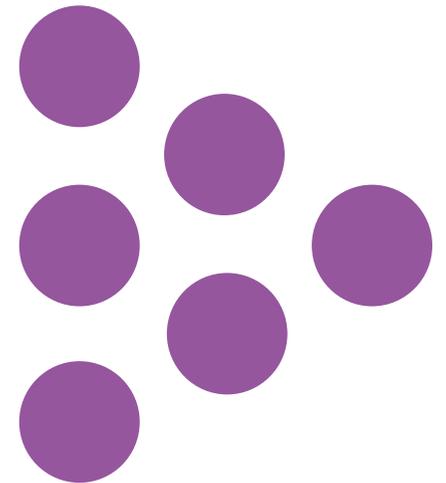

Report

Part-time Teaching and Flexible Working in Secondary Schools

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)



Part-time Teaching and Flexible Working in Secondary Schools

Caroline Sharp
Robert Smith
Jack Worth
Jens Van den Brande

Published in June 2019

By the National Foundation for Educational Research,
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ

www.nfer.ac.uk

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Registered Charity No. 313392

ISBN: 978-1-911039-88-4

How to cite this publication:

Sharp, C., Smith, R., Worth, J. and Van den Brande, J. (2019). *Part-Time Teaching and Flexible Working in Secondary Schools*.
Slough: NFER



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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the teachers and school leaders who contributed to this research by responding to the survey and taking part in interviews.

We would also like to thank the Association for School and College Leaders (ASCL) for their support and interest in the research.

We are grateful to the following NFER staff and Associates for their contributions to this research: Kerry Swain and Caroline Stanford conducted interviews; Tom Kirkup helped us to recruit our interviewees; and Vani Cardozo was our invaluable Project Coordinator.



Executive Summary

Introduction

Ensuring there are enough high-quality teachers in England's schools is crucial for delivering a first-class education for young people. Attracting and retaining enough secondary teachers is a key challenge facing school leaders today. Providing more opportunities for part-time and flexible working may provide part of the answer.

Although the number of teachers working part-time has been rising since 2010, considerably fewer teachers work part-time compared to the average in the wider economy (DfE, 2019). Enabling teachers to work part-time appears to be a particular challenge in secondary schools.

Study aims and methods

This research sets out to identify the demand for part-time teaching and flexible working in secondary schools, to provide insights into the barriers and discover how some schools with high levels of part-time teachers are making it work.

The research used three methods of data collection:

- Survey questions in NFER's nationally-representative Teacher Voice Omnibus survey (June 2018), with responses from 475 teachers and 125 school leaders
- Analysis of data from the 2017 school-level School Workforce Census (SWC), to identify a sample of schools with high

proportions of teachers working part-time and a sample with lower proportions of teachers working part-time

- Interviews with 19 senior leaders in English secondary schools in spring 2019 (eight with a high proportion of teachers working part-time and 11 with a slightly lower than average proportion of teachers working part-time).

There is an unmet demand for part-time working in secondary schools

Excluding those who said they would ideally like to reduce their hours but cannot afford to work part-time, 36 per cent of secondary teachers and leaders would ideally like to work part-time compared to the 19 per cent who currently do so (a difference of 17 percentage points).

Around half of these teachers say they would prefer to work 0.8-0.9 full-time equivalent (FTE). There is also some demand for working 0.6-0.7 FTE, but relatively low demand for working 0.5 FTE or less. This indicates a degree of unmet demand, especially for working 0.8-0.9 FTE. However, the extent of the unmet demand is likely to be lower than the 17 percentage points suggests. This is because some of those who said they would ideally like to work part-time might not actually choose to do so if they had the opportunity. Also, around a third of the full-time teachers who ideally wanted to work part-time had already applied to do so – if they are successful, this does not represent unmet demand.

This report focuses on meeting the demand for part-time work to retain current teachers and to attract returning teachers back into the profession. The overall impact of more part-time working on teacher supply would depend on whether the teacher recruitment and retention benefits off-set the reduction in working hours per teacher.

Some teachers suspect their schools would not agree to part-time working

The main reason that secondary teachers who wish to reduce their hours and could afford it do not request part-time working is because they suspect their schools would not agree to such a request. The other main reason is a concern about the effect that working part-time might have on their future career progression. This concern could be well founded, as several of the school leaders (although not all) who took part in the interviews said they would not agree to middle or senior leaders working part-time. This was because they thought it would make it impossible to undertake strategic duties, manage staff and lead teams effectively.

School leaders are concerned about the possible impact of part-time working on pupils

School leaders' concerns focused on four main issues.

1. Ensuring continuity for pupils and fitting different working patterns into the timetable
2. Very few of the school leaders we interviewed were able to identify examples of flexible working patterns. They said that

the nature of teaching made it difficult to enable teachers to work flexibly in other ways, beyond part-time working.

3. School leaders were concerned about communication issues for staff working flexibly or part-time (mainly between staff, but also with parents).
4. School leaders cited the additional costs of employing more teachers and funding the time for handovers between staff working part-time.

The main benefit from part-time and flexible working for schools is to retain good teachers

School leaders identified four main benefits from part-time and flexible working:

1. increased teacher retention and recruitment – in particular, school leaders said that offering part-time working had enabled them to retain effective teachers who might otherwise have left the school
2. a positive impact on staff wellbeing, leading to improved energy and creativity for the whole staff
3. retaining specialist expertise and maintaining the breadth of the curriculum
4. an opportunity to reduce costs (by reducing the amount of teaching hours required).

Proactive leadership is key to enabling part-time working

Interviewees from both groups of schools said there were two main reasons for the current level of part-time working in their schools: the profile of the teaching staff and the culture of the school. In particular, the proportion of female teachers returning from maternity leave was a large influence on demand for part-time working. However, they acknowledged that school leaders' attitudes also made a difference to whether teachers would consider applying for part-time or flexible working.

Schools with high proportions of staff working part-time tended to adopt a proactive approach towards part-time and flexible working rather than responding to teachers' requests on an ad-hoc basis. They took a systemic approach, which required flexibility on both sides. This included issuing an annual request to teachers asking for any requests to change their working pattern in the next academic year. School leaders then checked whether they could make teachers' requests fit with the timetable and staffing before negotiating with staff. This was much easier to achieve when teachers were willing to be flexible too. Several school leaders said a two-week timetable was helpful in enabling more flexible working patterns.

School leaders used a number of strategies to bring their staffing back to capacity, including: negotiating with part-time staff to increase their hours; employing recent retirees; employing trusted supply teachers; asking full-time teachers with spare capacity to teach another subject; or sharing a teacher with another school.

School leaders attempted to ensure continuity for pupils by minimising the number of subject teachers and form tutors working with each group. Some schools had arranged for teachers to share the role of form tutor, and had increased flexibility by separating registration from pastoral sessions.

Flexible working (as opposed to part-time working) appeared to be more difficult for school leaders to accommodate due to the restrictions of the school timetable and because they preferred teachers to be on site during school hours. However, some schools allowed teachers to do planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) at home and there were a few examples of schools enabling individuals to work flexible hours.

School leaders said it was important to continue to ensure strong lines of communication with staff, pupils and parents for part-time staff. They achieved this by: scheduling staff meetings and parents' evenings on a particular day of the week, which coincided with most teachers' working days; making notes of staff meetings readily available; and investing in secure IT systems to facilitate information sharing between staff.

Although some school leaders said that part-time working was incompatible with middle or senior leadership, others enabled senior leaders to work part-time, either by sharing tasks among the leadership team and/or by delegating tasks to less experienced teachers. This required some planning, to identify which tasks were role specific, and to ensure there were sufficient leaders on site to deal with emergencies.

When asked what policy levers would encourage schools to increase the use of part-time and flexible working, the small sample of school leaders we interviewed suggested that additional funding would support them in covering the perceived costs – although a few school leaders had used flexible working to generate cost savings. They did not feel that new timetabling tools or a job-sharing service would be particularly helpful, and gave a cautious welcome to advice from other head teachers. The school leaders we interviewed said that although teachers may wish to reduce their hours to relieve workload pressures, part-time working was not an ideal solution because it could result in teachers devoting more of their own, unpaid time, to the non-teaching aspects of the job. Interviewees identified this as part of the bigger issue of unreasonable workloads in the teaching profession and called for more concerted action from policymakers to reduce the administrative burdens on teachers.

Conclusion and recommendations

This research has identified an unmet demand from secondary teachers for part-time and flexible working. We make the following recommendations for policymakers and school leaders.

1. The DfE should encourage the providers of leadership training (such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship and related qualifications) to develop content on adopting a proactive approach to part-time and flexible working.

