



National Audit Office

Retaining and developing the teaching workforce

Survey evidence from school leaders

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This report can be found on the National Audit Office website at www.nao.org.uk

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Introduction

Retaining and developing the teaching workforce

In September 2017 we published a value-for-money report about the Department for Education's (the Department's) arrangements to develop and retain the existing teaching workforce. The report can be accessed through the National Audit Office's website, at the following address:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/supporting-and-improving-the-teaching-workforce/>

Our conclusion on value for money

In our report we concluded that:

Having enough high-quality teachers in the right places is crucial to the success of the school system and to securing value for money for the £21 billion that schools spend on their teaching workforce. Performance against national indicators suggests progress: the overall teaching workforce has been growing and more children are in schools where Ofsted has rated teaching, learning and assessment as good or outstanding. These indicators, however, mask significant variation between schools and concerning trends, especially in secondary schools. Schools are facing real challenges in retaining and developing their teachers, particularly when they are also expected to make significant savings by using staff more efficiently. Without a clear and practical integrated workforce and financial approach, supported by good evidence and school engagement, there is a risk that the pressure on teachers will grow, with implications for the sustainability of the workforce.

Developments, such as the Chartered College of Teaching, are promising but are at an early stage. The college will need ongoing support from the Department and the schools sector if it is to help address the issues we have identified. The Department still lacks data on local patterns of demand and supply and cannot demonstrate that its interventions are having a positive impact on teacher retention, deployment and quality. Overall, the Department cannot be assured that schools and the teaching profession are implementing its policy intent and we cannot conclude that it is achieving value for money.

Recommendations

In our report we recommended that:

- a **The Department should set out, and communicate to schools and other bodies in the sector, its approach to improving teacher retention, deployment and quality.** This should include: details of its various programmes and the funding available; what outcomes it is aiming to achieve and by when, and how progress will be measured; and its assessment of how schools can retain and develop their teachers at the same time as making significant workforce efficiency savings.
- b **The Department should set out clear measures of success and plans for evaluating its various programmes,** including impact and outcome indicators.
- c **The Department should use the information it is developing on local teacher demand and supply to determine how best to support schools or to intervene in the market.**
- d **The Department should work with the schools sector to understand better why more teachers are leaving before retirement and how to attract more former teachers back to the profession.** It should, for example, work with the sector on how to implement flexible working or provide refresher training to former teachers looking to return.
- e **The Department should work with, and support, the Chartered College of Teaching, teaching schools and others in the schools sector to develop clearer expectations for teachers' continuing professional development.** This should form part of its work with the college and others to support teaching as a profession.
- f **The Department should, as a matter of routine, explicitly assess the workforce implications for schools of all key policy changes and guidance, in particular the impact on teachers' workload.** It should also consider the cumulative impact on schools and teachers of changes initiated by central government.
- g **The Department should undertake the work we and the Committee of Public Accounts recommended in 2016 to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of its spending on supporting the serving workforce,** set against its investment in training new teachers.



This briefing

In the course of our fieldwork, we gathered evidence from a variety of sources, including a survey of school leaders. Some of this evidence is presented in our value-for-money report but there was insufficient room to accommodate all of the survey results. This briefing puts that material into the public domain. It does not alter the findings and conclusion in our value-for-money report. We hope that researchers and practitioners working in this important area will find the material useful.

Survey scope

The questions we asked school leaders sought information or views at the time of survey completion or for the academic year 2015/16. The survey covered the following topics:

- teacher quality (Part One);
- recruiting teachers (Part Two);
- retaining teachers (Part Three); and
- support from the Department for Education and the National College for Teaching & Leadership (Part Four).

Survey methodology

We commissioned DJS Research to conduct an online survey of state-funded school leaders during January and February 2017.

DJS Research recruited its sample from its existing panel of over 10,000 school leaders and used quotas to ensure that the sample was representative of both primary and secondary school leaders. We received valid responses from 285 primary and 201 secondary school leaders, exceeding our minimum quotas.¹

We report primary and secondary school responses separately but do not differentiate responses between maintained schools, academies or other types of school.² Where we do report primary and secondary school responses together, we have weighted the results to reflect the proportion of mainstream state-funded primary and secondary schools in England. As at January 2016, there were 16,778 primary schools and 3,401 secondary schools.

1 As with any survey, each result we report is subject to a certain level of uncertainty. The degree of uncertainty is indicated by the 95% confidence interval: broadly speaking, we are 95% certain that the stated confidence interval range contains the value for the population. The maximum confidence intervals for the sample estimates for this survey are +/- 5.8% for primary school leaders and +/- 6.7% for secondary school leaders.

2 Where we report differences between primary and secondary school leader responses, these are statistically significant at the 95% level, using a two-tailed Z test.

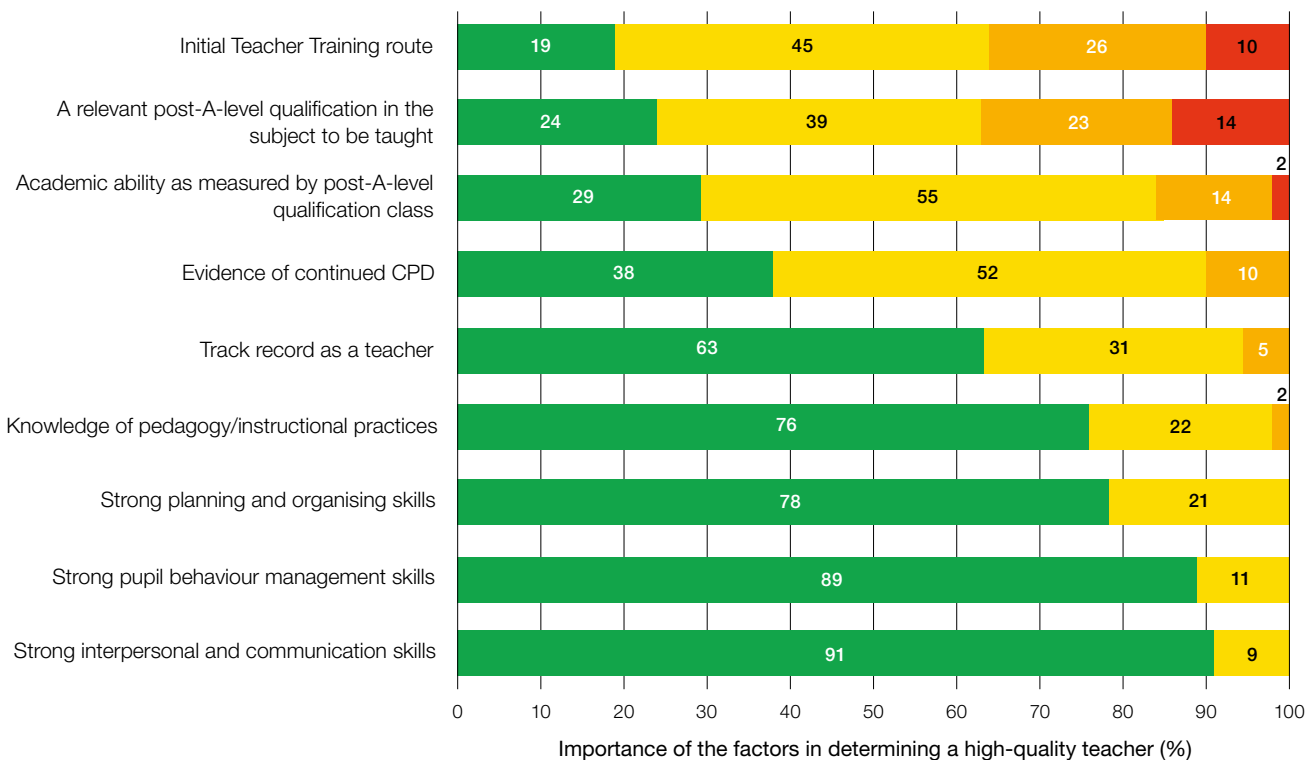


Part One: Views on teacher quality

Figure 1a School leaders' views on what makes a high-quality teacher

School leaders regard a range of personal skills as the most important factors in determining a high-quality teacher

