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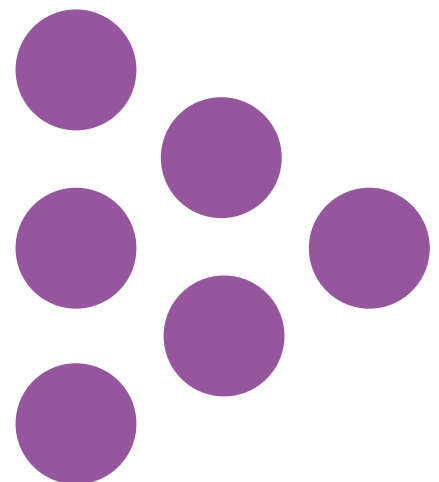
## Report

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# Cost-of-living crisis: Impact on schools

School staff

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)



## **Cost-of-living crisis: Impact on schools**

Megan Lucas, Rachel Classick, Amy Skipp and Jenna Julius

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## Glossary of terms

**Additional support:** This is defined as anything over and above the usual provision pupils might receive in relation to pupil premium and/or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) support.

**Disadvantaged schools:** For the purposes of this report, disadvantaged schools are defined based on the share of pupils eligible for free school meals in the school. Schools in the most disadvantaged quartile of schools have the highest rate of pupils eligible for free school meals.

**Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services (CYPMHS):** Services that support young people experiencing poor mental health, or difficult feelings or experiences. These services were formerly known as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

**Education, health and care plan (EHCP):** This is a legal document for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available usually. An EHCP identifies the educational, health and social needs and sets out the additional support to meet those needs.

**Free school meals (FSM) eligible pupil:** A pupil who meets the eligibility criteria for free school meals and whose parent(s) or carer(s) makes a claim (eligibility is not determined automatically (DfE, 2018)). The FSM rate refers to the share of FSM-eligible pupils in the pupil population.

**In-year deficit (surplus):** A school whose annual expenditure is larger (smaller) than their annual income by the end of the financial year.

**Overall deficit (surplus):** A school with negative (positive) overall revenue balance.

**Pupil premium (PP) pupil:** PP pupils are considered to be ‘disadvantaged’ and attract additional funding for their school to improve their educational outcomes. Any pupil who has been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years, has been in the care of the local authority at any point or is from a service family is PP.

**Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND):** A pupil with additional needs or disability which affects a child or young person’s ability to learn. This might include behaviour or ability to socialise, reading and writing (e.g., dyslexia), ability to understand things, concentration (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and physical abilities.

**Real household disposable income:** The amount of money that households have available for spending and saving after direct taxes, such as Income Tax, National Insurance and Council Tax, have been accounted for. Real household disposable income is adjusted for changes in prices over time.

## Executive Summary

The cost of living has been rising sharply across England since 2021, including unprecedented increases in energy costs, rapid increases in the costs of food and significant increases in the costs of housing via higher rents/mortgage costs (Harari *et al.*, 2023). The Office for Budget Responsibility is predicting that real household disposable incomes per person (a measure of living standards) will remain below pre-pandemic levels until at least 2027/28 (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2022).

Teachers and senior leaders in schools are on the front line. They see the immediate impacts of cost-of-living increases on pupils and their households. As well as impacting households, rising costs are also impacting mainstream and special school finances, in the form of higher energy and higher than expected staffing costs. While the Government has committed additional funding for schools in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (HM Treasury, 2022), there is still a question about whether this will be sufficient (Drayton *et al.*, 2022).

Alongside cost-of-living pressures, schools are also grappling with a myriad of other pressures, including post-pandemic recovery (Ofsted, 2022a, 2022b), additional financial pressures created by the current demographic decline in primary pupil numbers (DfE, 2023d) and teacher recruitment and retention challenges (McLean, Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2023).

Drawing on surveys of teachers and senior leaders in mainstream and special schools<sup>1</sup>, this report aims to explore how the cost of living is affecting schools by establishing:

1. What impact do teachers and senior leaders report cost-of-living pressures are having on pupils and their households?
2. How has provision in schools been affected by cost-of-living increases?
3. What impact have cost-of-living increases had on school staff?

NFER collected data via an online survey sent to all state-funded mainstream primary and secondary schools and all special schools in England in April and May 2023. We received responses from 1354 senior leaders and 1317 teachers in mainstream schools as well as 87 senior leaders and 41 teachers in special schools. It is important to note that the quantitative analysis presented throughout this report is largely descriptive in nature and is not intended to be used to make causal inferences.

A degree of caution is also needed when interpreting the analysis of the special schools' surveys due to the small sample sizes<sup>2</sup> (see Appendix for further details on the methodological approach). The key findings from our research are outlined below.

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<sup>1</sup> Mainstream surveys are weighted to be nationally representative of schools in England. Special school surveys are not weighted due to the small response rate achieved. Non-maintained special schools and special schools serving pupils with high levels of disadvantage are under-represented in our sample.

<sup>2</sup> Sub-sample analysis has not been done for special schools (i.e., by school disadvantage) as the achieved sample was not sufficiently large.

## School staff

- **Recent cost-of-living increases have negatively affected teachers' personal finances.** Teachers are making similar lifestyle and spending changes to the wider British population in response to pressures on their finances. Less than half of teachers can afford to pay an unexpected expense outright.
- **Teacher, teaching assistant (TA) and support staff recruitment and retention challenges have been exacerbated by recent cost-of-living pressures.** Cost-of-living increases have compounded pressures on school budgets, limiting the salaries schools are able to offer potential staff at a time when staff are having to contend with pressure on their personal finances. Salaries in schools have not remained competitive enough to attract and retain staff at a time when they are particularly focused on their incomes. Furthermore, the cost saving measures taken by schools in response to cost-of-living increases have intensified pressures on their staff and appear to be affecting staff retention.

For example, 45 per cent of secondary and special schools and 34 per cent of primary schools reported that the salaries they were able to offer were the single biggest barrier to recruiting TAs. Leaders also flagged that TAs, in particular, are likely to be seeking employment in other better paid roles (e.g., in hospitality and retail sectors), and that increasing numbers of TAs are taking on additional jobs to supplement their income.

- **Due to recruitment challenges which appear to have been compounded by the impact of cost-of-living pressures on the attractiveness of the salaries schools can afford to offer, senior leaders report that large numbers of teacher, TA and support staff vacancies are remaining vacant for more than two months.** For example, among the schools recruiting for TAs over the last 12-months<sup>3</sup>, only seven per cent of special schools, 23 per cent of secondaries and 45 per cent of primaries report filling all TA vacancies within two months. This is a particularly critical challenge for leaders in special schools where statutory staffing ratios are high and inadequate staffing may be unsafe.

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<sup>3</sup> Among those who were able to answer the question, 1006 senior leaders (92 per cent) report recruiting for TAs in the last 12-months.



## Recommendations

Our findings highlight that cost-of-living pressures, together with existing pressures, are having a profound impact on pupils and their schools.

**Without urgent action now, recent cost-of-living increases risk having far reaching and long-lasting impacts on pupils, particularly those who are most vulnerable, across both mainstream and special school settings.**

**Recommendation 1: The Government should prioritise the refresh of the teacher recruitment and retention strategy and extend its scope. A wider education workforce strategy is needed that has a long-term focus, and includes teaching assistants, school support staff and tutors as well as teachers and leaders. For wider support staff, this should include looking at whether pay is competitive enough to attract and retain sufficient high-quality staff.**

# 1 Introduction

The cost of living has been rising sharply across England since 2021, including unprecedented increases in energy costs, rapid increases in the costs of food and significant increases in the costs of housing via higher rents/mortgage costs (Harari *et al.*, 2023).

While inflation has fallen from its peak in October 2022, cost pressures are set to continue (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2023). Indeed, public debate has recently raised the possibility of introducing food price caps on basic necessities to support households (Jones and Walker, 2023). The Office for Budget Responsibility is predicting that real household disposable incomes per person (a measure of living standards) will remain below pre-pandemic levels until at least 2027/28 (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2022).

Cost-of-living pressures are having profound impacts on pupils and their families. Over a third of low-income parents are cutting back on food for their children (Earwaker, 2022). There has been an increase in the number of households who are unable to afford basic items for their children (The Sutton Trust, 2022). Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of cost-of-living pressures, as they are more likely to be in lower income households and require additional care (Blackburn, Spencer and Read, 2010).

Teachers and senior leaders in schools are on the front line. They see the immediate impacts of cost-of-living pressures on pupils. Regardless of whether they have the staff or resources to do so, many may feel the need to provide urgent support to pupils and their families. While this may go beyond schools' statutory duties, the evidence suggests that pupils whose most basic needs are not being met – whether it is going to school hungry or being unable to afford the costs of transport – are less likely to attend school and successfully engage with learning (The Food Foundation, 2022).

As well as affecting households, rising costs are also impacting mainstream and special school finances, in the form of higher energy and higher than expected staffing costs. While the Government has committed additional funding for schools in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (HM Treasury, 2022), there is still a question about whether this will be sufficient (Drayton *et al.*, 2022). Some schools have raised concerns that recent cost-of-living increases are impacting on their teaching and learning provision (Martin, 2022).

Pressures on schools are likely to be exacerbated by the fact that local authority (LA) budgets are also under significant financial pressures (CCN, 2023). The effect is two-fold. Firstly, local authorities may reduce support or increase waiting/referral times for wider services that low-income families and vulnerable pupils are dependent on, which schools may then need to step in to provide. Secondly, local authorities are unlikely to be able to provide additional financial support to schools to cover additional costs.

Alongside cost-of-living pressures, schools are also grappling with a myriad of other pressures, including post-pandemic recovery (Ofsted, 2022a, 2022b), additional financial pressures created by the current demographic decline in primary pupil numbers (DfE, 2023d) and teacher recruitment and retention challenges (McLean, Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2023).

Despite these challenges, relatively little is known about the overarching scale of current cost-of-living pressures in schools, how these vary across settings and groups of pupils and what steps schools are taking to mitigate the impacts of cost-of-living pressures. Drawing on surveys of teachers and senior leaders in mainstream and special schools in England (as outlined in Box 1), this report aims to fill this critical evidence gap by establishing:

1. What impact do teachers and senior leaders report cost-of-living pressures are having on pupils and their households?
2. How has provision in schools been affected by cost-of-living increases?
3. What impact have cost-of-living increases had on school staff?

It is important to note that the quantitative analysis presented throughout this report is largely descriptive in nature and is not designed to make causal inferences. While teachers and senior leaders were asked to specifically consider how cost-of-living increases have impacted their pupils and their settings, there are many other pressures affecting schools that may be difficult to disentangle from cost-of-living pressures. Findings need to be interpreted in that wider context.

A degree of caution is also needed when interpreting the analysis of the special schools' survey responses due to the small sample sizes. Findings from the special schools surveys have not been weighted to be nationally representative due to these small sample sizes (see Box 1). Further detail about the methodology can be found in the Appendix.

## Box 1. NFER cost of living surveys

### Sample

From 21 April to 11 May\*, NFER collected data via an online survey sent to all 20,193 state-funded mainstream primary and secondary schools, and all 1756 special schools in England. We asked senior leaders (head teachers, principals, deputy head teachers and assistant head teachers) to complete the survey themselves and pass it on to one teacher from their school. We received responses from 1354 senior leaders and 1317 teachers in 1666 primary schools (including middle deemed primary) and 637 secondary schools (including middle deemed secondary and all-through schools), representing 9.9 per cent of the 16,784 primary schools and 18.7 per cent of the 3409 secondary schools in England. We also received responses from 87 senior leaders and 41 teachers from special schools, representing 6.3 per cent of the 1756 special schools\*\* (including non-maintained specials) in England.

