

COBIS Research – Teacher Supply in British International Schools 2022





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COBIS Research – Teacher Supply in British International Schools – 2022

Key Points

- The pandemic has had an impact on teacher recruitment and retention, and on the wellbeing, workload, and job satisfaction of teachers, but it has not had a significant impact on teachers' plans within the sector. Alongside their wider school communities, teachers in the international sector have demonstrated tremendous resilience, and continue to have positive perceptions of their experience in the international school sector.
- Teacher supply continues to present a significant challenge for the international sector, but schools are addressing the challenges with increased recruitment of local staff and engaging with training new teachers in their locality, adapting recruitment practices, and an increased focus on supporting staff wellbeing.
- Teachers move between the UK and international school sectors, in both directions, and many see international experience as part of their global teaching career.
- International school experience gives teachers the opportunity to develop personally and professionally, and plays a clear role in retaining teachers in the profession.
- Positioning teaching as a global profession would enrich the professional experience of teachers, facilitate the movement of teachers between sectors, allow UK schools to benefit from the repatriation of skills developed in an international context, improve teacher retention, and enhance the attractiveness of the profession to increase recruitment to Initial Teacher Training.

- More consistent recognition of the benefits and value of international service, and the breadth of experience and backgrounds within the global teacher workforce, is needed to ensure teachers with international experience are welcomed, encouraged and supported to enter or return to the UK school sector.
- Ensuring recognition of the value and transferability of international teacher training routes, parity with domestic training and qualifications, and removal of barriers to teacher mobility could contribute to growing the teacher workforce in a scalable way, reduce stress on global supply, and increase the diversity of the workforce.



The research findings show that international experience has a positive impact on teacher retention, and that an increased proportion of teachers entering the international school sector would consider returning to the UK to teach.



Introduction

The Council of British International Schools (COBIS) has undertaken research into teacher supply, the movement of teachers into and out of the British international school sector, and the impact of Covid-19. Conducted in partnership with ISC Research Ltd, this is the third iteration of the Teacher Supply in British International Schools project, and builds on the findings from 2018 and 2020.ⁱ

This research, based on c. 1,600 survey responses from senior leaders and teachers, provides concrete data about the profile and motivation of teachers entering and leaving the British international school sector, the quality of their experience, the movement between sectors, the current teacher recruitment climate in international schools, and the impact of Covid-19.

It demonstrates that teacher recruitment continues to present a challenge for the sector, that Covid-19 has had an impact on both recruitment and retention, and that schools are adjusting their practices in response to the current climate. The pandemic has also affected the wellbeing, workload and job satisfaction of teachers, but has not had a significant impact on teachers' plans within the sector. On the whole, international school teachers remain positive about their experience. Teaching continues to offer a rich and exciting career, with

opportunities for teachers to develop personally and professionally through international experience. The international sector has a positive effect on teacher retention, encouraging teachers to remain in the profession, and many teachers who work abroad will choose to return to the UK, bringing with them valuable skills and experience. The British international school sector is also increasingly contributing to the growth of the global teacher workforce through engagement with Initial Teacher Training, and recruitment and training of local staff.

This research reinforces the COBIS stance that positioning teaching as a global profession – with domestic and international sectors working co-operatively to promote global opportunities and recognise the value of international experience – could have a positive effect on teacher supply. The professional experience of teachers would be enriched, UK schools would benefit from the breadth of experience and skills developed in an international context, teacher retention could be improved, and the attractiveness of teaching as a career could be enhanced to increase recruitment to the profession. This is particularly relevant at a time when the domestic and international school sectors – and the teaching profession – are continuing to face a range of challenges linked to the pandemic.

Background

There are currently more than 6,500 British international schools operating worldwide, representing a significant proportion of the global international school market.ⁱⁱ

British education is a leading export, with schools and FE exports valued at more than £1billion.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to contributing to the UK economy through franchises, use of education goods and services, and repatriation of salaries, these schools send students to UK universities, and generate soft power of significant value by educating thousands of global political, economic and professional leaders in countries worldwide. The *International Education Strategy: 2021 Update* – a joint policy paper published by the UK Department for Education (DfE) and UK Department for International Trade (DIT) – noted that “not only do education exports support the recovery of the UK economy, they also have far-reaching benefits beyond. Education partnerships help forge international relationships, strengthen the UK’s soft power and foster opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange.”^{iv}

Despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the international school sector – including both British and non-British schools – has been growing steadily over the past 10 years. Currently, there are c.13,000 English-medium international schools around the world, educating nearly 6 million students, employing more than 560,000 teaching staff, and generating more than \$50 billion USD in school fees. Since January 2012, the international school sector has experienced a 61% growth in the number of schools, 55% growth in the number of students, 62% growth in the number of staff, and 97% growth in fee income. British curriculum is the fastest growing offering at international schools worldwide as well as the most popular; 50% of international schools use the British curriculum (sometimes in combination with other curricula). While the pandemic has led to a moderate downturn in growth in some regions, on the whole the international school sector has remained resilient. If the current growth trends were to continue, the British international school sector could need c.180,000 additional teachers to meet staffing needs in the next ten years.^v

In England, there was an increase in recruitment to Initial Teacher Training in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the pandemic and challenges in the wider labour market.^{vi} But application levels appear to be dropping again to pre-pandemic levels. The recently published *Teacher Labour Market in England: Annual Report 2022*, from The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), notes that “there is a substantial risk that a range of secondary subjects will not meet their recruitment targets and that teacher supply challenges are re-emerging after two years of those challenges having eased somewhat.”^{vii} The report cites both a resurgent labour market and a reduction in bursaries from the DfE as contributing factors to the reduction in interest in entering teaching.

Teacher retention in England improved in 2020, according to the Department for Education’s School Workforce Census 2020.^{viii} But this is likely to have been impacted by difficulty or reluctance to change jobs or seek new employment during the pandemic, and it remains the case that according to the DfE data, roughly one in six teachers have left the profession one year after qualifying. The wellbeing impact of the pandemic is likely to influence teacher retention rates going forward as well. According to the *Teacher Wellbeing Index 2021*, published by Education Support, 54% of staff have considered leaving the profession in the past two years as a result of pressures on their mental health and wellbeing.^{ix} And the NASUWT *Teacher Wellbeing Survey 2022* concluded that “teachers and headteachers are experiencing increased mental health and wellbeing issues as each year passes, and the impacts are becoming noticeably more challenging.”^x

Recruiting and retaining enough teachers continues to present a challenge, both at home and overseas. Despite a brief improvement in recruitment to ITT and retention rates due to the pandemic, the current provision is still insufficient. Alongside the situation in the UK, the continuing growth of British schools overseas brings influence and export success, but also requires the development of more quality teachers. Effective solutions and approaches are required to meet the staffing needs of schools in the UK and abroad.



Purpose and Methodology

This COBIS research, delivered in partnership with ISC Research, builds on and develops previous research on Teacher Supply in British International Schools from 2018 and 2020.

This project was designed by COBIS to provide concrete data on the profile of teachers entering and leaving the British international school sector, why they choose to move, why they return, the quality of their experience, their perception of the profession, the skills they develop, and the impact of Covid-19 on their experience. The research also looks at the current teacher recruitment climate in international schools and the impact of the pandemic, and seeks to highlight areas for development in order

to improve the supply of high quality teachers to ensure the continued success of British schools both at home and abroad. This research was structured as two online surveys – one for senior leaders and one for teachers, with teacher data further segmented into incoming teachers (who had started a new job in the international school sector since August 2020); and outgoing teachers (who were planning to leave the international school sector at the end of the 2021/22 or 2022/23 academic year). In total, the research is based on c.1,600 survey responses collected in January-February 2022.