Primary and secondary school leaders



- Very important
- Quite important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

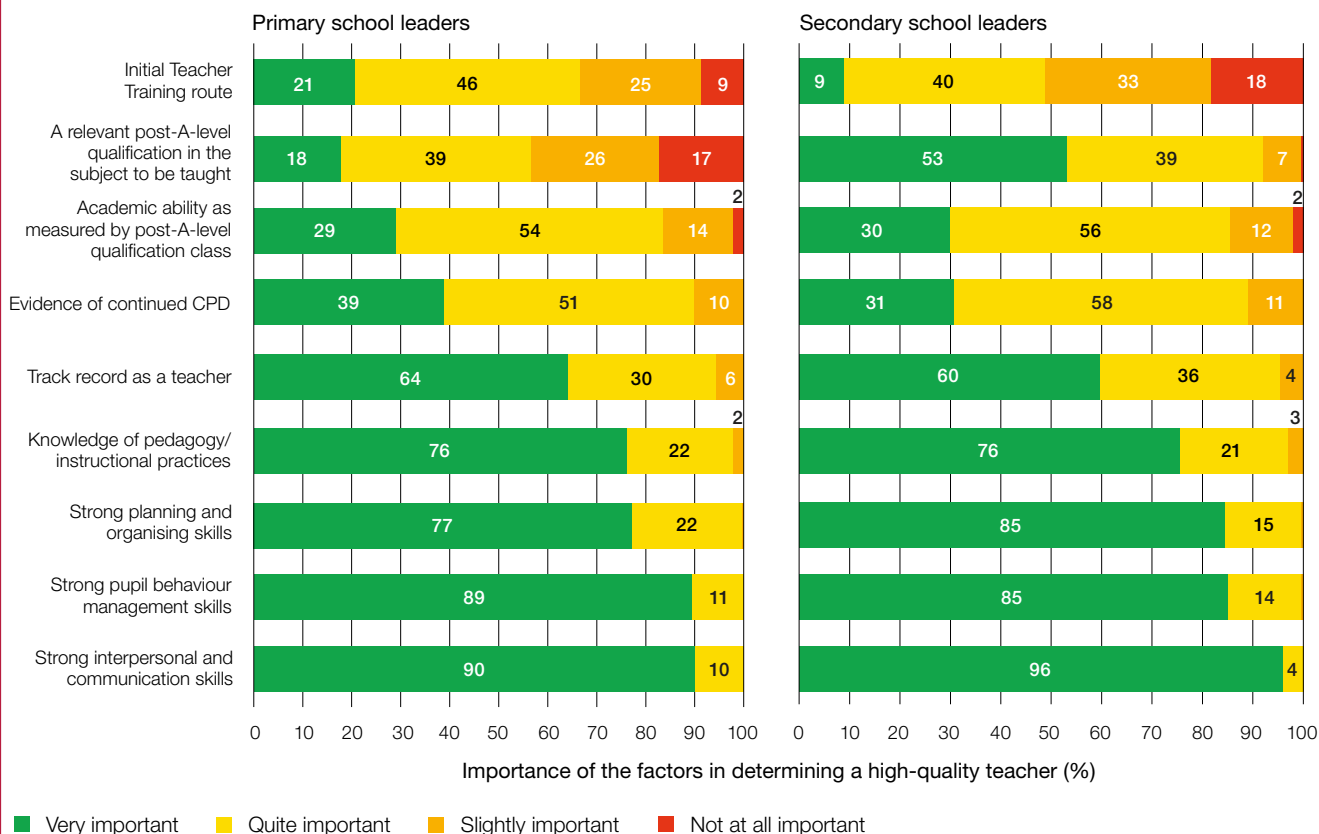
Notes

- 1 Appears as Figure 13 of the value-for-money report.
- 2 CPD = continuous professional development.
- 3 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 4 The figure shows responses against the factors listed in the survey question and excludes other factors reported by school leaders.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 1b Primary and secondary school leaders' views on what makes a high-quality teacher

School leaders regard a range of personal skills as the most important factors in determining a high-quality teacher



Notes

- 1 CPD = continuous professional development.
- 2 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 3 Around half of school leaders also reported other factors not listed in the question including passion and commitment to teaching, a willingness to take on constructive feedback and the ability and desire to relate to young people.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



Differences between primary and secondary

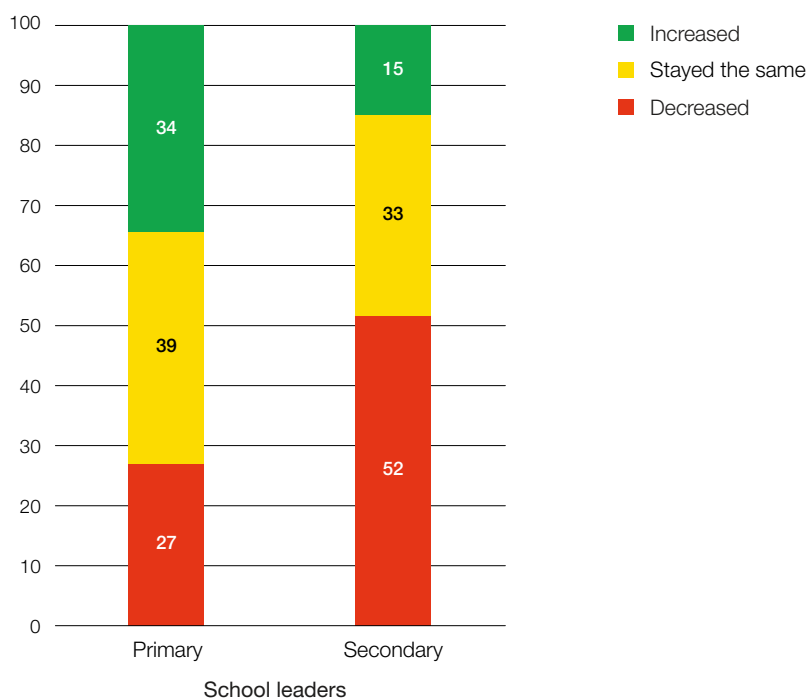
As would be expected, a greater proportion of secondary school leaders considered that a relevant post-A-level qualification (53%) in the subject to be taught was very important compared with primary school leaders (18%).

Instead a greater proportion of primary school leaders considered that the Initial Teacher Training route was very important (21%) compared with secondary school leaders (9%).

Figure 2 School spending on formal training and development for qualified teachers in 2016/17 compared with 2015/16

Over half of secondary school leaders surveyed reported a reduction in school spending on formal training and development for qualified teachers

Proportion of school leader responses on changes in spend (%)



Notes

- 1 Referenced in paragraph 3.12 of the value-for-money report.
- 2 Formal training and development includes qualification programmes, training and development courses, conferences and workshops.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders. 2017



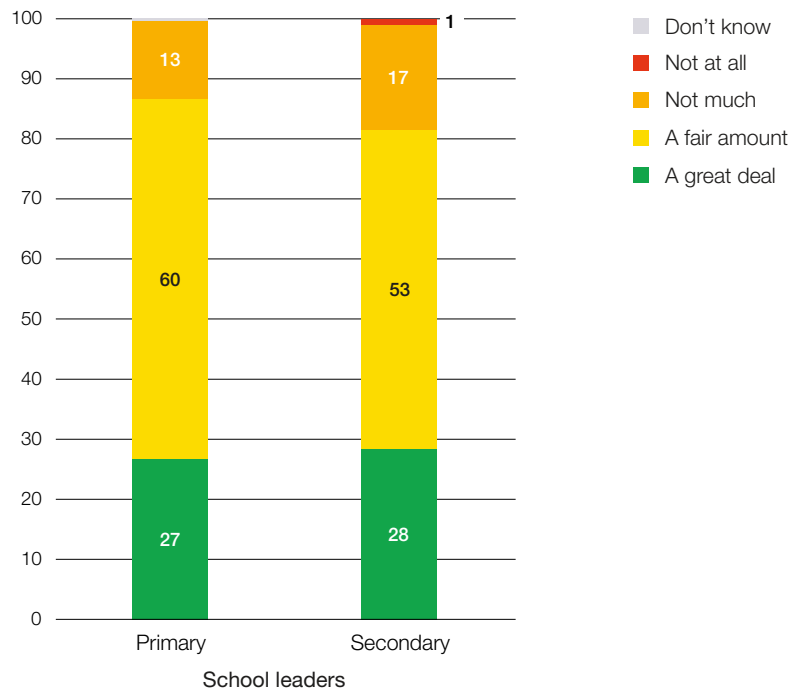
Differences between primary and secondary

52% of secondary school leaders reported that spending on formal training and development for qualified teachers had fallen in 2016/17 compared with **27%** of primary school leaders.