We weighted the data for mainstream schools to ensure that our findings are representative of mainstream schools in England. Findings from the special school surveys' have not been weighted to be nationally representative due to the small sub-samples of non-maintained special schools and the most disadvantaged special schools in our sample.

### Data collected

The survey focused on three main areas: how pupils and their families are being affected by recent cost-of-living increases, and how schools are supporting them; how provision in schools has been affected by recent cost-of-living pressures and what impact these pressures have had on school staff. The survey also asked respondents for some information about themselves, including their job role, gender and age.

### Analysis

The NFER team used DfE [administrative data](#) to identify the characteristics of each school, including phase, proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM), school type (local authority or academy), and region. Weighting used the distribution of the achieved sample of mainstream schools relative to the national population of school phase and FSM quintile.

The analysis used three main approaches: descriptive statistics for all of the survey questions; tests of statistical significance to identify associations between selected questions and school characteristics; and regression models. Results were considered statistically significant if the probability of a result occurring by chance was less than five per cent ( $p < 0.05$ ).

*\*Note that teacher strikes in English schools took place on both 27 April and 2 May. This should be borne in mind when interpreting findings.*

*\*\* Includes all special schools with pupils between the ages of four and 16.*

## 2 School staff

This chapter discusses how the increased cost of living is influencing recruitment and retention in schools. It also sets out the impact of recent increases in the cost of living on the personal circumstances of teachers, including how teachers are responding to cost pressures on their household finances.

Our findings highlight that cost-of-living pressures are compounding existing recruitment and retention challenges by placing additional pressure on personal and school budgets, alongside placing wider pressures on school staff (e.g., in meeting pupils' additional needs). This means staff and potential applicants are more likely to be looking for higher paying and less pressurised jobs at the same time as budget pressures are limiting the extent to which schools can afford to offer higher salaries.

### 2.1 Personal circumstances of teachers

#### Key findings

- Less than half of teachers can afford to pay an unexpected expense outright.
- Teachers are making similar lifestyle and spending changes to the wider British population in response to pressures on their finances.

The median salary for a classroom teacher in a state-funded school in England in 2022 was £40,251. Median salaries were highest in secondary schools at £41,624, compared to £38,810 in nursery/primary schools and £40,701 in special schools.

Nonetheless, roughly one in six classroom teachers across these settings earned less than £30,000 per year (DfE, 2023c). This compares to a median salary of £33,000 for a full-time employee in England (ONS, 2022).

#### Less than half of teachers can afford to pay, outright, an unexpected expense

While the typical classroom teacher may earn more compared to other professions, when asked about their ability to afford an unexpected necessary expense of £850, less than half of primary and special school teachers in our survey could afford to pay this expense outright (40 per cent and 31 per cent respectively, as shown in Figure 1). Around 30 per cent of teachers, in both settings, could only afford to pay it if they could borrow the money.

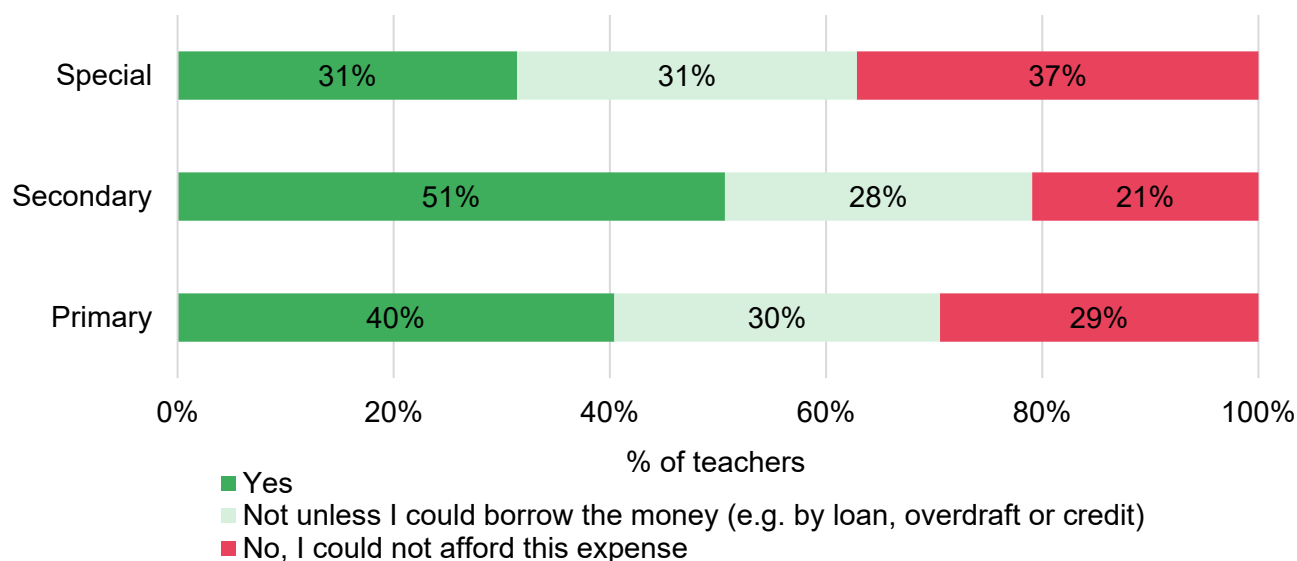
In comparison, around half (51 per cent) of secondary school teachers could pay this expense outright with a further 28 per cent able to if they could borrow the money. Secondary school teachers in our survey generally had a higher annual gross household income compared with primary and special teachers, which is likely to explain why they are typically more able to meet an unexpected expense.

These findings are largely in line with the wider British population, as indicated by a similar question used in the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from the Office for National Statistics (ONS,

2023) where 59 per cent of people could afford it and 29 per cent could not<sup>4</sup>. However, these findings highlight that many teachers are not in a position to easily meet additional costs that are arising as a result of cost-of-living pressures.

As would be expected, teachers with higher annual household incomes are more likely to report they could afford an unexpected expense question. Additionally, the more children in teachers' households, the less likely they are to report that would be able to afford an unexpected expense.

**Figure 1 The percentage of teachers who could afford to pay an unexpected expense**



Note: Due to rounding errors, figures may not match breakdowns presented elsewhere  
Source: NFER survey of 1358 teachers: 1196 gave a response

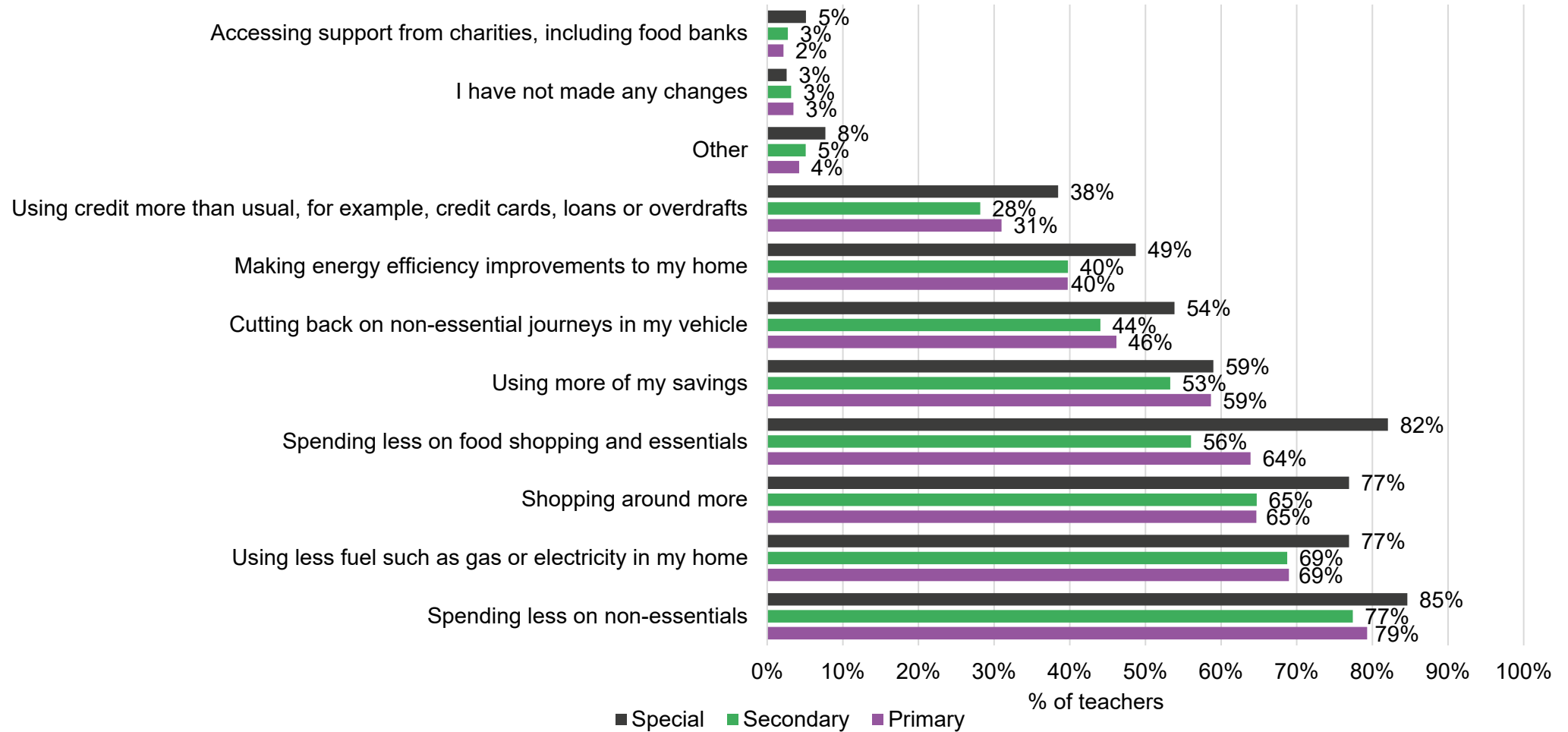
### Teachers are making similar changes as the wider population in response to cost-of-living pressures

Teachers were also asked what changes they had made in the last year as a result of recent cost-of-living increases. The most common changes are spending less on non-essential items, shopping around more and using less fuel such as gas or electricity in homes, as shown in Figure 2. Teachers in special schools are also commonly spending less on food shopping and essentials.

These findings are again in line with the wider British population (ONS, 2023). Only three per cent of teachers across all settings had not made any changes, slightly lower than nine per cent of the British population overall (ONS, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Those who responded 'Not unless I could borrow the money' in our survey have been interpreted as 'Yes' for the purpose of comparing with the ONS findings.

**Figure 2 Lifestyle changes made by teachers in response to recent cost-of-living increases**



Source: NFER survey of 1358 teachers: 1295 gave at least one response

## Recent cost-of-living increases are impacting on teachers' personal lives

The findings above highlight that, while teachers may earn more than the median full-time employee, they are nonetheless facing pressures on their personal finances because of cost-of-living pressures. Indeed, in their open responses<sup>5</sup>, some teachers highlighted that increases in the cost of living are affecting them in the same way as pupils and their households. Younger teachers, in particular, are likely to report that they were struggling to afford their living costs – food, housing and heating.

While teachers should not be required to supply resources for their lessons in the first place, a number of teachers stated that they could no longer buy equipment or resources they needed to deliver their lessons. This chimes with the findings presented in Chapter 3 of the full report which showed that the financial pressures faced by schools are impacting on teaching and learning provision.