School leaders' attitudes and actions are critical to increasing opportunities for more flexible working, which is likely to increase the retention of secondary teachers in the profession and help to improve

work-life balance. Leadership training provides an opportunity for aspiring and new leaders to explore the issues involved.

2. The DfE should continue to prioritise reducing teacher workload and encouraging more flexible working in schools, including working with teacher organisations and middle tier organisations, such as local authorities and MATs. This could include gathering and sharing of good practice and publicising the benefits for schools.

Workload pressure is one of the reasons teachers would like to reduce their hours, but the leaders we interviewed pointed out that unreasonable workload is a bigger issue that needs to be tackled in order to make teaching a more sustainable career.

3. Further research is needed to consider the overall short-run and long-run implications for teacher supply of enabling more part-time and flexible working.

This would include investigating the likely behavioural responses, the effects on teacher recruitment and the potential impacts of more flexible working patterns. NFER will investigate the data that is available to provide plausible estimates.

4. School leaders should adopt a positive attitude towards encouraging part-time working, with flexibility on both sides.

We recommend that school leaders adopt a proactive and systematic approach to encouraging flexibility for teachers whilst prioritising the needs of pupils. This includes seeking applications from all staff for part-time and flexible working and negotiating with individuals in advance to find a reasonable solution. It also involves flexibility from

teachers wanting to change their working patterns. Structural features that can help include changing the timetable, revising the pastoral support system and improving IT systems to support communication and remote access.

5. Governors and school leaders should enable middle and senior leaders to adopt part-time working.

Restricting leadership to those willing and able to work full-time limits the pool of leadership talent and means that teachers have to choose between leadership and part-time/flexible working. On the other hand, part-time and flexible working patterns for middle or senior leaders can encourage a more distributed model of leadership and help to provide effective succession planning. We therefore suggest that policymakers, governors and school leaders seek to identify and address the barriers to more flexible working patterns for middle and senior leaders in schools.

6. School leaders and policymakers should encourage more opportunities for flexible working among secondary teachers, beyond part-time working.

This research found few examples of flexible working, as opposed to part-time working among teachers. The main barriers appear to be the rigidity of the school timetable and a requirement for teachers to be on-site for PPA time. We therefore recommend that policymakers and middle tier organisations should focus on identifying and sharing examples of successful flexible working, in order to encourage its wider adoption in schools.

Introduction

Ensuring there are enough high-quality teachers in England's schools is crucial for delivering a first-class education for young people. However, as the number of secondary pupils is forecast to increase by 15 per cent between 2018 and 2025, attracting and retaining enough secondary teachers is a key challenge facing school leaders today (Worth, *et al.*, 2018).

One of the ways of encouraging more teachers to remain in the profession for longer – and potentially to attract more to join the profession – is to ensure there are part-time or flexible working opportunities when teachers need them. Providing opportunities to keep teachers who would have left without being able to go part-time retains their expertise and reduces the risk of losing them from the profession permanently.

NFER research (Worth *et al.*, 2018) has shown that a lack of part-time and flexible working opportunities is an important factor contributing to some secondary teachers leaving the profession and is preventing others from returning (Buchanan *et al.*, 2018). Action to improve the availability of these working patterns is therefore likely to have benefits for recruiting and retaining teachers – although the overall impact on teacher supply will depend on whether the increase in the *number of teachers* off-sets the reduction in *working hours per teacher*.

Supporting schools to improve the availability of part-time and flexible working opportunities forms a key strategic objective of the DfE's

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, published in January 2019 (DfE, 2019). This states that 'creating a culture that promotes flexible working ultimately comes down to headteachers', who are 'the ones who can ensure these opportunities become the norm in teaching'.

However, while having a strategic objective of supporting headteachers to implement flexible working practices is welcome, the detail of *how* to support headteachers effectively is a crucial next stage of policy delivery and implementation. This new NFER research looks in detail at the barriers that secondary school leaders face in implementing flexible working and identifies priority actions for school leaders and policymakers.

How many teachers currently work part-time?

The latest teacher workforce data in England shows that 27 per cent of primary school teachers and 19 per cent of secondary teachers worked part-time in 2017. These figures have been rising since 2010, when they were 25 per cent for primary and 17 per cent for secondary teachers.

Part of the difference between primary and secondary teaching is explained by there being more female teachers in primary schools, more of whom work part-time in both sectors. However, a significant part of the gap persists even after accounting for differences in the gender distribution. More generally, fewer teachers work part-time compared to the average in the wider economy (DfE, 2019).

Part-time teaching is most prevalent among women in their late 30s and early 40s, which corresponds to the period in which women are most likely to decrease their employment workload to take on childcare responsibilities (Worth *et al.*, 2018). The proportion of male teachers working part-time rises with age and peaks in their late 50s (around one in five) as they approach retirement age. Around a third of female teachers in their fifties work part-time.

NFER analysis of Understanding Society (USoc) data shows that among those who leave the profession, the percentage of secondary teachers working part-time increases by 20 percentage points after they leave for another job (Worth *et al.*, 2018). This suggests that there is unmet demand for part-time working amongst secondary teachers. There is no significant change in part-time working among primary teachers who leave. Data from the Labour Force Survey suggests there is also a degree of unmet demand for part-time working among primary teachers, but the USoc data suggests that this is not driving those teachers to leave (Worth *et al.*, 2018).

Part-time secondary teachers also have higher rates of leaving the profession than part-time primary teachers and their full-time secondary colleagues (Worth *et al.*, 2018). This suggests that secondary teachers and/or secondary schools have more difficulty making part-time employment work and that part-time teachers in secondary schools find it more difficult to sustain the demands of part-time working alongside their other responsibilities.

Part-time working is just one form of flexible working arrangement. Our analysis of data from the USoc survey suggests that, apart from

job-sharing, teachers are less likely to work flexibly than nurses and police officers (Worth *et al.*, 2018). The flexible working arrangements measured in the survey include job sharing, flexi-time, working compressed hours, and regularly working from home.

The evidence suggests that there is unmet demand for part-time working opportunities in secondary schools that drives some teachers to leave teaching in order to work part-time. The evidence also suggests that, compared with the primary sector, part-time teaching in secondary schools is more challenging for teachers and/or schools to sustain. The relative inflexibility of secondary schools also creates a barrier to re-entry for secondary teachers who wish to return to teaching. For these reasons, supporting secondary schools to accommodate and implement more part-time and flexible working is likely have a positive impact on teacher recruitment and retention.

Why do teachers want to work part-time?

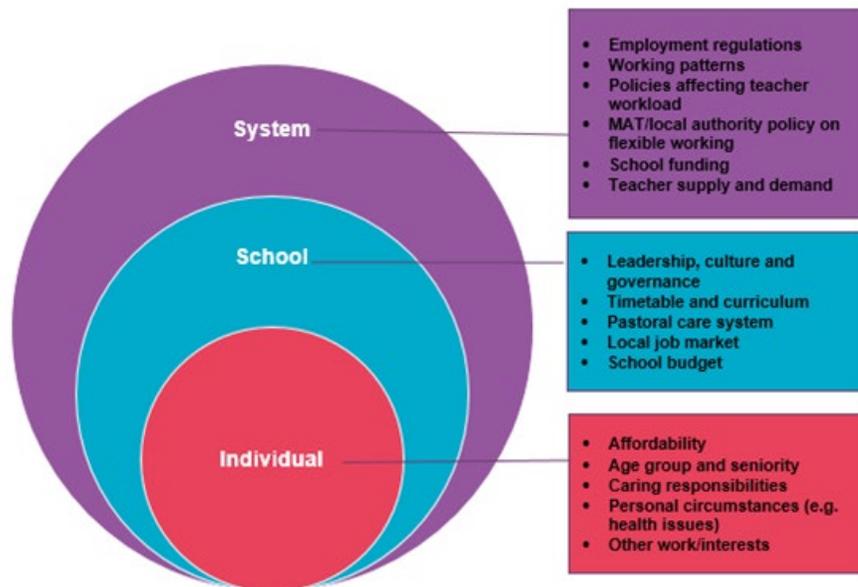
Teachers' decisions to work part-time or flexibly are influenced by a number of factors, (Worth *et al.*, 2018; CooperGibson Research, 2019). In addition to the influences of caring responsibilities and retirement planning set out above, some teachers may wish to work part-time or flexibly for health reasons, to improve their work-life balance or to free up time for other part-time work, study or to pursue other interests. Ultimately, though, their personal finances determine whether part-time working is affordable.

At school level, leadership, culture and governance are important in setting the expectations for teachers' working patterns. Other school-level influences include the local job market (i.e. the supply and

demand for teachers), the school's budget, the curriculum and timetable.