Figure 3 Engagement with other schools to develop the quality of teachers in 2015/16

Over 80% of school leaders surveyed engaged either a great deal or a fair amount with other schools to develop the quality of the teachers in their schools

Proportion of school leader responses on engaging other schools (%)



Note

1 Of the 37 primary school leaders and 37 secondary school leaders who responded that they did not engage much or did not engage at all with other schools, over half said that this was due to not having the time, being unaware of support provided by other schools or not seeing the value.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

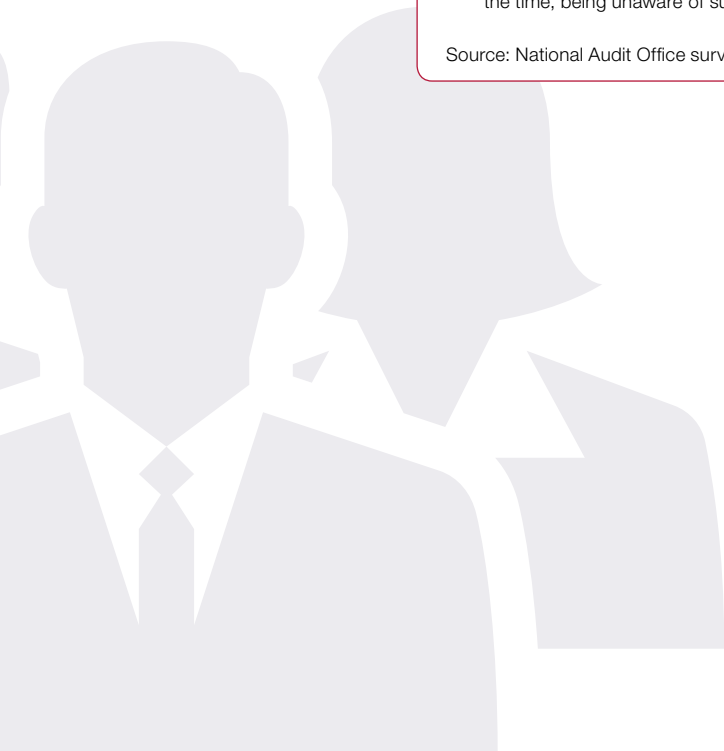
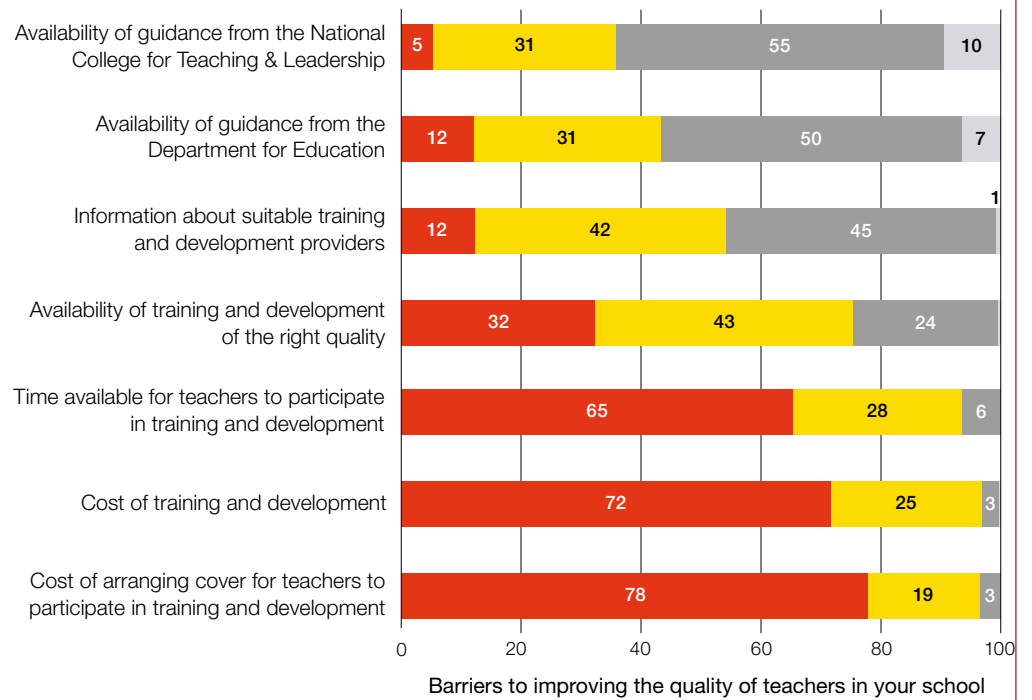


Figure 4a Barriers to improving the quality of teachers

Over 90% of school leaders said that time and cost were barriers to improving the quality of teachers in their school

Primary and secondary school leaders



- Major barrier
- Minor barrier
- Not a barrier
- Don't know

Notes

- 1 Referenced in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13 of the value-for-money report.
- 2 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