The fact that increases in the cost of living are affecting teachers' personal finances is not only likely to place additional pressure on staff already contending with levels of increased need among pupils but is also likely to affect both retention and recruitment to the profession, as discussed in the following sub-chapter.

Cost-of-living increases have significantly affected the quality of life for myself and my colleagues. Affordability of basic foods / services has resulted in no saving and therefore no safety net. We cannot plan for a future and any unforeseen costs e.g., car or boiler repairs results in going into debt. This is not a sustainable way of living and the take home pay should be more reflective of current cost of living. – Mainstream teacher

I'm definitely feeling the effects of cost of living. Worrying about money and how I'm going to pay bills or having to go without food and essential items has an impact on my mental health. Not being able to afford leisure activities, eating out, new clothes, haircuts makes me feel frustrated as a professional working long hours and only just being able to make ends meet. – Mainstream teacher

It has affected me personally a lot. I am a single household and are struggling to pay the bills such as council tax. I am also more reluctant to get resources for the kids in class now as it affects me more financially. – Special school teacher

Taking on a second / third job to afford my bills. This is on top of working full time. I constantly worry about money. I have starting growing food. We look at the bargain section first. We don't socialise because we can't afford it. We don't see family or friends as much as we would like because we can't afford it. – Mainstream teacher

I am worried about how I am going to be able to afford rising travel fares in the long term as well as rising cost of electricity and heating. Because of this I try to do as much work from school so that I do not have to use more energy at home. – Mainstream teacher

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<sup>5</sup> Teachers and senior leaders were asked 'Is there anything else which you would like us to know about how the cost of living is affecting you, your pupils, your teaching or your school?'



## 2.2 Retention

### Key findings

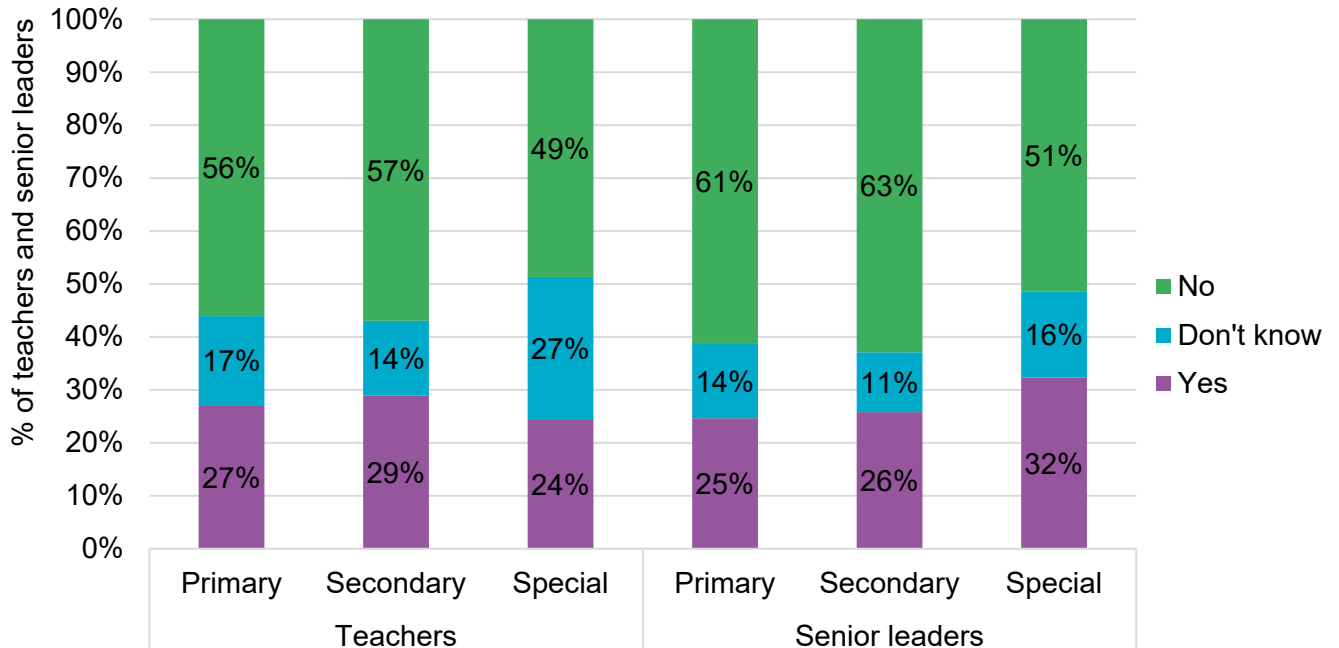
- The percentage of senior leaders and teachers considering leaving the profession (over one in four) has returned to 2019 (pre-pandemic) levels.
- School leaders report teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) leaving school because they can earn more in other jobs and that TAs are taking second jobs alongside their TA role for the first time.

### 2.2.1 Teachers

#### The percentage of senior leaders and teachers considering leaving the profession has returned to 2019 levels

Figure 3 shows that 27 per cent of primary, 29 per cent of secondary and 24 per cent of special school teachers are considering leaving the profession next year. While similar proportions of primary and secondary senior leaders are considering leaving the profession (25 per cent and 26 per cent respectively), a notably higher proportion (32 per cent) of leaders from special schools are considering leaving the profession.

**Figure 3 The percentage of teachers and senior leaders considering leaving the profession next year**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 1170 gave a response and 1358 teachers: 1242 gave a response

While the levels of teachers and senior leaders considering leaving teaching is high, particularly compared to during the pandemic, these are similar to the proportion considering leaving the profession in 2019 when around 26 per cent of senior leaders and teachers report considering leaving. While retention rates had improved during the pandemic, our findings suggest that cost-of-living pressures are exacerbating ongoing retention challenges in education.

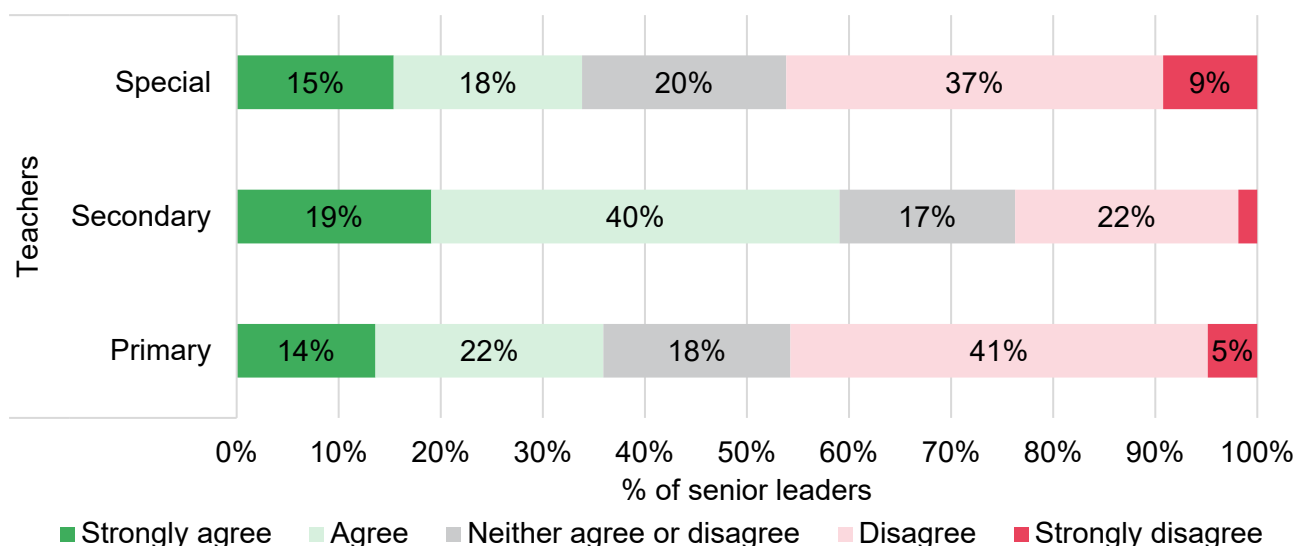
**The impact of cost-of-living pressures on retention is evidenced by leaders reporting that teachers are leaving schools because they can earn more in other jobs**

While teacher retention was already challenging before recent cost-of-living increases, our findings suggest that these increases have made teaching a less attractive career option for households contending with cost-of-living pressures.

Around 59 per cent of secondary senior leaders report teachers leaving to earn more elsewhere compared to 36 per cent of primary schools and 34 per cent of special schools, as shown in Figure 4. This is likely to reflect the fact that that secondary school teachers are more likely to be able to transition into industry or other sectors related to their subject specialism with higher associated earnings (Worth and McLean, 2022).

Senior leaders in the South are also more likely to report teachers leaving school to earn more in another job compared to the Midlands and the North. This is likely to reflect the overall higher costs associated with living in the South and the higher salaries, particularly in areas like London, compared with the Midlands and the North.

**Figure 4 The proportion of senior leaders who agree or disagree that teachers are leaving the school because they can earn more in another job**



Note: Due to rounding errors, figures may not match breakdowns presented elsewhere  
Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 1125 gave a response

In their open responses, teachers and leader again highlighted that the increased cost of living was putting pressure on staff personal finances. This was giving some staff no choice but to move on

into higher paying jobs. Others indicated that it was the combination of pressure on finances in conjunction with the workload, low morale and lack of classroom support that was making it challenging to retain staff in school.

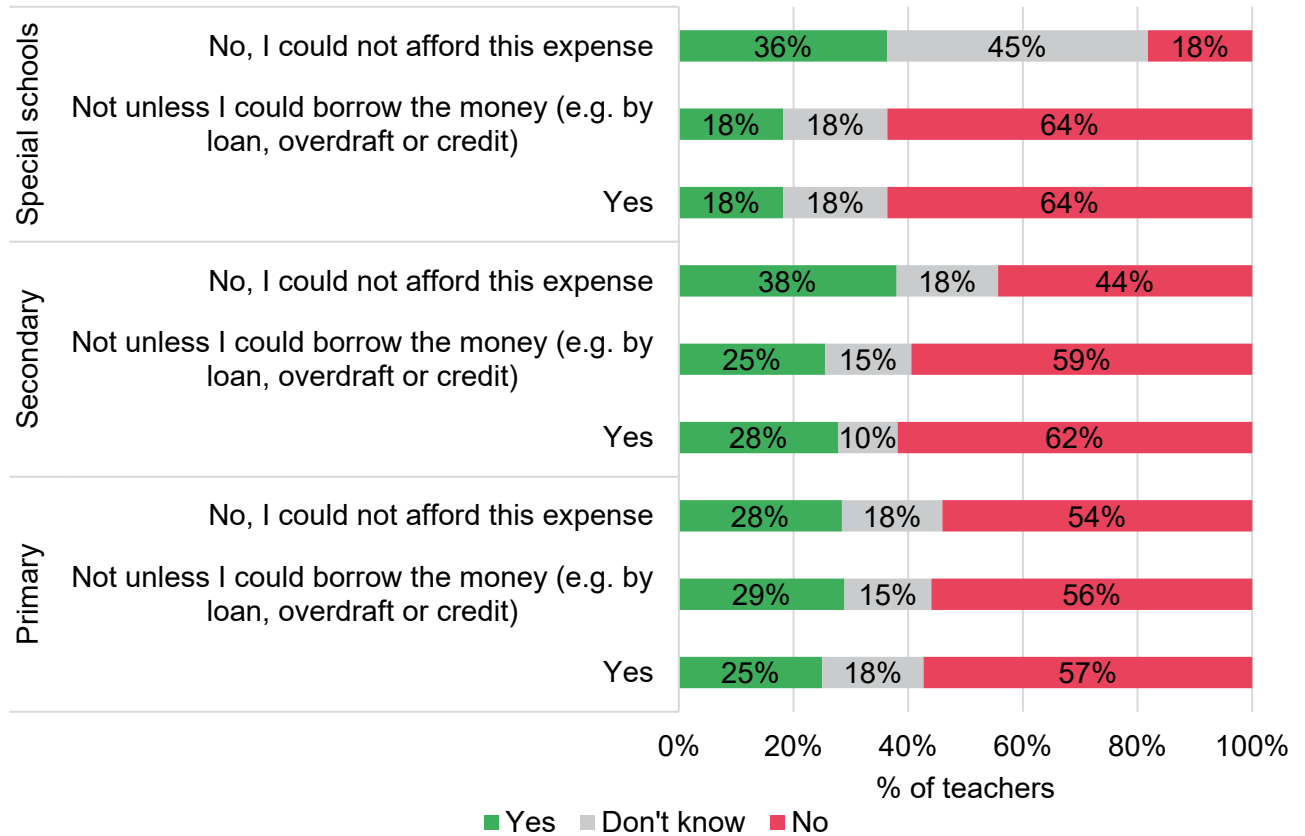
Morale is low with staff as everything in life has gone up and salaries just don't match it. Private sector is beginning to look more and more appealing because they pay properly. – Mainstream senior leader

