

Retention Reality Check: what might you uncover?

Another term is well underway and fresh rafts of teacher job ads are being posted up and down the country, joining those still languishing from last term. And that's before the main recruitment season really gets going. With only 59% of teachers expecting to stay in the profession for three years, retention continues to be one of the most urgent challenges school leaders face today.

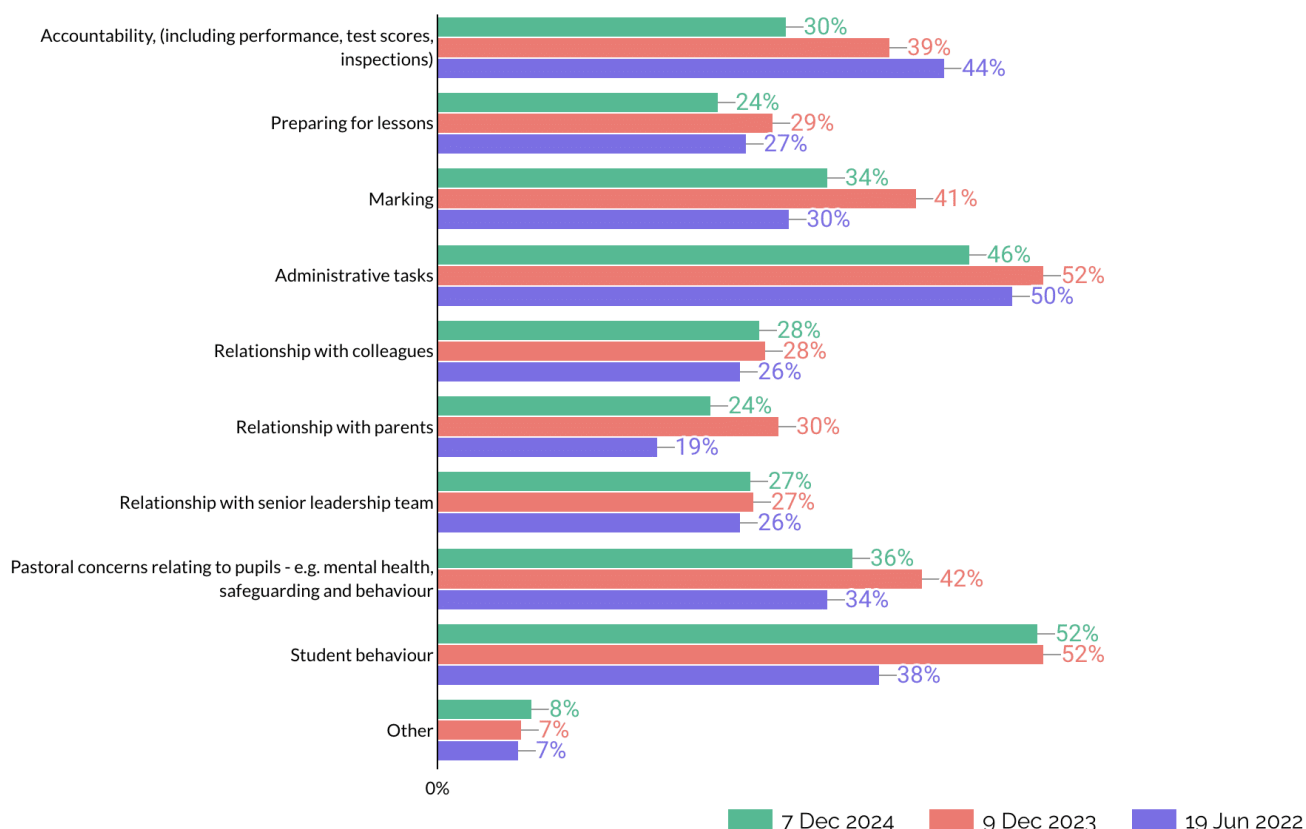
Teachers rarely leave overnight. Dissatisfaction builds up through unaddressed frustrations, workload pressures, and a lack of support. By the time leaders notice, it's often too late. But there are ways that leaders can uncover the issues and take steps to address them. Read on to find out what we have been learning from our Teacher Tapp data and our experiences at School Surveys.

