Teacher Retention in a London primary school

Ahmed Mahfoodh¹

¹Affiliation not available

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Classroom Teacher Retention in A State-Funded London Primary School

Ahmed Mahfoodh

A Primary Teacher and MA TESOL graduate, University of Westminster

Abstract

Teacher retention in the UK has reached crisis level according to many resources. The paper attempts to provide an overview of the extent of the problem and its impacts, the factors that make a teacher wanting to leave especially in state-funded London primary schools, and how some schools manage to keep a high teacher retention. Then it explores the same issues again but from the point of view of the headteacher and teachers of the author’s school. The results show that the efforts of the management, which are based on an understanding of the factors that could drive teachers away, play an important role in retaining the teachers. They also reveal that there are other independent factors (not directly resulting from the management’s efforts) that influence high retention within the school such as royalty and ethics.

Keywords

Teacher, Retention, Education, Primary, State-funded, School

Definition

Employee retention can be defined as “keep[ing] employees from leaving an organization” (Bannock, 2003), hence, teacher retention can be defined as keeping teachers from leaving their schools. It is noticed in the relevant literature that many authors use the term without supplying a definition (e.g. Arthur, 2001; Cardy and Lengnick-Hall, 2011; Grotto et al., 2017), probably, due to the relative simplicity of employee retention as a term. Similarly, none of the references used in this paper supply a definition of teacher retention (TR hereafter).

Literature review

The Status Quo of Teacher Retention in the UK
The topic of TR has gained importance and attention recently in the UK. Searching the BBC website for teacher retention while limiting the search to News on the 1st of May 2018 yielded more than 40 headlines dated between March 2015 and April 2018 (BBC, 2018) and searching the UK Parliament website on the same date yielded about 5500 results in the form of debates and publications, enter alia (UK Parliament, 2018c). The importance and recency of this topic constitutes one aspect of the rationale behind choosing this topic. Another aspect is that this topic is relevant to the author of this paper since he works for a state-funded primary school in London. This made collecting data convenient, especially that the management and teachers, despite their many responsibilities, were exceptionally cooperative.

It is hoped that this research would give the management of the author’s school useful feedback. Moreover, the paper has the potential of contributing to the general national debate on TR since the author’s school enjoys a relatively high TR.

The paper will first review relevant literature. For reasons of space, the focus will be on official reports i.e. reports written by government agencies or UK educational institutions, since they are more relevant. As a foundation for the research, the paper will seek to reach an understanding of the status quo of TR in state-funded London primary schools. Next, impacts of TR will be discussed. Then reasons to why a teacher would leave a school and what can be done to retain teachers will be explored. The literature review will be followed by a brief description of the data collection process, which will clear the ground for the next section where the theory and practice will be brought together. In this section the same issues discussed in the literature will be revisited while linking them to related excerpts. The last section of this paper will be dedicated to drawing conclusions from the emerging findings and based on that recommendations will be made.

Because “the number of qualified teachers leaving the state sector has been slowly increasing year on year”, a number of politicians, unions, and journalists believe that there is a TR crisis in the UK (Des Clayes and Full Fact, 2017: 1). Des Clayes and Full Fact fail to give examples, but there are quite a few. Politicians such as Angela Rayner MP (2017), the current shadow secretary of state for education (UK Parliament, 2018a), Meg Hillier MP, current chair of the Public Account Committee (Committee of Public Accounts, 2018; UK Parliament, 2018c), Layla Moran MP (2017), the current Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Education (UK Parliament, 2018b), Katherine Sellgren (2018), a BBC News education reporter, and Rajeev Syal (2018), a journalist from The Guardian, all opine that there is a crisis in TR in the UK. Moreover, National Union of Teachers (NUT) and National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), the largest two teachers’ unions in the UK (Certification Officer, 2018), both label the situation as a crisis (NASUWT, 2018; NUT, 2018a). The view of the mentioned politicians, journalists, and unions is supported by several published reports e.g. Foster (2018), Des Clayes and Full Fact (2017), House of Commons Education Committee (2017), School Teachers’ Review Body (2017), and Worth and Lazzari (2017), all of which use the word ‘crisis’ to describe the situation. Furthermore, a key statistical release by the Department for Education (DfE) “based on data collected from schools and local authorities in November 2016 as part of the seventh annual School Workforce Census” (Department for Education, 2017: 3), which was used by NUT (2018a), Hollis (2017), and Syal (2018), to name a few, provides strong statistical evidence.

Figure 1 based on table 7a, DfE (2017)
Table 7b of the statistical release shows that between November 2015 and November 2016, 50,110 teachers with qualified teacher status (QTS), equal to 10.5% of the total QTS workforce (475,900 strong at November 2016, according to the DfE (2017, Table 3a)), left state-funded schools in England. A section of the table (see figure 1) indicates that while the annual total of QTS teachers leaving the profession between 2011 and 2016 increases from 46,130 to 50,110, across these annual totals, there is a shift in the percentage of teachers leaving for reasons other than retirement (and the neglectable reason of decease); it enjoyed 63% of the total in 2011 raising to 80% in 2016, gaining a 17% increment in just five years. This means that the rate of leaving has been increasing at an accelerated rate since 2011. This contradicts a statement made by the DfE that TR “has remained broadly stable since 2006” (2017: 6), which was repeated by the government in its response (UK Government, 2017) to the House of Commons Education Committee (2017) and by Justine Greening MP, the former Secretary of State for Education (July 2016 - January 2018) (UK Parliament, 2018d), in a House of Commons debate on 11th of December 2017 (Rodda and Greening, 2017). This was criticised and seen as an action of denial (e.g. Sims (2018)). Additionally, the government has been criticised for failing to adequately recognise and act to resolve the crisis by many senior politicians, including Angela Rayner MP (Syal, 2018), Meg Hillier MP (Busby, 2018) and Neil Carmichael, former chair of the Education Select Committee (June 2015 - May 2017) (UK Parliament, 2017), amongst others (see Jarque (2017)). However, there are signs that the current UK government has started to respond to criticism and evidence and take some action to alleviate the situation. For example, surveys by NUT/YouGov (NUT, 2015), DfE (Highton et al., 2017) and NUT (NUT, 2018c) highlighted that the increasing pressure and workload are a major cause for leaving. In response, on 10th of March 2018 the government announced her plans to “remove unnecessary workload for teachers” (Department for Education, 2018b). A thorough evaluation of the government’s performance regarding this problem goes beyond the scope of this paper.

It is noteworthy that London schools are the most effected by the crisis. Greater London Authority (2017: 65) and Worth, Luzzari and Hillary (2017) report that London has poorer retention and more recruitment challenges than elsewhere. Moreover, London has proportions higher than average of vacancies, teachers leaving the profession, unqualified teachers, and teachers on temporary terms (ibid, 2017). Thus, it is clear that London schools requires the government’s attention and action more than the rest of the UK.