Fig. 1 Survey response rates

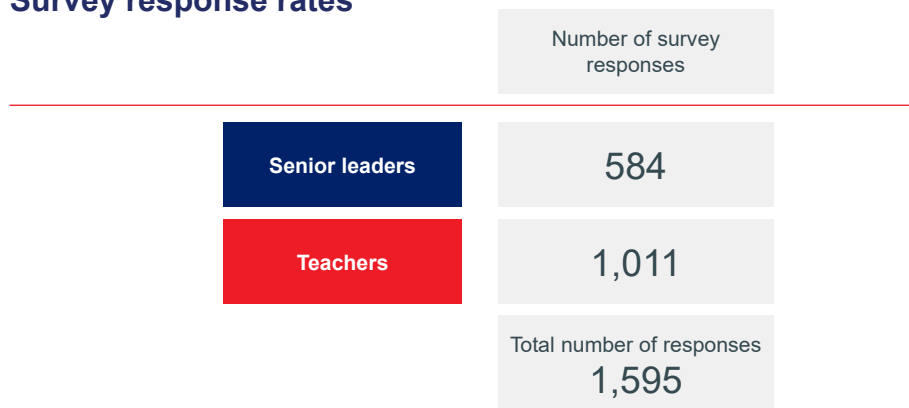
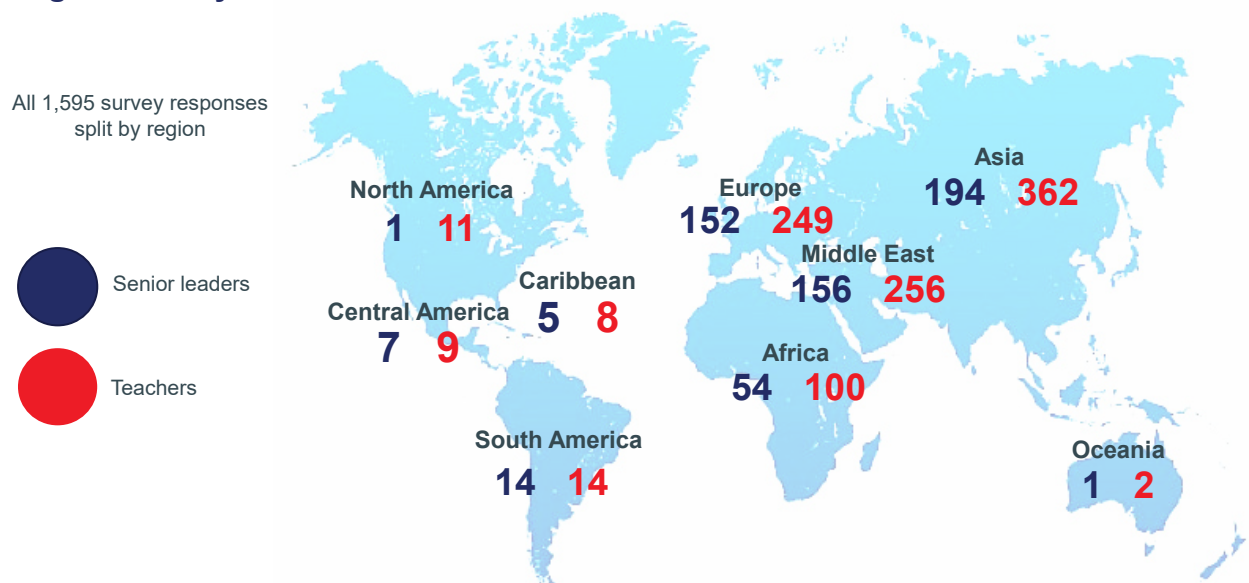


Fig. 2

Regional analysis



Key Findings

- 91% of British international school leaders find recruiting quality teachers 'somewhat' or 'very challenging'. This is slightly higher than the response from early 2020 (88%), but lower than the 94% reported in 2018.
- 40% of school leaders report a lower volume of applications for each post, compared to two years ago, and only 19% report that they are always able to recruit candidates that meet their expectations (down from 25% in 2020 and 26% in 2018).
- Senior leaders report changes in the profile of applicants for international school jobs as a result of Covid-19: Decrease in applicants moving from the UK (52%), applicants travelling with families (41%), and experienced teachers (39%); Increase in local applicants (53%), international applicants (39%), younger applicants (39%), and applicants already working internationally (38%).
- Senior leaders report that Covid-19, school closures, and the delivery of remote or blended learning has had an impact on teacher supply, wellbeing, and workload. 68% of senior leaders report a negative impact on teacher recruitment; 56% report a negative impact on teacher retention; 94% report a negative impact on teacher wellbeing; and 88% report a negative impact on teacher workload.
- Schools are adjusting their recruitment practices to respond to the changing environment with increased use of remote/virtual interviews (86%), earlier advertising of vacancies (49%) and increased recruitment of local staff (46%) listed as the top ways in which recruitment practice has changed compared with two years ago.
- According to senior leaders, the services that would most help the international school sector with teacher supply in the coming years are: better recognition of overseas experience by UK State and Independent Schools (51%), straightforward conversion routes to QTS for internationally trained teachers (49%), and recognition of international teaching qualifications (48%).
- Teachers choose to work internationally for a number of reasons. The main motivations continue to be travel and cultural exploration (59%) and enjoyment and challenge (59%). Other contributing factors include career growth (49%) and salary (47%). The percentage reporting dissatisfaction with the home education system as a reason for working internationally has decreased to 33% (down from 42% in 2020 and 47% in 2018).



- Teachers move between the UK and international school sectors, and many see international experience as part of their global teaching career. 49% of incoming teachers say they are definitely or possibly planning to return to teaching in the UK in the future (up from 43% and 44% in 2020 and 2018).
- Teachers develop a wealth of transferable skills in the international sector including cultural awareness (73%), global outlook/international mindedness (69%), adaptability (69%), and resilience (61%) as well as benefitting from professional development opportunities (61%).
- International experience continues to play a role in retaining teachers in the profession. 43% of incoming teachers were thinking about leaving the profession before taking up an international job (up from 36% in 2020 and 32% in 2018).
- The main reasons why teachers consider leaving the international sector are concern about being separated from family/friends (53%), return home (44%) and family commitments (34%).
- The majority of teachers (61%) say Covid-19 has not changed their plans in the international school sector, although some teachers report planning to stay in their current location longer than planned (16%), planning to move (or have moved) closer to home (10%), or planning to move (or have moved) to a different location (10%). For outgoing teachers, however, a third indicated that they are likely to leave the international school sector earlier than planned as a result of Covid-19.
- The majority of teachers report that the pandemic has had a moderate or significant negative impact on workload (73%), wellbeing (72%), work/life balance (67%), and job satisfaction (65%).
- Despite the challenges of the past two years, overall, teachers continue to have a relatively positive perception of their workload and job satisfaction, and feel valued and respected in their profession. 63% feel they have an acceptable workload; 62% feel they achieve a good work/life balance; 69% feel valued and respected as a teacher in the international sector; 72% are satisfied with their job.
- Overall, teachers are positive about their international school experience with 83% of teachers reporting that they are happy or very happy with their experience.



Teacher supply continues to present a significant challenge for the international sector, with 91% of senior leaders reporting that recruiting teachers is challenging or very challenging.

Recruitment and Retention

Teacher supply continues to be a global challenge. 91% of British international school leaders find recruiting quality teachers ‘somewhat’ or ‘very challenging’. This is slightly higher than the response from early 2020 (88%), but lower than the 94% reported in 2018. 40% of school leaders report a lower volume of applications for each post, compared to two years ago, and only 19% report that they are always able to recruit candidates that meet their expectations (down from 25% in 2020 and 26% in 2018). But 94% say they are ‘sometimes’ or ‘always’ able to recruit candidates that meet their expectations (compared to 96% in 2020 and 90% in 2018).

