

# Helping Teachers Achieve Their New Year Goals

Did you make a New Year's Resolution this month? Twenty-eight per cent of teachers did. Do you want to know what they were and how it could help make your school a compelling place to stay? Read on...

## A Fresh Start at a New School

Across the country, Boxing Day is traditionally the time when many people start thinking about whether they need a fresh start in a new job. It is often said to be the day of the year when the greatest number of job adverts are browsed. Teaching, however, is a little different. The March-to-May annual recruitment cycle means there are relatively few adverts to look at in December. But this doesn't mean that teachers weren't reflecting on change over the Christmas holidays.

On Boxing Day, 16 per cent of teachers told us they thought it was likely they would leave their school this summer. Even more strikingly, 48 per cent said they had considered resigning at some point during the last term. While many of them won't follow through, this is their current intention.

Do you know who these individuals are in your school? And do you know why they are thinking of leaving?

## Understanding the Reasons

Many of the reasons teachers mentioned are predictable, as they arise repeatedly in surveys of wellbeing. In open-text responses, those likely to leave often cited feeling overwhelmed. For some, it was due to behaviour challenges (1 in 10), workload pressures (2 in 10), cultural issues (1 in 10), or problems with leadership (2 in 10). Others planned to leave because of external factors such as house moves or fixed-term contracts ending.

The more intriguing group is the 13 per cent who mentioned promotion and career development as their primary reason for considering a move. These teachers are not overwhelmed by their work; quite the opposite – they are actively seeking a new challenge.

It might seem that there is little a school leader can do about this. After all, if someone wants to become a headteacher, they will need to move on! But for the majority, the desire for "new challenges" or "promotion" does not necessarily mean leaving is inevitable. If their

headteacher knew they were ready for more responsibility, could a suitable opportunity be created within the school? And does their current leader even know about their aspirations?

When teachers seek promotion elsewhere, it is often because the potential benefits – higher pay and fresh opportunities – outweigh the perceived downsides of staying put. Yet, many teachers consciously choose not to move because they value their current situation. The question for school leaders is whether there are steps they can take to make their school more “sticky” for such individuals.

## Helping Teachers Achieve Their New Year Goals

There are plenty of ways to make your school a more attractive place to work. Research consistently highlights the importance of addressing behaviour management, reducing administrative workload, fostering strong collegial relationships, and maintaining effective communication with staff. Since it is the New Year, though, we suggest focusing on one additional area.

Help your teachers achieve their New Year’s Resolutions.

While only 28 per cent of teachers explicitly set a New Year’s Resolution, many others have personal goals they are working on. When we looked at the responses of those who had resolutions, the similarity between their goals was striking. This suggests that certain aspirations are likely shared by many staff in your school as they return for the new term.

As a headteacher, understanding these goals is a fantastic opportunity to boost morale, promote well-being, and align personal ambitions with workplace support. While what you can do will depend on the size and resources of your school, here are some common areas where you might help:

1. **Supporting Fitness Goals.** The most frequently mentioned resolutions were to exercise more, lose weight, or develop a regular running or walking routine. What prevents staff from exercising on-site before or after school? Can these barriers be removed? Initiatives like a “walk and talk” for meetings, a steps challenge with fun prizes, or partnerships with local gyms for discounted memberships could make a big difference.
2. **Better Eating Habits.** Many teachers mentioned how difficult it is to eat well at lunchtimes or cook healthy meals after an exhausting day. What is your staff lunchtime culture like? Are healthy meals readily available in the canteen (and is it nice for teachers to eat there)? Could you run an INSET session on preparing nutritious packed lunches or evening meals as a fun way to engage staff?
3. **Promoting Reading Goals.** Reading more – whether for pleasure or professional development – is a common aspiration. Do you have a staff book club? Are there quiet spaces on-site where teachers can read during breaks? Would you consider offering “time back” or small rewards for staff who dedicate time to professional reading?

While some of these ideas may seem outside the scope of a workplace, they align directly with what teachers want to achieve this year. By supporting these personal aspirations, you demonstrate genuine care for their well-being. This not only helps teachers achieve their

goals but also gives them one more reason not to browse for jobs elsewhere.