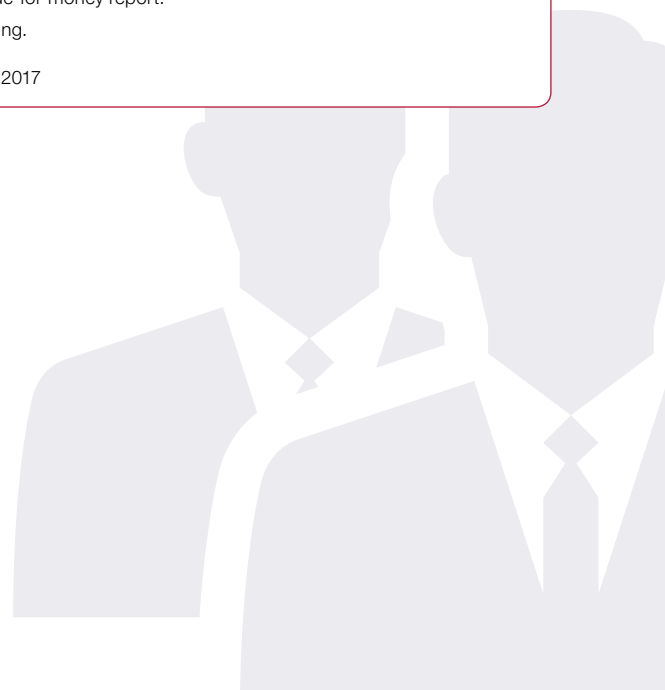
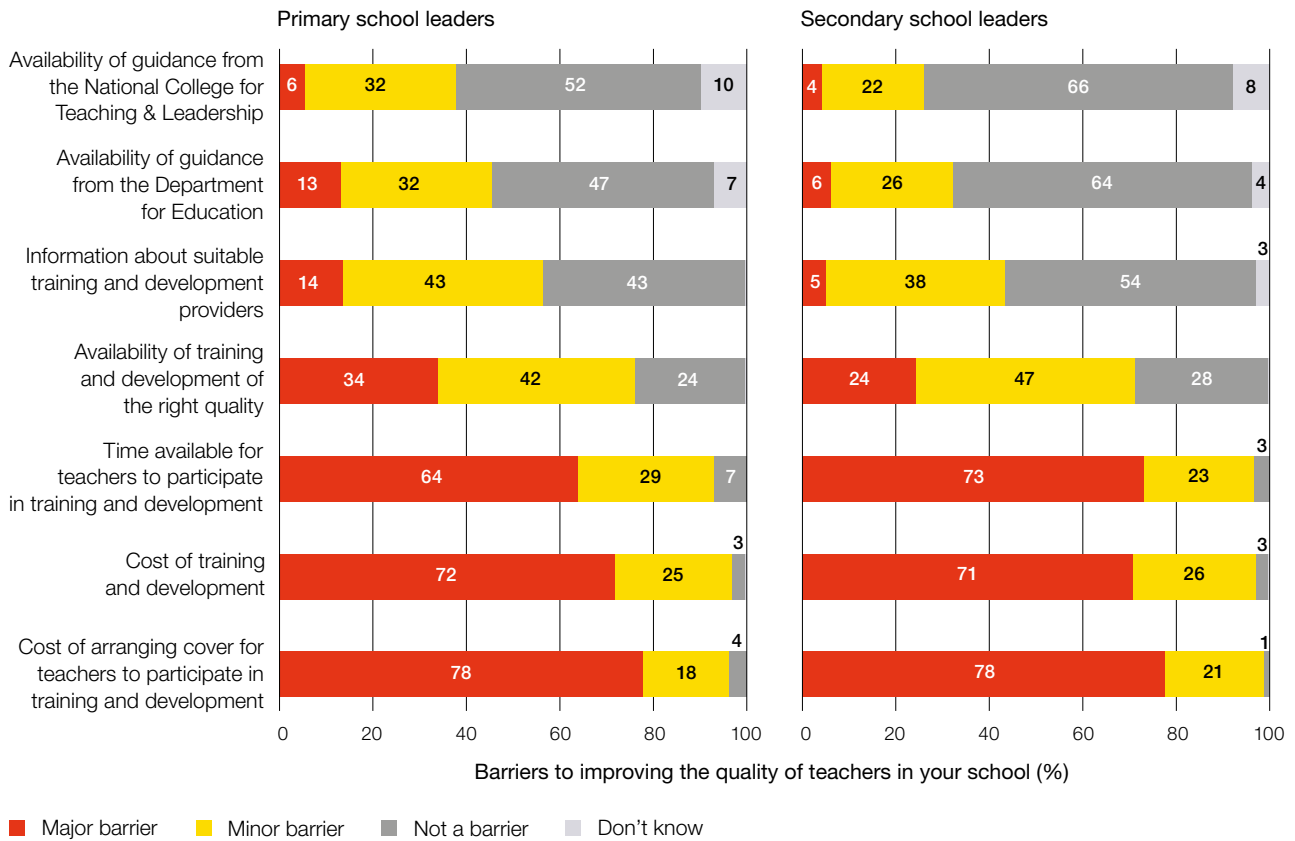


Figure 4b Barriers to improving the quality of teachers

Over 90% of school leaders said that time and cost were barriers to improving the quality of teachers in their school



Note

1 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



Differences between primary and secondary

A greater proportion of primary school leaders considered that the lack of availability of guidance on improving quality and the lack of information about suitable training providers were barriers to improving the quality of teachers in their school compared with secondary school leaders.



Part Two: Views on recruiting teachers

Figure 5 Outcome of teacher recruitment in 2015/16

The schools we surveyed filled only around half of vacancies advertised with a qualified teacher with the experience and expertise required

Proportion of vacancies advertised (%)



Notes

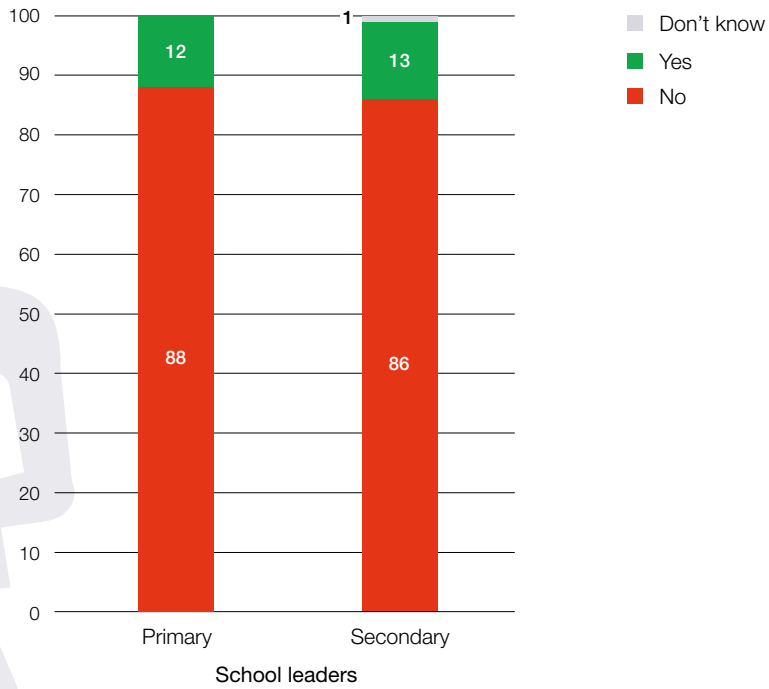
- 1 Appears as Figure 10 of the value-for-money report.
- 2 School leaders reported 2,785 advertised vacancies (957 in primary schools and 1,828 in secondary schools). Where a school leader reported more than one vacancy in their survey response, we accounted for them separately.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 6 Proportion of school leaders who recruited a qualified teacher returning to the profession in 2015/16

Nearly 90% of school leaders we surveyed reported that they had not employed anyone returning to teaching in 2015/16

Proportion of school leaders who reported recruiting a returning teacher (%)



Note

1 Referenced in paragraph 2.20 of the value-for-money report.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

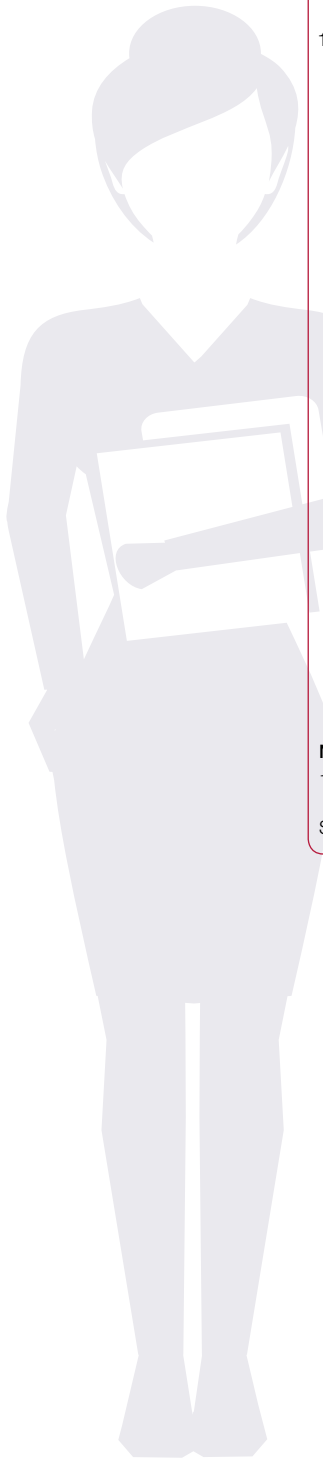
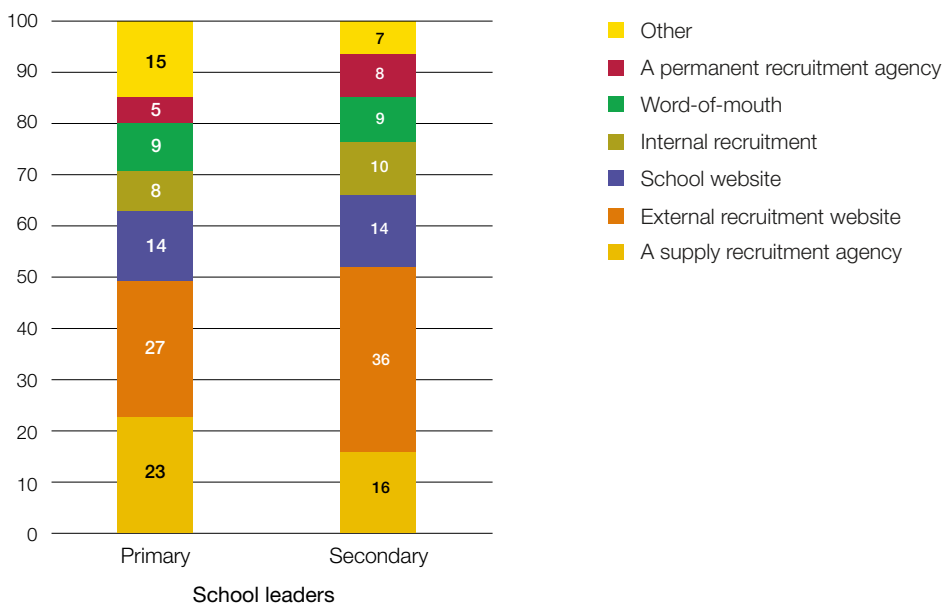