Fig. 3

Currently, how challenging is it to recruit the required quality of permanent teaching staff for your school?

Senior leadership

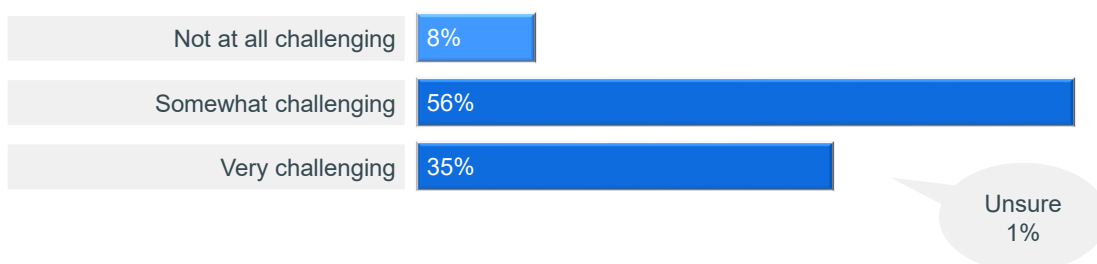
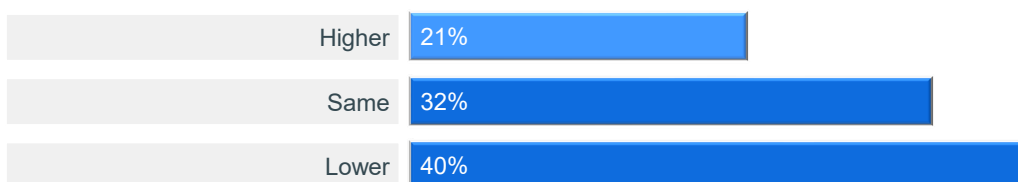




Fig. 4

Compared to two years ago, do you receive the same, lower or higher volume of applicants for each post?

Senior leadership

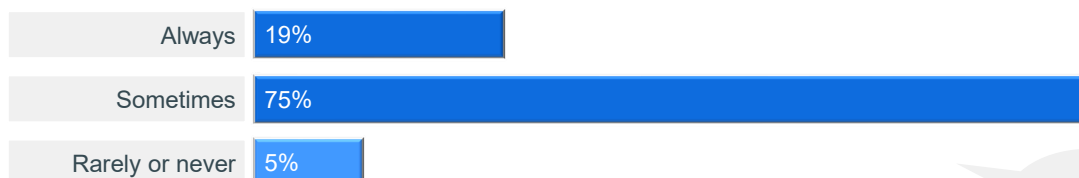


Unsure
7%

Fig. 5

Are you able to recruit candidates of a calibre that meet your expectations?

Senior leadership



Unsure
1%

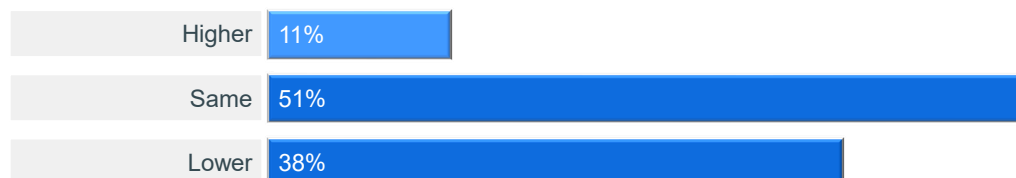


While the majority of senior leaders (62%) feel the teachers they have interviewed in the last two years have been of the same or higher calibre than previous years, this is down from 80% in 2018.

Fig. 6

Do you feel that teachers you have interviewed in the last two years are of the same, lower or higher calibre than previous years?

Senior leadership



Senior leaders report changes in the profile of applicants for international school jobs as a result of Covid-19. This includes a **decrease** in applicants moving from the UK (52%), applicants travelling with families (41%), and experienced teachers (39%); and an **increase** in local applicants (53%), international applicants (excluding UK nationals and local nationals; 39%), younger applicants (39%), and applicants already working internationally (38%).

The pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on teacher recruitment and retention, and on the wellbeing, workload, and job satisfaction of teachers.

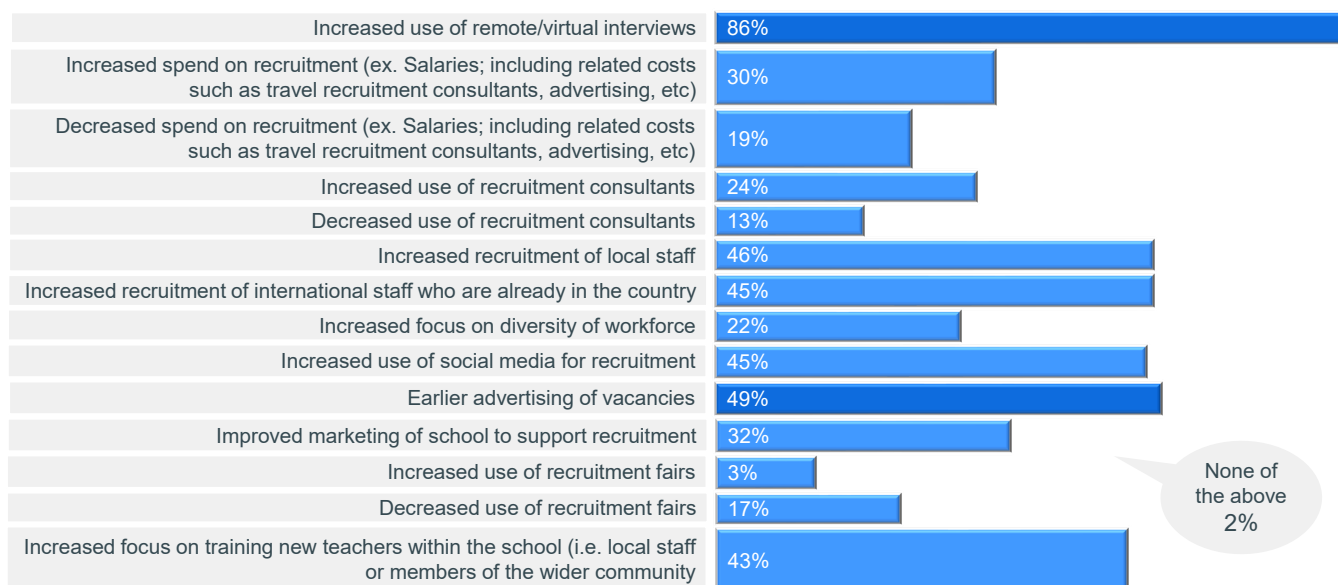


Schools are adjusting their recruitment practices to respond to the changing environment with increased use of remote/virtual interviews (86%), earlier advertising of vacancies (49%) and increased recruitment of local staff (46%) listed as the top ways in which recruitment practice has changed compared with two years ago. Other responses include increased recruitment of international staff who are already in the country (45%), increased use of social media for recruitment (45%) and increased focus on training new teachers within the school (43%).