Impacts of Low Teacher Retention in the UK

Possibly, the one major impact of the crisis that the official reports focus on the most is shortage of teachers
supply (Foster, 2018 and others; School Teachers’ Review Body, 2017; Worth et al., 2017). As highlighted above, the impact in London is severer. This applies also to deprived areas as the Social Mobility Commission (2017) suggests. The National Audit Office (2017) notes that only half of the schools surveyed managed to recruit teachers at the required level, with one tenth not able to fill the vacancy at all. Based on this, it can be deduced that low TR generates a two-layered challenge for schools: Recruiting a teacher in the first place and then avoiding compromising on quality.

The financial impact probably comes next in terms of representation in the official reports. Allen et al. (2016) mentions that the average cost of the initial teacher training (ITT) is about £23,000 per teacher. After the ITT, once the teacher is recruited, a substantial amount of money, energy and time is invested by school managements, and the teachers themselves, to further develop their skills, which is wasted when a teacher leaves the profession. Then there is the time and money devoted to recruiting a new member of staff (watch 00:19-00:27 of Teachers TV/UK Department of Education (2008)). Likewise, the government recent “relatively expensive” (Allen et al., 2016: 2) tax-free bursaries and scholarships initiative (see Department for Education, 2018a) was financially ineffective according to many official organisations as a result of poor retention of teachers after they complete their training (Cater, 2017; Committee of Public Accounts, 2016; National Audit Office, 2016; Sellen and Perera, 2017; Worth and Lazzari, 2017).

The impact on children education is reported in the official reports, albeit with less focus and details, and reliance on USA-based research. For instance, Greater London Authority (2017), relying on two USA studies, warns against the negative impacts on the pupils’ achievements that high turnover can cause. Similarly, using six references, four of which are American, Allen et al. (2016: 5) states that there is a “consensus in the research community” that a good teacher can have a positive impact on pupil attainment. It may be concluded here that more research within the UK context is needed to fully explore the impacts of the TR crisis on pupil education. Another important impact is that the leadership pool, i.e. the number of teachers who are able to take leadership positions, is becoming smaller (Lynch et al., 2017) since teachers of 40-59 years age, who make up 80% of all headteachers in the UK (Department for Education, 2017, Table 9d 2016), has been falling since 2010 (Worth et al., 2017: 13).

Reasons for Teachers’ Wanting to Leave

As stated above, workload, mainly in the form of marking, lesson planning, assessment and reporting, and data management (Gibson et al., 2015) has been listed by a few surveys as a major reason for leaving. Research identifies changes to the curriculum and assessments, the accountability system (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017), the Ofsted inspection framework, and frequency of policy changes as the roots of high workload, which leads to health and morale problems and ultimately wanting to leave (Lynch et al., 2016). Despite the fact that nearly three quarters of teachers identify workload as being the most common reason for leaving, according to two different surveys: Association for Teachers and Lecturers (2015) and Menzies (2015), it must not be treated as the only one as Lynch et al., (2016) warns. This is because “[t]he reasons behind teachers considering leaving the profession are clearly not straightforward” (House of Commons Education Committee, 2017: 15). Other important reasons for leaving include lack of support and flexibility from the management, job dissatisfaction and disengagement (Lynch et al., 2016), being unhappy with the management, insufficient pay, disliking the school culture, and poor pupils behaviour (Menzies et al., 2015). It is worth noting here that all the studies on reasons of leaving mentioned above are general and not specific to a certain school. Since each school has its own features, reasons for leaving are relatively unique to each school at least in certain aspects. Also, a certain factor could gain importance over time as circumstances change. For example, the factor of pay seems to be gaining importance at the time of writing this paper due to an accumulation of pay freezes and caps claimed to be resulting in a current average deduction of 15% compared to 2010 (NUT, 2018b).

Ways to Improve Teacher Retention

The official reports examined in this paper fail to discuss ways of improving teacher retention. The cases below come from Teachers TV.
Like the case of leaving causes, each school has its unique situation. In one school bad behaviour and lack of support damaged the staff morale and drove them away from the school. The newly appointed headteacher improved TR by putting an effective behaviour policy in place and supporting the staff in their disciplinary decisions. In another, the headteacher appointed a mentor for each newly appointed teacher to make sure they are to settle well. Also, she made sure the staff get a good work/life balance by providing for example ironing and reflexology services. In the maths department within a secondary school near perfect retention was achieved through strong team work and opportunities for development (Teachers TV/UK Department of Education, 2007). In Cleeve School in Cheltenham, in addition to elements of the above, the management showed flexibility and understanding of life demands and allowed staff to go part-time (Teachers TV/UK Department of Education, 2008).

The UK Government’s Efforts

As aforementioned, in response to some of the factors identified in the official reports, the government has started to act especially in regards of workload and its roots, as discussed above. Additionally, the government has other initiatives but they have been scrapped, are yet to materialise, or are focusing on recruitment rather than retention (see (Foster, 2018: 15–26)). The government’s focus on recruitment new teachers rather than keeping existing teachers has been criticised by House of Commons Education Committee (2017) and the National Audit Office (2017). This focus could lead to an overall younger workforce, which would cost less and make savings on the “£21 billion spent annually by state-funded schools on teaching staff” (National Audit Office, 2017: 4), but this would come at the expenses of education quality. To illustrate this point: In November 2016, the average salary for under 25 classroom teachers was £24,000 while the average salary for 35 and above was approximately £36,000 (Department for Education, 2017, Table 9b 2016).

Methodology

A data triangulation, “the use of more than one method for gathering data” (Hammond and Wellington, 2013: 145), was used in this paper. Semi-structured interviews (see Gimenez (2018) and Matthews and Ross (2010, Chapter C4)) with the head teacher (about 70 minutes), a retained teacher (24 minutes), and a new teacher (5 minutes) were recorded and transcribed (see Appendix I). As an ethical measure, before conducting the interview, they were asked to sign a consent form based on School of GeoSciences- Ethics Committee (2013). Three questionnaires were filled by existing teachers to explore intentions (see Appendix II, Questionnaire 1). Also, a different questionnaire was collected from two teachers who left the school (see Appendix II, Questionnaire 2). To keep the research focused, the data collection was limited to classroom teachers, excluding other categories of teachers, such as intervention and permanent cover teachers, since they have less involvement with the pupils’ learning.

Data Analysis

The Status Quo of Teacher Retention (in the UK and author’s school)

The author’s school enjoys a relatively high TR that is worthy of analysing. In the headteacher’s own words: “[…] we’ve got very few cases of teachers leaving our school” (HeadT9). Commenting on the status quo of TR in the UK, he reminds that low TR happened about 15 years ago and was resolved mainly through powerful incentives such as “golden Hello handshake”, “equity loans” and “pay incentives” (HeadT3), hinting that this is what is possibly needed from the government to alleviate the current RT crisis which he describes as being “probably at its all-time worst” (HeadT3).