Figure 7 How teachers were recruited

Around half of teachers recruited during 2015/16 by school leaders we surveyed were recruited through external recruitment websites and supply recruitment agencies

Proportion of teachers recruited (%)



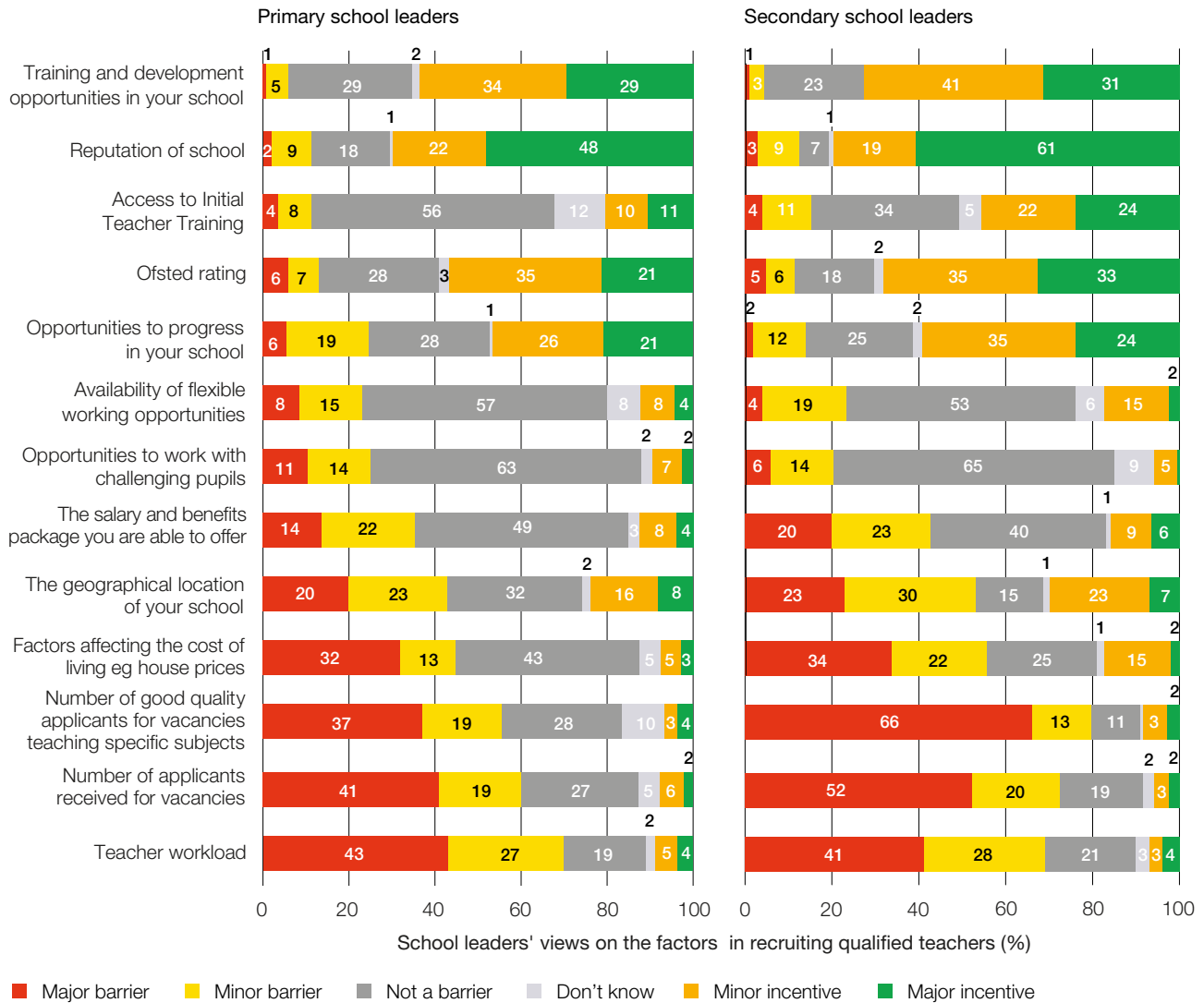
Notes

- 1 School leaders reported recruiting 2,325 teachers (791 primary school teachers and 1,534 secondary school teachers) during 2015/16. Where a school leader reported more than one teacher recruited in their survey response, we accounted for them separately.
- 2 A further 23 primary school leaders and 3 secondary school leaders reported that they recruited teachers through other methods but did not specify or did not know.
- 3 School leaders also reported other methods of recruitment not listed in our question including advertisements on local authority websites or in local newspapers and the Times Educational Supplement.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 8 School leaders' views of the factors that affect teacher recruitment

Secondary school leaders consider that the number of good-quality applicants is the most significant barrier to teacher recruitment, while workload was the most significant barrier for primary school leaders



Notes

- 1 CPD = continuous professional development.
- 2 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 3 27% of primary school leaders reported other factors that affect recruitment but were not listed in the question, for example reported low morale within the teaching profession.
- 4 22% of secondary school leaders reported other factors, such as the London weighting of salaries.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



Differences between primary and secondary

79% of secondary school leaders considered that the number of good-quality applicants for vacancies teaching specific subjects was the most significant barrier compared with 56% of primary school leaders.

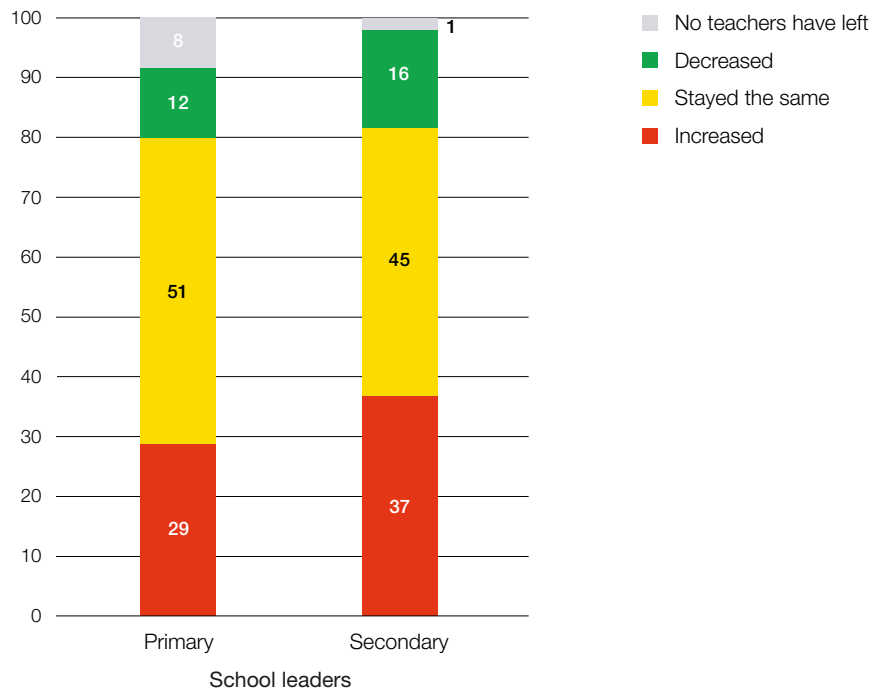


Part Three: Views on retaining teachers

Figure 9 Number of teachers who left in 2016/17 compared with 2015/16

Just over half of primary school leaders and under half of secondary school leaders reported no change in the number of teachers who left their school