Fig. 7

Compared with two years ago, how has your recruitment practice changed? (Tick any that apply)

Senior leadership



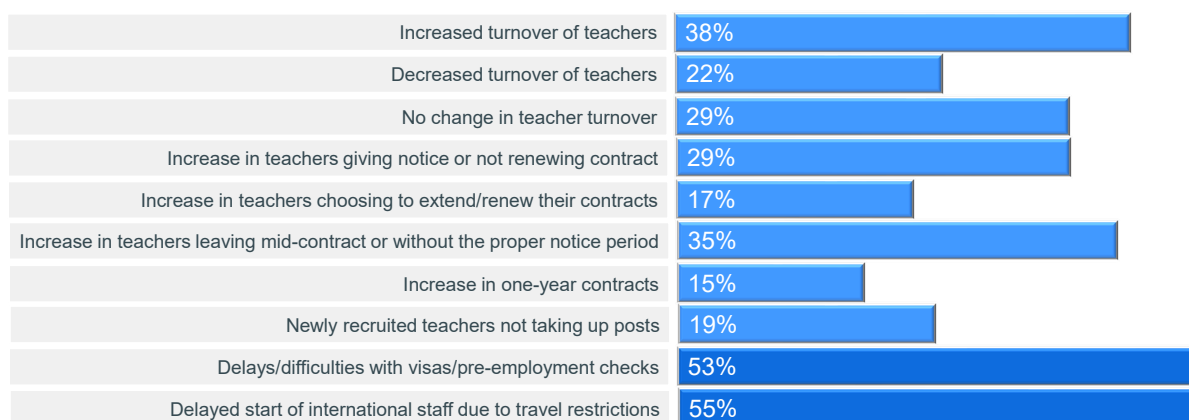


Covid-19 has also impacted recruitment on a practical level with 55% of senior leaders reporting delayed start of international staff due to travel restrictions and 53% experiencing difficulties with visas/pre-employment checks. But only 15% of senior leaders report having teachers teaching remotely from a different country, and only 13% have newly employed teachers or leaders who are still unable to enter the country due to travel/visa restrictions.

Fig. 8

Which of the following has your school experienced as a result of COVID-19?

Senior leadership



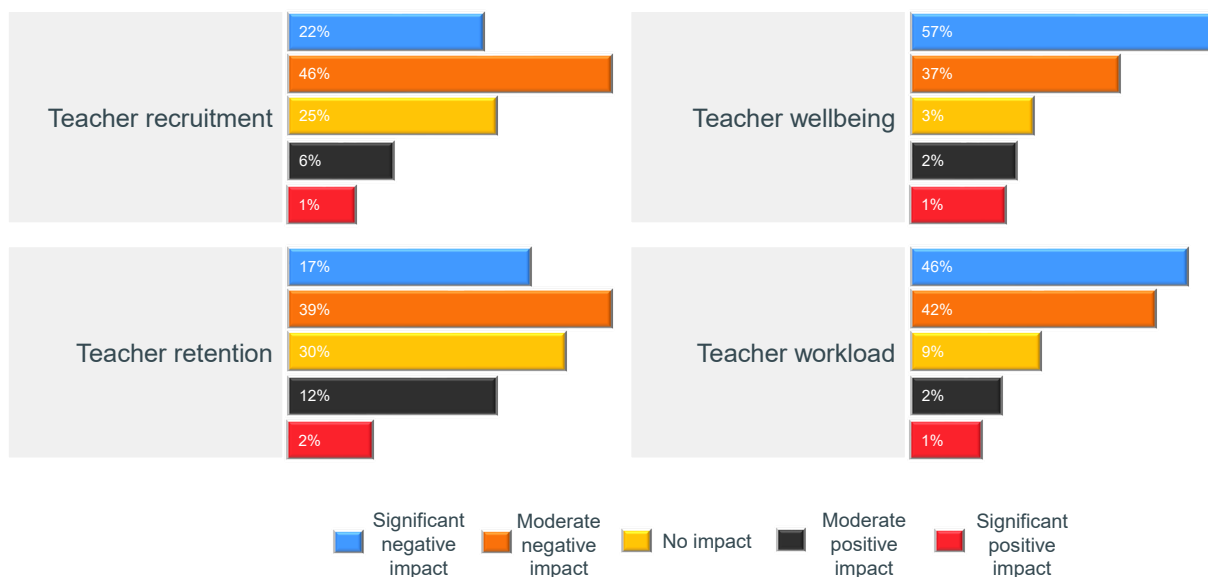


68% of senior leaders report that Covid-19, school closures, and the delivery of remote or blended learning has had a significant or moderate negative impact on teacher recruitment; 56% report a significant or moderate negative impact on teacher retention.

Fig. 9

How do you feel COVID-19, school closures, and the delivery of remote or blended teaching and learning have impacted

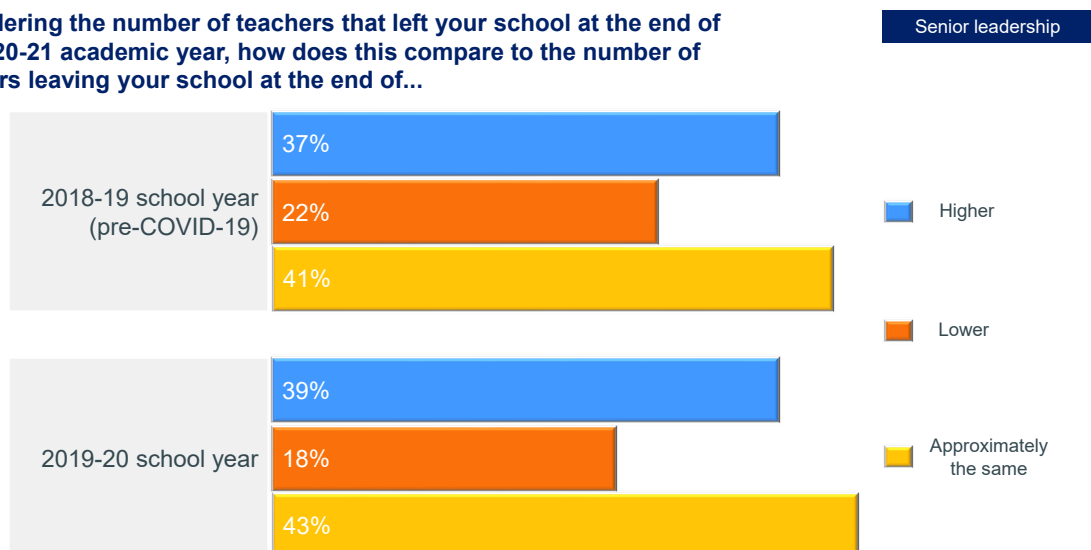
Senior leadership



More than a third of senior leaders report that the number of teachers leaving at the end of the last academic year (2020/21) was higher than the previous year (39%) and higher than the end of 2018/19 (37%; pre-Covid-19).

Fig. 10

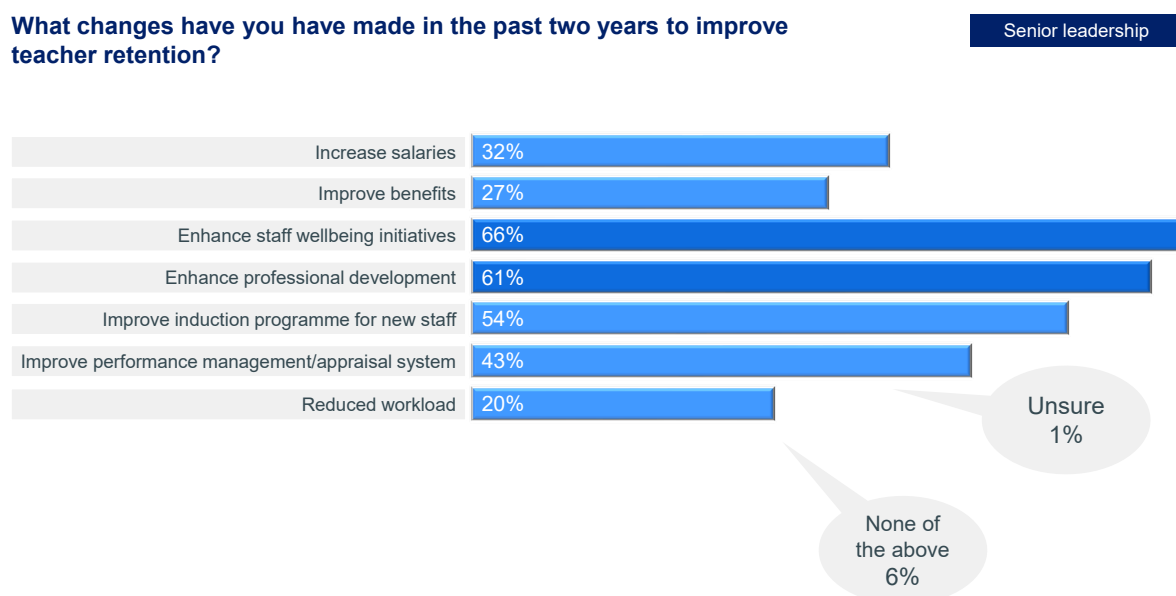
Considering the number of teachers that left your school at the end of the 2020-21 academic year, how does this compare to the number of teachers leaving your school at the end of...