Teaching salary now requires topping up from other sources e.g., renting our property out on the weekend. I have chosen to leave teaching at the end of this academic year with [classroom challenges] and falling real term salaries being key reasons. – Mainstream teacher

### **Teachers unable to afford an unexpected expense are more likely to say they are planning to leave the profession, particularly in secondary and special schools**

As shown in Figure 5, 38 per cent of secondary and 36 per cent of special school teachers who could not afford an unexpected payment are also considering leaving the profession within the next school year. This was in contrast to those who could afford the payment at 28 per cent of secondary school teachers and 18 per cent of special school teachers. However, this will partly reflect an age effect, as younger teachers are both more likely to have a lower salary and to be thinking of leaving the profession.

**Figure 5 The percentage of teachers who could afford to pay an unexpected expense and their intention to leave the profession**



Source: NFER survey of 1358 teachers: 1146 gave a one response

### 2.2.2 Teaching Assistants and other support staff

**As was the case for teachers, senior leaders also feel that TAs are leaving schools because they can earn more in other jobs**

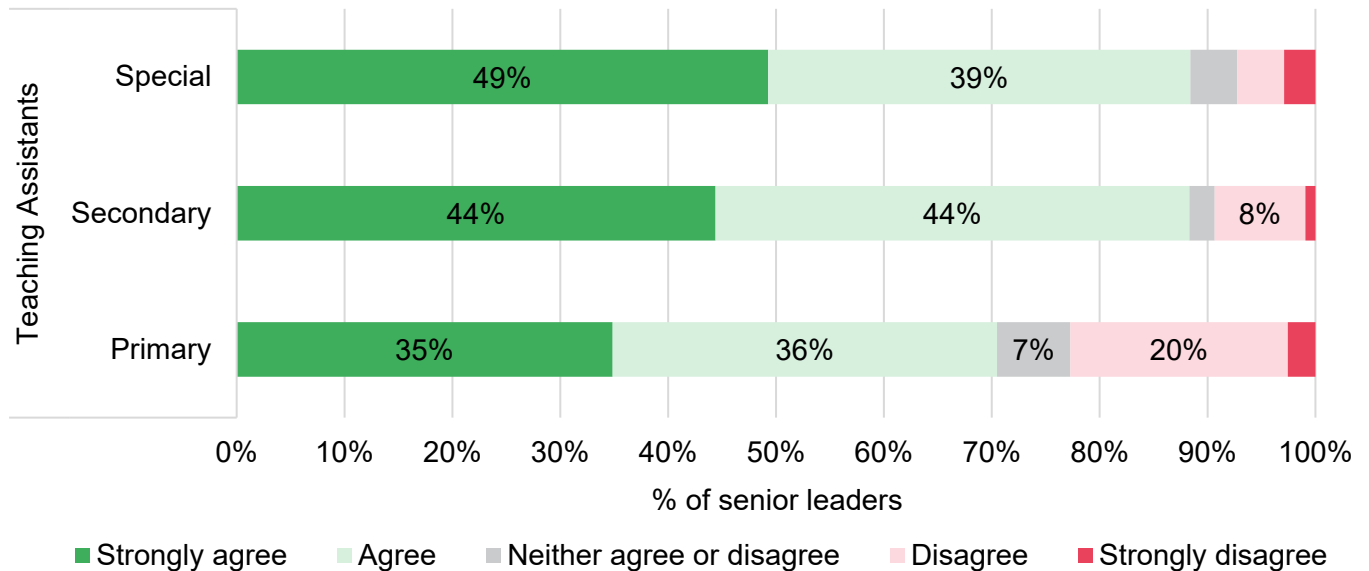
While sub-chapter 2.1 demonstrated that cost-of-living pressures are having significant impacts on teachers’ household finances, similar impacts have been experienced by other school staff, particularly TAs whose starting salaries in 2022 were just over £20,000<sup>6</sup> (NEU, 2023).

Over 70 per cent of senior leaders across all settings report TAs are leaving the school because they can earn more in another job, though there is some variation by phase. Almost nine-tenths (88 per cent) of secondary schools and special schools agree TAs are leaving schools to earn more in another job compared to 71 per cent of primary schools, as shown in Figure 6.

As was the case for teachers, schools in the South are more likely to report TAs are leaving to earn more in another job than in the North or Midlands.

<sup>6</sup> This is based on local government pay scales which are only used by a subset of schools.

**Figure 6 The proportion of schools who agree or disagree that TAs are leaving the school because they can earn more in another job**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 1179 gave at least one response

In their open responses, teachers and leaders highlighted that the impact of the increased cost of living on the personal finances was particularly acute for TAs. As such some TAs are leaving school in favour of job opportunities in other sectors (such as roles in hospitality and retail) that offer either increased pay or opportunities to work more hours. Leaders highlight that this only intensifies workload pressures on remaining staff.

TA pay is appalling. We cannot offer salaries that are an incentive. The school budget cannot sustain the increase in costs without letting high quality staff members leave. – Mainstream senior leader

The support staff are leaving in large numbers as they can earn significantly more in other settings. There are also fewer qualified staff available to fill these posts. – Mainstream senior leader

Support staff are leaving because they can get higher paid jobs in other sectors. TA vacancies remain unfilled due to a lack of suitable applicants. Lack of TAs impacts on teacher workload and teacher well-being. SEND children are increasingly more complex, so need more support. It feels like a vicious cycle. – Mainstream senior leader

TA recruitment is even worse. Since the cost of living has increased we have lost TAs to work in supermarkets, fast food restaurants, hotels and other such roles. We cannot recruit or retain young people into the roles. – Mainstream teacher

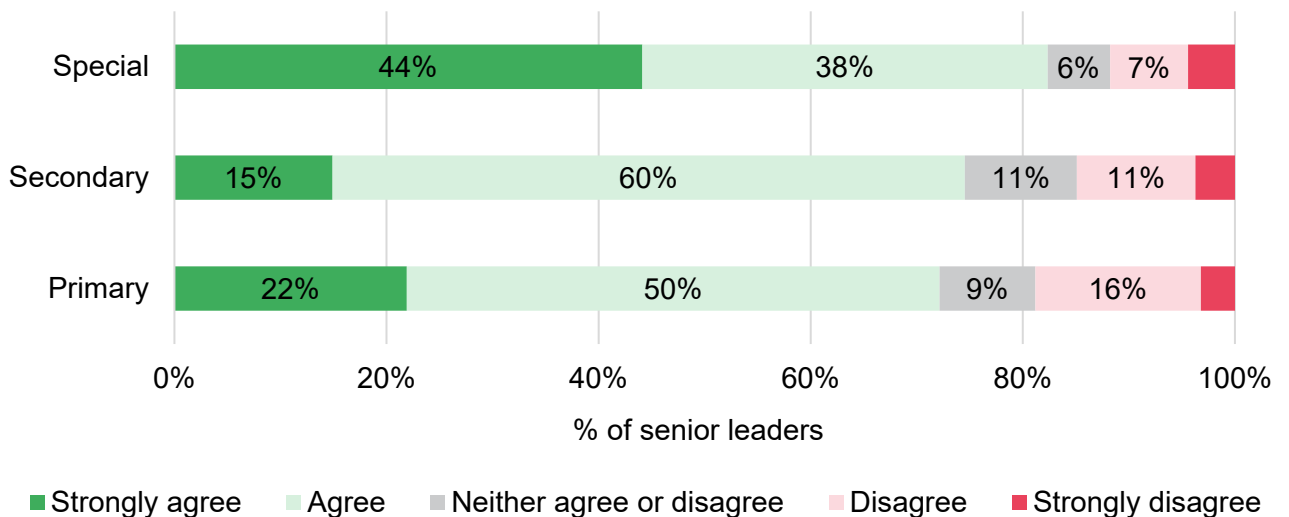
**The majority of schools report TAs are taking second jobs alongside their TA role for the first time especially among special schools**

As shown in Figure 7, 82 per cent of senior leaders from special schools report that some of their TAs are taking second jobs for the first time compared to 75 and 72 per cent of secondary and primary senior leaders respectively.

In addition, among primary schools, higher proportions of leaders in the South report TAs taking second jobs for the first time (at least 76 per cent across all settings) than among leaders in the North (at least 71 percent across all settings) or Midlands (at least 68 percent across all settings). Among secondary schools, the same pattern was observed, but differences between the regions were smaller. Furthermore, significantly more primary leaders report TAs taking second jobs among more disadvantaged schools<sup>7</sup> (as measured by eligibility for free school meals (FSM)) (at 77 per cent) than the least disadvantaged schools (at 63 per cent). There is no clear pattern among secondary schools.

These findings highlight that cost-of-living pressures have led many TAs to supplement their income via other sources and suggests that pay for TAs should be revisited in light of these pressures.

**Figure 7 The proportion of schools agreeing or disagreeing that some TAs in their schools are taking second jobs alongside their TA role for the first time**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 1036 gave at least one response

<sup>7</sup> Sub-sample analysis was not possible for the special schools sample due to the sample size achieved. All analysis presented by school-level disadvantage is for mainstream schools only.

## 2.3 Recruitment

### Key findings

- Among the senior leaders who recruited teaching staff in the last 12-months, nearly all (88 per cent) secondary schools report that teacher recruitment was difficult over the last year. Only a fifth of secondary schools who tried to recruit teachers managed to fill their vacancies within two months.
- A substantial proportion of primary and special senior leaders also reported facing difficulties recruiting teachers, albeit lower than in the secondary sector (59 per cent of primary and 77 percent of special senior leaders).
- The overwhelming majority of schools are also struggling to recruit TAs and other support staff. Large numbers of TA and other support staff vacancies remained vacant for more than two months, especially among special schools.
- Salaries, insufficient numbers of applicants and a lack of applicants with the required skills are the biggest barriers to the recruitment of teachers, TAs and other support staff.
- Half of schools across all settings are struggling to recruit teachers with the required specialist skills and experience. Similarly, around three-quarters of schools are unable to recruit TAs with the required specialist skills and expertise.