At system level, a number of wider influences come into play, including population trends and employment legislation as well as national supply and demand, school funding and other policy decisions affecting teachers' working conditions.

Figure 1: Different influences of teachers' demand for part-time and flexible working



Research aims

In this research, we address the following research questions:

- What is the extent of unmet demand for part-time and flexible working in secondary schools? What are the reasons why this demand has not been met?
- What are the barriers that secondary school leaders face in implementing part-time and flexible working?
- How can these barriers be overcome?

Methodology

We used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to meet these aims. These were:

- Survey questions in NFER's nationally-representative Teacher Voice Omnibus survey
- Analysis of data from the 2017 school-level School Workforce Census (SWC), to identify samples of schools with high proportions of teachers working part-time and with lower proportions of teachers working part-time
- Interviews with 19 senior leaders in English secondary schools (eight with a high proportion of teachers working part-time and 11 with a lower proportion of teachers working part-time).

Survey questions

The Teacher Voice Survey took place in June 2018. Questions on part-time and flexible working included whether teachers would ideally like to work different hours and the reasons for not working their ideal working pattern, as well as questions on their job satisfaction and the manageability of their current workload. A total of 600 secondary staff responded to the survey: 475 were teachers and 125 were school leaders.

SWC analysis

Our sampling strategy for the interviews was firstly to identify a group of secondary schools with higher than average rates of part-time working. While part-time working is only one aspect of many that comprise flexible working, we used this as a proxy for our sampling as it is the only form of flexible working measured for every school through the SWC. We wanted to find out how the leaders of schools with high proportions of teachers working part-time manage to run their schools effectively, what they see as the benefits and where the remaining challenges lie.

Second, we identified a group of schools with a proportion of part-time staffing that was slightly below average. We selected this group

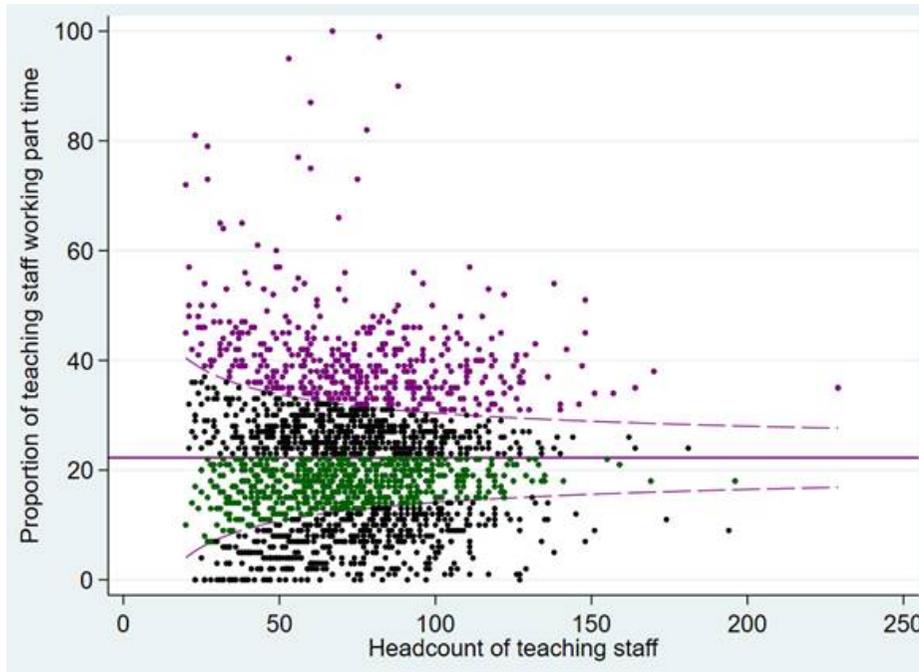
because they have some experience of part-time working and may have the potential for more. We wanted to know what influences their current levels of part-time working, what barriers these school leaders face and what might encourage them to increase opportunities for part-time and flexible working in future. We anticipated that by comparing the views of these two groups of leaders, it would enable us to identify what was different about the most flexible schools.

Our analysis of SWC data found that across all secondary schools in England with at least 25 teachers, an average of 22 per cent of teachers were working part-time¹. We excluded schools with less than 25 teachers as very small secondary schools are likely to have a unique set of challenges (e.g. newly-established schools).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of part-time working across schools with different numbers of teaching staff. There is wide variation in the proportion of teachers working part-time across schools. There are several schools with no teachers working part-time and a few with over 60 per cent of teaching staff working part-time. In most schools less than half of the teaching staff were employed part-time and there is a large concentration of schools between ten and 40 per cent of teachers working part-time.

¹ This differs from the 19 per cent reported in the national tables, published by DfE in the same statistical release as the school-level data. DfE states that the national figures may differ because the school-level figures *'have not been adjusted to account for schools that did not make a return or to account for multiple contracts for the same post, or where teachers are in service with more than one employer'*.

Figure 2 Plot for identifying schools with high and average levels of part-time working



Source: School Workforce Census, DfE statistical first release.

The plot shows the variation of part-time teachers for schools of different sizes. We anticipated that there may be more part-time working in larger schools, because it might be easier for larger schools to fit part-time working into their timetables. However, the percentage of teachers employed part-time does not seem to be related to the size of a school. This suggests that other influences may be more

important at school level – a theme which we explored in our interviews with school leaders – see below.

Variation between schools tends to be greater among schools with fewer teachers, because each individual teacher has a greater impact on the school average. We therefore used a ‘funnel plot’ to select the schools. The funnel plot shows that small schools have a greater variation in part-time rates, whereas large schools tend to have a smaller variance. Drawing a sample containing schools with the highest part-time rates would result in a sample with a disproportionate number of small schools, which is undesirable as the experiences of large schools would not be included.

The relationship between how spread out the data is and the number of teachers it is based on follows a mathematical formula derived from statistics, known as the ‘control limit’ which is similar to a confidence interval. By using the control limit, this sampling approach gives large schools a fair chance of being selected.

The purple dots represent schools with an above average proportion of teachers working part-time (the average for this group was 43 per cent) and the green dots represent schools with slightly below average numbers of teachers working part-time (the average for this group was 17 per cent). These were the two groups of schools we sampled to approach for interview. We compared schools with high levels of part-time working and those just below average because we wanted to understand the experiences of school leaders with some experience of part-time working in their schools. Arguably, the latter group has a greater potential to increase the extent of part-time and

flexible working than schools which have little experience of part-time working patterns due to structural or cultural reasons.

Interviews with school leaders

We conducted interviews with 19 senior leaders (16 headteachers or principals, one assistant head, and two business managers) in English secondary schools. The sample comprised a range of schools across England, including small and large schools, located in rural, urban and inner city areas. Eight of the schools had a high proportion of teachers working part-time and 11 had a slightly lower than average proportion of teachers working part-time.

The interviews took place in spring 2019. They were conducted by telephone and lasted around 45 minutes. Questions focused on: the school's policy towards part-time and flexible working among teachers; the application and decision-making process; opportunities for flexible (as opposed to part-time) working; opportunities for part-time/flexible working for teachers in middle and senior leadership positions; benefits, challenges and recommendations on how to encourage more part-time and flexible working in schools.

What is the extent of unmet demand for part-time and flexible working?

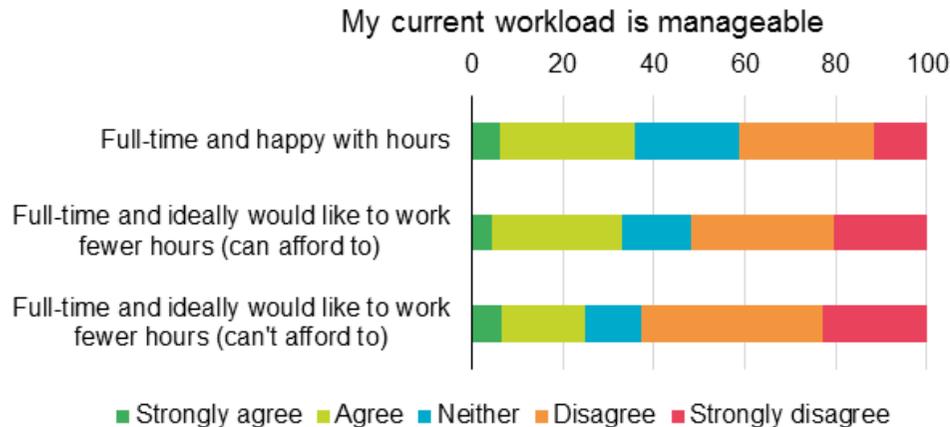
The Teacher Voice survey asked teachers and leaders to confirm their current working pattern in terms of full-time equivalent (FTE) and to indicate what working pattern they would ideally like to work. The data shows that although four-fifths (81 per cent) of the responding secondary teachers and leaders were working full-time, less than half

(45 per cent) would ideally do so. Most of the unmet demand was from full-time staff, but some of those currently working part-time would also ideally like to reduce their hours from their current part-time level.