Schools continue to be proactive to improve retention with 66% reporting enhanced staff wellbeing initiatives, and 61% enhancing professional development.

Fig. 11

What changes have you have made in the past two years to improve teacher retention?



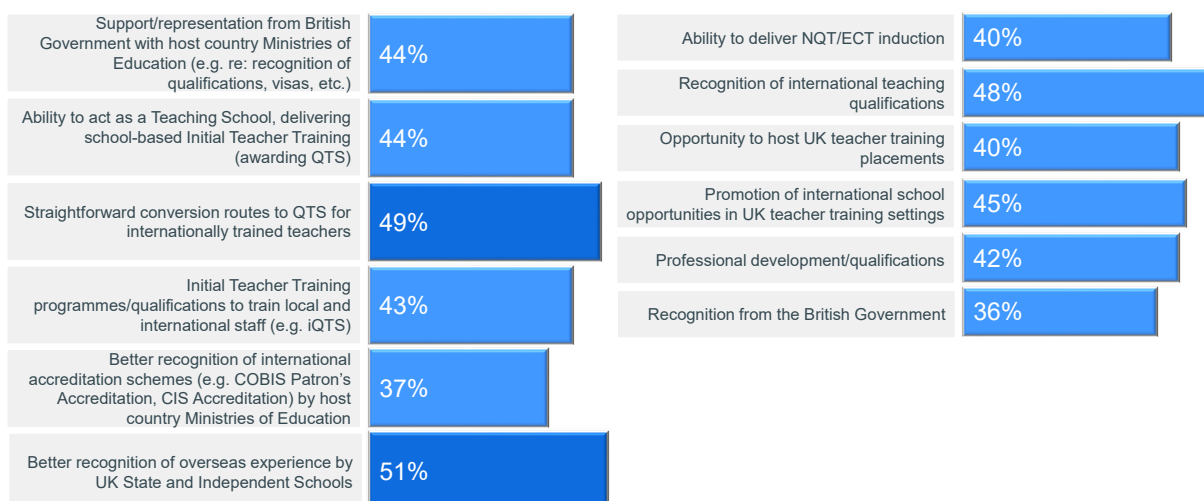


According to senior leaders, the services that would most help the international school sector with teacher supply in the coming years are: better recognition of overseas experience by UK State and Independent Schools (51%), straightforward conversion routes to QTS for internationally trained teachers (49%), and recognition of international teaching qualifications (48%). Initial Teacher Training programmes/qualifications to train local and international staff (e.g. iQTS) was also highlighted by 43% of senior leaders. The UK Department for Education's plans for International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS),^{xi} due to be piloted from September 2022, respond to evidence and recommendations presented in the first COBIS report on *Teacher Supply in British International Schools*.^{xii}

Fig. 12

What additional support or services would most help the international school sector with teacher supply in the coming years?

Senior leadership



Recognising international experience as part of a well-rounded teaching career, facilitating the movement of teachers between sectors, and increasing training and recognition of teacher training in an international context will benefit both the UK and international education sectors.



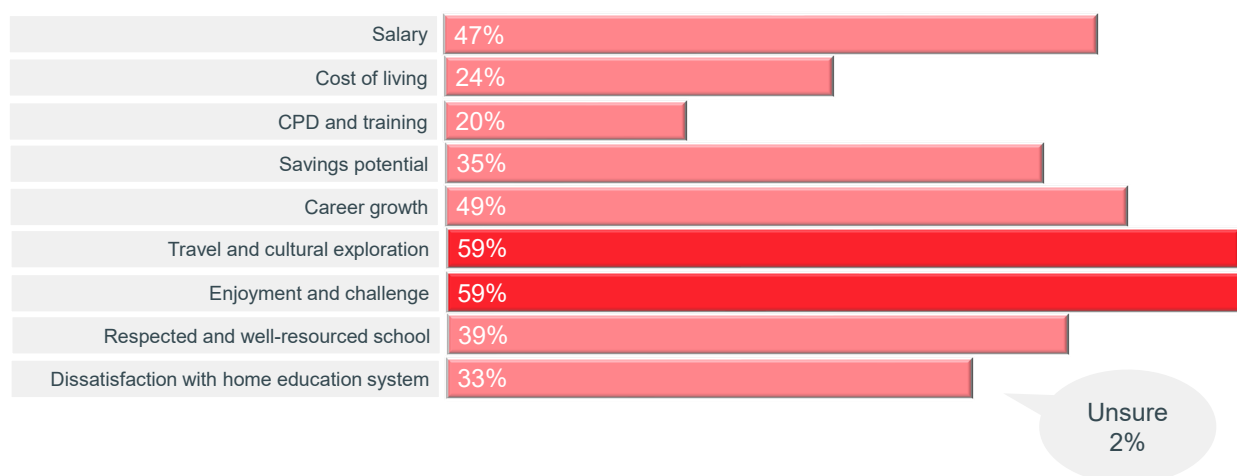
Movement of Teachers

Teachers choose to work internationally for a number of reasons. The main motivations continue to be travel and cultural exploration (59%) and enjoyment and challenge (59%). Other contributing factors include career growth (49%) and salary (47%). The percentage reporting dissatisfaction with the home education system as a reason for working internationally has decreased to 33% (down from 42% in 2020 and 47% in 2018).

Fig. 13

Which of the following are reasons for you to have chosen to work in the international school sector?

All teachers



Teachers do move between the UK and international school sectors, in both directions, and many see international experience as part of their global teaching career. 49% of incoming teachers say they are definitely or possibly planning to return to teaching in the UK in the future (up from 43% and 44% in 2020 and 2018). 67% of school leaders indicated they had teachers who left at the end of 2020/21 who were moving/returning to the UK to teach (up slightly from 65% in the 2020 report).

Fig. 14

Are you intending to return to teaching in the UK (or, for non-UK nationals, start teaching in the UK) in the future?

Incoming teachers

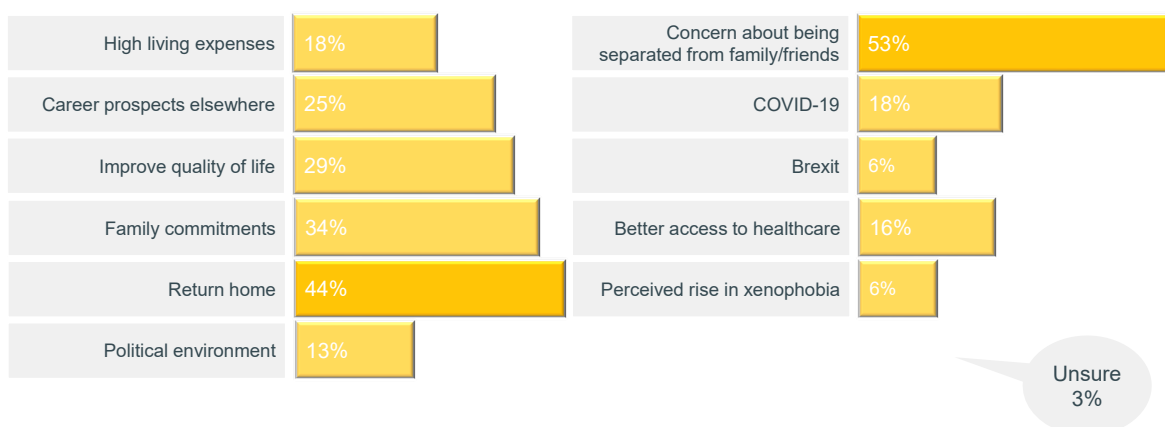


For outgoing teachers, the main reasons for leaving the international sector are concern about being separated from family/friends (53%), return home (44%) and family commitments (34%).

