confines of their own school as a factor prompting teachers to leave their existing posts.

### **Lack of support and appreciation in the second year**

Although the steepest fall off in terms of leaving the profession was at the end Year 1, there was also some evidence that Year 2 was significant, particularly in terms of professional development opportunities. Many of the teachers interviewed highlighted the significance that they placed on feeling that they were developing as a professional and on their interest in looking for opportunities for promotion. It should be noted, however, that for some the desire for promotion was strongly allied to an economic imperative. Nonetheless, there was a sense from those interviewed that career opportunities were seen as a marker of being valued and were actively sought by the respondents. This may have implications for the type and longevity of early career development and support that is offered to recently qualified teachers as to NQTs. Rather than discrete training courses often aimed at whole schools a focus on developmental trajectories for individuals might be worth considering.

### **Additional responsibilities with inadequate support**

However, a precautionary note should also be sounded about the form of additional professional responsibility offered to early career teachers. From the survey data it would seem that many schools were alert to the need to provide development opportunities; 59 of the 87 teachers mentioned had secured additional responsibilities within the first few years of qualifying. For some teachers these were highly valued, although it was notable that the degree of responsibility attached to the role that they had been allocated was highly variable. Many opportunities were leadership of specific, often time-bounded, projects but, some individuals were given leadership responsibility for whole phases or subject areas. It was not clear to what extent the assumption of these roles had been supported by additional training but there was some evidence from the interview respondents that early additional responsibility of this sort could be a double-edged sword, adding to the pressures of an already challenging workload.

## **1.4 Why do some primary teachers recruited as NQTs to Oxfordshire schools choose to continue working in the school and what might induce others to stay?**

### **Locality and community**

In the interviews with teachers still in the profession the significance of loyalty to particular school communities was again reflected in their responses as to why they remained committed to teaching. This resonates with the earlier finding regarding the attractions of working in particular regions and schools where they already had existing associations. Taken together, these factors suggest that finding ways to cement such ties and relationships in the running of schools and in the approaches that are adopted to professional development could be significant factors in the retention of staff. (This echoes some of the findings related to special schools where the formation of a clear and

strong sense of identity linked to the core purpose and effectiveness of the school was found to be highly important in retaining staff.)

### **Professional and personal development opportunities**

The need for continued support and space for professional development featured heavily in the accounts of the teachers interviewed, many of whom regretted the loss of the kind of on-going support they had experienced as a trainee. Providing such additional support would have cost implications for schools but other aspects could be addressed by a greater degree of communication at the start of the school year or even earlier. A number of the teachers interviewed, for example, referred to the need to be better prepared in a general sense for the combined range of demands that they would face and recommended providing more specific information about school policies and internal systems.

Similarly the value of low-cost but informal support mechanisms was highlighted, including opportunities simply to drop in on colleagues elsewhere in the school and social activities that helped new teachers to feel integrated and valued.

### **Sustained support beyond the first year**

One factor that seemed to be significant for teachers in their second or subsequent years of teaching was the extent to which support was *maintained*. Being able to continue to access support and guidance about how their career was developing was important to all those interviewed and was seen as integral to their decision to remain (both in the profession and in their particular school). The teachers who had stayed in teaching, despite facing early challenges that had sometimes prompted them to contemplate leaving, reported that they had valued the opportunities they were given to develop as well as the ways in which they had been supported in talking through their particular needs with senior colleagues in school, and seen their requests and interests acted upon.

### **Personal commitment: a sense of worth, enjoyment and agency**

Among all those interviewed an underlying factor in their decisions to stay was their own fierce commitment to teaching; to doing a job that they valued and for which they felt valued. It is easy to focus on the very obvious challenges and demands of the job, but finding ways to continue to value teachers for what they do and giving them the opportunities to shape their careers in their own interests as well as the children for whom they work are positives force that we may sometimes underestimate.

# Chapter 4: The design of the research

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## 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 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.

## 4.6 Full details of the data collected for the primary survey

### 4.6.1 Survey responses from primary schools [responses from 38 schools related to 87 NQTs]

Thirty-eight primary schools (including one MAT, representing three primary schools as a single response) provided data about recent recruitment of NQTs, with some of them also reporting on the career trajectories of up to three individual teachers who had been recruited to their school during the course of the past three years.

Specific data was provided for 87 individual teachers appointed across three primary phases (Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2). Figure 1 shows how the different phases were represented, while Figure 2 shows the representation of schools across all districts within the county. One-third of responses (32%) were from schools in South Oxfordshire. As shown in Figure 3, nine schools were community schools and 18 had a faith affiliation. Eleven schools were academies (including one MAT, and two academy faith schools). Seventeen out of the 38 schools were designated as rural.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-primary-schools-designation>

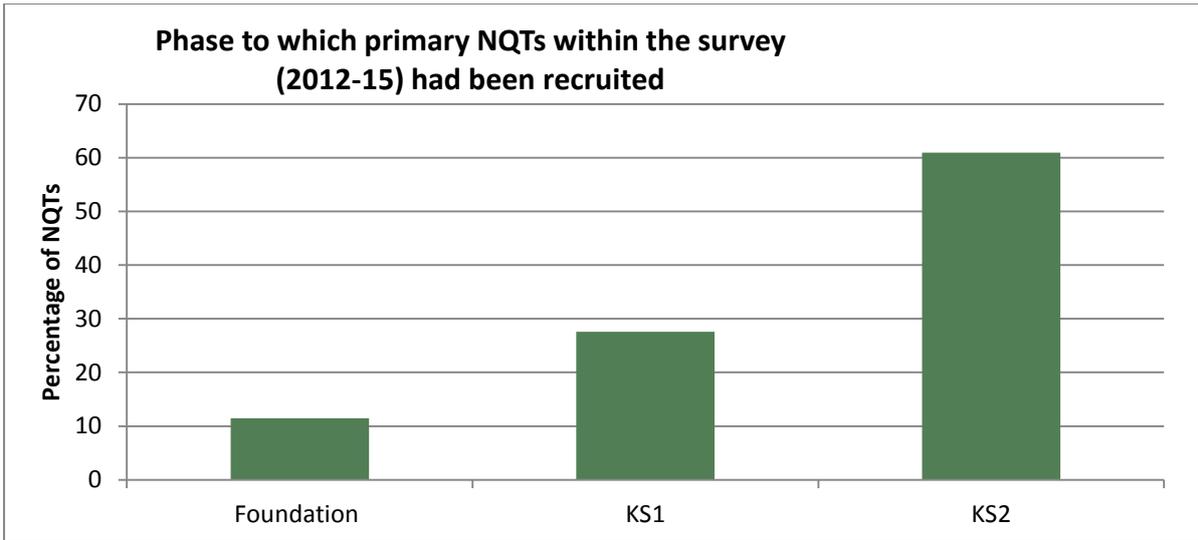


Figure 1: Percentage of NQTs (2012-15) included within the primary survey recruited to each phase

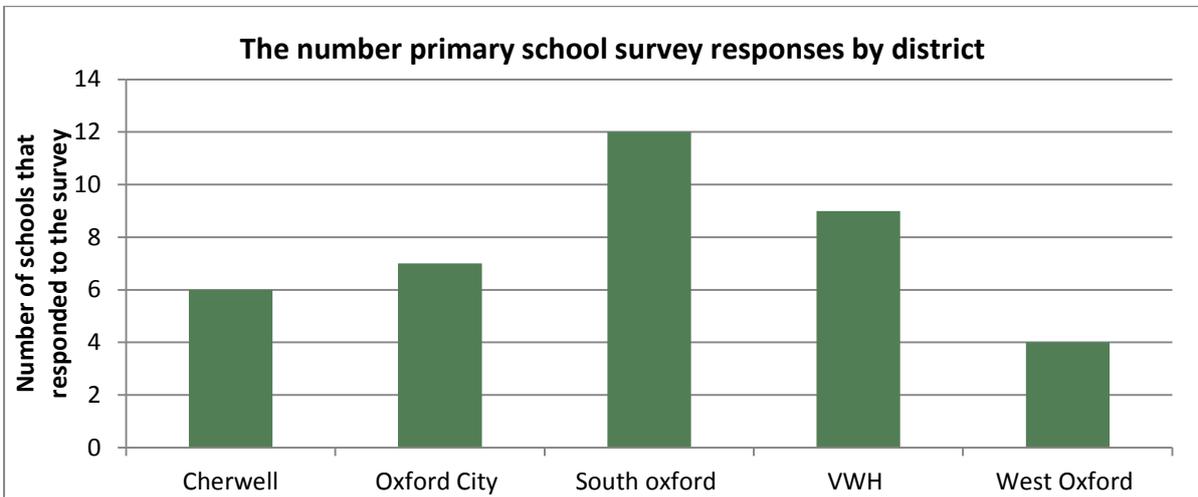


Figure 2: The number of schools within each district that responded to the survey