Teachers and leaders whose current and ideal working hours were not the same (218 respondents) were asked why this was the case. The most common reason, given by around half of respondents, was that they could not afford to work shorter hours because of the reduction in income this would represent. This suggests that if they were offered a part-time position they would not accept it.

One of the reasons for wanting to work part-time may be to reduce workload. Figure 3 shows that those who want to reduce their hours are more likely to disagree that their workload is manageable: 52 per cent for those who can afford to go part-time, and 63 per cent for those who can't. However, teacher workload is also an issue for those who work full-time and don't want to change their working hours, 41 per cent of whom disagree that their workload is manageable.

Figure 3 Preference for part-time work is associated with finding workload unmanageable



Source: NFER Teacher Voice omnibus survey, June 2018

The school leaders we interviewed said part-time working was not an ideal way to relieve workload pressures because it could result in teachers devoting more of their own, unpaid time, to the non-teaching aspects of the job. Interviewees identified this potential driver for part-time working as part of the bigger issue of unreasonable workloads in the teaching profession and called for more concerted action from policymakers to reduce the administrative burdens on teachers.

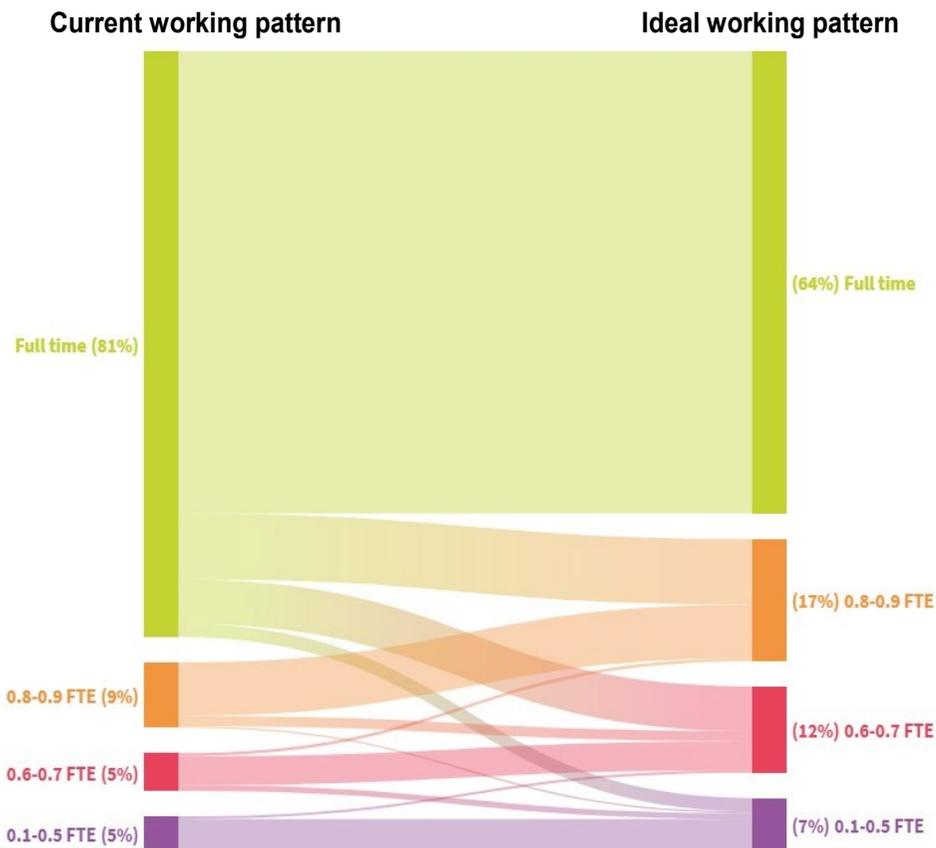
To investigate the other reasons for teachers and leaders wanting to reduce their working hours, we have assumed that the ideal working pattern of those who say they couldn't afford to go part-time is the same as their current working pattern. While it may not be ideal for

them in the true sense, we assume that their current working pattern is optimal given the alternatives.

Figure 4 summarises the differences between secondary teachers' and leaders' current and ideal working patterns. Assuming those who would like to reduce their hours but could not afford to work part-time do not represent unmet demand, 36 per cent of secondary teachers and leaders would ideally like to work part-time compared to 19 per cent who currently do so. This represents a potential unmet demand of 17 per cent of teachers and leaders, who would ideally like to work part-time and can afford to do so (not including part-timers who would like to change their hours).

While only nine per cent of teachers currently work four days per week or nine days per fortnight (0.8-0.9 FTE), around 17 per cent would ideally like to work hours in this range and could afford to make the change. More teachers would like to work three days per week/seven days per fortnight (0.6-0.7 FTE) than currently do. The data shows that there is relatively low unmet demand for working 0.5 FTE or less. One implication of this for school leaders is that 0.8-0.9 FTE could be challenging to timetable given the low demand for teachers to work small numbers of hours per week to make up for the reduction in hours. We return to this issue later in this report, using interviews from leaders of schools with high proportions of part-time teachers to explain how they make it work.

Figure 4 A proportion of full-time secondary teachers would like to work part-time instead



Source: NFER Teacher Voice omnibus survey, June 2018. N = 589.

Figure 4 gives an indication that there is unmet demand for part-time working among full-time teachers and leaders. However, we should be cautious about assuming that all of those who are currently working full-time and would like to work part-time would do so if they could. This is for two main reasons.

First, some movement between full-time and part-time working would happen anyway. Our analysis of SWC data shows that between 7,000 and 8,000 secondary teachers move from working full-time to part-time each year and around 3,000 to 4,000 move from working part-time to full-time. Indeed, Figure 5 below shows that 28 per cent of those who would like to reduce their hours and can afford to change them are intending to make a request very soon or have one pending. Many of these teachers may be successful in arranging a part-time role so their demand is likely to be met in the normal course of events, in which case the unmet demand for part-time work is less than 17 per cent.

Second, stated intentions are not the same as actions. For example, previous NFER research has found that the proportion of teachers who say they intend to leave teaching in the next year is considerably higher than the proportion that we know actually leave each year (Worth *et al.*, 2015). The survey did not probe how strongly teachers felt about their intentions to change their working arrangements, so it is difficult to predict the likelihood of these teachers actually moving to part-time working if they were offered the opportunity, but it is highly unlikely that all of them would do so.

What impact might more part-time and flexible working opportunities have on overall teacher supply?

Figure 4 illustrates the demand for part-time work. If this was the only change, the total number of teaching hours available to schools would reduce. However it does not illustrate the whole picture. Creating more opportunities for part-time and flexible working is likely to have positive benefits for teacher recruitment and retention. These include retaining teachers who would otherwise leave, encouraging more returners who would like to work part-time to return to teaching and attracting career-changers into the profession.

The overall impact of improved part-time and flexible working opportunities is highly uncertain as it depends on the relative sizes of the positive retention and recruitment effects and reduction in hours due to changes in work arrangements. However, creating more part-time and flexible opportunities is unlikely to represent the only solution required to address the teacher supply challenge. NFER will investigate the data that is available to quantify plausible estimates for what the impacts could be. Further research is needed to, where possible, explore the short-run and long-run implications for teacher supply at the system level.