Proportion of school leader responses on teachers leaving their school (%)



Note

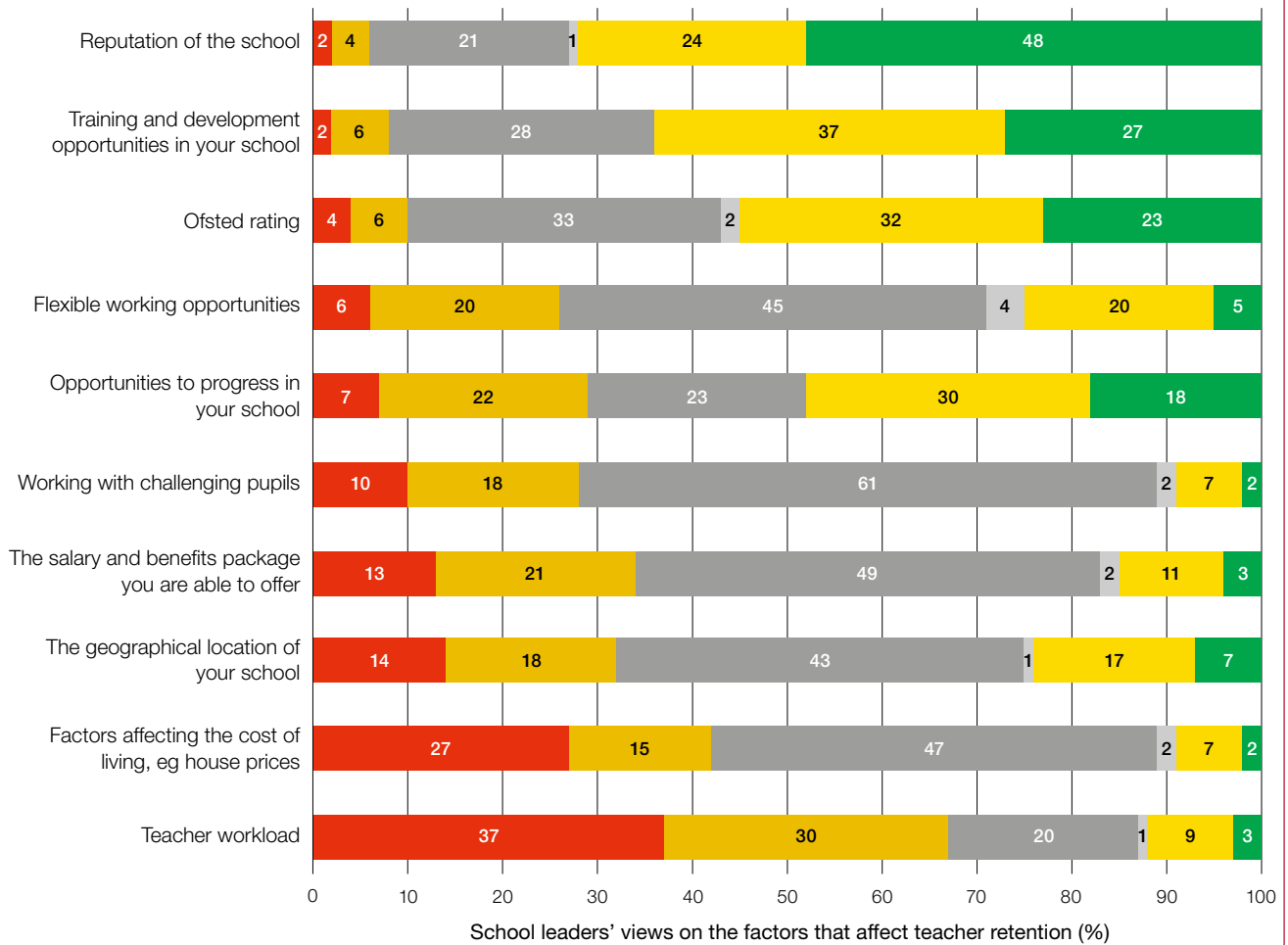
1 The question excluded teachers who left due to parental leave or retirement.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 10a School leaders' views of the factors that affect teacher retention

School leaders consider that workload is the most significant barrier to teacher retention

Primary and secondary school leaders



- Major barrier
- Minor barrier
- Not a barrier or incentive
- Don't know
- Minor incentive
- Major incentive

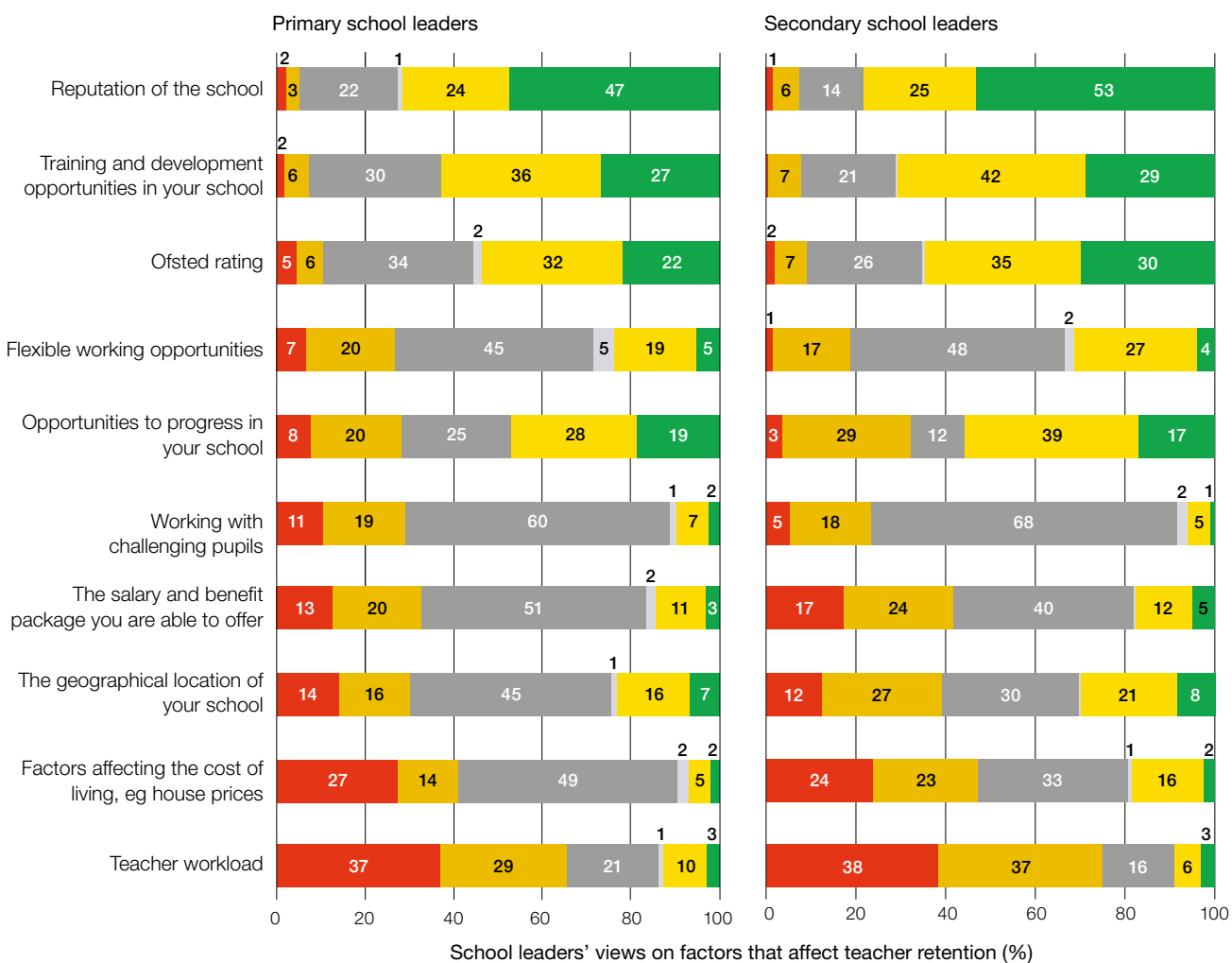
Notes

- 1 Appears as Figure 7 of the value-for-money report.
- 2 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 10b School leaders' views of the factors that affect teacher retention

School leaders consider that workload is the most significant barrier to teacher retention



- Major barrier
- Minor barrier
- Not a barrier or incentive
- Don't know
- Minor incentive
- Major incentive

Notes

- 1 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 2 22% of primary school leaders reported other factors that affect retention but were not listed in our question such as having a supportive environment within the school. 17% of secondary school leaders also reported other factors including curriculum and exam changes.