While agreeing with the politicians and journalist that the current TR situation is a crisis, he declares that “education is highly politicised […] these [educational] issues have nothing to do with politics at all and shouldn’t be in the newspaper […] [This] has pushed many people away” (HeadT3). The headteacher’s point of view could explain, partially at least, the high presence of the TR issue in politics and media as seen in the literature review.

Teacher Retention in London
The headteacher then confirms that TR in London is worse than the rest of the UK (Worth et al., 2017). He provides multiple reasons: “the property prices are very expensive” especially for teachers who are “under 30 years old” and “struggling a little bit more than the [earlier] generation” (HeadT5). A former classroom teacher (FormerCT hereafter) supports this and reveals that he would have remained had he been paid “more money as it may have helped with housing” (FormerCT2). Other reasons would be a higher percentage of “children who have […] Special Educational Needs” and “behaviour issues”, which “increases the workload” and make it “a lot more difficult to teach within a London school” (HeadT4). With this, he points towards multiple factors that drive teachers, especially newly qualified teachers (Allen et al., 2016), away from London, hence a solution should also be multiple and match the complexity of the problem. Then he accentuates that TR “[…] really depends upon what type of school, […] a local authority school, […] an academy or a free school or an independent school” (HeadT4). He explains further that while as state schools is a “non-selective institution” (HeadT4), an independent school can be selective and enrol only the type of pupils that would help with TR. Nonetheless, the headteacher remains optimistic and believes that “we’re heading towards an upward trend” (HeadT6).

Impacts of low Teacher Retention

The headteacher confirms that teacher shortage is one of the impacts of the TR crisis: “[…] whenever we were advertising for vacancies, you’d have only have a handful. Whereas five years before that, […] you’d have double figures even 20-30 people applying” (HeadT6). This first-hand experience could be one of the reasons to why he is so keen on maintaining high TR. He continues to mention other dimensions of the impact of low TR. Firstly, on pupils:

A high CTR [Classroom Teacher Retention] is that you got stability within the classroom. You haven’t got a situation where learning is interrupted and disrupted by having different teachers […] we’re talking about human beings here. They have emotions. Many of the children become very unsettled when you have different teachers within the classroom and there’s disjointed learning as well, […] when you have cover teachers they are not of the same quality […] as more permanent class teachers. […] when you’ve got a teacher who is experienced, who has been in the school for a while, knows the children, has not only taught those children but has also taught their siblings as well […] is already aware of their families and met their families (HeadT10).

Here the headteacher provides an insight into an area that seems to be under-researched and under-represented by the official reports: the emotional and educational impacts of TR on the child. With this insight, the notion of child-protection, which is a very high priority within the British educational system, can be extended to include reducing TR. A second reason for being keen on keeping existing teachers is being given here: they possess inside knowledge of the school and the children which was built over years. While emphasising the that “the biggest issue is the quality of teaching and learning” (HeadT13), the headteacher mentions other impacts such as the difficulty “for a school […] to have a long-term plan”, building “new relationships between teachers that barely develop in time” (HeadT11), and incurring costs for “advertising” and getting “somebody from an agency” (HeadT12). Apart from cost, all these impacts are also under-represented in the official reports.

Reasons for Teachers’ Wanting to Leave

Workload

The term workload was repeated 12 times by the headteacher and twice by the retained classroom teacher (RetainedCT hereafter) during the interviews as a factor that can cause a teacher to leave. This agrees with the official reports’ findings (e.g. Highton et al. (2017)). However, the interviewed new classroom teacher (NewCT hereafter), both FormerCTs, and the existing classroom teacher (ExistingCT hereafter) who intends to leave (ExistingCT3), did not mention workload as a reason for leaving or intending to leave. This demonstrates that workload in this school does not seem to be a main reason for leaving. Interestingly, these teachers are relatively young, which does not support the headteacher’s “own personal belief” that the “work
ethic” of younger generations is what makes them feel “being burnt out” (HeadT9), especially that the only teacher who referred to workload was RetainedCT, who belongs to a much older generation. This could be because RetainedCT compares the current workload with what it was earlier in her career, when she had time to “mark […] books, […] set up […] lessons for the next day, and […] had time to even enjoy part of […] the] evening” (RetainedCT8). In response, the headteacher says: “[we are committed] to make sure that […] every year […] we are monitoring and reviewing the workload” (HeadT34). He continues “the latest one [i.e. policy change] is to look at marking and to eliminate marking in September [next year]” (HeadT34).

Pupils’ Behaviour

An issue that both the headteacher and RetainedCT broadly agree on is that the pupils’ behaviour can have an impact on TR. In addition to the above point of “behaviour issues […] within a London school” (HeadT4), the headteacher opines that in “many secondary schools in […] inner London […] the] verbal and physical abuse by children on daily basis […] has […] huge impact on teachers” (HeadT15) but he excludes primary schools since they have “far less of an issue with regards to verbal and physical abuse” (HeadT16). However, for RetainedCT bad behaviour is a key factor that she has possibly experienced within her current primary school. She repeated the word behaviour eight times within the interview and explained in length that parents can be unsupportive and go to the extent of making false and damaging allegations. This is confirmed by FormerCT2 who blames “issues with parents” as one of the reasons for his departure from the school.

The relations between the teachers themselves and between them and senior staff is a factor that all participants mentioned, except ExistingCT3, which shows its importance (HeadT17; RetainedCT3, 11,13; ExistingCT1, 2; FormerCT1, 2). Notably, FormerCT1 and FormerCT2, spoke of a negative relationship, with the management (FormerCT1) and with other teachers (FormerCT2), which means that this is an area the management probably needs to work on.

Continuous Professional Development

Continuous professional development (CPD) appears to be quite essential for a teacher to remain in the school. ExistingCT3 left because an “Opportunity arised [sic] elsewhere”, and ExistingCT1 and ExistingCT2 intend to remain because there are opportunities for CPD and being promoted. The headteacher realises that once teachers feel that “their job has become a dead-end job, that they’ve hit a brick wall, that is the point where they want to exit” (HeadT25) and would use “a professional development incentive” (HeadT8) to convince a teacher who wants to leave to remain.

Ethos and Faith

Unanticipatedly, ethos and faith emerged as an important TR factor, if not the most important one. The general surveys give it less importance e.g. Menzies et al. (2015: 19) who ranks it sixth compared to other factors. The headteacher affirms that the faith and ethos of the schools are “[…] one of the reasons why we are able to retain teachers, even if other schools are able to offer more pay or better career opportunities” (HeadT5). NewCT echoes this and states that “The biggest factor for me is because I wanted to be in a faith-based school” (NewCT4). NewCT and both existing classroom teachers (ExistingCT hereafter) list it as reason number 1 to why they intend to remain in the school (ExistingCT1; ExistingCT2). Once more, this shows the uniqueness of TR factors to each school. Another unanticipated reason for remaining is the principle of loyalty.