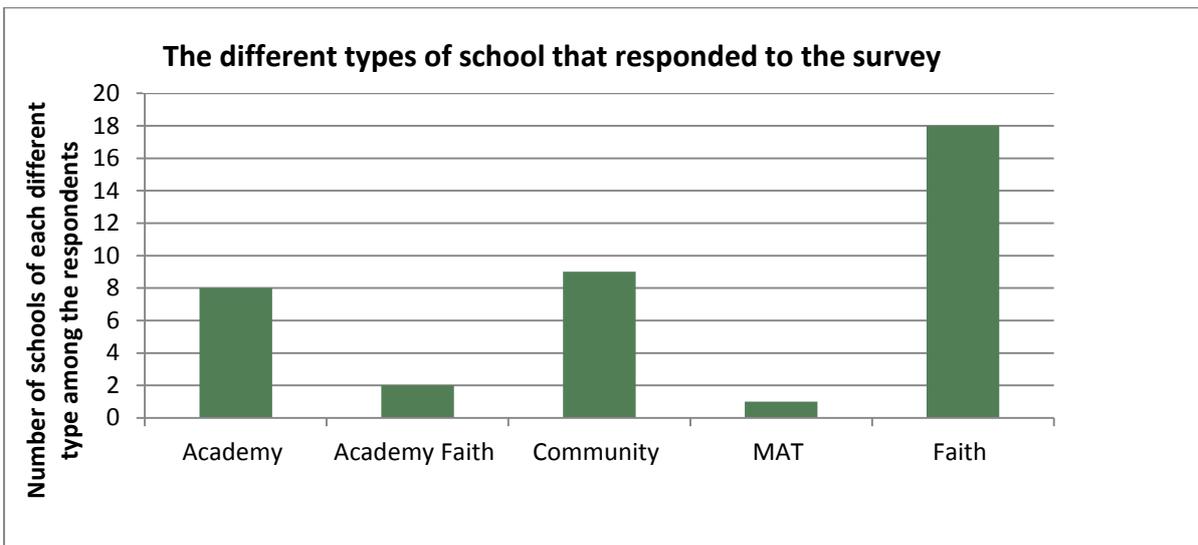


Figure 3: The nature of the schools that responded to the survey

### **4.6.3 Telephone interviews with primary teachers recruited as NQTs who had remained in post for more than three years [15 interviewees]**

Fifteen primary school teachers, who were originally recruited at ten schools as NQTs, were interviewed by telephone. (All districts were included in the sample except for the Vale of the White Horse). The interviews varied in length from 9 - 36 minutes. Many of those interviewed had been nominated by the teachers completing the school survey or through approaching head teachers (directly to ensure all districts had been covered). Some others had been recruited via recommendations by staff at OUDE. Six of the schools represented were faith schools. Five schools were below national average size in terms of the number of students on roll; five were above. All but one school had lower than the national average %FSM (26.3%). Interviewees had joined their schools between 2001 and 2013.

Teachers had a range of current teaching responsibilities: three were Reception teachers, five taught in KS1, five in KS2, and one worked across KS1 and 2 (providing planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) cover two days per week). One of the interviewees had a non-teaching role in school (SENCO).

### **4.6.4 Individual interviews with teachers responsible for NQT induction, supplemented by individual written answers to the same questions**

The focus group interview was unable to proceed as planned. Instead individual interviews were conducted by telephone with three tutors responsible for NQT induction (one of whom was employed by a MAT specifically to work across the three primary schools in the chain), supplemented by responses from three paper questionnaires in the same format as the focus group discussion. These had been obtained from delegates at the county primary HT conference.

Responses were received from teachers in six different primary schools across four districts (excluding West Oxfordshire) 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.

### **4.6.4 Telephone interviews with current NQTs [2 interviewees]**

To flesh out our understanding of the challenges experienced by NQTs and their perceptions of different kinds of induction support, 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.

# Chapter 5: Detailed findings for primary schools

## 5.1 What attracts primary NQTs to work in Oxfordshire Schools?

### 5.1.1 Findings from the 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 76 teachers originally recruited as NQTs. As Figure 5 shows, of these 76 teachers, 57 (75% of the total) 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 eight (a further 11%) had trained in directly neighbouring counties, such as Berkshire and Warwickshire, while two more trained in or near London. Two were recruited from the East of the country and two from the North. One teacher trained in Wales and another was an overseas trained teacher. 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.

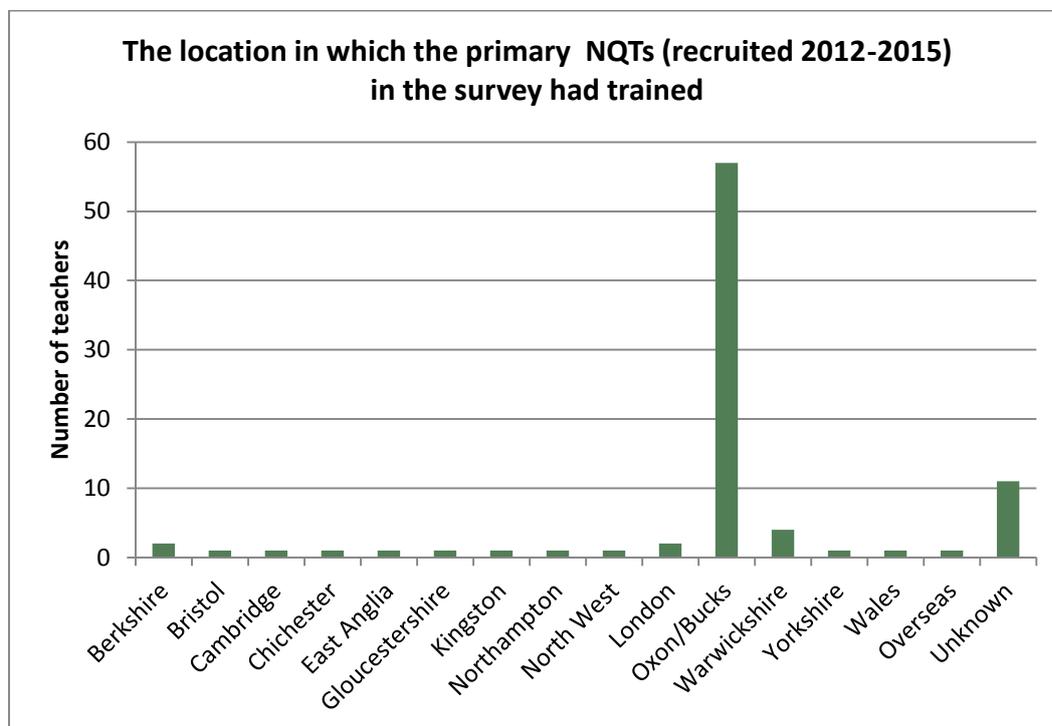


Figure 5: The locations (where known) in which the secondary teachers recruited as NQTs had trained

Figure 6 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 full impact cannot yet be clearly seen.