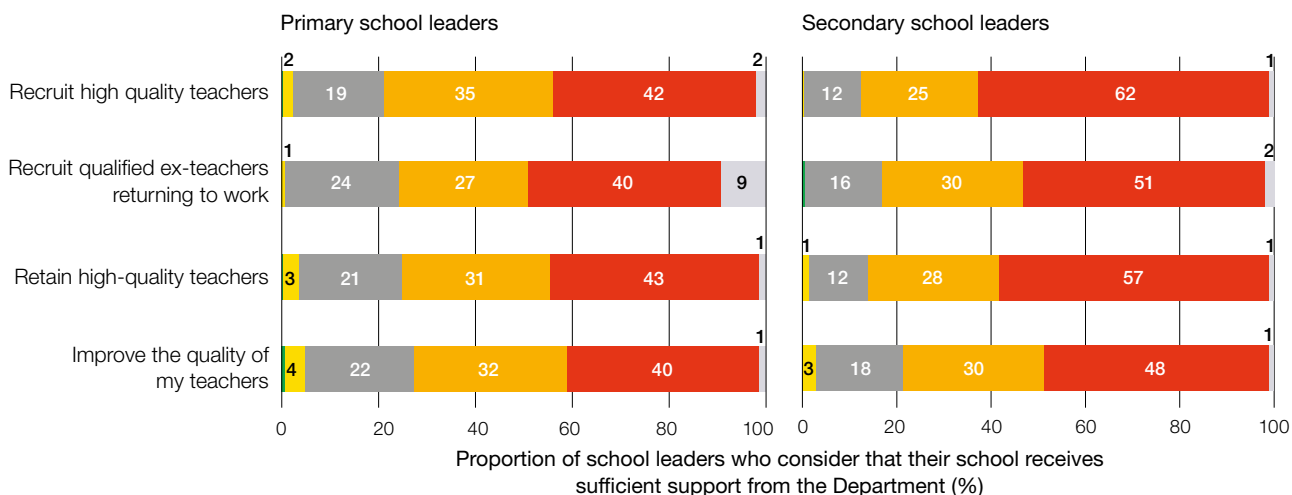
Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



Part Four: Views on support from the Department for Education

Figure 11 School leaders' views on the Department's support for schools

Most school leaders disagreed that the Department provides schools with sufficient support to recruit, develop and retain high-quality teachers



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

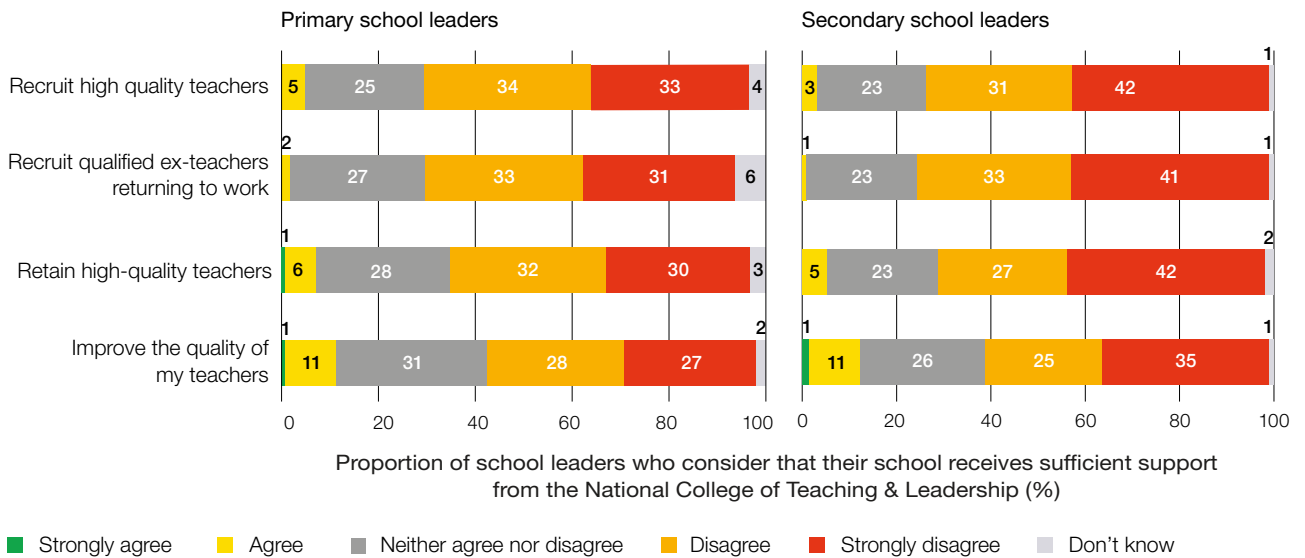
Notes

- 1 Referenced in Figure 5 in the value-for-money report.
- 2 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 12 School leaders' views on the National College of Teaching & Leadership's support for schools

Most school leaders disagreed that the National College of Teaching & Leadership provides schools with sufficient support to recruit, develop and retain high-quality teachers



Note

1 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



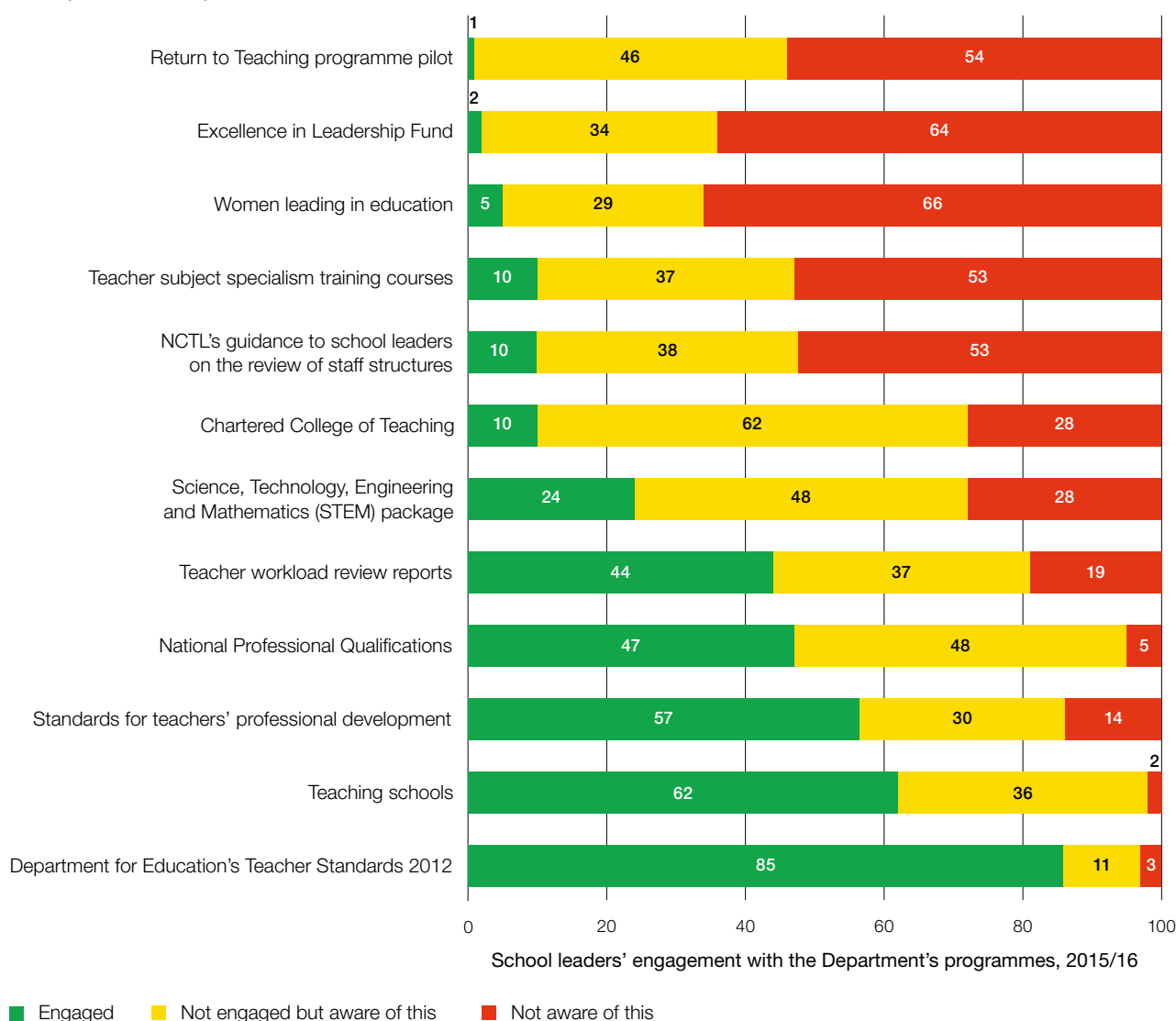
Differences between primary and secondary