Fig. 15

Which of the following do you see as potential reasons why you might leave teaching in the international school sector?

Outgoing teachers



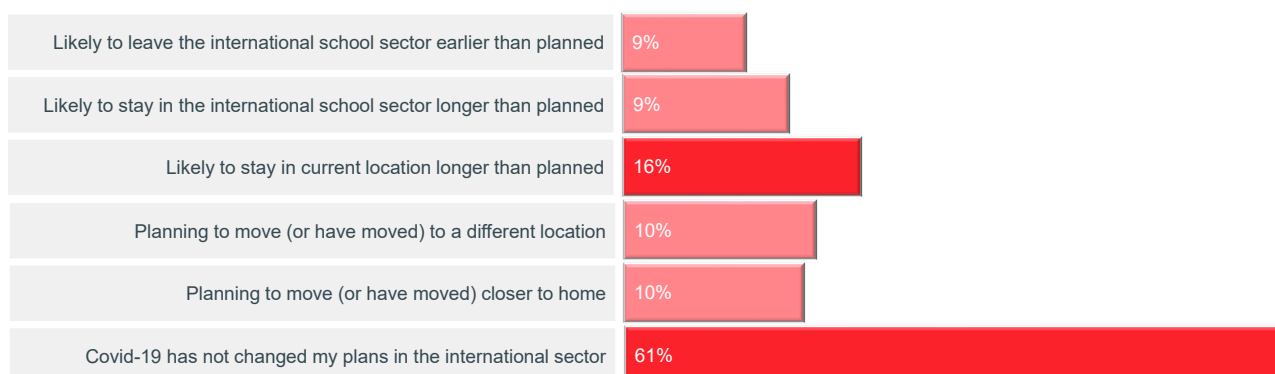


The majority of teachers (61%) say Covid-19 has not changed their plans in the international school sector, although some teachers report planning to stay in their current location longer than planned (16%), planning to move (or have moved) closer to home (10%), or planning to move (or have moved) to a different location (10%). For outgoing teachers, however, a third indicated that they are likely to leave the international school sector earlier than planned as a result of Covid-19. Regionally, the percentage of teachers planning to stay in their current location longer than planned is highest in the Middle East, while Asia has the highest proportion of teachers planning to move to a different location. Teachers in Europe are most likely to say that Covid-19 has not changed their plans in the international school sector (63%), while teachers in Asia are least likely to say that Covid-19 has not changed their plans (45%).

Fig. 16

In what way(s), if any, has COVID-19 changed your plans in the international school sector?

All teachers

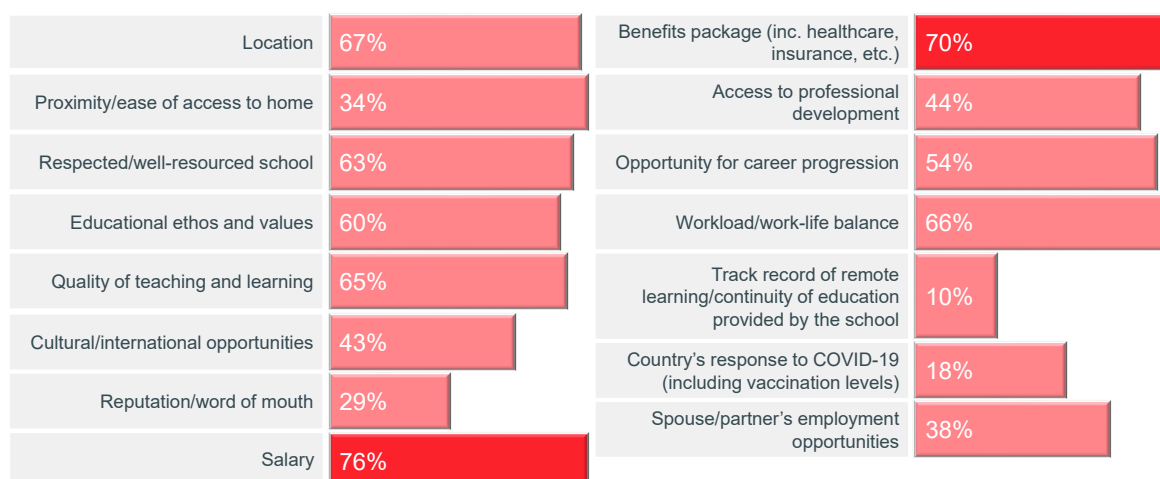


When considering their next international school job, teachers indicated that important factors included salary (76%), benefits package (70%), location (67%), workload/work-life balance (66%), and quality of teaching and learning (65%).

Fig. 17

When thinking about your next international school job, which of the following are important?

All teachers



Only 38% say Covid-19 has had an impact on locations they would consider for an international teaching job. But teachers do report that the pandemic has led to a preference for locations with developed healthcare systems (52%) and good international transport links (46%).

International experience continues to play a clear role in retaining teachers in the profession. 43% of incoming teachers were thinking about leaving the profession before taking up an international job (up from 36% in 2020 and 32% in 2018).

Fig. 18

Before taking a job in an international school, were you thinking about leaving the teaching profession?

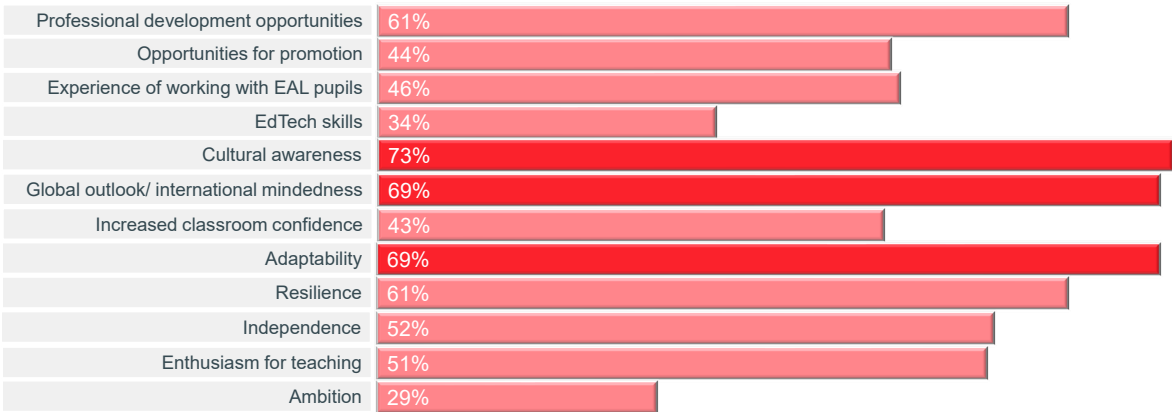
Incoming teachers



Teachers develop a wealth of transferable skills in the international sector including cultural awareness (73%), global outlook/international mindedness (69%), adaptability (69%), and resilience (61%) as well as benefitting from professional development opportunities (61%).