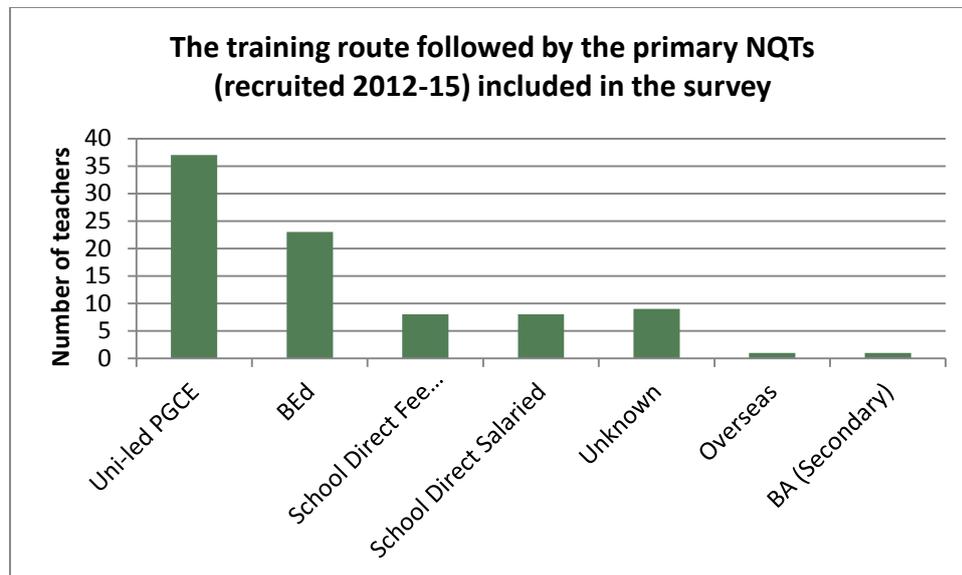


Figure 6: The training route followed by the primary NQTs included in the survey

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

Of the 15 teachers interviewed, nearly three-quarters (73%) had trained **locally**, with eight from Oxford Brookes University (OBU), and three from Reading. Others had trained at Gloucestershire, Kingston, Cheltenham and Hertfordshire. Of these four, one was already living in Oxfordshire (completing a flexible post-graduate certificate of education (PGCE)), one relocated to Oxfordshire to be with their spouse, one had previously completed undergraduate study in Oxford (so was returning), and the fourth had conducted a search over the four counties neighbouring where they lived. Two-thirds of teachers (10/15) had followed a PGCE route to qualification, three studied a three-year BA/BEd programme, and two had qualified through the graduate teacher programme (GTP); one of these was salaried.

For those who had trained locally, reasons for remaining in Oxfordshire included the fact that they already lived in the county (or close to county borders); *'It wasn't that I was drawn to Oxford, I was already here and had no plans to leave at that point'* (interview 10), or that they had family within the area (either parents or their own children, whom they did not wish to relocate). In one case, the teacher had initially worked as a teaching assistant (TA) in the school, and a training route was offered to them through the GTP. Four teachers lived close to the county borders and had therefore applied for jobs in neighbouring areas. The position in Oxfordshire appears to have been the first one offered; *'I just lived here, I didn't specifically want to work in Oxfordshire, I was looking in Oxfordshire because I'd lived here before, and I was looking in London, and I found a job here first'* (Interview 12). Two teachers were familiar with the school in which they ended up, or with schools

within the vicinity: *'I had been on placement, actually in two of the schools, in the partnership that the current school I work in is, so that was an appealing point to me'* (Interview 13).

None of the teachers interviewed had any serious reservations about taking up a post in the county, and only two mentioned the cost of living. One of these indicated that the financial burden decreased with qualification as a teacher, and through finding friends with whom to share the costs of rent.

### 5.1.3 Findings from interviews with current NQTs

The importance of existing **local connections** was also confirmed by the interviews conducted with two current NQTs even though both of them had followed a three year BEd / BA primary training programme. One had studied at OBU and had lived in the county for several years; the other had studied at Plymouth and returned to work in Oxfordshire where they had family. Neither expressed reservations about working in the county.

## 5.2 What obstacles are there to the effective recruitment of NQTs in Oxfordshire?

### 5.2.1 Findings from survey data about the trajectories of recent NQTs

Eight schools responded with details on 14 unfilled vacancies. (Schools were invited to skip this question if they had no vacancies lasting three months or more). As Figure 7 shows, five schools indicated they had one vacancy (three at KS2, one at KS1 and one in the Foundation stage), with three schools having three vacancies each (six at KS2 and three at KS1). All three of these schools had a greater than the national average (263) number of pupils on roll; however two were considerably larger with 400+ pupils. Two of the three schools had higher than the national average percentage of children taking free school meals (26.3%)<sup>2</sup>, however the third had a considerably lower proportion of pupils eligible for FSM. Few firm conclusions can be drawn, however, about the number of vacancies and size of school or %FSM. Cover provision for short vacancies (lasting three to four months) was delivered in equal measure by stable consistent and changing forms of provision, with the longer term vacancies (five-six months and six months or more) utilising changing forms of provision more often than having stable cover.

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<sup>2</sup> Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number *except* for %FSM (national average and individual schools)

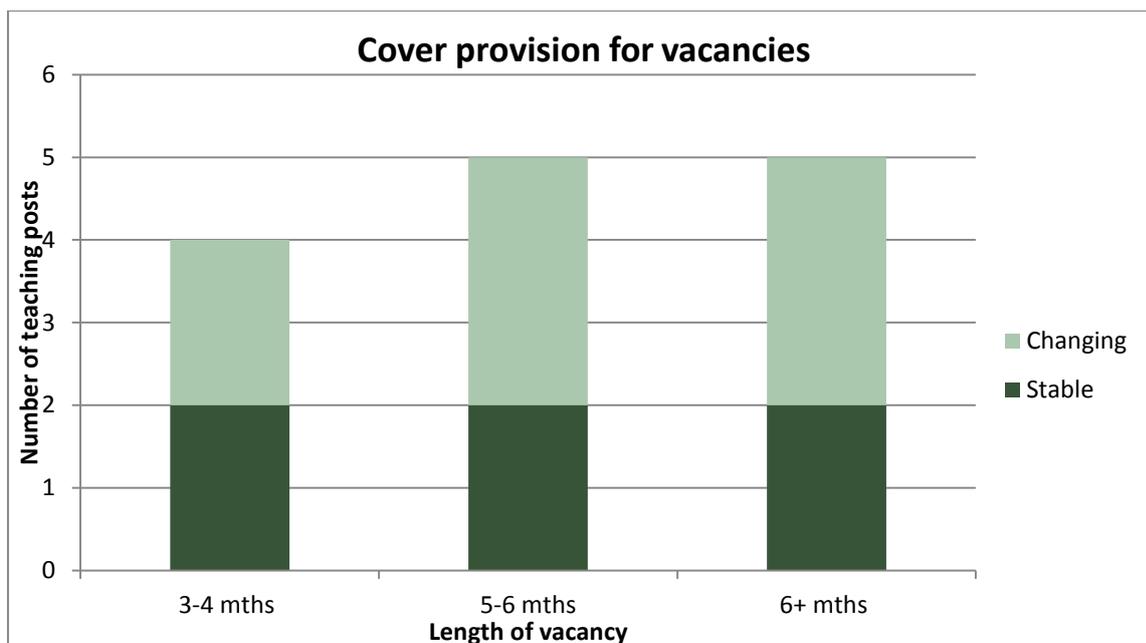


Figure 7: Cover provision for primary vacancies lasting three months or more

As Figure 8 shows, although there is a **positive correlation between %FSM and the total number of NQTs** appointed in the period 2012-2015, a high proportion of FSM does not necessarily create difficulties with recruitment. For example, of those schools appointing seven NQTs in that period, four were below the national average for % FSM, and other reasons may prevail such as that the school with a very low %FSM had undergone recent significant expansion, which might explain the need for additional teachers; additionally, the school with over 60% FSM was a large primary school (over 500 pupils). One school appointed eight NQTs in the period 2012-2015, but had a relatively low % FSM (11.9).

Of the schools with the highest average number of NQTs appointed each year over the four year period, (3), two of these had well above the national average %FSM of 26.3; one had close to the national average, and one was well below. Three schools appointed 0.25 NQTs per year; all of these had a %FSM below 10.0. Those appointing an average of 0.5 NQTs per year 2012-2015 (ten schools) had a %FSM of below 10.0 (except for 2; 12.1 and 14).