What's the national picture looking like now?

Overall, the numbers of teachers considering resigning remains worryingly high, with 48% of teachers doing so last term, 8% of them 'constantly'. Our Teacher Tapp data reveals that the biggest issues impacting teacher morale continue to be workload and behaviour.

Accountability has slipped down the stress-causing stakes from impacting 44% of teachers in 2022 to 30% in December 2024. It will be interesting to see if this may change again in coming months as Ofsted changes are implemented.

Have any of the following caused you to feel stressed or unhappy at work over the last 2 weeks?



Digging deeper: two schools' stories

Analysing the reports generated by schools using our School Surveys tool, we can uncover some of the fascinating stories that lie behind the unhappy headlines. And, crucially, think about what sort of action might make a difference.

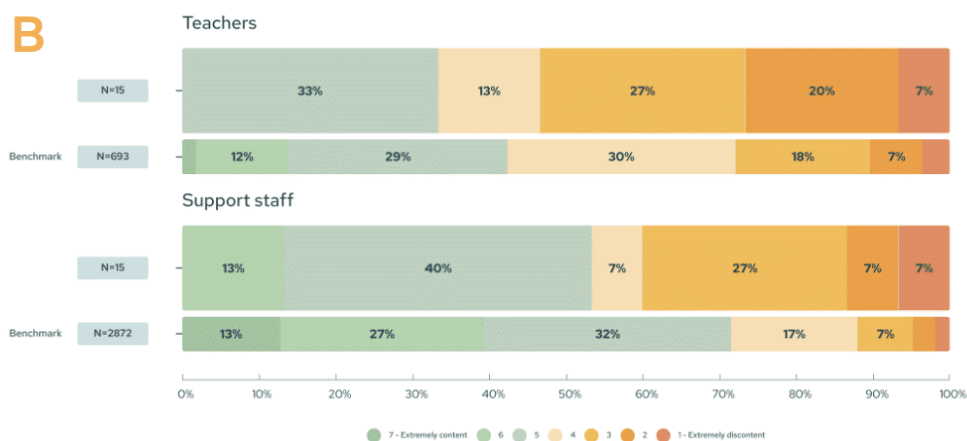
Here are two different schools, both with staff surveys giving alarming responses about their likelihood of quitting. They scored pretty similar results on this key question, both being 10% points behind the benchmarks of what staff in similar schools report:

Q: This term, how often have you considered resigning from your post in this school?