Loyalty

The headteacher elucidates this principle and states that there are a few teachers in the school who “feel as if they are part and parcel of the school […] they are the school and the school is them […] moving to another school. That would be unthinkable” (HeadT5).

Job-satisfaction
There are a number of TR factors mentioned by the headteacher and the teachers that can be categorised under the rubric of job-satisfaction, including “staff wellbeing” (HeadT8), being “respected”, “valued” (HeadT17), “appreciated” (RetainedCT11,12; NewCT11), and “celebrated” (HeadT17), “enjoy[ing] [. . .] work” (RetainedCT6) and “given the support and resources that they need” (HeadT17). The teacher promotes job-satisfaction within the school by making sure that the teachers “have a say [. . .] in the running of the school [. . .] they are consulted” (HeadT8). He adds: “something as simple as a ‘thank you’ or a message or a card or an email goes a long way” and make the teachers feel that they are being valued (HeadT17).

Pay and Other Factors

The issue of pay was not highlighted except by the headteacher (HeadT3) and FormerCT2, who confirmed what the headteacher pointed out regarding going abroad where the earnings are “tax-free” (HeadT3). According to FormerCT2, he would have stayed, had he been paid “more money as it may have helped with housing” in London (FormerCT2). FormerCT2 mentions another reason that could have made him stay: “Offered a place for my kids at the school” (FormerCT2), which could constitute an ‘external’ TR factor. Other external factors were mentioned in the interviews such as accommodation and living close to work as discussed above, ethnic background (HeadT23) and maternity (HeadT20; RetainedCT7).

Conclusions

Reflecting on the literature review and the analysis of the data collected in this research, a number of conclusions can be made. The TR situation in the UK has clearly reached crisis point. London schools in particular are suffering the most. This has attracted political and media attention, some of which is serving ends other than education. Low TR has led to serious shortage of teachers and educational leaders and inflicted financial losses at school and government level, amongst other problems. However, it is the educational, emotional and otherwise impact on pupil that should take the highest priority.

Workload is currently being blamed as the main reason for making teachers wanting to leave. Nevertheless, there are many other elements that have the potential to be the main reasons, depending on the national situation at a given time and the local circumstances unique to each school, including its type. In the case of the author’s school, the available data suggests that faith and ethos were the predominant factor of retention, followed by loyalty to the school, CPD opportunities, staff relations, and job-satisfaction in order of importance. Workload, pay, children’s behaviour, and external factors appeared to have less, yet important, impact. The management’s successful approach to maintaining high TR is reflective of these factors, especially workload, CPD, and job-satisfaction, and clearly motivated by a general realisation of the significance of retaining existing teachers. The headteacher would go as far as negotiating with teachers who intends to leave and offering them incentives.

Recommendations

Although, there are factors outside the control of the management, such as being a non-selective institute, parents’ behaviour, and high prices of accommodation in the area, there is conceivably a room for improvement, particularly regarding relations between staff. It is recommended here that the management should study this sensitive and complicated area thoroughly to find suitable solutions. To maintain high TR, it is suggested that schools across the UK should conduct their own accurate and comprehensive local research to identify what could work for them. There is also a need for more research within the UK context to accurately understand how TR affects pupils, particularly their education and emotions, staff (e.g. their relations) and school management in terms of, for example, long-term planning and development. TR and education in general, needs to be depoliticised, to allow real solutions, that are not influenced by politics or media, to be found. A review of the government current strategy is highly recommended. Despite financial pressures, the strategy should be more about maintaining the current experienced workforce than recruiting new teachers. The TR situation in London demands an urgent action from the government that caters for the complexity and the multiple angles of the problem.

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Author biography
Ahmed Mahfoodh has worked within primary schools for more than 20 years. He holds an MA TESOL with distinction [Email: a_mahfoodh@hotmail.co.uk].

Appendices
Appendix I – Transcripts of Interviews

Interview 1

*Date:* 18/4/2018

*Key:*

XYZ = The interviewer

HeadT = Head Teacher of a state-funded primary school in London

*Transcript:*

**XYZ: Can you tell me about your role in the school in regard to classroom teachers?**

HeadT1: So, because I’m the headteacher, my role is about leading learning. So, although I’m not physically teaching every one of the children, I mean it’s impossible for me to teach [hundreds of children] [the actual number of children is omitted for anonymity] every day all day every day So, this is a delegated responsibility that I have given the teachers but I’m still a leader of learning and what that means is that I am still involved in making sure that the children are receiving a certain level and quality of education. Now we see that there’s different time parts to that and . . .
XYZ: Just to be a bit clearer on my side, it’s about the classroom teachers as individuals. It’s not—The focus is on the classroom teachers as individuals and not on the children, the question again then: Can you tell me about your role in the school in regard to classroom teachers in terms of management?

HeadT2: So, it’s my job to make sure that teachers are able to fulfil their role as defined by their job description and the national teaching standards. So, part of my role is to make sure that a good quality of teachers are recruited first of all, and once they’re recruited is to make sure that they are given an environment where they are able to carry out their role and that can include resources as well. There’s also training as well, ongoing training which is CPD: continuous professional development. So, teachers can start out as newly qualified teachers and as they progress within their career, they then should—training doesn’t stop just one day becoming a teacher, it also continues right the way through their teaching career. At various points in their teaching career, they need to be given opportunities to develop. Some of that might be subject specific: so, it might be literacy, numeracy, science or any of the other subjects that they’re teaching, or it might be to do with pedagogy. So different aspects of teaching itself—and the idea is to try and enhance their ability to do the job that they are doing which is to ensure that the children are learning. That’s one aspect. The other aspect is obviously about accountability. So, it’s my job to monitor and evaluate what teachers are doing and by that it means conducting lesson observations, book scrutinises and learning walks, and also meeting with teachers as well through progress meetings and performance appraisal as well. So, these are some of the things that I do.

XYZ: Excellent! That lends itself to teacher retention. So, in your opinion what is the situation of classroom teacher retention, we will call it CTR hereafter, in the UK in general?