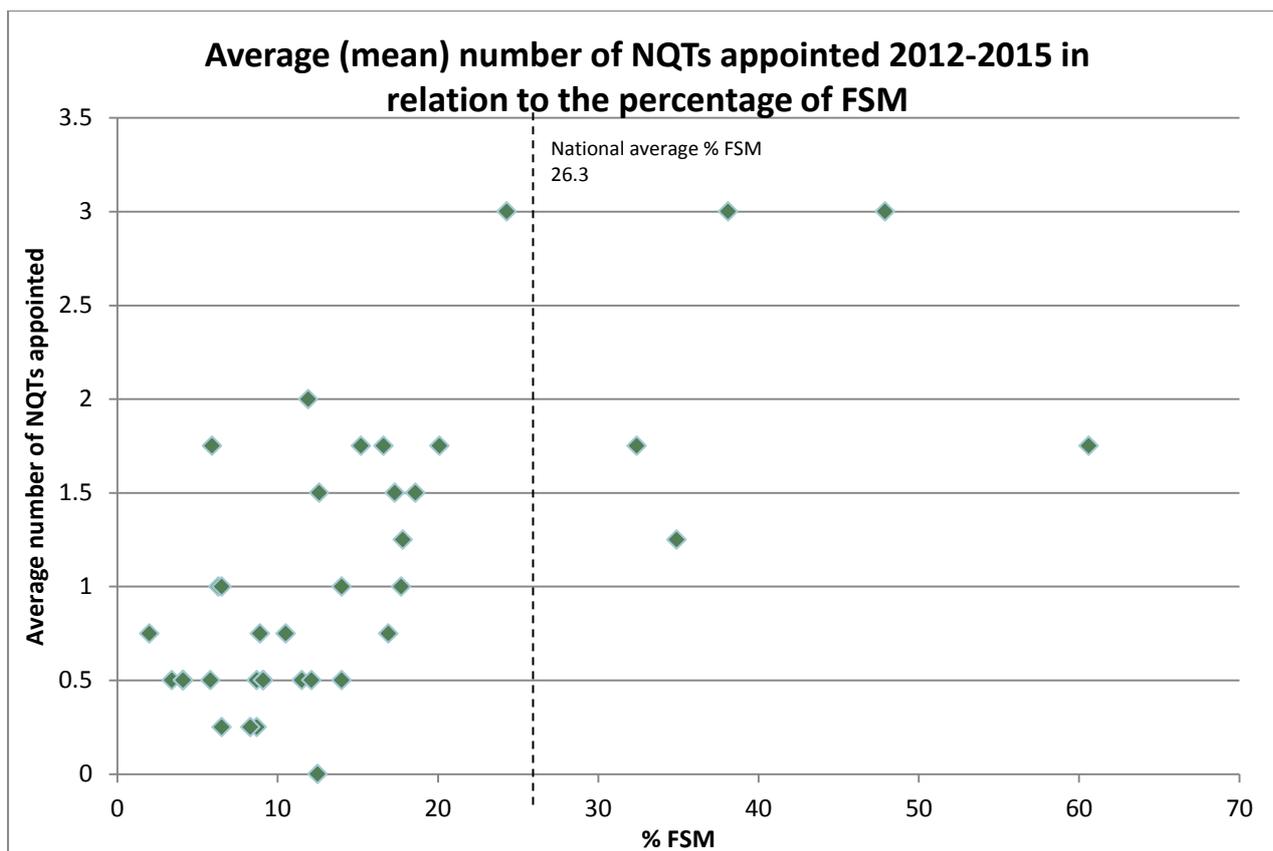
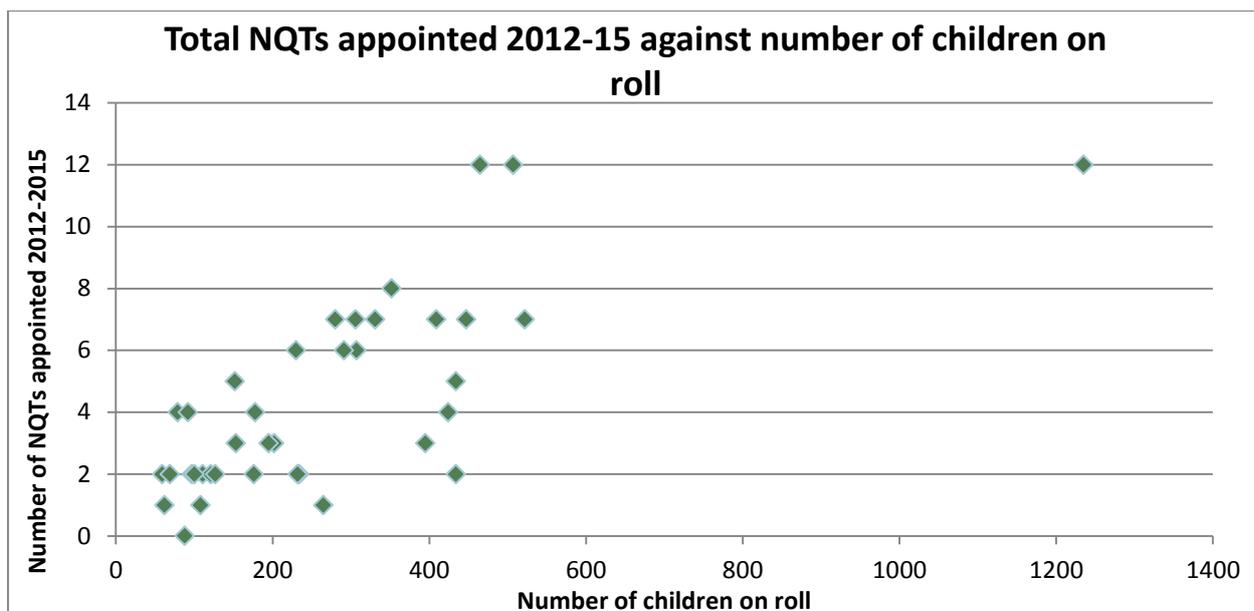


Figure 8: The average (mean) number of NQTs appointed annually in each school over the period 2012-15 in relation to the proportion of FSM students (% FSM)

As Figure 9 shows, there is an **overall positive correlation between size of school and the number of NQTs appointed 2012-2105**, but this is not the complete picture. For example, two schools with less than 100 pupils on roll appointed four NQTs over this period.<sup>3</sup> One of these schools had a change of head teacher (HT) within this time, which might have precipitated a change in staffing; the other had replaced three out of four teachers in 2012 (only two of these were NQTs).<sup>4</sup> One school appointed no NQTs over this period, being a small school with less than 100 pupils on roll. This might indicate a very stable staffing structure, or an unwillingness to appoint NQTs. Additionally, one large school (400+ pupils on roll) appointed only two NQTs within the last three years. Three larger than average primary schools (500+ and 400+ pupils, and one multi-academy trust covering three primary schools) each appointed 12 NQTs over the period 2012-2015. One of these schools began expansion in 2011 which has subsequently continued; this might explain the additional demand for teachers.

<sup>3</sup> Information from cross-referencing with interview data

<sup>4</sup> From cross-referencing with interview data. There had been a change of HT during this period (information from OFSTED reports) but it is unclear when this occurred, and therefore it cannot be related to the appointment of new staff.



(Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) covers 3 schools with 1235 pupils)

Figure 9: NQTs appointed against size of school (number of pupils on roll)

### 5.2.2 Findings from induction tutors' focus group and questionnaires

One tutor mentioned difficulties with recruitment in particular, suggesting that a **prevailing negative perception of the local area** (one of significant deprivation) had a detrimental impact. This had led to the creation of a post specifically to work with NQTs and early career teachers, to try and address this issue. However, discussion of the **communication strategies** used to attract teachers in difficult circumstances which prompted consideration of different schools' public communication about development opportunities for early career teachers revealed important variations in emphasis, which might influence NQTs' decisions. For example, one policy document outlined support at different stages of a teacher's career (from NQT to senior leader); the other specifically highlighted the support and training offered to NQTs as a separate element. One was candid about the considerable challenges facing children in the area, while also noting the significant demand of the first year of a teaching career. The extensive support programme offered in response to these challenges was then outlined, but it may be important to consider whether this frank appraisal of the issues might be off-putting for some potential applicants. In contrast, the presentation of the support offered for each stage of a teacher's career implied a progression route, which might be more appealing to some candidates.