Fig. 19

Which of the following have you gained or benefited from in your time working in an international school? All teachers





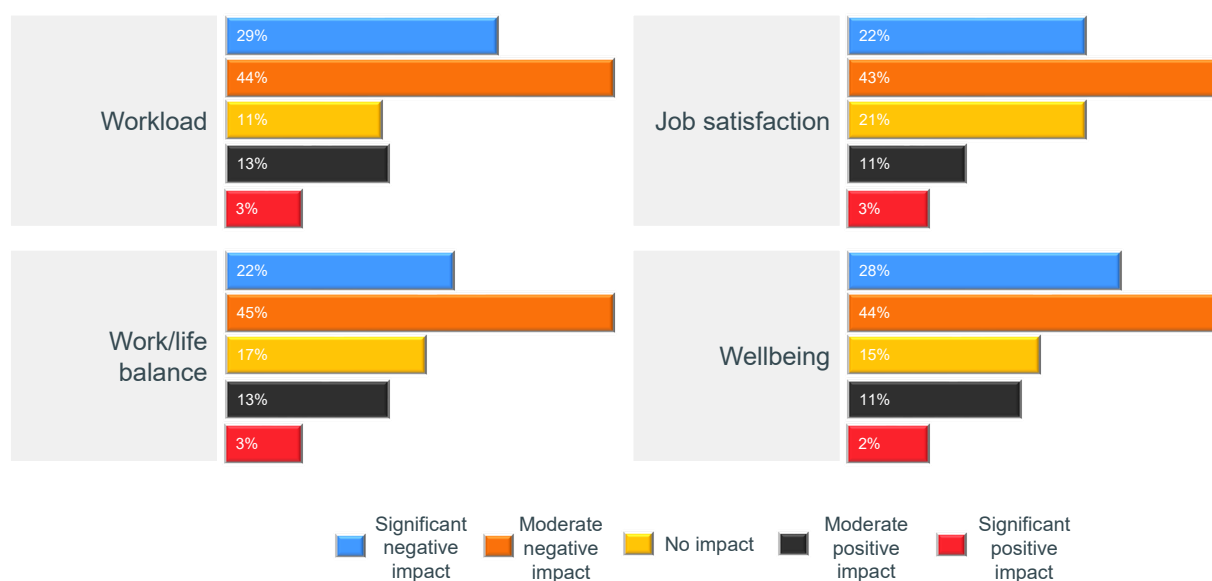
Wellbeing and Perception of the Profession

The majority of teachers report that the pandemic has had a moderate or significant negative impact on workload (73%), wellbeing (72%), work/life balance (67%), and job satisfaction (65%). Similarly, 94% of senior leaders report a significant or moderate negative impact on teacher wellbeing; and 88% report a significant or moderate negative impact on teacher workload as a result of Covid-19, school closures, and the delivery of remote or blended learning (see Fig. 9).

Fig. 20

How do you feel COVID-19, school closures, and the delivery of remote or blended teaching and learning have impacted your....

All teachers



Yet despite the challenges of the past two years, overall, teachers continue to have a relatively positive perception of their workload and job satisfaction, and feel valued and respected in their profession. 63% feel they have an acceptable workload; 62% feel they achieve a good work/life balance; 69% feel valued and respected as a teacher in the international sector; 72% are satisfied with their job. Looking at the responses from incoming teachers only, to allow for a direct comparison with 2020, the percentage of teachers reporting that they achieve a good work/life balance has decreased by 10%, and the percentage reporting that they feel valued and respected has decreased by 13%, but perceptions of workload and job satisfaction have remained fairly constant. There are also some regional variations in this data. A higher proportion of respondents from the Americas and Africa felt they had an acceptable workload, while a higher proportion of respondents from Europe disagreed with the statement about workload. Respondents from Europe were also more likely to disagree with the statement about work/life balance, and had the lowest level of agreement with the statement about job satisfaction. The proportion of respondents from the Middle East and Americas feeling they achieve a good work/life balance was above average.

Fig. 21

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

All teachers

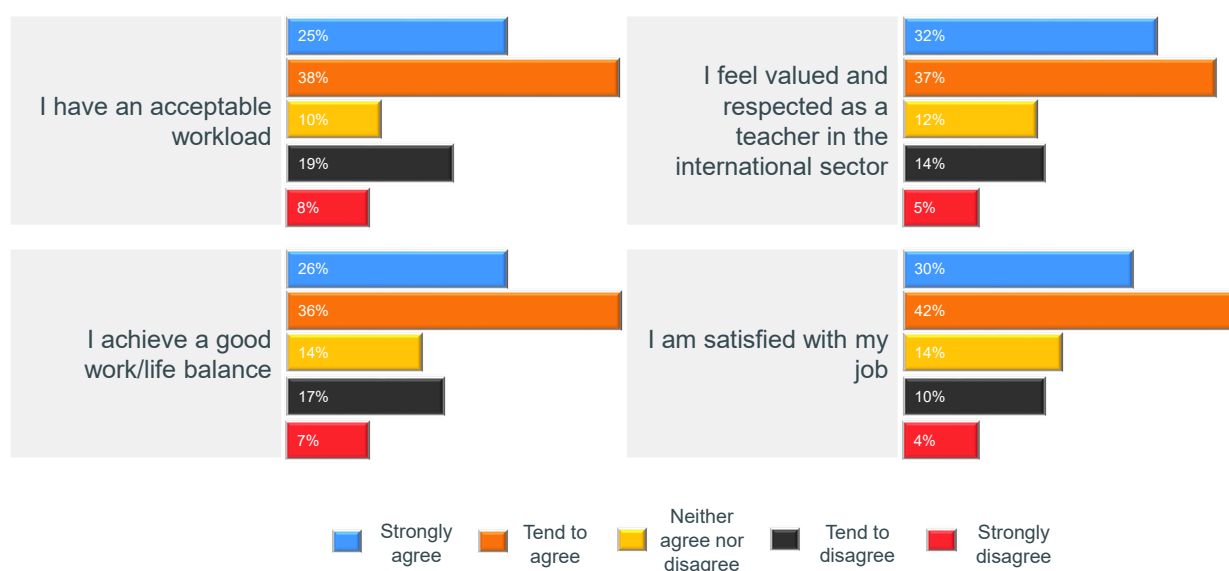


Fig. 22

All teachers



COBIS Teacher Supply in British International Schools – 2022



Recommendations and Conclusion

The international school sector, like other sectors, has faced significant challenges in recent years, but teachers and leaders have responded with tremendous resilience, and an ongoing commitment and determination to ensuring the best possible educational outcomes for children and young people.

The pandemic has clearly had an impact on teacher recruitment and retention, as well as teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction. The international school sector is addressing these related challenges in a number of ways – enhancing staff wellbeing initiatives, increased recruitment and training of local staff, adaptations to recruitment practices, and more.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, international school teachers continue to report a comparatively positive perception of workload,^{xviii} job satisfaction, and feeling valued/respected in their profession. It continues to be the case that the opportunity to work and learn in an international context can make teaching a highly attractive career, support teacher retention, and enable teachers to develop their practice and gain valuable skills and experience. COBIS continues to believe that recognising international experience as part of a well-rounded teaching career, facilitating the movement of teachers between sectors,

and increasing training and recognition of teacher training in an international context will benefit both the UK and international education sectors, and enable the growth and retention of the global teacher workforce. On the back of this research, COBIS is making the following recommendations:

Position teaching as a global profession

The opportunity to work both at home and abroad continues to make teaching a highly attractive career. The research findings show that international experience has a positive impact on teacher retention, and that an increased proportion of teachers entering the international school sector would consider returning to the UK to teach. And nearly a quarter of school leaders reported an increase in the number of teachers moving or returning to the UK to teach. Those teachers who do move or return to teaching in the UK bring with them a wealth of valuable experience and transferable skills from their international roles. Promoting the international opportunities of a teaching career could also increase the attractiveness of the profession and increase recruitment to Initial Teacher Training at a time of decreasing applications to Initial Teacher Training in England. Positioning teaching as a global profession, with the UK and international sectors (including DfE and

DIT) working co-operatively to promote global opportunities and recognise the value of international experience, could have a positive effect on teacher supply both domestically and internationally. The professional experience of teachers would be enriched, the movement of teachers between sectors could be facilitated, UK schools would benefit from the repatriation of skills developed in an international context, teacher retention could be improved, and the attractiveness of teaching as a profession could be enhanced to increase recruitment to Initial Teacher Training.