### 2.3.1 Teachers

#### *Schools' recent recruitment experiences*

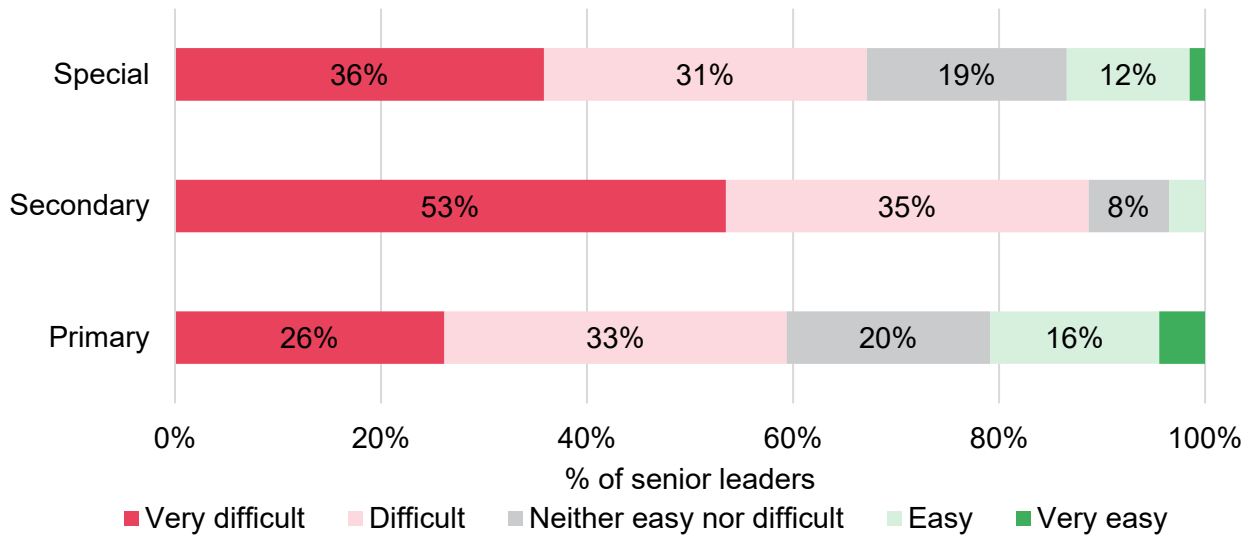
#### **Nearly all (88 per cent) of the secondary senior leaders who tried to recruit teachers report finding teacher recruitment difficult over the last year**

This is shown in Figure 8 which presents how easy or difficult different senior leaders report finding it to recruit, among schools who had to recruit new teachers over the last 12-months<sup>8</sup>. It also shows that there was considerable variation by phase: primary schools are least likely to report experiencing difficulties at 59 per cent, compared to 67 percent of special senior leaders and 88 per cent of secondary senior leaders.

As with retention (as discussed in sub-chapter 2.2), it is likely that the scale of recruitment challenges in schools have been exacerbated by the effects that cost-of-living pressures have had on the relative attractiveness of teaching as a profession.

<sup>8</sup> Among those who were able to answer the question, 1012 (83 per cent) of senior leaders reported recruiting teachers in the last 12 months: 792 primary senior leaders, 228 secondary senior leaders and 68 special senior leaders report attempting recruitment.

**Figure 8 The proportion of schools finding teacher recruitment easy or difficult over the last 12 months**



Note: Due to rounding errors, figures may not match breakdowns presented elsewhere

Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 1012 gave a response

A regression model confirmed that secondary schools are significantly more likely to report experiencing difficulty recruiting teachers, as are schools with a ‘requires improvement’ Ofsted rating (compared to an ‘outstanding’ rating). The model also found that schools in London are more likely to experience difficulty recruiting than schools in the North, Midlands or elsewhere in the South. Further details can be found in Appendix C.

Furthermore, the increased cost of living is also likely to have contributed to historically low initial teacher training (ITT) recruitment in 2022/23 (McLean, Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2023). NFER forecasts show that ITT recruitment in 2023/24 is also likely to be significantly below target. Applications received up to April 2023 suggest that less than half of the secondary teachers that schools need are expected to be recruited (Worth, 2023). This evidence demonstrates that the pipeline of new teachers has deteriorated and is likely to place even further strain on schools attempting to recruit in the coming years.

### *Barriers to recruitment*

#### **Salaries, insufficient numbers of applicants and a lack of suitable applicants with the required skills continue to be significant barriers to teacher recruitment**

Among senior leaders who had recruited for teachers, the most reported biggest barrier is having too few applications, followed by the salaries they can offer and applicants lacking the required skills. This suggests that the recruitment challenges outlined above have been amplified by the impact that cost-of-living increases have had on salaries in the wider economy and on household finances. It chimes with the findings presented in sub-chapter 2.2 which show that senior leaders feel teachers are leaving the profession due to insufficiently competitive salaries.



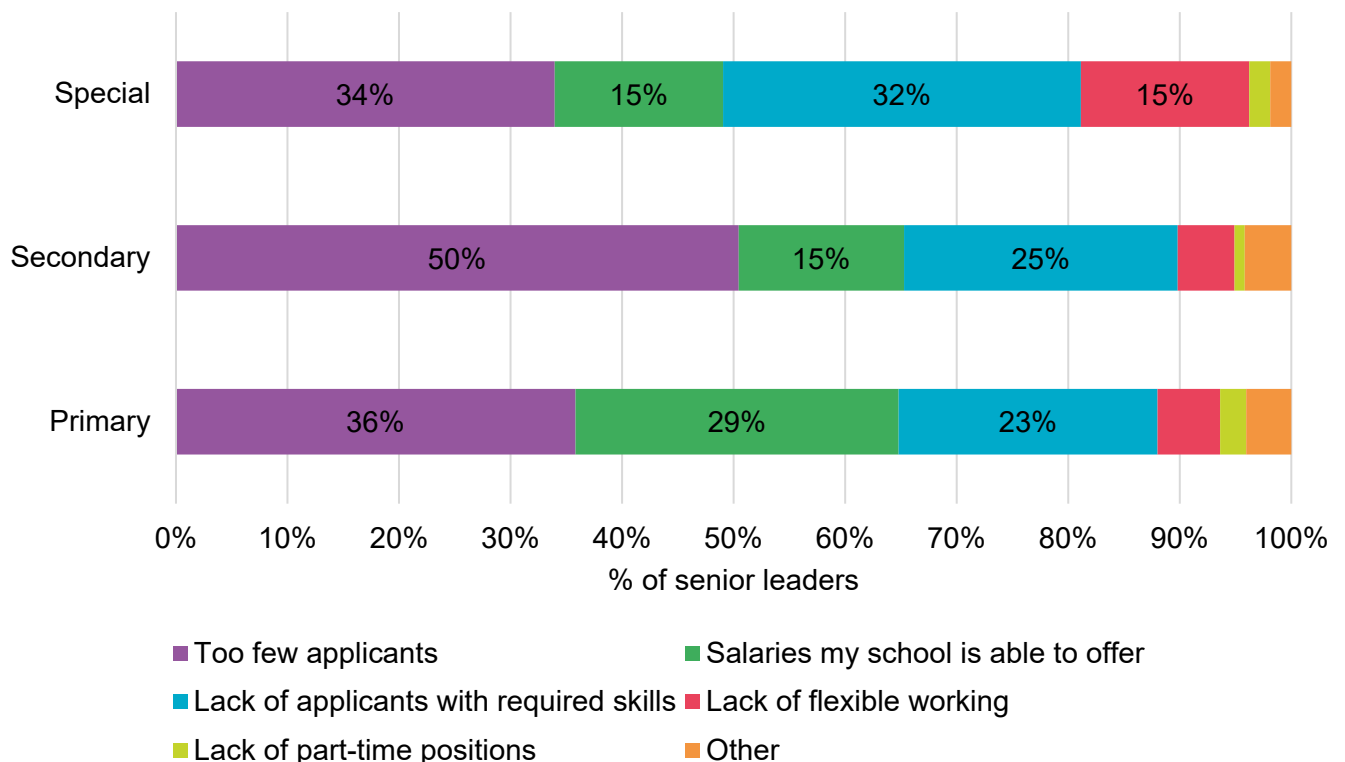
There is some variation by phase. As shown in Figure 9, the proportion of primary schools who report salaries as the biggest barrier to recruitment is almost double that of secondary and special schools (29 per cent compared to 15 per cent).

While previous evidence has demonstrated that the quality and quantity of applicants as well as budget pressures are long-standing barriers to recruitment (Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2022), this data highlights that the increased cost of living and its pervasive impacts on schools may only be exacerbating these issues.

Teaching salaries are very low compared to train drivers, senior NHS workers and private sector colleagues. There is no incentive [now] to teach. – Mainstream senior leader

As a school in London the salaries are the biggest issue. With the exception of experienced teachers the salary doesn't cover the rent, bills and travel costs required with living in London. – Mainstream senior leader

**Figure 9 The single biggest barriers for recruiting teachers reported by senior leader who had recruited for teaching staff**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 908 gave at least one response

*Impact of recruitment challenges*

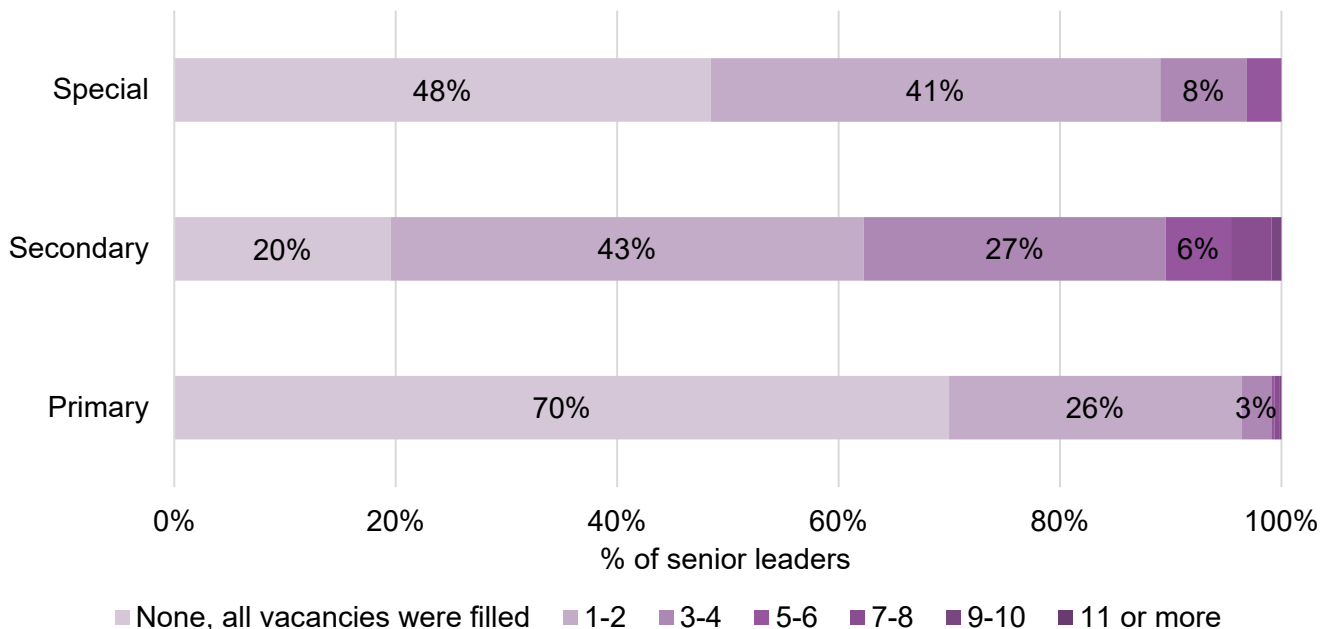
**Due to recruitment challenges which appear to have been exacerbated by cost-of-living pressures, only a fifth of secondary schools filled all teacher vacancies within two months**

When asked how many of their teaching posts remained unfilled for a period of two months or more during the current academic year, among those schools who had recruited in the last 12-months, only 20 per cent of secondary schools report that all teacher vacancies were filled within this timeframe. As shown in Figure 10, this compares to 70 per cent of primary schools and 48 per cent of special schools filling all teacher vacancies.