Another induction tutor highlighted the significant amount of pressure experienced by young teachers, who were working excessive hours due to **government-induced changes**. This in her opinion was a *'key problem in keeping anybody in the profession at the moment'* (Induction Tutor, Interview 2). One tutor suggested that more NQTs are younger, and have flexibility in their lives, enabling them to move if life changes occur, or new roles crop up. It was also suggested that a village location might be less appealing to younger members of staff to work as there is little going on outside of work.

## 5.3 Why do many early career teachers in Oxfordshire primary schools leave the schools to which they were recruited as NQTs?

### 5.3.1 Findings from survey data about the trajectories of recent NQTs

Respondents to the online survey were asked to provide information for up to three NQTs appointed to the school within the last three years. Details on 87 NQTs from 38 schools were given, covering Foundation Stage (eight teachers), KS1 (26 teachers) and KS2 (53 teachers). Of those 87 personnel, 69% (60 teachers) had remained in school, with 31% (27) having left. Of those 27 who had left, 12 (44%) left within the first year, 7 (26 %) left after two years, and eight (30%) left after three years. Although the sample size is very small, the number of NQTs leaving within the first year is much higher than those leaving in the subsequent two years. This data alone cannot provide clear messages about the reasons for teachers' departure from their first school role.

The proportions of leavers overall largely reflected the numbers of teachers in each phase being recruited: two foundation stage (FS) specialists (7%), 10 KS1 teachers (37%) and 15 KS2 (56%) teachers.

As Figure 10 shows, over 60% of those leaving (total 17) went to another school; ten of these were outside of the county (compared with seven to Oxfordshire schools). Eight teachers left the profession (representing 30%); one took up supply teaching, and the destination of one other was unknown.

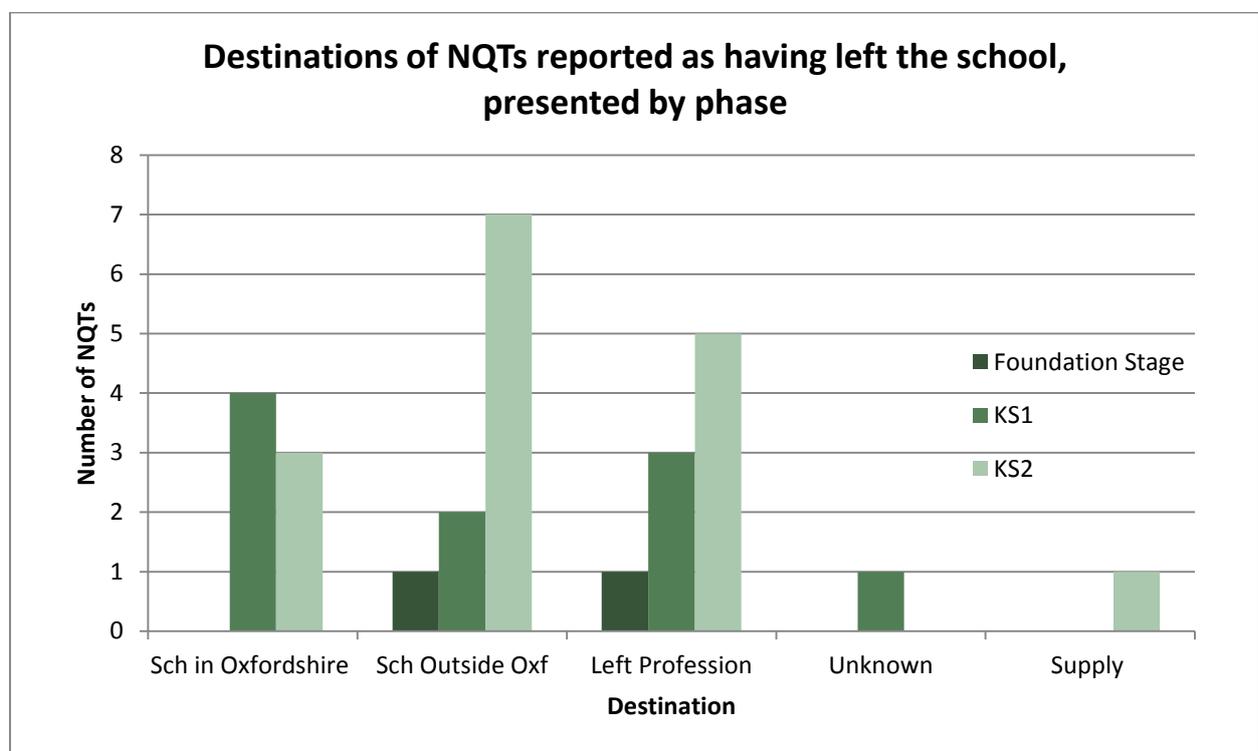


Figure 10: leaver destinations by phase (number of teachers)

Of those leaving the profession (nine), the most cited reason was *'unhappy with the demands / nature of the job'* (four), followed by *'family'* (three). Other reasons for leaving were to train as an

educational psychologist, personal difficulties, to work as an educationalist, not passing the NQT standards, and to work as a supply teacher. Those leaving to take up another post within Oxfordshire (six) most commonly quoted family (two), and a fixed term contract (two) as reasons for leaving, with one seeking experience in a different school / context, and one citing the cost of living in Oxfordshire. Eleven teachers remained in teaching but sought posts outside the county. 'Family' was given in over half these cases (six) as a reason for leaving, with three teachers leaving due to being unhappy with the demands / nature of the job, or the challenge of the school. Two highlighted the cost of living in Oxfordshire, and two wanted experience in a different school. Others mentioned quite specific reasons: an interest in teaching at secondary level (a specialist subject); a promotion; and the school not being able to accommodate the part-time hours that they had requested.

Survey respondents were asked to identify any **additional responsibilities** for the teachers described; 28 of the 87 had no role beyond that of classroom teacher. For the other 59 teachers, a total of 70 additional tasks were outlined, ranging from senior roles (such as Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or early years foundation stage (EYFS) coordinator), to specific projects (such as Forest School leader, management of the school council or leading on 'talk for writing'). Eleven teachers held two responsibilities; four had a core and non-core subject leadership, one teacher had two core subjects to look after, two teachers held senior leadership roles (SENCO or phase responsibilities) in conjunction with other responsibilities; two teachers had responsibility for two non-core subjects, and two were the lead for PHSCE and the school council.

The most often-cited responsibility was that of science coordinator (12), followed by PE coordinator (seven), and music coordinator (six). Fifteen teachers who had held a responsibility additional to their teaching role had left; five of these had left the profession. Only one of these cited being unhappy with the demands of the job (others referred to personal or family reasons or different career opportunities). One teacher holding two additional roles had left, for another school outside of the county. As this sample is very small, no firm conclusions can be drawn about the demands of taking on an additional responsibility early within a teaching career and the rate at which teachers leave, but it is important to be alert to the potential for additional pressure that this creates and to recognised the need for induction support within these additional roles

### 5.3.2 Findings from telephone interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs

#### 5.3.2.1 The nature and extent of the challenges that teachers faced as NQTs (including the extent to which they were prepared for the challenges)

*Extent of challenge:* Although two teachers suggested that the NQT year was not challenging (with one of them claiming that their current – their fourth – was far more so), other interviewees described the scale of challenge they had faced in variable terms but with a clear message that it was indeed **demanding**: the 'most stressful time' of her life' (one), 'incredibly' (one), 'tough' (one), 'very' (two), 'really challenging' (two), 'pretty challenging' (one), 'quite' (two), and 'challenging' (two).

*Nature of the challenge:* There was a broad range of aspects that NQTs found challenging in the first year of their career. Largely, these related to **relationships**, **workload**, and the **specific tasks** required of teachers.