School A



School B



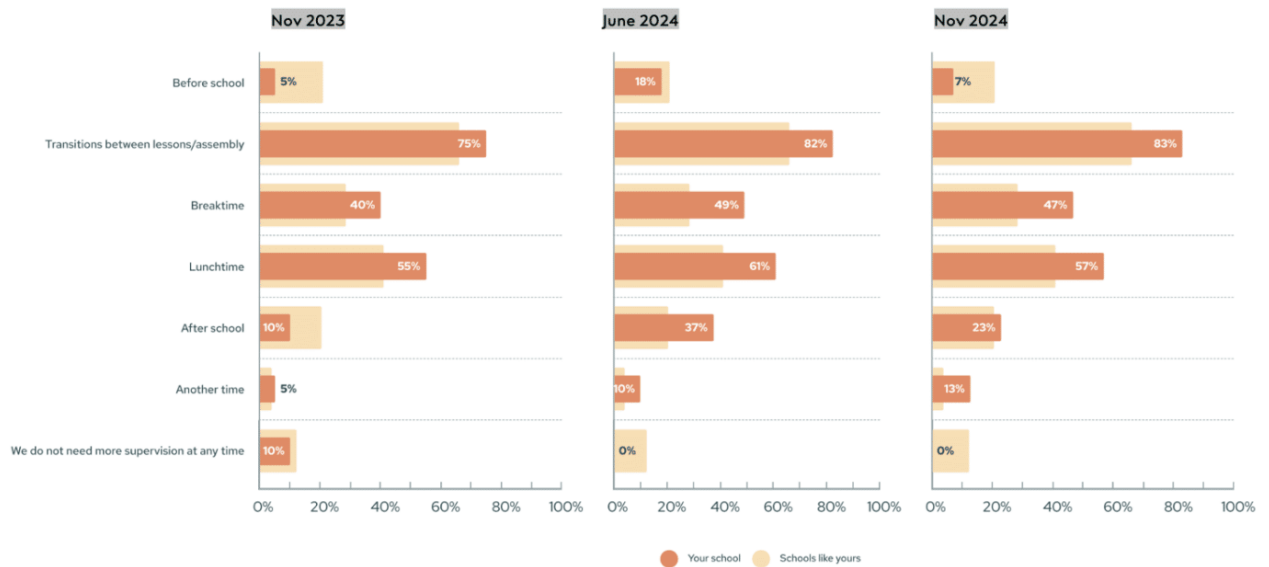
However, digging into the reports reveals quite different issues going on...

School A

School A doesn't appear to follow the standard story of poor behaviour and workload being at fault. Staff actually rated their leaders as doing slightly better than average on a range of factors: 42% asking for reduced workload (vs their benchmark of 66%), 63% asking for better communication (vs their benchmark of 65%), and 47% agreeing that leaders are doing enough to support behaviour management (vs 43%). Admittedly these responses still show some room for improvement, but it takes a bit more questioning to find out what might be really bothering staff most.

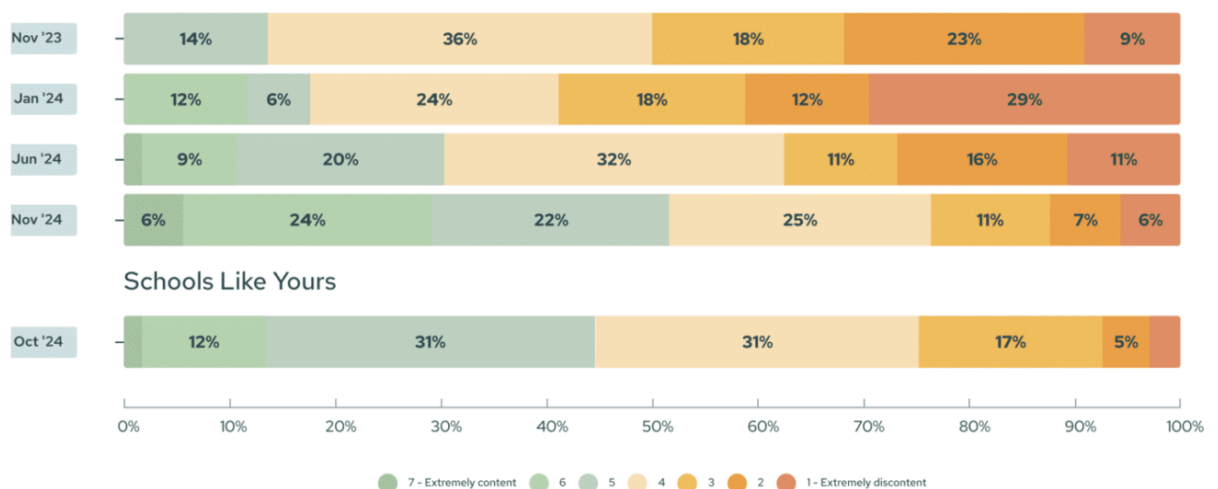
The question generating the greatest variance from national benchmarks is the one about staffing of different times of day, with much greater concern than in similar schools about transitions, lunch times and break times. Here is something very specific for leaders to focus on:

Q: In your school, do you feel that any of these periods of the day need more staff supervision?