Furthermore, one in ten (11 per cent) of secondary schools report that at least five of the posts they were recruiting for this academic year remained unfilled for two months or more.

In general, the least disadvantaged mainstream schools report fewer difficulties in filling their teacher vacancies within two months. Among the least disadvantaged quartile of schools, 76 per cent of primaries and 33 per cent of secondaries report filling all vacancies within two months. In comparison, this falls to 67 per cent of primary schools and 19 per cent of secondary schools among the schools in the most disadvantaged quartile of schools (as shown in Figure 14 in the Appendix).

**Figure 10 The number of teaching posts schools were recruiting that remained unfilled for a period of two months or more during the current academic year**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 944 gave at least one response

## **Half of schools report struggling to recruit teachers with the specialist skills and experience required to meet the needs of pupils**

This rises to around two-thirds (67 per cent) of secondary schools, compared to 53 per cent of special schools and 48 per cent of primary schools.

These findings highlight that cost-of-living increases, together with existing pressures faced by schools, have meant that schools are not only finding it difficult to recruit, but are struggling to find staff with the appropriate specialist skills and experience.

In their open responses, senior leaders report having to go without staff and relying on TAs or supply staff to cover gaps in teaching provision. They also report senior leaders taking on larger teaching commitments. For some schools, this is due to an inability to recruit while other schools report taking this step because they cannot afford to recruit staff (as discussed in Chapter 3 of the full report, some schools have had to reduce teacher numbers in response to cost-of-living pressures on their budgets). Other steps schools report taking in response to staffing difficulties include recruiting a lower calibre of staff and amalgamating classes. Senior leaders also highlight that the combined impact of cost of saving measures, together with recruitment challenges, is resulting in increasing workload, poorer teaching and learning provision and lower morale among school staff.

This shows that cost-of-living increases are not only compounding recruitment challenges, but that recruitment and retention challenges are themselves amplifying the impacts of cost-of-living pressures on schools.

Only way to reduce debt is to reduce staffing through recruiting less skilled staff and not replacing some staff when they leave. Impact is negative on the workload of others and also ability to meet post-pandemic challenges. – Mainstream senior leader

We're having to use staff from supply agencies and often they have little or no experience working in schools with children so aren't really able to add to the quality of teaching and learning for the children. – Mainstream senior leader

We worry about being able to support an increasing number of vulnerable pupils as SEND needs have increased and we cannot recruit staff at all, let alone staff who have the experience and skills that is required. – Mainstream senior leader

### 2.3.2 Teaching assistants and support staff

#### *Schools' recent recruitment experiences*

#### **The overwhelming majority of schools are also struggling to recruit TAs and other support staff**

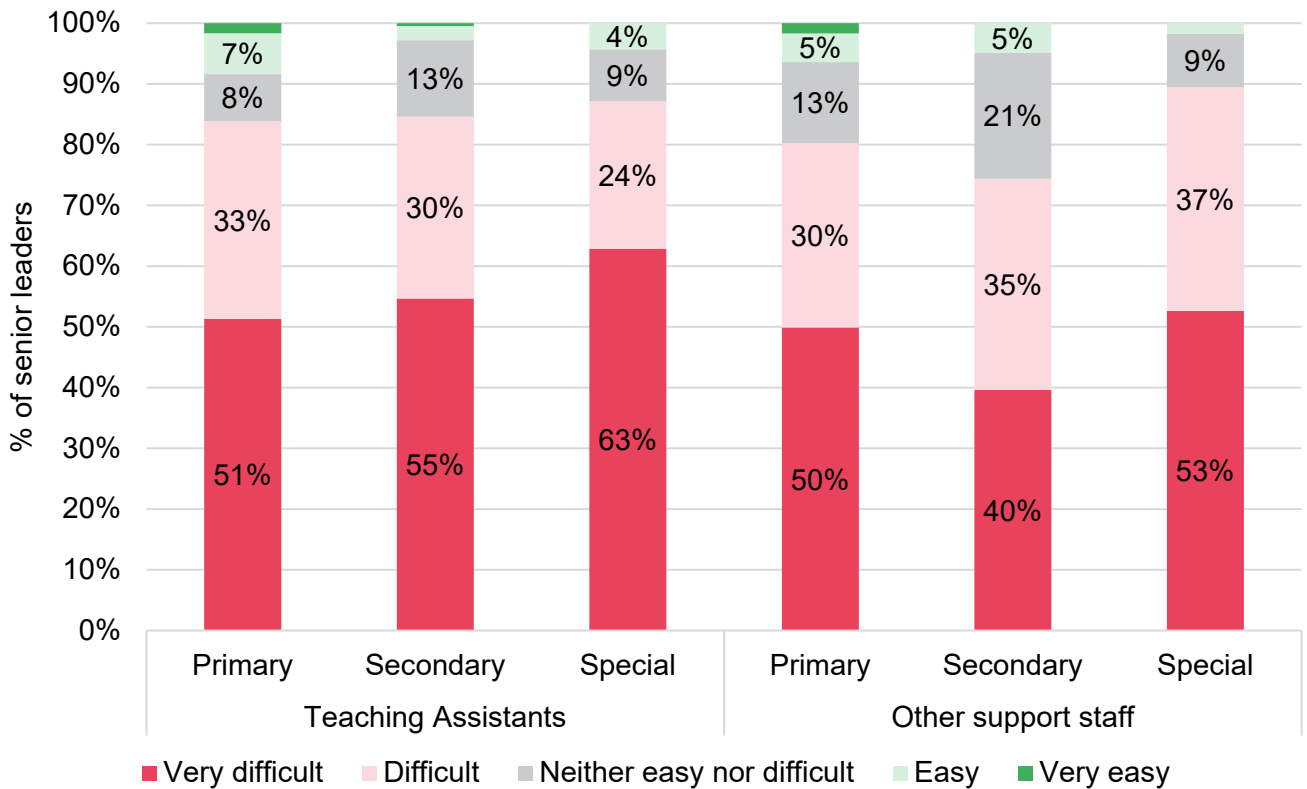
Figure 11 presents how easy or difficult different senior leaders report finding it to recruit TAs and other support staff (e.g., business managers, administrative staff and cleaning staff) among schools who had to recruit staff into these roles over the last 12-months.

Special schools are finding recruitment particularly difficult – 87 per cent report difficulty recruiting TAs (compared to 84 per cent of primaries and 85 per cent secondaries) and 90 per cent report difficulty recruiting other support staff (compared to 80 per cent of primaries and 75 per cent of secondaries). As already discussed in relation to teacher recruitment and TA retention, the fact that recent increases in cost of living have put pressure on household finances is likely to have resulted in individuals looking for roles with higher, more competitive salaries.

The implications of the recruitment difficulties which special schools are experiencing is particularly concerning given the pupil ratios these schools tend to require and the additional responsibilities these staff members often have for supporting pupils and meeting their needs while in school. The lack of support staff contributes to the reduction in the core specialist school offer described in Chapter 3 of the full report – therapy pools cannot operate if there is no cleaner; interventions for social and communication development cannot happen if there are no staff to deliver them; even handling and personal care cannot take place unless suitable adults are available.

However, the lack of TAs in mainstream settings is also likely to be affecting pupils with SEND and those who would most benefit from tailored interventions, given that this is a large part of how TAs are deployed in schools (Skipp and Hopwood, 2019).

**Figure 11 The proportion of schools finding the recruitment of TAs and other support staff easy or difficult over the last 12 months**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: the minimum number of responses given to an individual item was 856

We also estimated a regression model which explored the factors that are associated with senior leaders reporting experiencing difficulty recruiting TAs across mainstream schools in the last 12 months, over and above other factors. The model showed that there are no clear patterns which explain why some mainstream schools are finding TA recruitment particularly difficult. The results can be found in Appendix C.

### *Barriers to recruitment*

#### **Salaries, insufficient numbers of applicants and a lack of applicants with the required skills are also the biggest barriers to the recruitment of TAs and other support staff**

As shown in Figure 12 among senior leaders who had recruited for TAs, salaries and a lack of skilled applicants are the most frequently reported barrier to recruitment. For other support staff, salary is reported most frequently as the biggest barrier to recruitment. This is consistent with the findings and existing evidence on teacher recruitment presented above. It demonstrates that the increased cost of living is making TA and support staff recruitment increasingly challenging for schools just as is the case for teacher recruitment as they are not able to offer competitive salaries relative to other sectors.

There is some important variation by phase. As shown in Figure 12, salaries are more often perceived as the single biggest barrier to recruitment among secondary and special schools (at 45 per cent of senior leaders) than primary (at 34 per cent), particularly in relation to TA recruitment.

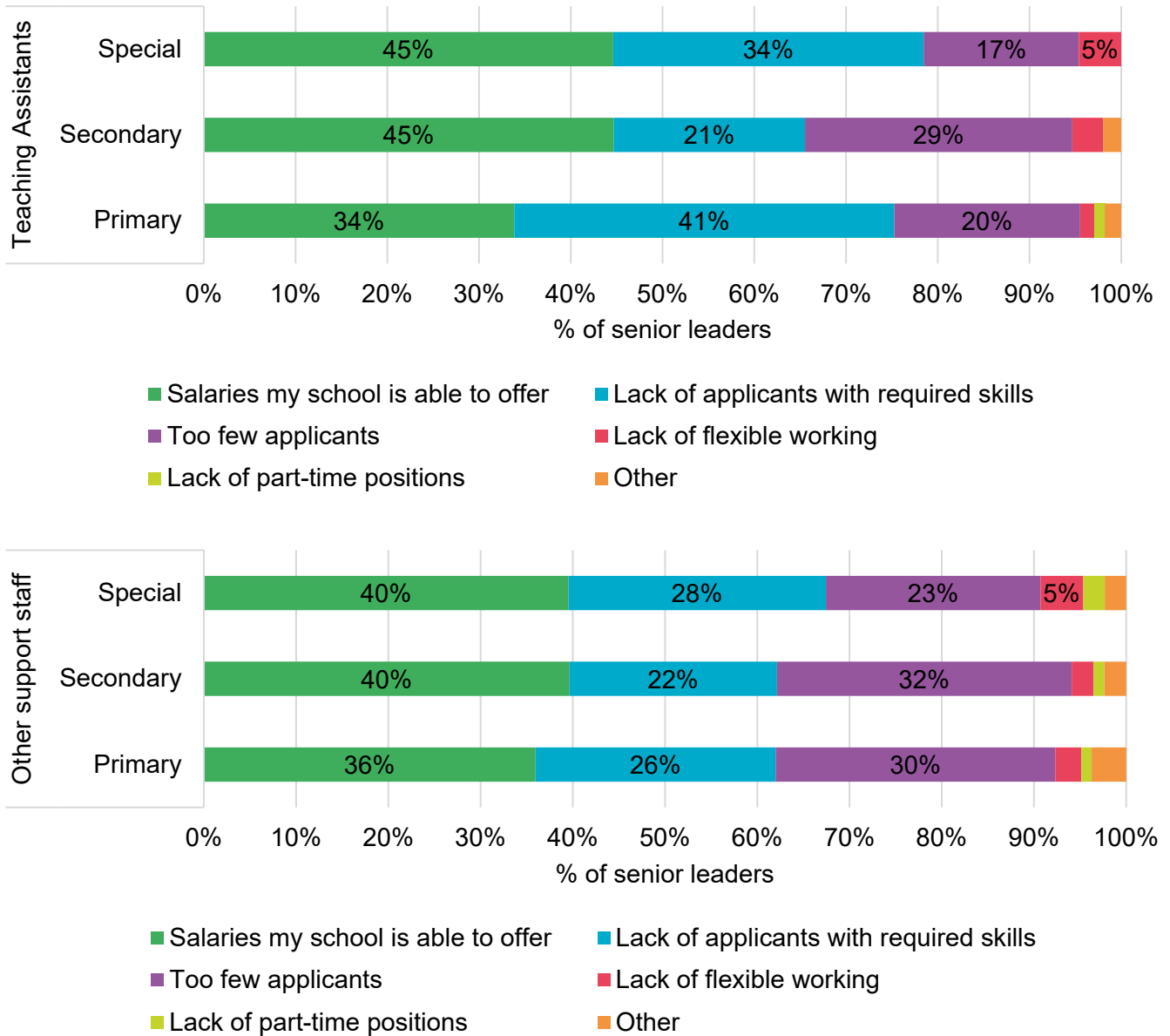
As was the case for teachers, schools in the South, particularly in London, are more likely to report salary as the biggest barrier to recruitment for TAs and other support staff compared with the Midlands and the North. This is likely to reflect the overall higher costs associated with living in the South and the higher salaries, particularly in areas like London, compared with the Midlands and the North.