With respect to the children; four cited **behaviour** specifically, from a general comment (two), to particularly difficult classes (two). One mentioned behaviour as part of a general reference to the day-to-day routine of teaching. Two identified the level of (SEN) within their classes as an issue. Three highlighted relationships with other adults as demanding: learning to work with others in the classroom, not getting on with their partner teacher, or relationships with parents.

Two highlighted the **challenge of Ofsted inspections** within the first year (one within the first term, which resulted in a lack of support for the individual, as the following quotation illustrates:

*The setting was a village school with a mixed age class, who had considerable needs; in terms of learning, emotion, social and behaviour. The school received notice (6 week) of an OFSTED inspection, and from then on, everyone concentrated on their own preparation, leaving no support for me, or anyone! I was totally ill-equipped to deal with the level of need and I didn't know how to manage it. The experience was the most stressful of my life.*

One teacher specifically mentioned a lack of support (and training) within the first year, in this case because of other changes in school personnel:

*As a NQT, I didn't get much support, although I knew the school, and how it would be when I began the year. The school was going through a difficult time with a change of headteacher. I lost my mentor, who was replaced by the interim headteacher. With that head not knowing the school so well, and having a lot to do, I probably received the minimum that was offered. Due to the changes, processes were inconsistent and communication was not great.*

Another teacher, working with a class with a high level of need struggled because of the lack of adequate TA support.

Three teachers mentioned the challenge of working in a **small school**, with one noting the difficulties with teaching a mixed-year class group. Another identified the lack of systems (planning, tracking) in place, which resulted in an 'immense' workload in setting these up, and one described being the sole teacher for a year group as a challenge. Two others identified the demand of having one's own class, from the responsibility of this, to taking ownership of the room. Two interviewees mentioned planning and assessment specifically, with another including this as part of the daily practice. One highlighted the difficulties of developing a sense of familiarisation with the curriculum. Two interviewees highlighted time; with one citing the fragmented nature of the PPA time they were offered (as opposed to being given a block of time). One mentioned 'pace', possibly referring to the overall nature of teaching. Workload was noted in general terms by two teachers. One teacher highlighted the challenge of starting part-way through the academic year, when everyone is settled, in learning school systems and processes

Finally, two personal demands were cited: having high but realistic expectations of oneself, and managing one's own dyslexia.

While some teachers clearly faced significant pressures during their first year of their career, these were all teachers who remained in the teaching profession, and at the schools in which they completed their induction year. This demonstrates considerable resilience to overcome challenging circumstances.

### 5.3.2.2 Reports on their colleagues' reasons for leaving

All but one (who had been the last NQT appointed at the school) of the 15 teachers interviewed were aware of other NQTs who had subsequently left their first post. Two teachers suggested that NQTs had left their schools but did not supply any further detail about how many, or for what reasons; in total 23 NQTs were identified as having left. One emphasised that they felt their school had a good level of retention, with people leaving through life changes, promotion / higher paid job, relocation elsewhere, part-time hours, retiring, or doing supply teaching, implying that the support provided by the school or school environment itself were not factors in the decision to leave.

Reasons were offered for 22 of the leavers; the most commonly perceived cause was **relocation**, for example, to be with a partner, to travel abroad, or to have a better work-life balance (with one response of each kind given). One left due to **career progression**, and career opportunities were also cited in a general comment. Two teachers had left to be closer to home (one who was commuting long distance because of house prices in Oxfordshire). Two were thought to have left because of poor staff relationships, one of these being with the teacher in the year group above, who might possibly have provided support in the NQT year; the other due to tensions caused by an early promotion. Two teachers had sought opportunities in larger schools, and two had left the teaching profession (one of these to teach music privately). Other reasons suggested were retirement, family / health issues, and for one NQT, a subsequent change in year group from what they were anticipating, which resulted in them not starting at the school.

### 5.3.2.2 Reports on their own reasons for considering leaving

All but three teachers (12) interviewed had considered leaving the profession at some point, although they had not been pushed to do so thus far. However, when questioned about whether they anticipated leaving within the next two-to-three years, six indicated yes, with four suggesting '*possibly / maybe*'. Five indicated '*no*'.

In terms of general reasons for leaving teaching, two suggested a specific alternative career, or seeking a different challenge, while two highlighted the difficulties of working part-time (being unable to keep a teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) allowance, and not feeling as much part of the team). Three people highlighted **government changes**: highlighting the uncertainty; the way in which the changes impact on teachers' lives; and frustration with the lack of understanding about the profession of those imposing the new regimes. All other comments related to the **demands and stress of the job**; six specifically mentioned workload, hours or work life balance; '*workload is becoming almost impossible*' (Interview 7), '*when I get up at five in the morning and then I'm still working at midnight*' (Interview 14). Others highlighted expectations, bureaucracy, and pressure (general, and of the job), three mentioned their children or families. One suggested OFSTED as a

contributing factor to feeling generally overwhelmed. Only one teacher mentioned behaviour, in the specific case of a child with severe needs.

Of those anticipating a move, one indicated that she *was* leaving at the end of the academic year to travel, one was planning to move abroad (and take a break from teaching to bring up a family); one suggested personal reasons as a factor, and three indicated that professional development would cause them to seek a post elsewhere (particularly in a small school, where it was felt all opportunities had been exhausted). Of those possibly seeking a move, two highlighted **career development** as a reason, one indicated frustration with the new curriculum and expectations on the children, and one was about to complete extracurricular study in a related field. For those not contemplating a move, two cited professional development opportunities as potential reasons to leave; others suggested a family-led decision, house prices and personal wellbeing.

### 5.3.4 Findings from induction tutors' focus group and questionnaires

Nine NQTs were reported as having left five schools in the last three years, and reasons for this were suggested for eight of these. The most commonly cited reason was to be at a school closer to home (four); particularly for one teacher who was commuting to the north of the county by train. Three teachers relocated due to family, including one abroad, where the teaching qualification was not recognised and hence they were unable to continue in the profession. One teacher was '*poached*' by a school where they had been on placement previously.

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

### 5.4.1 Findings from telephone interviews with teachers recruited as NQTs

#### 5.4.1.2 Nature and effectiveness of support in their NQT year

*Support that they had expected:* Three interviewees indicated they had few expectations when beginning at their first school, or did not know what to expect. In one teacher's opinion, NQTs have few reference points to judge this until they are further into their career, unless they are able to compare their experience with that of peers at other schools (for example during network or partnership meetings).

In terms of **dedicated personnel**, eight teachers indicated they had expected a mentor, with three suggesting that this would be someone from the senior leadership team (SLT). One mentioned expecting a partner teacher for joint planning in a two-form entry school.

With regards to a **formal support programme**, three interviewees mentioned the opportunity to attend external and partnership (NQT) training. Two suggested being observed by their mentor, with

constructive feedback, or guidance about how to improve, and two highlighted observing others teach. An anticipation of being more closely monitored was highlighted by one teacher, who indicated that she was not disappointed when this did not actually materialise! One expected a framework for coaching on whole school policies. Two teachers specifically suggested the improvement of their own teaching as a focus for a formalised programme. Others suggested getting to know systems and processes within the school, or the chance to observe one's own class. With regards to more tailored opportunities, one teacher identified behaviour management, another highlighted others' understanding of life and family (as a part-time member of staff), and a suitable environment in which to work. For those entering the profession after a previous career, or those balancing the demands of family and working, these two seem particularly pertinent.

There was some expectation of a **reduced timetable** in acknowledgement of NQTs' status. However, only one teacher mentioned the additional NQT time (to PPA entitlement) specifically, although one other referred to time to '*do things*'. Nonetheless, some interviewees mentioned the entitlement elsewhere, so the expectation is more universal than this might imply. Two interviewees anticipated previous planning or marking / assessment systems being in place, and one indicated support with planning. One interview highlighted an expectation of encouragement and acceptance that NQTs are learning. (Given two interviewees' experiences of a lack of support in their first year, this appears to be an important consideration when structuring a support programme).

Finally, two teachers mentioned a **focus on well-being** rather than just developing professional skills. One highlighted a focus on '*holistic care*' (Interview 6), another, the expectation of a positive support network (to help them get through).