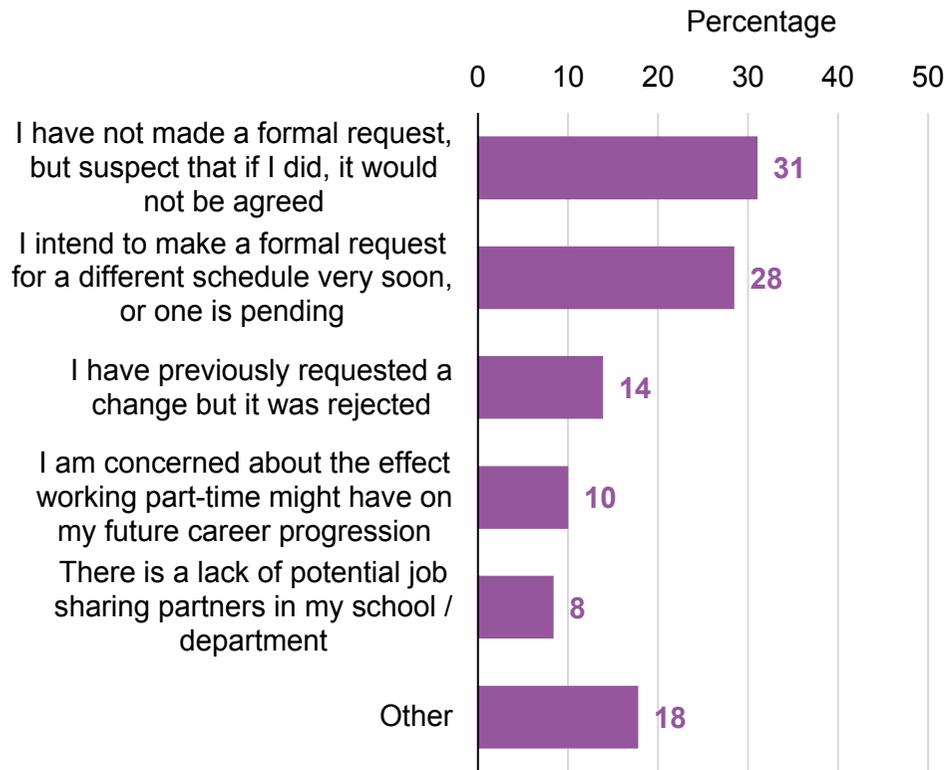
Barriers to part-time and flexible working

This section explores the barriers to more flexible working patterns for teachers and school leaders.

Reasons why teachers are not working their ideal hours

So if part-time working is the ideal for so many full-time teachers who can afford it, why is it not more common? Teachers responding to the Teacher Voice survey whose current and ideal working hours were not the same were asked why this was the case. Figure 5 shows that the main reason was a concern that their request would not be accepted.

Figure 5 Aside from affordability, the most common reason for not working part-time is that teachers suspect their request would not be accepted



Source: NFER Teacher Voice omnibus survey, June 2018. Question asked if current working pattern is different from ideal working pattern. Respondents could give more than one response. Excludes those who responded 'I couldn't afford to work part-time or more part-time', N = 130.

The reasons for not working fewer hours were driven by teachers' perceptions and actual experiences of requesting a reduction in their working hours. Just under a third of the teachers (31 per cent) who wanted to work fewer hours and could afford to do so said they had made no formal request for part-time working, but suspected that if they did their senior leaders would not allow them to change. This was not reflected in our interviews with school leaders – all of whom said they would consider seriously and attempt to accommodate teachers' requests for part-time working (though note that we did not interview school leaders from schools with very low proportions of teachers working part-time).

Teachers' perceptions that senior leaders would not agree to their request was a more widespread barrier to part-time working than the actual incidence of teachers' requests being turned down (14 per cent). This implies that flexible working is strongly influenced by the extent to which senior leaders welcome part-time working and take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to encouraging part-time working patterns.

Among teachers who would like to reduce their hours, ten per cent said they were concerned about the effect that working part-time would have on their future career progression. This concern was reflected in the comments of some (though by no means all) of the senior leaders we interviewed. Some of our interviewees were of the opinion that it was simply not possible for teachers with a middle or senior leadership responsibility to work on a part-time or flexible basis. They felt working part-time would make it impossible to undertake strategic duties, to line-manage staff, and lead teams effectively.

School leaders also referred to specific challenges related to part-time working among middle or senior leaders, such as safeguarding and legal issues which meant that they needed sufficient middle and senior leaders to be on site during normal working hours.

As a result of these concerns, these interviewees said that they would not agree to requests for part-time or flexible working from staff in leadership positions. One senior leader from a school with a high proportion of teachers working part-time said *'I can't think of a situation where I would allow somebody on a responsibility area to go part-time'*. This comment was echoed by another who said: *'I make it crystal clear that if they want to go part-time, they will be stepping down from their responsibility area'*.

Barriers faced by school leaders

The school leaders we interviewed raised a number of barriers and concerns regarding part-time and flexible teaching arrangements. These were common across the two groups of interviewees, although leaders with higher proportions of teachers working part-time tended to identify fewer concerns and more benefits. Leaders' concerns focused on four main issues:

1. ensuring continuity for pupils and timetabling different working patterns
2. constraints on other forms of flexible working
3. communication issues
4. additional costs.

Ensuring continuity for pupils and timetabling challenges

School leaders said their main motivation was to provide the best education for their pupils and that it could be difficult to balance the needs of pupils with the wishes of teachers for more flexible working.

Some school leaders said that it was not ideal for pupils to have more than one teacher for a subject because this disrupted the continuity of pupils' learning. They also described the challenge of fitting teachers' working patterns into the timetable.

We know from a previous Teacher Voice survey (Smith *et al.*, 2018) that school leaders cite 'timetabling difficulties' as one of the main barriers to part-time and flexible working in schools. A particular challenge for our interviewees lay in finding staff to make up the missing hours created by a teacher who wanted to reduce their hours, especially when looking for someone to teach a small number of hours in a shortage subject.

In addition to teaching duties, some interviewees said accommodating part-time and flexible working caused challenges for pastoral care, especially having sufficient teachers to act as form tutors. As one said: *'We very much put an emphasis on the pastoral and staff being available for children to see. So, if a staff member goes part-time, they still have to be given their PPA time and therefore you are restricting the amount of time they have available to do other 'softer' teacher duties like being a form teacher and being there for their form class, or being able to do intervention work with their classes or being able to do clubs. You find they are very much focussed on their lessons and trying to get everything done within that time.'*

Some leaders also raised concerns about ‘inflexibility’ on the part of teachers seeking to change their working arrangements. In particular, they said that some teachers wanted to work specific hours or that too many staff wanted to take the same days of the week as their non-working days (typically Mondays and Fridays). This could create timetabling difficulties for schools if a teacher’s request for part-time or flexible working meant that there were too few teachers available to cover working and pastoral duties on certain days of the week.

Constraints on other forms of flexible working

Flexible working patterns for teachers (such as staggered or compressed hours, or allowing staff to work from home) were generally viewed as problematic by the school leaders we interviewed. They pointed out that teaching requires teachers to be present in the classroom and the teaching day allows few opportunities for flexibility. They also referred to other requirements for teachers to be on site, such as form tutor periods, departmental PPA sessions, whole-staff meetings and training sessions. Some were concerned that flexible working arrangements would reduce the number of teachers available at any given time, emphasising that their school’s priority was to have as many teachers as possible on site during working hours.

Communication issues

Some leaders feared that an increase in part-time or flexible working would hinder communication and information-sharing in their school because staff were not together often enough; explaining that it was ‘difficult to run a school when people aren’t there’. They emphasised the importance of whole-team and whole-school meetings where staff were able to review and plan work together. Some leaders thought that enabling staff to work part-time or flexibly was an additional complication that could slow the pace of work in a school.

A few school leaders raised concerns about the effects of increased part-time and flexible working on staff morale. They feared that full-time staff would be required to ‘pick up the slack’ for those working part-time and this could cause resentment. On the other hand, they were concerned that part-timers could begin to lose their sense of ‘belonging’ and possibly have a lower level of commitment to the school. As one interviewee said: *‘I think there’s a danger sometimes of part-timers not feeling included in the life of the department’*. School leaders also referred to the practical constraints on the number of rooms, which meant that teaching spaces could not always be reserved for a specific teacher if they worked part-time.

A few school leaders voiced concerns about the potential impact of part-time or flexible working on the school’s relationships with parents. In particular, they referred to the difficulty of ensuring staff were available for parents’ evenings on their non-working days. They were also concerned that parents could have difficulty contacting a teacher to discuss an issue affecting their child.

Additional costs

Several school leaders said that part-time or flexible working arrangements were more expensive than employing a single full-time member of staff. This was particularly difficult for school leaders to accommodate given recent budget constraints which meant that schools had cut their staff allocations to a minimum. As one leader said: *'The rhetoric [on flexible working] is wonderful and I'm philosophically completely into it, but the reality means I need to over-fund my school by twenty per cent so I can create the flexibility for my staff to suit them and their work-life balance. But no-one will give me that money.'*

Another explained: *'The ideal way to get people to communicate is face-to-face and then unfortunately that is much more expensive because you are paying for two members of staff to be on site when you actually only want one.'*

Several interviewees estimated the additional costs to be around 0.2 FTE more than a full-time teacher because two members of staff working 0.5 FTE would each need to be employed for 0.6 FTE to allow time for handovers, attending meetings and training. This does not include the additional time needed for senior leaders to revise their staffing and timetabling or the 'on costs' of employing an additional member of staff (such as pension contributions and time for line managers to liaise with each member of staff). Not all school leaders felt able to pay for this additional time, which put additional pressure on part-time staff to 'catch up' in their own time.