Extend and recognise international training opportunities

The range of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) opportunities in an international context, and the level of engagement with these opportunities, has been increasing since the publication of the first COBIS Teacher Supply report in 2018. More providers are offering programmes such as iPGCE, the Department for Education has developed plans to pilot International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS) from September 2022, and an increasing number of British schools abroad are engaging with Initial Teacher Training routes. However, there is still scope for international schools to play an even greater role in training teachers in their locality as a means of growing the global teacher workforce. 43% of senior leaders noted an increased focus on training new teachers within the school, and 46% reported an increase in recruitment of local staff (compared with 34% reporting an increase in recruitment of local staff in 2020). Increasing engagement with ITT programmes overseas – for candidates within the wider community of international schools, and for local staff – could contribute to growing the workforce in a scalable way to reduce stress on global supply and increase the diversity of the workforce. Crucially, there needs to be recognition of the value and transferability of international training routes (including by UK schools), parity with domestic training and qualifications, and removal of barriers to teacher mobility. It is positive to note that the DfE's

plans for iQTS include provision for conversion to English QTS,^{xiv} but other barriers to teacher mobility persist. For example, the ability to deliver Early Career Teacher (ECT) induction is currently limited to a very small proportion of accredited British international schools. This outdated restriction is limiting the number of teachers who can complete their induction, and limits the number of fully-trained teachers (many trained by UK-accredited ITT providers) that are eligible and encouraged to teach in the UK. With high-quality international schools choosing from a range of internationally recognised and respected quality assurance and accreditation routes, extending the opportunity to support new teachers through ECT induction to a wider range of accredited schools would further support the growth of the global teacher workforce and contribute to the ongoing success of British schools both in the UK and abroad.

Value and recognise the breadth of experience and backgrounds within the global teacher workforce

Alongside increased recruitment and training of local staff, many schools are assessing and seeking to address the diversity of the teacher and leader workforce as part of wider work on diversity, equity and inclusion in the sector. This is an important journey for the education sector, and can only have a positive impact on both the workforce and the quality of educational provision for children and young people in schools. It is crucial that the breadth of experience and backgrounds within the global teacher workforce is nurtured, valued and recognised. Linked to this is the need for more consistent recognition of the benefits and value of international experience, in order to facilitate the movement of teachers between domestic and international sectors. Recognition of the value of international experience and international qualifications continues to be variable, and a more consistent approach would ensure teachers with international experience are welcomed, encouraged and supported to enter or return to the UK school sector.



The key findings in this report show that the pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on teacher recruitment and retention, and on the wellbeing, workload, and job satisfaction of teachers, but it has not had a significant impact on teachers' plans within the sector. It remains the case that teachers move to the British international school sector to develop themselves personally and professionally. Alongside their wider school communities, they have demonstrated tremendous resilience, and continue to have positive perceptions of their experience in the international school sector. International experience also appears to play an increasing role in retaining teachers in the profession – 43% of incoming teachers were thinking about leaving the profession before taking up an international job.

Movement between the UK and international school sectors continues to be a two-way street, with some evidence of an increase in movement (or plans to return) to the UK compared with previous years. Those teachers who work abroad and subsequently move to teach or work in the wider education sector in the UK bring with them a wealth of valuable skills and experience (cultural awareness, global outlook/international mindedness, adaptability).

Teacher supply continues to present a significant challenge for the international sector, with 91% of senior leaders reporting that recruiting teachers is challenging or very challenging. The pandemic has had an impact on the profile of teachers applying for jobs in the sector, and has also impacted recruitment on a practical level with visa difficulties and travel restrictions. But schools continue to address the challenges of teacher supply with increased recruitment of local staff and engaging with training new teachers in their locality, adapting recruitment practices, and an increased focus on supporting staff wellbeing. Senior leaders have also highlighted a number of services (better recognition of overseas experience; straightforward conversion routes to QTS for internationally trained teachers; and recognition of international teaching qualifications) that would support teacher supply in the coming years, both internationally and domestically.



It is positive to note that the UK Department for Education (DfE) has responded to evidence presented in the first COBIS report on *Teacher Supply in British International Schools* (2018), for example with the development of iQTS, and initiatives to support and encourage returning to teaching in the UK.^{xv} COBIS continues to play an active role in the development of iQTS, supports the DfE with a range of initiatives and events to facilitate the movement of teachers, and represents the needs of member schools and the wider sector with the UK Government, including through the Education Sector Advisory Group chaired by Ministers from the Department for International Trade and Department for Education.

Teacher supply is a global challenge, and while other challenges have been more prominent in the past two years, the need for effective approaches to teacher supply is vital. In England, the NFER's *Teacher Labour Market in England Annual Report 2022*^{xvi} includes sound recommendations on improving the competitiveness of teacher pay, ensuring manageable workloads, and support for Early Career Teachers to increase the attractiveness of the profession in England. Considering the international dimension, approaches should also include prioritising and supporting teacher wellbeing, recognising international experience as a valuable part of a teacher's development as a professional, eschewing any perception of the domestic and international sectors being in competition for teachers, recognising the value of skills gained in the international sector and the breadth of experience and backgrounds within the global teacher workforce, encouraging teachers to embrace international opportunities and broaden their horizons, and welcoming and supporting teachers who wish to enter or return to teaching in the UK. This needs to be supported by increased opportunities and capacity for growing the global teacher workforce through training of teachers in an international context, parity and recognition of qualifications, and removing barriers to training and movement of teachers – in both directions – between domestic and international school sectors.



Notes

- ⁱ <https://www.cobis.org.uk/about-us/research/teacher-supply-in-british-international-schools>
- ⁱⁱ Figures on the size of the international school market are courtesy of ISC Research Ltd. British international schools are schools located outside the UK that teach a curriculum (wholly or in part) that would be recognised in the UK (such as the National Curriculum for England) and have a British orientation/ethos (which can include high-quality pastoral care, a range of extra-curricular opportunities, and reference to British values, freedoms and culture). Where ISC Research figures for British international schools are cited, these represent schools categorised as having a 'UK national orientation' in the ISC Research database.
- ⁱⁱⁱ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/944966/SFR_education_exports_2018_FINAL.pdf
- ^{iv} https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/958990/International-Education-Strategy-2021-Update.pdf
- ^v Data on the international school market is courtesy of ISC Research Ltd. The figure about the potential number of teachers is not a forecast, but rather the number of teachers that could be required if the growth patterns of recent years were to continue unchanged.
- ^{vi} <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census/2021-22>
- ^{vii} <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2022/>
- ^{viii} <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>
- ^{ix} <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/media/qzna4gxb/twix-2021.pdf>
- ^x <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/asset/1AC040A7-96A5-481A-A052DDD850ABC476/>
- ^{xi} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-qualified-teacher-status-iqts/introducing-the-international-qualified-teacher-status-iqts-pilot>
- ^{xii} <https://www.cobis.org.uk/about-us/research/teacher-supply-in-british-international-schools>
- ^{xiii} 63% of responding teachers agreed with the statement 'I have an acceptable workload'; this can be compared to the Tes Wellbeing Report 2022: International (<https://www.tes.com/international/for-schools/content/staff-wellbeing-report-2022>) which notes that only 18% of responding teachers in the UK indicated that their workload was manageable.
- ^{xiv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-qualified-teacher-status-iqts/introducing-the-international-qualified-teacher-status-iqts-pilot>
- ^{xv} <https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/international-returns>
- ^{xvi} <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/teacher-labour-market-in-england-annual-report-2022/>