HeadT3: I think when I first joined—became a teacher, which is 15 years ago, there was a teacher shortage at the time and then over the course of my career—and in fact there was a great interest in teaching and also the retention of teachers. So, all the incentives that were in place 15 years ago, and I’m talking ‘golden hello handshakes’, there was equity loans for property, there were, you know, certain pay incentives that people were getting 15 years ago, because there was low teacher retention and high teacher turnover and shortage of teachers. That then improved over [the years], and I think that was mainly because of the publicity and incentives that they were given. But I think education has changed quite a bit over the course of the 10-15 years. Ofsted and the demands that Ofsted have made on schools has increased and that’s across the board: teachers as well as leadership and also head teachers as well. So, retention 15 years on now is probably at its all-time worst and a lot of that has got to do with workload issues. So, people feeling that they have got alternatives to teaching here in the UK, but also teaching itself. So, those who want to continue into teaching you find that many of them are attracted by going overseas where there is obviously tax-free earnings but also less of a workload and working abroad in places like the Middle East and Dubai etc. So, that’s an issue. Also, there are many teachers who are deciding not to continue into teaching and I give an example. The Teach First programme, which sure brings highly qualified graduates from Russell Group universities and also Oxbridge into really difficult inner city schools and they take you through the QTS programme and then you, you’re there for 2 years now what you’re finding is that a great number of, well, graduates who [are] really highly qualified graduates or very passionate at the time, they tend to not stay on after the 2 years, and this is a problem, because it’s issues to do with workload. Some people point towards pay as well, where they say that other sectors, other industries are progressing faster than the teaching sector. If you look at teachers’ pay goes up for the last few years, it’s only been going up by 1% every year. Whereas other sectors [are] increasing at a faster rate. And also, the idea of a 9 to 5 job does not exist within teaching. It’s—you find that teaching does take over large parts of your life and so the work/life balance is very difficult; for most teachers are finding it very difficult. Now there are some national initiatives to try and address that, which have been expressed through unions and also directly to the department of education and Ofsted. And one of those, for example, is the idea of a reduced marking and actually this one example I’m mentioning because what you find is at the majority of time the teachers spend at home for school is marking and what they’re trying to do now is to eliminate marking completely. So, that teachers aren’t spending, you know, hours and hours at home every day, marking these huge piles of books. And also, what you find as well,
within secondary schools they have eliminated coursework and again teachers were spending hours and hours marking coursework, redrafting coursework and marking them again. What you find as many courses now are 100% exams, so there’s no coursework outside of the exam. So, I think some of these are there to try to reduce the workload. But nevertheless, education is highly politicised in this country, you know. We’re talking about exams that 7 years olds take or 5 years olds take are—they have high stakes and suddenly, it’s, you know, front page of a newspaper. The fact that 5 years olds are taking examinations, whereas these issues have nothing to do with politics at all and shouldn’t be in the newspaper, front pages of newspapers. Teachers should just be able to teach without any interference, the over interference from the government and politicians who think they know what’s best I think this over interference and demands placed upon teachers and schools and leadership, I think has pushed many people away Because teaching can be very difficult, and you know, I always say that we’re not in the business of making tables and chairs and producing, manufacturing thousands of tables and chairs that would be an easy thing to do relatively. But we’re dealing with individuals who are all different, every child is different, every year group is different, every school is different. So, the approach that you take with one child might have to be different than the approach that you take with another child. We are dealing with people who are, sometimes, have difficult circumstances and in particularly in inner London schools . . .

XYZ: Let’s shift the focus to state funded London primary schools. So, you were about to mention that . . . could you just tell me about the situation of CTR in London is it better than the rest of the UK? Is it worse? the same? Just a little bit of information that please Thank you

HeadT4: Yeah, I think when we are talking about state education, we need to ask ourselves what that means? That means that we are then obligated to follow some of the statutory regulations that are enforced by the government. And what it also means is that we are non-selective institution. That means that we are not allowed to select who it is that [we accept] on the basis of ability on the basis of— any aspect really. Now there are faith schools who can put faith as a criteria, so they can— there can be a preference for those followers of that particular faith, but other than that, when we’re talking about people’s socio-economic background or their prior attainment or anything like that, we’re not allowed to make a selection on children and so really doesn’t matter what faith people are, children are children, and so when they’re from different difficult circumstances you get children who from difficult circumstances in every faith group. So, inner city schools, of course they have, relatively to other schools that are perhaps in other areas, they have children who have high percentage of Special Educational Needs, a high percentage of children who have a free school meal you have high . . . so because of these difficulties, it is a lot more difficult to teach within a London school. OK? Now that for many people can put a lot of people off So, and quite often what you find is that when there are issues and you can call it mental health, you can call it social issues There is also behaviour issues amongst some of the children as well, particularly within inner London schools. So that has an impact on teacher retention, because if teachers feel—, you know, so that increases the workload of teachers within inner London schools and so I think it goes without saying really at the retention of teachers within inner London school’s is not as great as let’s say independent schools where the retention is far higher. However, there are some incentives to try and keep those teachers within inner London schools, particularly the academies, that now exist where there’s a lot more flexibility in the pay and conditions. So, what they tend to do is to pay a little bit more than other schools would do, because they are functioning in areas which are very difficult in a London context. So, they are able to retain teachers because of the fact that their pay packages are a little bit higher than some of the other schools. So, it really depends upon what type of school, whether you’re a local authority school, whether you’re an academy or a free school or an independent school I think depending upon what type of school you are talking about, the retention rates will be different, but it goes without saying I think when we are talking about the problem of retention amongst teachers today we are talking about inner London state schools, that’s what you’re talking about.

XYZ: Excellent, now we gonna zoom out (in) if you like into our school How do you describe the status of CTR, classroom teacher retention in our school?
HeadT5: Yeah, I think there are two layers if you like, OK? Or multiple layers if you like You’ve got teachers who have been at the school for a significant period of time, we’re talking 15-20 years, who are— feel as if they are part and parcel of the school, the school’s history and they are the school and the school is them. OK? For them they have no intention of ever moving to another school. That would be unthinkable from their perspective. That is a significant portion of the score. Then you find the layer of those who are fairly new to teaching and therefore fairly new to the school. So, some of those commitment levels of being there for x number of years aren’t really there. So, they’re very much looking— still developing in their own career and they’re trying to find themselves. Some of them are trying to take on additional responsibilities, it might be subject responsibilities or other but they’re trying to develop themselves. And for them, if they find an opportunity that is better than the one that they currently have at the school— now I believe that they still would accept the school that we are at because there is an added incentive at our school and it’s nothing to do with pay, but it’s to do with the faith ethos of the school. So, one of the reasons why we are able to retain teachers, even if other schools are able to offer more pay or better career opportunities, is because of the faith ethos and that’s exactly the same reason why our children and parents decide to send their children to us as well: that’s because of this faith ethos. However, the more younger and I suppose the more youngest, the youngest members of staff, I believe that the retention issue, it’s greatest and I’m talking about those who have been teaching under 5 years What you will find is they are normally under 30 years old, they are normally either unmarried or recently married or have young families. So, the economic situation that they are in is a little bit more different. They are the generation who are struggling a little bit more than the generation that came before them and so unfortunate what we have suffered from is the fact that we are located in London and we are located in an area a very affluent area. So, we live in London and obviously the property prices are very expensive in London so you’ll find that the younger teachers simply cannot afford to live in London. So and this is not just our issue; it is the issue with lots of other London schools as well, where teachers are deciding to move further away out of London into the suburbs and also out of London and some are even deciding as I mentioned earlier on to move abroad to where there is tax-free salaries, teaching salaries, and so I think unfortunately whilst they would love to remain at our school, financially it’s not viable for them to do so.