*Support that they had received:* NQTs experienced a wide range of support in their first year of teaching. With respect to **designated personnel**, all but two interviewees indicated they had had a mentor; one of these had met with the HT but considered this a less formal arrangement. One teacher indicated that she considered she had received no formal support in her NQT year apart from the county-led behaviour support programme<sup>5</sup>.

**Formalised support** included access to people, additional non-contact time, and training. For example, teachers received NQT **time** additional to their PPA entitlement (three mentioned these being combined to make a full day off timetable), regular formal observations, weekly in-school training (INSET), regular meetings with one's mentor, opportunities to observe others teach, team teaching, attendance on courses / training, an '*open door*' policy, and a buddy (or someone other than the mentor) within school to talk to. One teacher stated a reluctance to attend many courses as she felt it preferable to remain in school to '*get stuck in*'.

**Provision tailored to the individual** included: peer observations with another NQT within the school, joint weekly working with a teacher at a local partnership school, INSET with another school in the local partnership, phonics training (*Read-Write-Inc*), phase meetings, team planning with the three other mixed Year 1/Year 2 class teachers in the school, joint planning with a partner class teacher, a shared (experienced) TA, and the NQT's classroom being located next-door to that of the mentor.

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<sup>5</sup> The NQT left this school within the first term, and started the induction year again at another setting, which they have subsequently remained at.

Other elements of support included: a lack of subject responsibility, the flexibility to work from home or at school during non-contact time, in house INSET, regular staff meetings, and being returned time in lieu, to facilitate report writing. One NQT highlighted being allowed to explore things for oneself. Two interviewees mentioned other teachers helping with specific projects or tasks; running a club, or assessing pupil progress (the formal processes then in play, known as APP).

*Value attributed to that support:* All teachers were positive about the support they had received.<sup>6</sup> This ranged from 'brilliant' (two) to the support offered being 'minimal'. In terms of whether the formal support programme met NQTs' expectations, only one teacher suggested the support had fallen short of expectations and in six cases, the teachers' reported that it had exceeded them.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Other kinds of informal support that they received in the NQT year

The most widely cited informal support was from other staff within the school (five), which was much appreciated. The NQT cited earlier, who had received minimal support from the interim headteacher acting as mentor, stressed the informal support that she had received from colleagues: *However the staff were incredibly supportive and helpful, and I felt like I belonged to the team. I was allowed to find my feet and make mistakes, and I could talk to anyone at any time if I had problems'* (Interview 3).

Additionally, socialising as a staff, support from TAs (two), talking to a family member who was also a teacher, an open door policy, another teacher offering to help with assessment, and a strong friendship formed between the NQT and their mentor were suggested.

A NQT hub run by a local HT provided opportunities to review other schemes, share best practice, or have training on a specific theme

#### 5.4.1.4 Nature and effectiveness of support in their second year of teaching

Two teachers mentioned they had received nothing specific in terms of support going into their second year of teaching. One suggested she had been left rather to her own devices. Another commented on the shock of losing the extra NQT time, and the removal of the NQT mentor was also noted. More positively one teacher considered that their headteacher had allowed them to be more independent in the second year, noting that there was still an open door if needed. One teacher indicated that she had received the same amount of training and support in the first and second years, noting the change in relationship between her and the coordinator to a more equal one, which made her feel valued as a professional.

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<sup>6</sup> One NQT who moved schools after just one term indicated that more might have been done at their second setting, and the comments included relate to this experience, rather than to their first placement. Considerable differences were highlighted between support provision at the two establishments, and highlighted team planning as the most useful support provided.

<sup>7</sup> One teacher indicated that the support had neither fallen short of, nor exceeded expectations. One specific area was cited where the support might have been better. One teacher did not provide an opinion on whether the support received had met expectations, instead suggesting the school was 'fantastic', which was why they were still there.

*Support that they had received:* In terms of access to dedicated personnel, one interviewee continued with the same partner teacher as in the NQT year, noting the value in an already existing relationship. Another suggested support was still available during the second year, but that the onus was now on the individual to seek it, rather than it being offered.

There appears to be far **less of a formal support programme going in to the second year**. Several people attended training related to additional responsibilities, for example as an assistant SENCO, geography lead, RE lead, or global learning lead. One teacher continued to have lessons observed, and was able to watch others teach.

With regards to tailored, selected opportunities, a number of interviewees mentioned that courses were still available to them if they deemed them relevant. In contrast, one teacher noted the general reduction in access to external training. Two interviewees changed year group which brought fresh opportunities, with a third changing phase. This provided access to specific training since they were new to the Foundation stage. One teacher visited other Year 1 settings in the county to observe (as the school was one-form entry). Others attended courses relevant to their circumstances, for example numeracy for KS2, writing moderation, autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), behaviour, or a 'maths course'. One attended a behaviour support course targeted at NQTs.<sup>8</sup>

For those receiving the same support as everyone else, only one teacher specifically mentioned the loss of the NQT time. In the second year, there appears to be a significant reduction in the amount of support offered, yet some individuals still had access to development opportunities. One interviewee had attended some training courses (planning, behaviour, assessment) delivered by a local special school. Another teacher had attended training arranged through the local partnership. One teacher noted the value in teaching a single year group, and having the previous year's planning as a starting point. Another teacher participated in a residential visit with his phase group.

There was evidence of some entirely informal arrangements for additional support. One interviewee began leading the key stage jointly with another teacher in her second year, as there was no official role. This provided an opportunity work alongside another (mutual support) and to demonstrate / develop leadership skills.

There was no personally arranged informal support identified, although one teacher mentioned that by her second year, she was beginning to find tools and resources to help herself.

*Value attributed to that support:* People generally valued, and were positive about, the support they had received during the second year, with only two negative comments. One individual suggested that attending external training added to an already considerable workload, while the other suggested that the support was not as helpful as it might have been, without elaborating further. This has implications about the quality of training offered, and how relevant it might be for individuals' requirements.

Comments regarding how this support was perceived ranged from '*brilliant*' (one) to '*really helpful*' (four), to '*helpful*', '*on the whole*', '*mixed*' and '*quite – not that I can remember*'. Two teachers

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<sup>8</sup> As the individual had begun their NQT year in January, they were still eligible to attend the following September

described the benefits rather than indicating the value they afforded the support; for example courses providing lots of ideas and resources, a critical friend highlighting positive practice.

#### 4.1.5 Nature and effectiveness of support in their third year of teaching

*Support that they had received:* Four teachers noted that they had not received anything very different to the previous year in terms of support and training, and two indicated that they received little. One of these suggested that she was just '*left alone*'. Another mentioned the '*usual observations*'. By this point, however, five teachers have additional subject or leadership responsibilities, which provided access to sources of support.

In terms of support associated with a promoted role, one teacher participated in a professional development visit to the school's partner school in Africa (as geography coordinator), additionally noting that cover was provided for part of the trip which began before the school holiday. Other opportunities included science coordinator training, design and technology (DT) lead training, SEN training (as assistant SENCO), and leading (with support) global learning training for the local hub.

In terms of **subject-specific support**, there was a focus on those **changing phase or year group**, or new initiatives, rather than development of subject knowledge per se. One teacher attended 'New to EYFS' training (provided by Oxford County Council (OCC)), another, how to teach lower KS2 maths. One other attended baseline assessment provider-run curriculum training for EYFS (to provide exemplification). Only one teacher recalled attending a course related to personal development: 'How to be an outstanding teacher'.

With respect to general reference to CPD, training and support appears to have reduced significantly by this point in people's careers. In a specific set of circumstances; one teacher noted that stability with the SLT in the school brought more investment in terms of internal training and support. Another teacher noted that courses were '*drying up*' by this stage in their development, although one suggested she was still able to attend training when she wanted. One teacher noted story-telling workshops as part of school INSET.

With regards to other opportunities, one teacher indicated they had taken more of a lead with Year 2, helping a new partner teacher, although this was not an official TLR. This provided experience and the chance to develop skills. Another interviewee attended a residential visit with his own class as a development opportunity, and one noted a change in partner teacher provided '*resurgence*' of energy for planning.