In their open responses, leaders highlight that the increased cost of living putting pressure on individuals' finances is causing potential applicants to look to other sectors for work as other sectors are often able to offer higher salaries, particularly in comparison to TA and support staff salaries.

The problem with TAs is that their salaries are pro-rotta meaning they would earn more in M&S or Costa coffee because they would be paid for 12 months of the year, as opposed to 44 weeks.  
– Mainstream senior leader

We cannot recruit cleaners etc, as it is not viable when transport costs are factored in. Salaries for support staff means that we struggle to employ TAs when jobs become available. Unless possible recruits need school term only working, the salaries do not stack up for many, supermarkets offer far more and with perks. – Mainstream senior leader

**Figure 12 The single biggest barriers for recruiting staff by role type as reported by senior leaders who had reported for these roles**



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: the minimum number of responses given to an individual item was 744

*Impact of recruitment challenges*

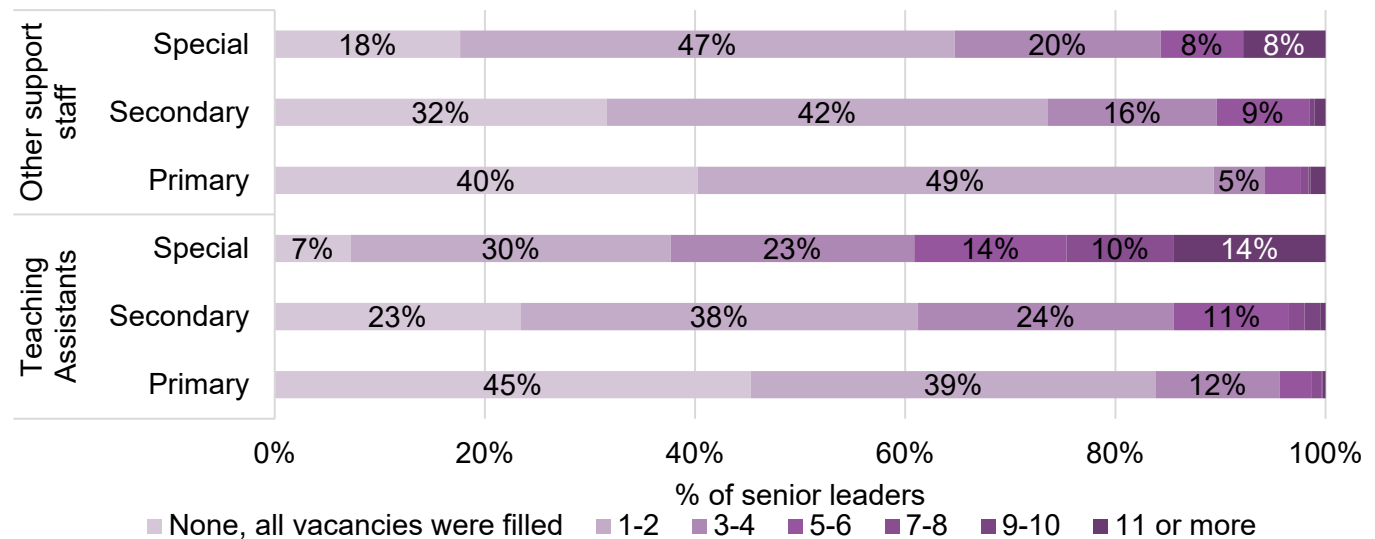
**Large numbers of TA and support staff vacancies in schools – particularly in special schools – are remaining vacant for more than two months**

Among the schools recruiting for TAs over the last 12-months<sup>9</sup>, only seven per cent of special schools report filling all TA vacancies within two months compared to 23 per cent of secondary and 45 per cent of primary schools, as shown in Figure 13. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of special schools report having five or more TA vacancies left unfilled for a prolonged period. By comparison, 14 per cent of secondary schools and just four per cent of primary schools report having at least five vacancies for a period of two months or more.

A similar trend was observed in relation to support staff. Among the schools who had recruited, around 18 per cent of special schools filled all support staff vacancies within two months compared to 32 per cent of secondary and 40 per cent of primary schools. In addition, 16 per cent of special schools report five or more vacancies compared to 10 per cent of secondary schools and six per cent of primary schools.

These findings highlight that difficulties in recruiting TAs and other support staff, which are likely to have been exacerbated by cost-of-living pressures, are leading to schools having to contend with large numbers of unfilled vacancies.

**Figure 13 The number of posts schools were recruiting that remained unfilled for a period of two months or more during the current academic year by role type**



Note: Due to rounding errors, figures may not match breakdowns presented elsewhere

Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: the minimum number of responses given to an individual item was 797

<sup>9</sup> Among those senior leaders who provided an answer the question, 1006 (92 per cent) report recruiting for TAs during the last 12-months.

Across mainstream schools, more disadvantaged schools report being unable to fill TA vacancies within two months compared to the least disadvantaged schools. For example, among schools in the least disadvantage quartile, 55 per cent of primaries and 32 per cent of secondaries report filling all TA vacancies within two months. This falls to 41 per cent of primary schools and 15 per cent of secondary schools among schools in the most disadvantaged quartile.

The same trend was observed for secondary schools recruiting other support staff. Among schools in the least disadvantaged quartile, 40 per cent report filling all support staff vacancies within two months but this decreased to 21 per cent among the most disadvantaged quartile. It is, however, important to note that the converse is true among primaries where 38 per cent of least disadvantaged schools report filling all support staff vacancies compared to 43 per cent of the most disadvantaged schools.

**Around three-quarters of schools are unable to recruit TAs with the specialist skills and expertise required to meet the needs of pupils**

Similar proportions of schools across all phases are struggling to recruit appropriately skilled and/or experienced TAs, with 70 per cent secondary, 71 per cent of special schools and 76 per cent of primary schools reporting this difficulty<sup>10</sup>.

While large shares of all schools are struggling to fill all their TA and support staff vacancies, these findings highlight the particularly stark staffing challenges which special schools are currently experiencing. TAs in special schools will often need to have particular skills to appropriately support specific pupils with SEND, yet their pay may not reflect these requirements. The slow speed at which special schools are able to fill vacancies is particularly concerning given the statutory responsibilities of special schools. If schools cannot fill vacancies, this not only potentially compromises pupil safety, but it may also mean special schools risk being in breach of their legal responsibilities if they cannot meet pupils’ needs.

We are now appointing support staff who we would have been unlikely to interview 18 months ago. – Special senior leader

We are a good school that has historically been easy to attract staff to. There has been a marked decrease in the number of candidates applying for positions and those with the necessary skill sets to meet the needs of the pupils within the school and effectively support high quality teaching and learning. – Mainstream senior leader

There are fewer specialists within our school because they can get better pay and conditions elsewhere. There are fewer TAs because we do not offer good enough pay and conditions. – Special school teacher

[We need] fully funded salary increases for TAs so we can attract and retain quality staff. – Special senior leader

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<sup>10</sup> All senior leaders were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement ‘We are able to recruit TAs with the specialist skills and experience required to meet the needs of our pupils’. 1157 senior leaders gave a response.



## **In response to recruitment challenges, over three-quarters of schools are changing how TAs are deployed in school**

Some 75 per cent of secondary senior leaders, 79 per cent of special senior leaders and 82 per cent of primary senior leaders agree that they have changed how TAs are deployed in schools in response to recruitment pressures (which are in themselves related to cost-of-living pressures). This included using them as staff cover and to carry out more of the school's pastoral work.

We are trying to reduce cover costs and use higher level TAs to cover planning, preparation and assessment and staff absences. – Mainstream senior leader

## **2.4 Discussion**

Schools were already facing significant challenges recruiting and retaining teachers before recent cost-of-living increases (McLean, Worth and Faulkner-Ellis, 2023). Our findings demonstrate that cost-of-living pressures have only exacerbated these challenges. Salaries in schools have not remained competitive enough to attract staff, while additional pressures are affecting staff satisfaction and retention. With schools facing considerable challenges in filling roles with staff with comparable skills and experience, this is only amplifying the impacts of cuts and hindering schools' ability to meet pupil need.

A greater focus is also needed across the sector on ensuring that TAs and non-teaching support staff (such as school business managers) are attractive roles. Primary and special schools, in particular, are facing major challenges in recruiting support staff. Our findings highlight that ensuring that schools have the financial headroom to offer competitive salaries, not only to teachers, but to TAs and wider support staff is a key part of the solution.