XYZ: Overall just very briefly, in what direction CTR: Classroom teacher retention, — I’m focusing only on classroom teachers because of their significance Intervention teachers, with all due respect they’re great and everything, is just the impact in my opinion is more when a classroom teacher would leave, more than— anyway, you understand So, briefly in what direction is it going? Is it better? Not doing so well? The direction of the CTR, yeah?

HeadT6: I think we will always have a situation where it will go up and down. So, the direction— we’ve already had our dip for quite a considerable period of time. So, whenever we were advertising for vacancies, you’d have only have a handful. Whereas five years before that, whenever you advertise for a vacancy you’d have double figures even 20-30 people applying. But I think we’re heading towards an upward trend and that’s simply because what we’re finding is that the conditions will be better, the workload issues are being addressed, you’ll find that the pay— there is going to be a pay review shortly. So, even though the teachers’ pay has been going up by 1% every year, I believe that the teaching it will change similar to the way that the NHS has decided to pay the nurses at a higher rate. So, I think the teaching unions have already decided to address that. So, I think that will also change I think the incentives will be— paying incentives will be better I think that there are always other type of incentives and around that will encourage teachers to become a teacher and also I think you know just highlighting the, you know, the impact that teachers have, there are programs like the Teach First programme which are very— in fact only today I saw on the TV, students from Teach First— I’m talking about how much they benefit from being part of the program. Because these programs aren’t just about— they don’t talk about just being a teacher for 1-2 years What they’re talking about is ‘fast tracking’: really bright individuals becoming classroom teachers, and then becoming department heads, and then senior leaders and then becoming head teachers and so when you when programs are almost promising that they are going to be developing you into a leader and I think that does encourage more people to apply. So, I think we’re going to increase the number of people who are going to come to
teaching in the coming few years.

XYZ: Excellent And that will have its impact on our school, obviously

HeadT7: It is yeah.

XYZ: ... About the school policy and its implementation Maybe you could just briefly link what you’ve just said to the school’s policy in regards of CTR and its implementation

HeadT8: Ultimately, we need to look at the reasons why teachers join schools: because they want to make a difference; it is more than a job. In our school we want to make sure that the conditions within the school—are a place that teaches want to come to every day. So, staff wellbeing is hot on the agenda in our school as it is in many schools. Now part of that staff wellbeing is making sure that teachers feel as though that they are growing and that they are developing. So, giving them an opportunity to take part in their own development. Also, that they have an opportunity to have a say as well in the running of the school So, they that—they are consulted on, you know, even what would seem to be quite trivial things like calendars, school calendars, or something like that—but being able to consult with them so that they are able to feel as though they are part of the school, they are part of a family rather than just a group of people and that there are some values that are shared. We want to make sure that we are returning good teachers and we are—our policy is that we will do what we can to make sure that we retain our best teachers So, if we have a really good teacher who wishes to move on then, we will, we are prepared to have a conversation with that teacher, as I have done, to negotiate for that person to be able to go on as long as possible. So, our policy is to retain our best teachers and we will encourage them to stay by different means and that can be through a financial incentive, that could be through a professional development incentive, it could be through an environment incentive something redeployment. Let’s say, for example, a different type of role that they take within in the school. It also might be to do the promotion as well, a different leadership role for example, but we are keen to make sure that we are not losing any teachers who are class teachers, who we believe are having a positive impact on the outcomes of children.

XYZ: Lovely! From your experience, those teachers who left do they usually move to another school, or do they leave the profession all together. Which one is more often?

HeadT9: I mean—we’ve got very few cases of teachers leaving our school, but the one, the most recent one that I can think of, is simply going abroad and teaching in another school. Now I haven’t come across that many teachers from our school who have decided not to teach at all. However, I have—I’ve had conversations with at least two teachers, both of which have expressed—and these are relatively young teachers and by that I mean they’re under 30 years old, who expressed the feeling of being burnt out as a teacher, not necessarily in our school, but being burnt out as a teacher and the need to have some type of break of some kind. Now my own personal belief is that is reflective of the generation that they are in I can’t remember—it’s not Generation X It’s the most recent generation, where actually the work ethic is far different. The work ethic, it is not the same as, for example, the work ethic of my parents’ generation where they would be—the idea of working one or two years and been burnt out was pretty much a joke! For them it’s working 30-40 years flat out, you know, and then—and that’s the new—just about made it. The work ethic is different. The resilience levels are far different. The younger generation are far more—are far more less resilient and they are far less satisfied and patient with their careers, and they are always wanting to move from one thing to another and that also it has its part to play as well. The culture of the young generation.

XYZ: The second issue would be the impacts of CTR So, in your experience what are the advantages of maintaining high CTR?

HeadT10: Yeah. A high CTR is that you got stability within the classroom. You haven’t got a situation where learning is interrupted and disrupted by having different teachers within the classroom. Because again, like I said, this is not about pressing the button and making a thousand tables and chairs This is—we’re talking about human beings here. They have emotions. Many of the children become very unsettled when you have different teachers within the classroom and there’s disjointed learning as well, and quite often what you find
is that when you have cover teachers they are not of the same quality as main— as more permanent class teachers. So, all of these have an effect So, when you’ve got a teacher who is experienced, who has been in the school for a while, knows the children, has not only taught those children but has also taught their siblings as well. We’re talking about somebody that has a much— and is already aware of their families and met their families You are talking about a child that who is being taught by somebody who is much more aware and much more skilled and experienced at, you know, meeting all of their needs and that’s the benefit of having somebody who’s, you know— teacher retention.

XYZ: The question is almost the same as the previous It’s just the other way around to extract more data! I’m just have a few categories, if you like, the first one is pupils learning You’ve already mentioned that the pupils have emotions and it disturbs the pupils learning. Now what is the impact on other— of course feel free to add to the point of impact on pupils learning, but also, I’ve made up this list, which is: the impact on other teachers, the impact of on management and finance. And if you got any other areas that I missed please help me. So, if you’d like to start with the pupils’ learning it’s up to you If you feel that you’ve covered that, that’s fine; you can move to the next point which is impact on other teachers I leave it to you.