*Value attributed to that support:* Only one comment was negative, relating to a specific support programme. This, it was felt, was more critical than supportive and suggested developments that conflicted with what OFSTED were looking for. One suggested that they could not remember how valuable the support had been. Five teachers indicated they found the support in their third year to have been '*really*' helpful / useful. Two stated that the support was helpful, or '*good for me*', while two suggested their support was reasonably helpful (having taken on a core subject lead), or '*OK*'. Two said yes; indicating a positive response, and one related improved support to better leadership within the school.

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

Two teachers did not consider there was any additional support they would have welcomed over the first three years of their career. This might be taken as a positive evaluation of the programme they had received, although given that a number of teachers enter their NQT year not knowing what to expect, this might also imply that early career teachers are unaware of what further development they might need. One teacher would have liked a structured network for support in her NQT year, as she considered the support provided to be largely informal and internal. One teacher highlighted the most useful aspects of her support, which perhaps carried an implicit request for more: visits to other year groups, other schools, and NQT network meetings. Two teachers mentioned that they were able to attend courses when they wished.

Essential requests for '**more**' training were related to supporting children with special educational needs; either with respect to SEN in general, (two), or specific aspects of SEN, (i.e. specific learning difficulties (SpLD)) (one). Academic, subject focused support covered specific aspects and strategies: phonics, grammar, literacy and numeracy (frameworks), and wider subject areas (RE).

With regard to **specific aspects of teaching**, a range of developmental support was identified. This included: observing how to teach maths in mixed year groups, network meetings for year groups other than EYFS, training on assessment, training on the use of iPads, how to write reports, how to speak to parents, and behaviour management. One teacher highlighted the value in attending the 'New to EYFS' course, but pointed out that it should be available earlier than the start of the academic year (to allow better preparation).

Only two suggestions were made in relation to the second and third year of teaching in particular; one teacher suggested that more observations beyond the end of the NQT year would be helpful. Another interviewee mentioned that a KS1 leader course would be beneficial in the third year (with respect to their current role); however it was noted that this opportunity was not currently available.

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

It is worth noting the main reasons why teachers who had at various points contemplated leaving the profession had actually chosen not to do so. In responding to this question, the teachers demonstrated significant **loyalty and commitment** to their institutions and to the people within them: five people stated that they loved the job / teaching, and four equally suggested that they loved the children and the school / people they worked with. One stated that they had found the job they were meant to do, two indicated job satisfaction was important, while two others suggested they would not know what else to do (other than teaching). Although two teachers acknowledged more practical reasons to remain, noting that having their own children was a factor; '*now I've got children obviously it lends itself to school holidays...it did all make sense to stay there*' (Interview 6), others were inspired to take on more responsibility. Two teachers indicated that the opportunity to take on leadership roles had influenced their decision to remain, while two mentioned money as an incentive (one in relation to other jobs being less well paid, and one who had been internally

rewarded). Other reasons cited were: variety (every day being different), and getting positive feedback.

#### **5.4.1.8 Specific factors that induced them to stay when they had contemplated moving elsewhere**

When questioned, eleven teachers indicated that they had considered moving elsewhere. Reasons cited for staying were provided from six interviewees and related to a **sense of community**, their **current school experience**, and the prospect of, or actual **promotion**.

One teacher highlighted the benefits of stability or shared history, mentioning familiarity with children, staff and families, and a sense of belonging in the community. With regards to their current school experience, one interviewee suggested, *'I quite like the people I work with...I quite like where I live'* (Interview 12), while another noted that *'I know it's a really good school...I hear horror stories of people at other schools and you think, hang on a minute, we don't have it so bad'* (Interview 14). One interviewee suggested the children as a reason for staying. With regards to actual, or potential promotion, one teacher noted that she had had good career progression within the school, (and thus stayed), while another suggested he had taken a more pro-active (and successful) approach to development in putting himself forward for promotion without waiting to be asked.

One teacher mentioned highlighted changes in circumstances over time had provided variety, which influenced her decision; for example maternity leave (and subsequently returning), and being a member of the SLT.

#### **4.1.9 Specific factors that they believed might induce them to stay longer**

Seven teachers offered responses to this question; one indicated nothing would induce them to stay longer. Others suggested the following reasons, related to **personal development**, a **change in school circumstances**, or **government-induced changes**.

In terms of the prospect of promotion; one mentioned the current lack of a deputy head teacher position, or heads of department role in her school. She indicated that if these positions were available, she might remain longer; another made a more general comment about possibly staying if a job came up at the school. Career development was mentioned by one interviewee, which might relate to opportunities other than promotion.

With regards to other aspects of school life, one teacher noted that a significant number of SLT had resigned from her school. This would bring huge changes to the school, and her inclination was to remain to see what would happen.

Finally, one teacher talked about being valued as a professional; suggesting that if teachers were trusted and listened to by those making policy decisions, this might induce her to remain in the profession.

## 5.4.2 Findings from induction tutor interviews and questionnaires

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

In the first year, support offered to NQTs included additional NQT time, a mentor<sup>9</sup>, a bespoke support programme, regular meetings with the tutor responsible for induction<sup>10</sup> and entitlement to all local authority (LA)-provided NQT training.

In the second year, this support was much less specific, although the MAT continued to provide in-class and planning support for those in their second year. None of the schools provided an official mentor into the second year for early career teachers, although one school indicated that the department lead had a remit to support those within the year group, and one other tutor mentioned a '*listening ear*' as a form of support. The number of formal observations reduced to three per year, although in one school, there were opportunities for paired ten-minute observations.

### 5.4.2.2 Induction tutors' reports on strategies already employed that impact positively on retention

Very few specific strategies were noted, with the comments made all quite general. However respondents referred to the support and help offered, providing a sense of **being valued**, opportunities for **professional learning**, and **routes to promotion**.

In respect of support offered, several strategies were mentioned; for example a '*listening ear*', the departmental lead having a remit to support all members of their year group (in replacement of the NQT mentor), strong teamwork within the school, and in-class and planning support extended into the second year.

In developing a culture of '*being valued*', one tutor suggested that individual interests and strengths were encouraged (but did not explain further); another indicated that teachers were given a choice of year group or specific subject for which to take responsibility. One mentioned more freedom, and having fewer formal observations than in the NQT year (three as part of the appraisal process).

With regards to scope for professional learning; one school required all teachers take on *joint* subject leadership in their second year, which provided the potential for working cross-phase. There were some opportunities to work with others; one school offered paired observations (ten minutes), another, opportunities to observe other colleagues. Another mentioned training for specific development needs, while some mentioned attending courses.

Routes to promotion appeared to relate to encouraging interests in leadership, although one school was careful to note that there were no current management opportunities available within the school.

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<sup>9</sup> In one school the mentor was also the parallel teacher for the year group, with a weekly joint one-hour planning meeting

<sup>10</sup> One tutor was employed solely to work with all NQTs in schools within the particular academy trust.

### 5.4.2.3 Induction tutors' ideas about how to improve retention

No specific suggestions were made by induction tutors proposing measures that they were not already using .

### 5.4.3 Findings from current NQT interviews

These offer a few additional insights into the most challenging aspects of the NQT year (as it was happening). The two teachers were interviewed by telephone both indicated that the NQT year was quite difficult or challenging, with one teacher reporting her sense of feeling overwhelmed at the start getting to know the children, school and policies. However both felt that they were settling into the role by Easter. With respect to specific challenges, assessment, in particular, was highlighted as a challenge, particularly in relation to the way that this was conducted in school.

Both teachers indicated that the support they were receiving as NQTs exceeded their expectations; this included having a NQT mentor, attendance at the OBU NQT course (regular sessions) as well as other external training, weekly '*family group*' meetings (across Year3/ Year 4), and a school-led NQT programme of sessions (in the designated NQT time). Neither felt that they were missing specific development opportunities or support. This contrasts with one former NQT's comment that early career teachers do not know what to expect with regards to training and support. With respect to future plans, neither thought they would move within the next two-to-three years. Both suggested that any more might be triggered by their partner, although one suggested that enjoyment of her role might persuade her to remain.