A few school leaders said they had employed retired teachers to 'fill in' for teachers reducing their hours because retirees were willing to work small numbers of hours, but this came at an additional cost, as retirees are usually more senior and highly paid than a mid-career teacher.

Benefits to schools from meeting the demand for part-time and flexible working

The school leaders we interviewed identified several benefits from part-time and flexible working among teachers. These were in four main areas:

1. increased teacher retention and recruitment
2. a positive impact on staff wellbeing
3. retaining specialist expertise and maintaining the breadth of the curriculum
4. an opportunity to reduce costs.

Increased teacher retention and recruitment

According to our interviewees, the greatest benefit of enabling teachers to work part-time or flexibly was to retain good teaching staff. As one interviewee said: *'When you know you've got somebody who's really good, you do everything you can to accommodate them'*. Another said: *'I would rather keep the really good people that I have got even if it means that they want to go off and do a masters or something and they want to go down to three days a week. If I can keep them and I can afford to keep them then I would'*.

Our interviewees had different opinions on the effectiveness of offering part-time or flexible working to encourage recruitment. Some had advertised jobs saying they would encourage applications from part-time staff with little effect, but others said that offering part-time or flexible working could help in recruitment – especially in shortage subjects. One interviewee said: *‘We have got some highly, highly skilled professionals who have joined our team and accepted slightly less pay so that they can have that work-life balance’*.

A positive impact on staff wellbeing

School leaders said that enabling staff to work on a part-time or flexible basis improved teachers’ wellbeing and energy at work. One school leader said: *‘I think that people underestimate the creativity and commitment that part-time staff can give... Sometimes when they come in and out a bit more, they can identify things you don’t see yourself when you’re here five days a week... If they’re working in another school, they can bring back some really brilliant ideas. If they’re using it for work-life balance in order to get more of a relaxing three-day weekend, they can lift other people’s spirits with that extra energy, have interesting conversations about things they’ve gone and done.’*

Retaining specialist expertise and curriculum breadth

Some leaders said that some teachers who chose to work part-time were able to concentrate solely on their specialist area of expertise, rather than having to teach another subject. In some cases, part-time

or flexible working could also help to sustain subjects attracting small numbers of pupils that would not justify a full-time teacher. If a teacher was prepared to reduce their hours, this meant that schools could continue to offer a less popular subject, which was a better solution for leaders than redeploying them to other more popular subjects or making the teacher redundant.

Reducing costs

Although several school leaders made the point that part-time or flexible working usually increased costs, a few said that negotiating such arrangements with staff had enabled them to cut costs for subjects which did not need a full-time teacher (for example, due to a decrease in the number of pupils opting for that subject). As one leader explained: *‘If you’ve got surplus teaching hours in a particular area and someone comes along and says they want to go part-time and you can still deliver the curriculum by reducing their hours, then that has financial benefit to the school.’* This provided leaders with an opportunity to retain less popular subject options while saving the cost of employing a full-time member of staff. It also helped leaders make best use of teachers’ expertise because they were not required to teach other subjects to fill their teaching hours.

Making it work

Interviewees said there were two main reasons for their current level of part-time working in their schools: the profile of teaching staff and the culture of the school. This was true of interviewees from schools with both high and lower levels of part-time working.

Some of the interviewees from schools with a high proportion of teachers working part-time said this was largely because they had a large proportion of women returning from maternity leave who wanted to return part-time. Similarly, some of the interviewees from schools with lower proportions of teachers working part-time said this was largely due to low demand from teachers for flexible working arrangements (for example, due to the gender and age profile of the teaching staff), rather than reflecting leaders' attitudes towards part-time working. As one leader of a school with a lower proportion of part-time teachers said: *'It's just been a changing workforce here. When I started at the school 14 years ago, we had considerably more [teachers working part-time]. Staff will start full-time and will then request to go part-time... Our current situation is that staff who went part-time when their children were little now want to go full-time again.'* Another said: *'The staffing is the staffing. The staffing is historic. There is no "agenda". It is just how it is'.*

However, interviewees also testified to the influence of senior leaders on teachers' demand for part-time and flexible working. For example, they referred to the negative attitudes of the previous head teacher or of heads of neighbouring schools, which had led to teachers leaving rather than attempting to negotiate part-time or flexible working. As one senior leader said: *'A couple of staff came [to this school] from a local academy chain [where] the ethos was so punitive, without any flexibility... If you've got a fairly collaborative way of working with staff and they feel you're approachable, there's more scope for coming to a mutual compromise rather than them just walking.'*

One leader from a school with a lower proportion of part-time workers said: *'I think it's a bit of a cultural thing, so I'm not sure it would even cross the minds of some of my staff to ask.'*

Creating a culture for flexible working

The overarching characteristic of schools with higher levels of part-time working was that these leaders were committed to enabling such arrangements and had designed their structures and systems to accommodate flexible working patterns – an approach which was driven by what one interviewee described as a 'moral choice about how we work'.

Leaders in schools with high rates of part-time or flexible working were proactive in encouraging part-time and flexible working rather than responding to teachers' requests on an ad-hoc basis. They actively encouraged staff to request changes to their working patterns (to increase or decrease their hours).

One senior leader explained how they contacted all staff each year inviting anyone who wanted to change their working arrangements to discuss their wishes with a senior colleague before making a formal application. *'In January or beginning of February I email the flexible working policy to all staff (including those on maternity leave) and ask colleagues to complete the application if they would like to change their hours in any way whatsoever. They have about a month to get back to me. We look at the curriculum needs and then I'll let people know after Easter. What we say is that we can't always guarantee the day or consecutive days or the same day*

each week... [but] we look at our teaching needs, at what options we will be running next year and we see whether we can accommodate the request.'

Another school leader described identifying teachers who might be interested in changing their working arrangements (such as staff returning from maternity leave, when their youngest child was about to start school, or approaching retirement) and asking them personally whether they wanted to decrease or increase their hours.

School leaders who were keen to support more flexible and part-time working recognised the costs involved in employing more part-time teachers but they emphasised that this needed to be balanced against the benefits to the school of being able to retain experienced staff. As one said: *'I'd rather have a great teacher for three days a week than a poor teacher for five days a week.'*

In our small sample, the proportion of staff working part-time did not appear to be strongly related to the existence of a formal policy on part-time or flexible working. Several leaders said they used their local authority's policy (regardless of whether they were a maintained school or an academy). Others said that they did not have a formal policy and their governing bodies gave them considerable discretion over staffing matters.

A systemic approach

Interviewees described the strategies they used to enable staff to work part-time. They said that arrangements worked best where both parties were prepared to be flexible about the details and teachers

were prepared to wait while schools worked out timetabling and other logistical issues. Some described a process of 'co-construction' aiming to achieve the best outcomes for both the school and the individual member of staff. As one said: *'It's those compromise solutions, which do take quite a bit of work from the management and leadership team but which are really worthwhile. Staff know that you are doing your best to accommodate [them] and in return, I know that they understand that and they don't then come back with unreasonable demands'.*

Several school leaders said it was much easier to accommodate teachers' wishes when the request was made in advance (ideally requesting a change in the spring term to take effect in the following autumn). That gave school leaders time to work out what would fit with the curriculum and timetable. They expected teachers to agree that any change in working practices would start from the beginning of the autumn term and asked staff to commit to the agreed working pattern for the whole of the school year. They then made the arrangements with the aim of ensuring continuity of teachers for each class, but especially for pupils in KS4. Some also set minimum working requirements (for example, asking staff to work for at least three days each week, arranging for non-working days of part-time staff to be spread across the week and/or stipulating certain days when all members of staff had to be on site).

Building flexibility into school organisation and timetabling

The interviews with school leaders identified a number of ways in which they addressed the challenge of ensuring that there were sufficient staff to cover both curriculum and non-teaching duties. School leaders used timetabling software to assist with planning different scenarios to accommodate teachers' requests. One interviewee said: *'Timetabling is probably one of the most difficult and logistical operations in the school and it's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle... We put the part-timers in first and then we work around the other priorities for the school.'*

Several of our interviewees said that adopting a two-week timetable made part-time or flexible working easier, because this provided greater flexibility than a weekly planning cycle. For example, it meant schools could block subject teaching and arrange for all teachers to be available on one day each fortnight for whole-school meetings.

When a full-time teacher requested to reduce their hours, school leaders used a range of strategies to bring their staffing back up to capacity. These included: negotiating an increase in hours with existing part-time staff; employing recent retirees; employing trusted supply teachers; or asking full-time teachers with spare capacity to teach a second subject.