HeadT11: Yeah. So, I mean I think the people in practice clear on their— whether it’s to do with their academic outcomes, whether it’s to do with their social emotional aspects of learning, whether to do with the behaviour— that’s clear. Also, when it comes to the school as well, it’s very difficult to plan because when you’ve got teachers coming and going— is very difficult for a school then to have a long-term plan for the school. Because you keep almost starting and stopping. So, you’re training a cohort of or a team of staff about a particular, let’s say subject, or concept, and you’ve got this 3-years CPD plan where you want your— all this— your staff to move from good to outstanding and suddenly, halfway through that program, you’ve got half of your staff have been replaced by a different staff. So, you have to start again. So, it definitely affects the development of a school— the long-term journey towards— If the school is trying to become outstanding they are far less likely to achieve that. We’re also talking about the commitment levels as well. The commitment levels of teachers who plan only to be there for a short time is far less than those who have got a long time, who plan to be there for a long time; they’re there for the long run if you like. So, those are the teachers to tend to work longer hours, to put a lot more of their time and effort and you know as they say: ‘blood sweat and tears’ in into their role And I think also, as well, schools are about teachers are about, you know— we are talking about a team, we are talking about people who share ideas and share, you know, ways of doing things and I think if you got teachers coming and going again then you’re talking about very new relationships between teachers that barely develop in time for the teachers then to them leave and be replaced. So, I think for us to have a strong team you need to be able to— you need to have stability there for the team as well. The stability is not important for the children [only] but it’s also important for the team— meaning the staff as well. And I mentioned, as well, when you got teachers who are coming and going you find that they are generally not as good at their job as those who have got much more sustained experience within a school and so then that affects the quality of the teacher, as well So, if you’ve got lots of teachers who have got— who haven’t got the type of, you know, longer experience within the school, then [it affects] the general quality of the teaching standards within the school.

XYZ: Is there any financial impacts?

HeadT12: The financial impacts, there is. Because if teachers leave, then sometimes it’s difficult there and then to get somebody in straight away and so, first of all, there is advertising costs there. When it’s difficult to get somebody in straight away, the only alternative is to get somebody from an agency and so quite often an agency— to get in a teacher from an agency would then incur additional costs that you need to pay to the agent. Not only the agent, but also the teacher. So, all of this costs money and if it happens once or twice, then fine, but you know if this is happening repeatedly, then that definitely does have— there [is] an impact on the cost on the finances of the school.

XYZ: Is there something that stands out? Something that is really you feel that it’s the one
that you don’t want to deal with? Or is the one that stands out, as simple as that?

HeadT13: For me, the biggest issue is the quality of teaching and learning. It’s not the— it’s not the expense, it’s not—it’s to do with the fact that in the middle of the year you could have a teacher who leaves and is replaced by a cover teacher whose ability to teach is not as great as the other person who has left and that then leaves the children—the outcomes of the children are greatly affected by the end of that year and, you know, you may be able to then [to] recruit a teacher, you know, later on in the year but quite often for a whole term that’s lost learning and that lost learning is very difficult to then give back.

XYZ: So, I’m just stretching the question a little bit . . . could you put the impacts in order of severity?

HeadT14: Well, I think the impact on the children obviously is the most important one, that’s number one. Because that’s why we’re here. And then the team, if you like, and I think the financial one is least.

XYZ: That’s fine Let’s move onto the third issue: What are factors that influence CTR in state-funded London Primary Schools [or] SFLP?

HeadT15: Yeah. I think job satisfaction definitely. And that’s in any job [It] doesn’t matter if it’s teaching or not The job satisfaction— so they must feel valued. Pay is definitely up there and that’s again the same in any profession I think the environment makes a difference. What you also find, unfortunately, in many secondary schools in the inner London school’s where behaviour is not under control— You will find that many teacher’s leaving the profession because they feel that they are victims of a verbal and physical abuse by children on a daily basis within schools. So, this is something I think has— there is a huge impact on teachers.

XYZ: You said ‘especially in secondary schools’ so I feel that you also include the primary schools or is it that primary schools doesn’t have that issue you think?

HeadT16: Having spent 10 years in secondary and 6 years in primary, primary level has far less of an issue with regards to verbal and physical abuse than secondary schools. So, it’s less of an issue. In fact, that’s the reason why some secondary school teachers are now coming to primary: for that very reason.

XYZ: Could you just elaborate a little bit on job satisfaction within a teaching context? How does that happen? What is the definition?

HeadT17: Look, I think if teachers are allowed to be teachers, so they are respected, and they are given the opportunity, and they are valued, so they’re allowed to teach, allowed to be creative, they allowed to do what it is that they, in teaching, what they enjoy doing, without over interference being— where we have a situation where they’re being monitored too frequently. So, you don’t have lesson observations happening every week and also, they are given the support, if need be. So, for example, if they have Special Educational Needs or they’ve got a child with some aspect of mental health that they are given the support they are able to access, the support and the resources that they need, that they have the resources that they need to be able to teach. For example, it may be IT related or it might be just any type of resource, they’ve got that available to them. I think also relationships are really important. So, relationships between the teachers— If you got toxic relationships within the school, you’ve got a lot of politics, you got a lot of bickering backbiting etc, then that can have a huge impact on a teacher. Whereas if it’s a friendly environment, it’s supportive environment, then teachers are far more likely to feel happy about being in a school. I mean, back to staff wellbeing and being valued and being celebrated, if staff feel that they are being celebrated— I mean something as simple as a ‘thank you’ or a message or a card or an email goes a long way I think all of these are ultimately human characteristics of being appreciated and it also relates to teachers as well.

XYZ: The question related to that is you’ve mentioned a number of internal reasons Are there any external reasons that has nothing to do with the school in a way to a certain degree? So, the teacher remains in the school not because of the internal reasons like good team,
good behaviour, good pay good condition celebration ... it is nothing to do with these and is completely outside the school? Can you think of any?

HeadT18: No, I think that’s very difficult for me— then we are talking about being forced to stay.

XYZ: Are there reasons that encourage them to stay, not force them in to stay?

HeadT19: One thing that I mentioned is about me the faith. If there is another aspect, so it could be that they belong to the same faith. If it’s the faith school that could be another reason why they stay. Because they believe that faith school represents the community, that they are from and they believe that they can make a difference from the inside whatever the issues that school may face. They may dislike whatever those issues are, but they feel that they can play a part in making a difference.

XYZ: For example, you’ve mentioned earlier on that because the teacher cannot live close to the school because of the high rent and the high cost of accommodation, I would call that an external reason The fact that the teacher cannot live close to the school, so he has to move out to another affordable area and obviously ultimately, they will leave the school and go and work closer to where they live So that’s one external reason that you’ve already mentioned So, can you think of any [other external reasons]?

HeadT20: Some of them are for with women to do with maternity as well. So that’s also has to play a factor.