**Recommendation 1: The Government should prioritise the refresh of the teacher recruitment and retention strategy and extend its scope. A wider education workforce strategy is needed that has a long-term focus, and includes teaching assistants, school support staff and tutors as well as teachers and leaders. For wider support staff, this should include looking at whether pay is competitive enough to attract and retain sufficient high-quality staff.**

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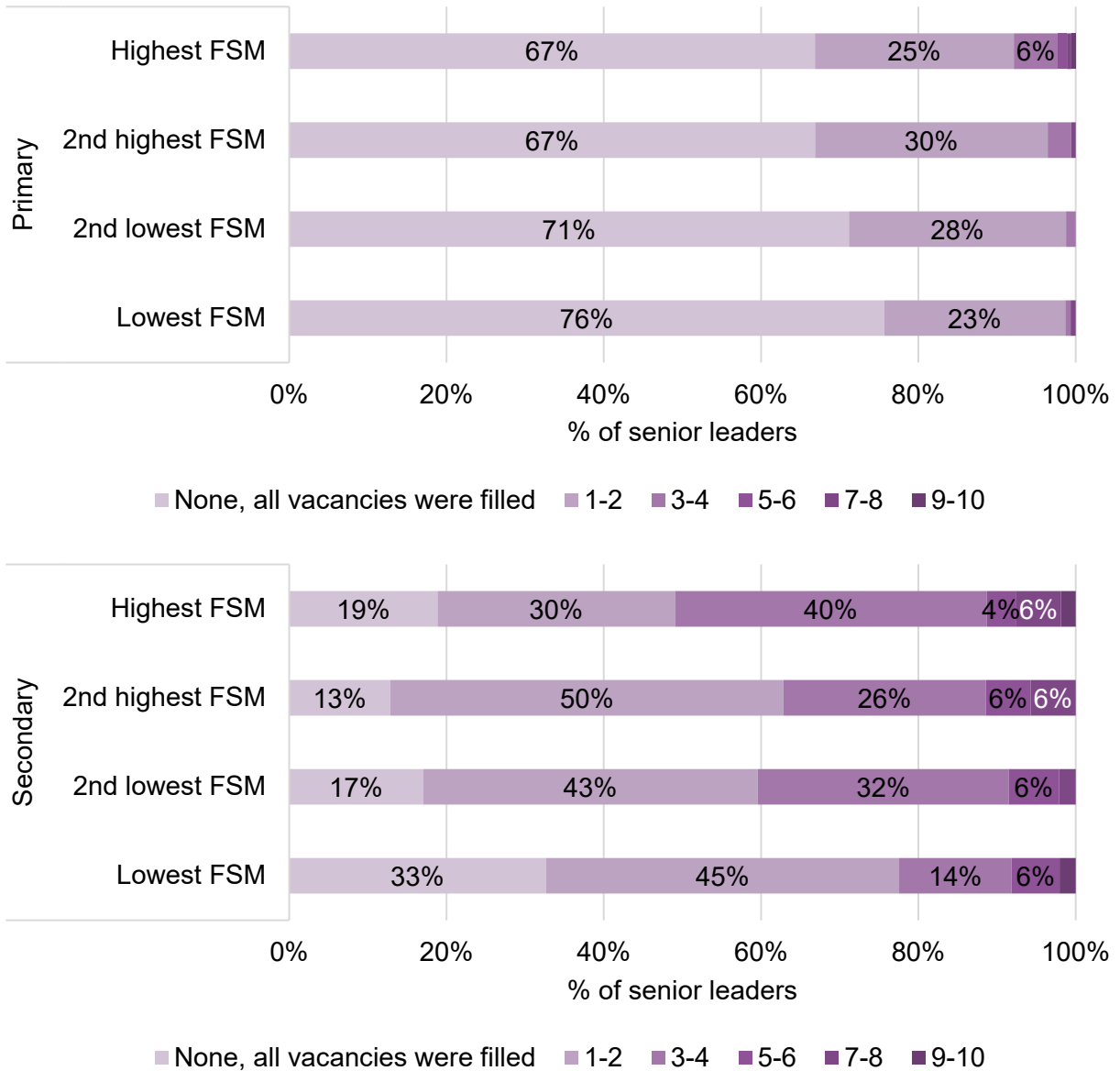
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## Appendix A: Additional figures

**Figure 14** The number of teaching posts schools were recruiting that remained unfilled for a period of two months or more during the current academic year



Source: NFER survey of 1441 senior leaders: 880 gave at least one response

## Appendix B: Methodological approach for descriptive analysis

### Linking to administrative data sources

Our survey data was linked to a range of administrative data sources. The Department for Education's (DfE's) [Get Information About Schools](#) (GIAS) data was used to identify school-level characteristics such as type of school, geographical information. Historical school finance information was drawn from the School Benchmarking Service data (Schools financial benchmarking, 2023) and local authority (LA) high needs funding information was drawn from the planned school and LA funding publication (DfE, 2022).

### A note on derived variables

We created free school meals (FSM) quartiles by identifying the proportion of pupils eligible for FSM in the population of mainstream and special schools respectively, split by phase (primary and secondary, with all-through schools treated as secondary). Based on this, we then split schools into four evenly sized groups known as quartiles by phase and school type.

Quartiles are used in presenting descriptive analysis, rather than quintiles for ease of presentation. Quintiles are used in the regression modelling (see below).

We created the overall region variable by grouping Government Office Regions as follows: North (North West, North East and Yorkshire), Midlands (West Midlands, East Midlands and East of England) and South (London, South West and South East).

In order to estimate the number of pupils in need of additional support across different areas, senior leaders were asked selected one of the following ranges: 'over 90 per cent of pupils', 'between 71 and 90 per cent', 'between 51 per cent and 70 per cent', 'between 31 per cent and 50 per cent' and 'less than 10 per cent'. Mid-points were used to estimate an average across senior leaders currently (as of April 2023) and compared to the same point last year.

In order to estimate the proportion of pupils coming into school hungry, without adequate clothing and without adequate materials, teachers were asked to provide the number of pupils in their class (primary/special schools) or year group/house<sup>11</sup> (secondary schools) who fit into these categories. The proportions of class/year/house groups were calculated using teachers' reported total number of pupils in their class/year/house group.

### A note on sample weighting for mainstream schools

For mainstream schools, we created a variable that identifies whether a school is a primary or secondary school (with all-through schools treated as secondary) and its quintile level of FSM eligibility. This created a 12-category variable of phase and quintile, including two missing categories. We compared the distribution of the responding schools to the population distribution and used a chi square test for independence to determine if weighting was required. Weights were

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<sup>11</sup> Secondary teachers were only asked to provide a response to this question where they were either a head of year or a head of house.

then constructed to ensure that the sample was representative across both phase and free school meal quintiles.

### Representativeness of the special school sample

The special schools sample was not weighted due to the small response rate achieved. Special school responses will best reflect the experiences of a maintained special school with an average level of pupil disadvantage: non-maintained special schools, schools in the North and the most disadvantaged special schools are all under-represented in the data as shown by Table 1 below. Special schools included in the data covered a wide range of SEND specialisms.

**Table 1 Characteristics of the special school survey**

Category	Population (%)	Sample (%)
<b>Type</b>		
Non-maintained	41	17
Maintained	59	83
<b>Region</b>		
South	40	45
Midlands	31	35
North	28	20
<b>Disadvantaged</b>		
Lowest FSM quintile	20	21
2nd lowest FSM quintile	20	20
Middle FSM quintile	20	23
2nd highest FSM quintile	20	22
Highest FSM quintile	20	15

Source: Based on pooled responses from 87 senior leaders and 41 teachers from special schools. Population proportions are based on data from 1756 special schools

## Appendix C: Regression methodology

### Approach

We estimated five statistical models to provide more detailed insights into the drivers and determinants of cost-of-living pressures to address the following research questions:

1. Which factors are most closely associated with schools reducing spending in order to accommodate the cost of providing cost of living support to pupils and their households?
2. Which factors are most closely associated with schools agreeing that the increased cost of living has negatively impacted on the quality of teaching and learning provision in school?
3. Which factors are most closely associated with schools feeling able to meet pupils additional needs?
4. Which factors are most closely associated with schools facing difficulties in recruiting teachers?
5. Which factors are most closely associated with schools facing difficulties in recruiting teaching assistants (TAs)?

All statistical models were unweighted and estimated on mainstream senior leader responses only. As all outcome variables were modelled as binary variables, all estimates were derived using a logistic regression approach with marginal effects estimated at means.

All categorical variables were turned into dichotomous variables and, where appropriate, responses were grouped to reduce the set of factors included in the modelling. As there were only small numbers of independent variables with missing observations, these were included in models using dichotomous dummies to avoid sample attrition.

The set of factors included in each model was tailored to the outcome variable of interest, and included school characteristics (i.e., Ofsted rating, school phase, SEN quartile, FSM quintile, region, whether the school was urban or rural, whether the school was an academy), wider factors (i.e., LA high needs fundings) alongside other relevant questions asked as part of the survey.

The set of independent variables for each model was refined using multi-collinearity tests. Where collinearity between variables was identified, the set of variables to be included in the models was refined using a general to specific approach.

### Models

Our model findings are presented in Tables 2-3 below. Two tables (a basic and extended model) are presented for the first model, both with and without wider survey variables. This is to reflect the fact that some of the survey variables tested for inclusion are mediators for the impacts of schools characteristics.



**Table 2 Extended model related to schools facing difficulty recruiting teachers**

Variable	Variable label	Average Marginal Effect	Standard error	Level of significance
Establishment Type	Local authority maintained schools	-0.024	0.033	0.473
FSM quintile	Lowest - Middle 20%	-0.051	0.050	0.304
	Middle 20%	0.028	0.050	0.577
	Middle - Highest 20%	0.064	0.051	0.209
	Highest 20%	0.065	0.056	0.244
Latest Ofsted Rating	Good	0.003	0.049	0.947
	Inadequate	-0.249	0.210	0.236
	Requires improvement	0.146	0.066	0.027*
Phase	Secondary	0.285	0.031	0***
Priority Education Investment Areas (EIA) <sup>12</sup>	Yes	-0.015	0.061	0.813
Region	Midlands	-0.112	0.048	0.02*
	North	-0.219	0.051	0***
	South	-0.130	0.050	0.009**
SEN quartile	Second 25%	0.005	0.046	0.912
	Third 25%	0.021	0.050	0.675
	Top 25%	0.035	0.050	0.489
Urban or Rural	Urban	-0.003	0.037	0.938

Notes: All marginal effects measured relative to the lowest FSM quintile, primary schools, academies, schools in London, outstanding schools, non-priority EIAs, rural schools and schools in the lowest SEN quartile. A model with interaction terms between region and FSM was also tested, but all factors remained statistically insignificant

\*\*\* denotes significance at 1% level, \*\* denotes significance at 5% level and \* denotes significance at 10% level.

Source: Based on a sample of 904 senior leaders. Schools who had not recruited teachers in the last 12-months are excluded

<sup>12</sup> Education investment areas (EIA) are the third of local authorities in England where educational outcomes were weakest based on low performance across key stage 2 and key stage 4 between 2017 and 2019, alongside areas previously identified as requiring additional support (known as opportunity areas) (DfE, 2023a). These areas are receiving additional support from government. In 2022, 24 of these EIAs were identified as priority EIAs and so receive additional funding and support over and above what is provided to all EIAs (DfE, 2023b).

**Table 3 Extended model related to schools facing difficulty recruiting teaching assistants**

Variable	Variable label	Average Marginal Effect	Standard error	Level of significance
Establishment Type	Local authority maintained schools	0.021	0.027	0.432
FSM quintile	Lowest - Middle 20%	0.006	0.040	0.88
	Middle 20%	0.025	0.040	0.525
	Middle - Highest 20%	0.015	0.043	0.73
	Highest 20%	0.066	0.043	0.123
Latest Ofsted Rating	Good	-0.016	0.037	0.664
	Inadequate	-0.121	0.167	0.469
	Requires improvement	-0.028	0.056	0.613
Phase	Secondary	0.021	0.030	0.487
Priority EIA	Yes	-0.053	0.045	0.237
Region	Midlands	-0.064	0.047	0.173
	North	0.030	0.045	0.505
	South	0.038	0.045	0.401
SEN quartile	Lowest - Middle 25%	0.038	0.036	0.289
	Middle - Highest 25%	0.026	0.040	0.508
	Highest 25%	0.023	0.041	0.584
Urban or Rural	Urban	0.004	0.029	0.894

Notes: All marginal effects measured relative to the lowest FSM quintile, primary schools, schools in London, outstanding schools, academies, non-priority EIAs, rural schools, schools in the lowest SEN quartile. A model with interaction terms between region and FSM was also tested, but all factors remained statistically insignificant

\*\*\* denotes significance at 1% level, \*\* denotes significance at 5% level and \* denotes significance at 10% level.

Source: Based on a sample of 954 senior leaders. Schools who had not recruited TAs in the last 12-months are excluded

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The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ  
T: +44 (0)1753 574123 • F: +44 (0)1753 691632 • [enquiries@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@nfer.ac.uk)

[www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk)

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