One school leader described sharing teachers with another school in the same multi-academy trust. The interviewee explained: *'If somebody was to request 80 per cent, it is difficult to find the other*

20 per cent... I talk to the other headteachers within the Trust because it might also fit with their plans. It might enhance somebody's subject specialism so that they focus on only delivering one subject.'

Some school leaders said that having two individuals teaching the same group of pupils (not necessarily as an official job share) eased timetabling arrangements. Several said they aimed to have a maximum of two teachers responsible for any given class in order to ensure effective planning, enable the teachers and learners to know each other, establish common expectations for work and behaviour, and avoid exposing pupils to too many different teaching styles. One school leader commented: *'When I was an acting head my boss said "Don't do job shares" – the thinking was that when one of the two left it was impossible to fill [the post] and would impose restrictions on the timetable. But so far, I've not found that to be a problem. I think it's because I'm increasingly confident about my ability to predict those situations.'*

Rather than asking part-timers to teach all the content of their subject area, some school leaders said it was more efficient for each teacher to focus on a different aspect of their subject.

A school leader described how two part-time teachers (one specialising in biology and another specialising in chemistry and physics) effectively shared the teaching of a combined science course. Another described how the school employed two geography teachers on a part-time basis: one specialised in physical

geography and the other in human geography. The school was able to use both teachers' expertise to best effect by deploying them to teach to their respective area of strength.

Schools' strategies for ensuring continuity of pastoral care included allocating the role of form tutor to full-time staff only; sharing the role between two teachers and deploying support staff to undertake the role of form tutor. In order to enable teachers to work more flexibly (for example to start work slightly later in the morning so they could take their own children to school), schools had experimented with separating registration from pastoral sessions, timetabling form tutor sessions later in the day and blocking form tutor sessions on certain days. For example, one school adopted a tutorial system with individual appointments for older students, which were easier to allocate to part-time staff.

Despite the general lack of opportunities for flexible (as opposed to part-time) working, a few leaders gave examples of accommodating flexibility within the constraints of the timetable. The most common examples were to allow staff to work from home in their non-contact (PPA) time.

Several interviewees said they would not accept requests for teachers to start later in the morning to take their children to school or leave earlier to pick them up. However, others said they were willing to negotiate such arrangements (usually combined with part-time working) for example, by enabling teachers to work shorter hours over several days. There were also a few instances where schools

arranged for teaching to take place during 'twilight' sessions, to accommodate teachers' requests for more flexible working patterns.

Establishing strong lines of communication

Leaders of schools with high proportions of part-time teachers said it was important to ensure all staff were aware of what was happening and were included in decision-making. Line managers were responsible for informing staff who worked part-time or on a flexible basis of any consultations and developments.

As mentioned earlier, school leaders typically ensured that staff who taught the same groups of pupils had time to meet and plan together, rather than expecting them to do this in their own time (though not all did so). Other means of improving communication included making sure all staff had access to the minutes of meetings and using a common online portal that could be accessed remotely by teachers to share information, manage pupils' data, view teaching resources and schemes of work.

One school found that not all part-time teachers were aware of the homework assignments set by their colleagues who were teaching the same pupils. The school invested in a homework platform – an online system for recording homework assignments – and found that this was particularly welcomed by part-time staff and pupils.

Another interviewee described how their school used an online management information system to ensure that all staff were kept up-to-date about any issues affecting pupils' welfare: *'We have an MIS system, so any concerns or reports get noted onto the child's*

records and any teacher can pick that up, whether it's the form tutor or head of year... they can always see at any point what stage a situation is at or who has dealt with what'.

School leaders typically encouraged teachers working part-time to attend whole-staff meetings, training and parents' meetings. They acknowledged that staff working part-time only had to attend a proportion of these activities, but several made arrangements to pay part-timers for the extra hours or give them time off in lieu.

Schools with large numbers of part-time staff needed to find ways of sharing space and resources effectively. For example, one school leader said all teachers in their school had to be flexible about issues like where they taught, what resources could be left in a classroom, and what they would be expected to carry with them or store in another location. Those responsible for timetabling had to be aware of where staff were teaching, to avoid teachers arriving late to a lesson because they had to move rooms. Such arrangements meant that everyone had access to the resources they needed and part-time staff did not feel marginalised.

We had anticipated that the school leaders we interviewed would identify parents' attitudes towards part-time working as a barrier, but very few did so. Interviewees said that it was important to communicate arrangements clearly with parents and reassure them that the school put their children's welfare first. One leader said: *'I think parents are just grateful we have subject specialists in front of their children.'* Another explained: *'We have had a couple of discussions with parents about the number of teachers in our Y7/8*

groups because of part-timers. I have tried to manage those as best as possible... It comes down to transparency and I reassure them that by the time they [pupils] get to GCSE studies, there will very little of this happening. I just try to explain the logistics of managing a big organisation.'

Enabling school leaders to work part-time

Despite the fact that some of the leaders we interviewed felt that part-time or flexible working was incompatible with leadership roles, others described how they had enabled staff in leadership positions to have greater flexibility in how they worked. Several interviewees set a minimum requirement for those in leadership positions to work 80 per cent of the time, as they felt that it was not desirable for leaders to work less than four days per week. Several interviewees explained that leaders working part-time delegated some of their responsibilities to a less experienced member of staff, which had the added benefit of preparing less experienced teachers to take on middle and senior leadership roles.

A school carried out a review of which members of its leadership team needed to be available and when. In doing so, they asked themselves the question: "Why does this member of staff need to be here?" They then checked that there were sufficient senior staff available to deal with safeguarding issues and emergency procedures. They concluded that not all senior staff needed to be on site at all times and this enabled some members of the senior leadership team to work part-time.

Part-time and flexible working arrangements for school leaders required effective communication between staff and their teams and clear arrangements for others to deputise for them when they were off site or not working. As one school leader explained: *'It's about them being clear about what they can and cannot do and identifying what I and other colleagues need to take on, so that the school can continue to be as effective and as efficient as possible'*. Another commented: *'This works because we have strong communication and we are very open and honest about what is achievable and what isn't.'*

Two interviewees said that they themselves were working part-time. One was a headteacher approaching retirement who had negotiated with governors to work two and a half days a week in a job share with a deputy headteacher. Another headteacher explained that due to previous ill health, their line manager (the chair of governors) had encouraged them to adopt a flexible working pattern, which entailed working from home one day per fortnight and not working on one day a month. The leader said: *'I am aware that I am in a very privileged position – my chair of governors makes sure that I am getting my flexible working. I am showing that it is OK and the school is not going to collapse if you're not here every day.'*

What policies would encourage school leaders to increase flexible working?

We asked school leaders what policy levers would encourage schools to increase the use of part-time and flexible working.

The possibilities we discussed were:

- New timetabling tools
- A new service to help interested teachers to find opportunities for job-sharing
- First-hand accounts from leaders who have a high level of part-time and flexible working
- Advice from schools that have a high level of part-time and flexible working
- A financial incentive for employing teachers on a part-time basis.

The first two suggestions were taken from the DfE's Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2019).

The senior leaders we interviewed all said that they were happy with their current timetabling software and the functionality of software tools. Some interviewees welcomed the creation of a service to help interested teachers find opportunities for job sharing. However, some noted that such applications usually come about where existing staff members agree to such a proposal themselves, so they felt that decisions needed to be taken at an individual school level.

Some school leaders thought that first-hand accounts from school leaders and the offer of consultancy support could help to encourage more flexible working in schools. But they were clear that any such advice would need to be provided by someone with experience of school life. As one school leader said, any such advice should be given *'by people who are doing the job ... rather than say we recommend you to do x, y and z, because a policymaker making the recommendations who has never had to put it into action themselves ... are not in a position to make recommendations'*. School leaders also said that any advice needed to relate to the specific circumstances and needs of each school.

Not surprisingly, school leaders were considerably more enthusiastic about the idea of additional funding for part-time and flexible working, though they recognised that this was unlikely to be forthcoming in the current financial climate. Interviewees also warned against any incentives which only targeted additional arrangements for flexible working as they felt this would be unfair on schools which had already achieved high levels of flexibility and could lead to 'gaming' (i.e. schools creating posts solely or primarily in order to supplement their budgets).

In addition to discussing these policy levers, several interviewees said that they did not want policymakers to limit school leaders' room for manoeuvre. They also pointed out that the constraints on part-time and flexible working were a reflection of wider pressures, especially high workload and school funding constraints, and called for policymakers to continue to address these issues.