74% of secondary school leaders disagreed that the National College of Teaching & Leadership supported them to recruit qualified ex-teachers back to the profession, compared with 64% of primary school leaders.

Figure 13a Schools' engagement with the Department's programmes, 2015/16

There is wide variation in school leaders' engagement with the Department's programmes, from 85% of those surveyed being engaged with the Department's 2012 teacher standards to 1% being engaged with the Return to Teaching pilot

Primary and secondary school leaders



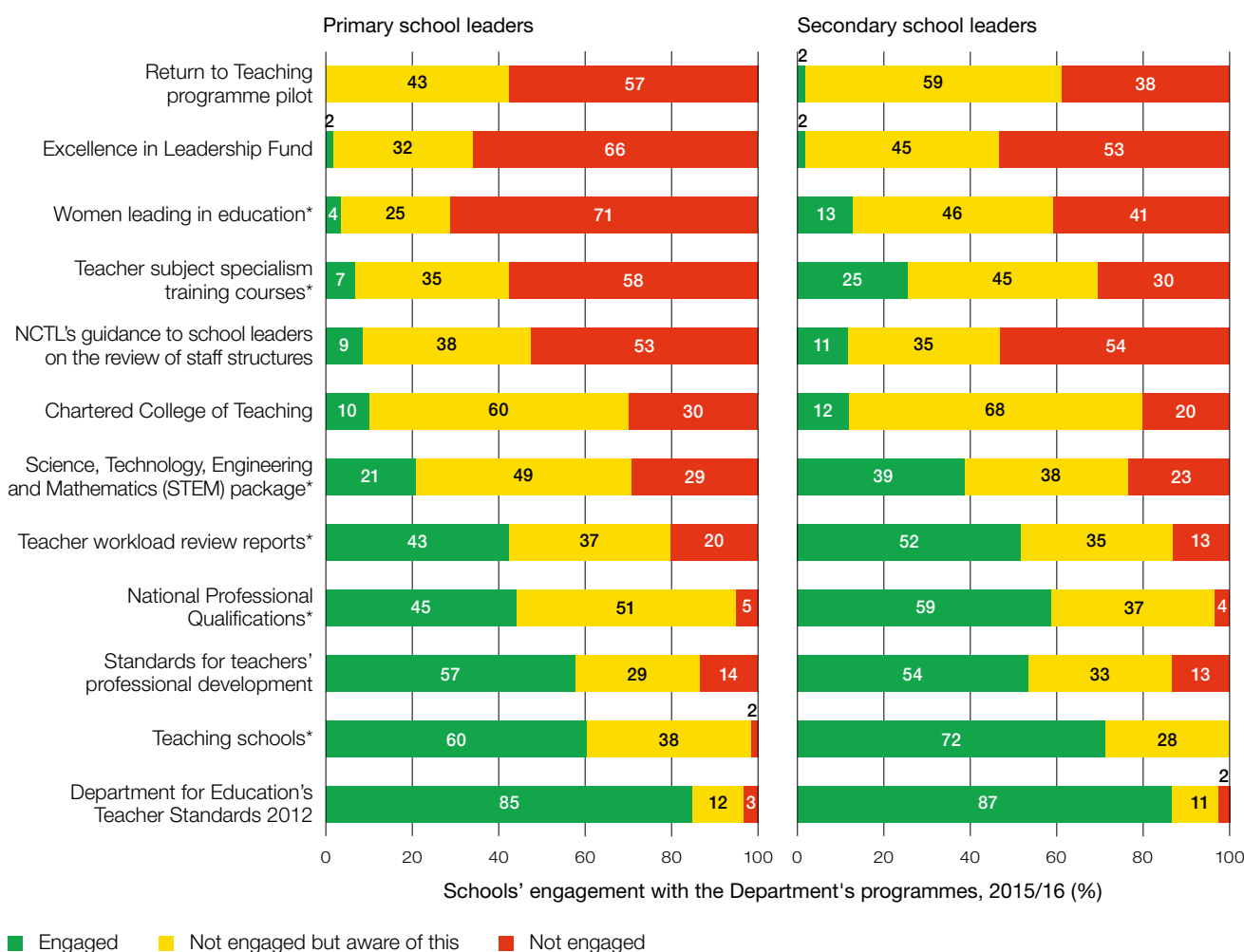
Notes

- 1 Referenced in paragraph 1.21 and Figure 18 of the value-for-money report.
- 2 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 3 NCTL = National College of Teaching & Leadership.
- 4 The Excellence in Leadership Fund was superseded by the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund from February 2017. The Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund is not included as it was announced after our survey had started.
- 5 The Chartered College of Teaching has been created as an independent professional body for teachers, with the Department providing funding to support its establishment.
- 6 We consider engagement to include participation in a programme or use of published guidance.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017

Figure 13b Schools' engagement with the Department's programmes, 2015/16

There is wide variation in school leaders' awareness of, and engagement with, the Department's programmes, from 87% of secondary school leaders surveyed engaged with the Department's 2012 teaching standards to less than 1% of primary school leaders engaged with the return-to-teaching pilot



Notes

- 1 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 2 NCTL = National College of Teaching & Leadership.
- 3 The Excellence in Leadership Fund was superseded by the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund from February 2017. The Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund is not included as it was announced after our survey had started.
- 4 The Chartered College of Teaching has been created as an independent professional body for teachers, with the Department providing funding to support its establishment.
- 5 We consider engagement to include participation or use of published guidance.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



Differences between primary and secondary

A greater proportion of secondary school leaders are engaged with the Department's programmes than primary school leaders, with a significant difference in engagement in half of the programmes surveyed (denoted with *).

Figure 14 Likelihood of schools' engaging with the Department's programmes in future

There is wide variation in how likely the school leaders surveyed are to engage with the Department's programmes in future



Notes

- 1 Survey results may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- 2 NCTL = National College of Teaching & Leadership
- 3 The Excellence in Leadership Fund was superseded by the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund from February 2017. The Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund is not included as it was announced after our survey had started.
- 4 The Chartered College of Teaching has been created as an independent professional body for teachers, with the Department providing funding to support its establishment.
- 5 We consider engagement to include participation or use of published guidance.

Source: National Audit Office survey of school leaders, 2017



Differences between primary and secondary

A greater proportion of secondary school leaders have indicated that they will more likely engage with the Department's programmes than primary school leaders, with a significant difference in engagement in seven of the programmes surveyed (denoted with *).

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