

Missing Mothers

Breaking the cycle: How retention can solve the recruitment crisis in education

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**The
New Britain
Project**

Women in their thirties are the single biggest group leaving teaching and have been since 2017

Age Group	Female	Male
Under 25	2,160	472
25 to 29	5,981	1,886
30 to 39	9,147	3,452
40 to 49	6,832	2,366
50 to 59	6,458	2,408
60 and over	1,669	668

Source: DfE School Workforce in England 2023

Workload remains the top reason for leaving, and its impact has intensified since 2018

What were your principal reasons for leaving UK state school teaching? (Please tick all that apply)	2024	2018
Workload	75%	69%
Mental health/ wellbeing	57%	50%
Lifestyle choice - i.e. wanting to work fewer hours, seeking a better work-life balance or to pursue other interests	54%	53%
Family commitments	51%	42%
Lack of flexible/ part time working arrangements in teaching	51%	33%
School culture	45%	38%
Childcare logistics	42%	32%

For mothers, workload, family commitments and lack of flexibility are the most influential reasons for leaving

What were your principal reasons for leaving UK state school teaching? (Please tick all that apply)	2024
Workload	76%
Family commitments	65%
Lack of flexible/ part time working arrangements in teaching	56%

"I feel like I'm a teacher, social worker, child psychologist, family support worker as well as trying to teach full time & be a mum."

Primary middle leader

It's absurd we're losing experienced teachers simply because some schools can't offer them basic flexibility

"I left because I didn't want to keep missing milestone events in my children's lives - assemblies, sports days, nativities."

Primary classroom teacher - left 2022 with 14 years experience

"I miss it every day, it's a bit of a grieving process, it's still my identity. So I find that really, really hard. I thought I would be a career long teacher. It was never my intention to leave."

Secondary Deputy Headteacher - left 2022 with 14 years experience

"It's not possible for me to be available for my children the way they want other parents to be available for their children."

Secondary classroom teacher

Retaining female teachers in their thirties should be the Government's top retention priority

1

Coaching programme for all mothers who want it during, and post-maternity leave.

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2

Priority childcare places for teachers.

3

The Burgundy Book provisions on maternity leave and shared parental leave should be updated.

4

The NPQ framework is under review – it is in the govt's gift to ensure that for the next iteration of quals, flexible working is part of it.

5

Require standardised timetabling data to quickly build a comprehensive evidence base and introduce

Comparative analysis of maternity leave policies

Employer	Full Pay	90%	Half Pay	Total Weeks (Paid at Enhanced Rate)	Equal Pay Offered to Both Parents?
Metropolitan Police	30	0	0	30	No
Department for Education	26	0	0	26	Yes
Deloitte	26	0	0	26	Yes
Linklaters	26	0	0	26	No (but 12 weeks offered to partners at full pay)
Natwest	24	0	0	24	Yes
NHS	8	0	18	26	No
Burgundy Book	4	2	12	18	No

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