And, even more interestingly, it turns out that the longer term picture is critical here: by comparing survey results over time (from termly repeats of surveys), it appears that the direction of travel is actually reasonably positive. Morale has improved consistently over the past three terms, with the proportion of 'discontented' staff members dropping impressively from 50% to 24%. Perhaps those resignation question percentages will keep dropping too, if staff feel that they are being listened to, and leaders are taking action. Frequently occurring words in the open responses support this notion: better, improving, positive.

Q: Taking everything about life at work into consideration, I am currently...

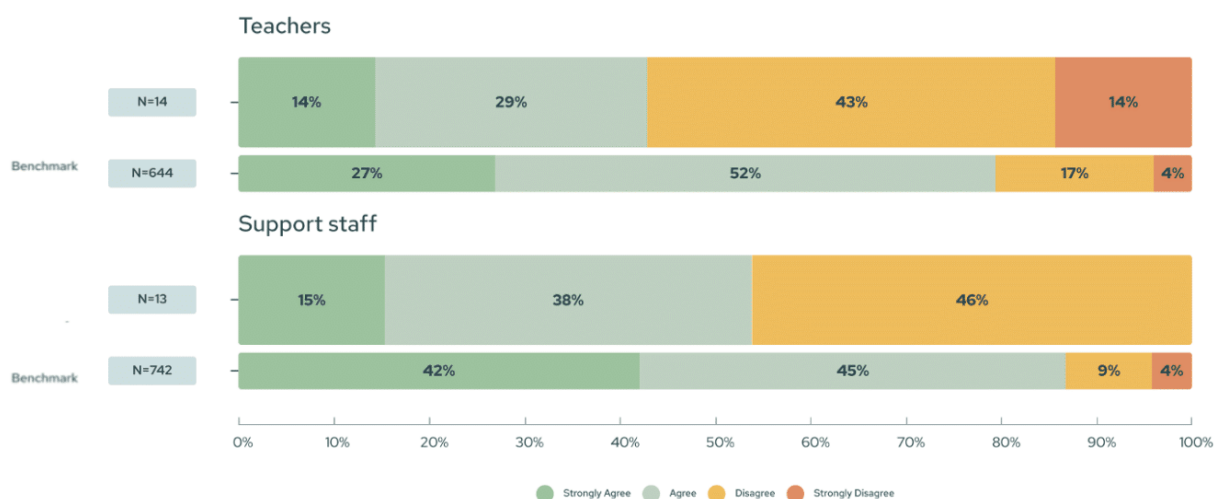


School B

By contrast, School B reported the same statistics about staff likelihood to quit (again 10% worse than schools similar to them), but actually quite a different set of issues was revealed by their report. Their headline scores on behaviour and communication were reasonably positive. Their weakest response was to the question about support for mental wellbeing, with just 43% of teachers anticipating being well supported with any concerns, versus 79% in similar schools:

Q: If I approached my manager with concerns about my mental wellbeing, I am confident that I would be well supported

SchoolSurveys



Their morale over time did not show an improving trajectory, and their survey's open question about morale generated many comments about 'overwhelm', with complaints about numbers of meetings and visits, as well as accountability demands from their Trust.

So, two schools with a very similar headline finding about staff retention, but actually with quite different underlying issues, suggesting very different courses of action to pursue.

What about your school?

Where do you stand regarding national benchmarks for morale and job satisfaction? And what issues are most important in your context?

Until the end of January, we are offering a free trial of our [Retention Reality Check](#) survey questions, in order to help schools face the reality of their school's retention challenges early and take action. In just a few minutes, school leaders can generate their own survey, allowing them to:

- Listen to staff through anonymous feedback,
- Benchmark results against national trends,
- Spot red flags before they turn into resignations.

Strong retention isn't about guesswork. It's about seeing the reality and acting before it's too

late.