Conclusions and recommendations

This research has found that there is unmet demand for part-time and flexible working in secondary schools. One of the main factors underlying this demand is likely to be teachers' experience of unmanageable workload, but teachers also have a number of other reasons for wanting to work part-time, including caring for young children or older relatives, allowing time for other interests, work or study, and managing the transition to retirement.

Key barriers for teachers and leaders who would like to work part-time are perceptions that school leaders would not support a request for part-time or flexible working and concerns about the possible impact on their career progression. These perceptions are clearly damaging and can lead to teachers making the decision to move school or leave the teaching profession altogether. The fact that teachers who could afford to work part-time are put off applying to reduce their hours indicates the importance of a positive culture towards flexible working patterns in schools.

According to the school leaders we interviewed, the perceived barriers to part-time working are the potential disruption to the continuity of pupils' learning and pastoral care, the difficulties of accommodating flexible working patterns within the timetable, the impact on communication between staff and with parents, and the additional costs involved in employing additional staff.

School leaders with high proportions of teachers working part-time typically took a positive and proactive approach to flexible working.

They identified the barriers and sought to find solutions wherever possible. This included planning and negotiating teachers' working patterns to suit both the needs of individuals and the needs of the school. They also strengthened their communication systems and found alternatives to traditional ways of managing non-teaching responsibilities. Whereas some leaders believed part-time or flexible working was incompatible with middle or senior leadership, others found strategies to make this work.

The key message from this research is that positive and proactive school leadership is critical to encouraging more part-time and flexible teaching in secondary schools. For this reason, we recommend the following actions for policymakers and school leaders

- 1. The DfE should encourage the providers of leadership training (such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship and related qualifications) to develop content on adopting a proactive approach to part-time and flexible working**

Staff management and employment practice is one of the key roles for senior leadership and headship, and training in these skills is essential. Embedding proactive approaches to workforce management into the basic training for senior leadership roles may support senior leaders to improve their staff management practice. A generally proactive approach to staff management is also likely to have wider benefits: for example, spotting workload becoming unmanageable early on before teachers reach the point of burn out. However, enhanced training of this kind needs continued reinforcement to be most effective.

- 2. The DfE should continue to prioritise reducing teacher workload and encouraging more flexible working in schools, including working with teacher organisations and middle tier organisations, such as local authorities and MATs**

Teachers work around 50 hours per week on average, with some working longer hours, so it is not surprising that teachers find it difficult to manage their workload and create a sustainable work-life balance (Worth *et al.*, 2019). Senior leaders work longer hours than teachers on average and therefore also face considerable work-life balance challenges (Higton *et al.*, 2017). However, the senior leaders we interviewed were clear in their view that part-time working was not the only or the best solution for helping teachers to deal with workload pressures.

The government needs to continue to work with schools and other agencies and organisations to reduce teachers' unnecessary workload and make teaching a sustainable career. The government also needs to continue its work encouraging more part-time and flexible working in schools, including gathering and sharing good practice through case studies and publicising the benefits for schools.

- 3. Further research is needed to consider the overall short-run and long-run implications for teacher supply of enabling more part-time and flexible working**

The overall impact of improved part-time and flexible working opportunities is highly uncertain as it depends on the relative sizes of the positive retention and recruitment effects and FTE reduction due to changes in work arrangements. For these reasons, creating more

part-time and flexible opportunities is unlikely to represent the only solution required to the teacher supply challenge. Further research would need to investigate the many different potential influences on teacher supply, including the likely behavioural responses, effects on teacher recruitment and the potential impacts of flexible working (not just part-time working). NFER will investigate the data that is available to provide plausible estimates.

4. School leaders should adopt a positive attitude towards encouraging part-time working

While there are barriers and challenges associated with part-time and flexible working, there are benefits for schools to attain. Not doing so risks teachers feeling unable to make a request, or having a request rejected, and ending up frustrated, less engaged and considering leaving the school. School leaders and governors are in a position to signal their encouragement for teachers to change their working patterns with sufficient notice and flexibility on both sides. We therefore recommend that school leaders adopt a proactive and systematic approach to encouraging flexibility for teachers whilst prioritising the needs of the pupils in their care.

The learning from schools with a high proportion of part-time teachers demonstrated the importance of school leaders predicting the likely demand for part-time and flexible working among teachers at different life stages and planning ahead to accommodate this, including by negotiating with individual members of staff. This is particularly important in secondary schools, where rates of part-time working are currently lower, and leaving rates higher, than in primary schools.

As well as making sure part-timers feel valued, structural features worthy of consideration by school leaders include: adopting a two-week timetable, ensuring that all staff are present on one day a week/fortnight, revising the pastoral support system and improving IT systems to support communication and remote access.

5. School leaders should enable middle and senior leaders to adopt part-time and flexible working patterns

The belief that leadership is incompatible with part-time and flexible working patterns is damaging to individuals and the profession as a whole. Restricting leadership to those willing and able to work full-time also limits the pool of leadership talent and means that teachers have to choose between leadership and part-time/flexible working. On the other hand, part-time and flexible working patterns for middle or senior leaders can encourage a more distributed model of leadership and help to provide effective succession planning. They also provide positive role models for other staff. We therefore recommend that policymakers focus on this issue in their communication with middle tier organisations, school leaders and governing bodies. We also recommend that school leaders identify and address the barriers that are currently preventing part-time and flexible working for middle and senior leaders in their schools.

6. School leaders should find more opportunities for flexible working among secondary teachers

This research found few examples of flexible working, as opposed to part-time working. The main barrier appears to be the rigidity of the school timetable, but it also seems that the requirement for teachers to be on-site for PPA time presents a barrier to teachers being able to

work from home. We therefore recommend that policymakers and middle tier organisations focus on identifying and sharing examples of successful flexible working, in order to encourage its wider adoption in schools.

Summary of barriers and solutions to enabling part-time and flexible working

Barriers	Solutions
Disruption to pupils' learning caused by having more than one teacher per subject	Aim to ensure that each group of pupils has a maximum of two teachers per subject. Divide the curriculum by theme, with each teacher specialising in a particular theme. Ensure effective handover between teachers (e.g. through notes, IT systems and/or personal communication).
Challenge of timetabling part-time teachers	Adopt a more flexible approach to timetabling (e.g. two-week timetable with blocks allocated to particular departments, twilight sessions). Identify another member of staff or recent retiree to substitute for the reduction in teaching time when a full-time teacher reduces their working hours. Consider sharing subject specialists with another school.
Several teachers want to have Friday or Monday as their non-working day	Create an expectation that staff will be flexible about their non-working days. Make it clear that non-working days may need to change from one year to the next. Negotiate non-working days with individual teachers to ensure adequate coverage across the week.
Part-time working patterns are perceived as incompatible with middle and/or senior leadership roles	Recognise that some schools successfully enable middle/senior leaders to work part-time. Identify the specific concerns regarding leadership roles and seek to address these. Review leadership coverage for key areas of responsibility – delegate tasks which do not need a senior member of staff. Create job shares or deputising roles.
Disruption to continuity of pastoral care and/or behaviour management	Revisit the pastoral care system. Timetable tutor sessions to allow greater flexibility in teachers' working days. Arrange for two teachers to share pastoral care responsibilities for the same group of pupils. Consider whether non-teaching staff could become form tutors.
Teachers working part-time are not available for staff meetings/whole-staff training days	Negotiate with teachers working part-time that they will attend whole-staff staff meetings/whole-staff training on their non-working days and book these well in advance. Compensate part-time staff for their additional time. Ensure there is one day per week or fortnight when all staff are present and hold staff meetings on that day. Arrange for full notes of meetings to be circulated to all staff so part-time staff are kept informed. Arrange for training to be repeated on a different day for part-time staff.
Teachers working part-time are not available for parents' meetings	Negotiate that teachers working part-time will attend parents' evenings on their non-working days and compensate them for the additional time. Ensure there is one day per week or fortnight when all staff are present and hold parents' evenings on that day.
Lack of opportunities for flexible working (e.g. compressed hours, working at home)	Consider remodelling the timetable to accommodate extended working hours. Look for opportunities to enable staff to start/leave earlier or later during the day. Consider scheduling some 'twilight' teaching sessions to enable staff to start work later in the morning. Enable teachers to carry out some of their PPA work at home.
Part-time teachers feel less involved in the work of the school	Ensure strong lines of communication with all staff, including through remote access to secure IT systems, email and/or text alerts. Consider how to make part-timers feel 'at home' in the school, including access to space and equipment.

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Evidence for excellence in education

Public

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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

www.nfer.ac.uk

NFER ref. **PTFT**

ISBN. 978-1-911039-88-4