XYZ: From your experience what prompts a teacher to leave SFLP schools?

HeadT21: I think it’s dissatisfaction. I think that when the teacher feels that the challenges that face inner city schools are too great for them and that could be the academic level of some of the children, it could be the socioeconomic background, it could be the relationship with the parents, difficult parents, it could relate to the behaviour of the children, some of them, then they decide that they would the prefer to work in much more quieter independent private school. Somewhere where all the children are high achieving and there are no family disadvantages or difficulties and that they can actually teach. Some of them believe that they can actually teach in these schools rather— Many teachers feel that they can’t actually teach within state schools and that’s unfortunately for many state schools that is the case where there is more Crowd Control than there is teaching. So, when the teacher has that experience of state education, then that’s something which then encourages them to look elsewhere.

XYZ: OK. Which ones out of all these factors that you’ve mentioned are most common in your opinion; from your experience?

HeadT22: I think the most common reason why people move I believe is to do a promotion. I don’t believe it’s because of running away from you know poorly behaved children or etc. I think, you know, we’re living in a society now where which is promotes inclusion in every aspect and so I think people are aware that children still need to be educated, no matter what their difficulties are and so if the people are always running away from the school because of the challenges that children face, you know, that I don’t think that most teachers would put that down the reason why they leave. I think most would because they want to experience a different setting maybe, a different type of school. But I think many are I believe that many because they are given a different responsibility. It’s to do with their career development.

XYZ: Back to the notion of external factors, can you think of any external factors that will cause a teacher to [leave] One of them is accommodation and how close to teacher lives to a school you mentioned maternity already So, can you think of any other external factors that could cause a teacher to leave? Internal means like pay External is nothing to do with the school can do nothing about it You as a head teacher can do nothing about it, even the government

HeadT23: Ok. There are other things which are specific to those from black and minority ethnic communities. You will find that many do have ambitions to give back to their own communities. Because their own communities are quite often underachieving in this country. OK. Whether it’s Black, Asian or other Arab
Communities as well And so, what you will find is that even though they may not have trained within those schools which are heavily populated by their particular ethnic background or ethnic minorities in general, you will find that many of them do tend to feel a lot more comfortable or actually more satisfied in giving back to a more diverse community. So, I think sometimes teachers do start off in, let’s say you’re kinda of more white British dominated schools, but then many do — especially when we’re talking about career progression. Because that’s another issue in itself, that if you look at statistically career progression for ethnic minorities happens most within inner city schools that have a diverse make-up and less so, in schools where there are for example the majority are white British — So, what they are doing is that they are moving into a school where they believe that the opportunities are going to be better for them and there isn’t a glass ceiling for them in that school. They move to a school which is has a more diverse ethnic makeup and because they believe that the opportunities are better, great in these schools.

XYZ: Let’s move to the last issue Anything you would like to add above the third issue which is factors that influence CTR in SFLP schools? Anything that you’d like to add before we move on?

HeadT24: No that’s fine.

XYZ: Last issue We’re almost there thank you for your patience, [it’s] appreciated. The last issue is how to maintain high CTR What can someone in your position do to encourage classroom teachers to remain in a school and reduce leaving?

HeadT25: I think making sure wellbeing is high. Making sure that you listening to the teachers. Making sure that you meet with each individual teacher and understand where it is that they want to take their career and be able to support them, provide them opportunities within the school and I think it’s just being responsive to each one of the teachers. At the point of, we say, they feel as though they’re not being heard, they’re not being valued and that they are not progressing, but they’ve hit that— suddenly their job has become a dead-end job, that they’ve hit a brick wall, that is the point where they want to exit. So, we need to make sure we were doing all of those things and all of those things then we are less likely, I think — We can’t eliminate it completely but then we’re less likely to— because there are some factors with that out of our control For example, the London high property prices but we were those things that are within our control, I think we must make sure that we do those things.

XYZ: Out of these that you mentioned which ones are implemented in our school?

HeadT26: I think all of them really to an extent, but I think each one of them could be improved.

XYZ: Anything else you can think of?

HeadT27: I think maybe some type of partnership or federation with another school or cluster of schools Sometimes what you find is— you find academies where you’ve got 5, 10, 15 schools and then you find staff who move around us schools and I think if we were able to have a federation with one or more schools, then we would be able to then have teachers to move between schools and then they feel as if they are then widening that their experience without leaving the school.

XYZ: Who else can have a role in CTR? I mean the head teacher obviously yourself of course has a responsibility. But who else can have a role in CTR within the school and outside the school?

HeadT28: Yeah, I think everyone has a role to play but particularly those leaders within the school I think they’re the ones who have a big a greatest influence. So, every line manager who has responsibility at every level be they phase leader or be assistant head, deputy head or headteacher, even the governors as well I think all have a role to play.

XYZ: Any agencies or organisation that are outside the boundaries of the school that can have a role in maintaining high CTR?
HeadT29: Yeah, I think local authorities as well and the local authorities’ advisers that come in. They also have a role to play and nowadays you have your school networks, when I think that, you know, if we are looking at clusters of schools all having the same aim then we can all contribute towards good retention at each other schools, I think.

XYZ: What can local authorities do improve CTR? What is in their power?

HeadT30: They can provide support and training and development. The other schools can provide for example, you may have heard of the concept of a secondment. OK. The idea of a secondment is, for example, let’s say we’ve got somebody who wants to be an assistant head, but there’s no assistant head response, there is no assistant head vacancy in the school. You can then ask the other schools: would you like, would any of your schools like to take on one of my staff for one year or even six months to be an assistant head as a secondment? It means that you then share the cost of that teacher working at the other school So, it then allows for there to be— so you still work for the original school, but you then are posted somewhere else for a short period of time and while you’re posted there you are then developing your skills.

XYZ: What can the government do to improve CTR?

HeadT31: Yeah, It’s a massive one! It’s to do with workload issues. The demands of Ofsted need to be reduced The government needs to stop this obsession with passing exams. We need to make sure that the exam results are not as high stakes as they are right now We need to allow teachers to teach and we need to allow children to be children, as well The new tests are coming out the baseline assessment for 4 year olds and so this is something that I think that’s going to drive a lot more teachers out of the profession and so they need to take away all of this testing, particularly within primary schools and, you know, all of this inspections: the multiple inspection, the no-notice inspections, and all of these need to be reduced as well.

XYZ: What can you tell me about the teacher retention strategy of the school and its implementation?

HeadT32: Yeah. Look, I think we are of the opinion that we would want to make sure that each member of staff is developing So, they are given an opportunity to whatever it is that they want to do; whether they want to become a teacher, from class teacher to subject leader or assistant head or deputy head or something like that If they want to do that, then that’s something that the school will support them in in doing so. So, that’s the first thing but I think ultimately retention is about [when] people [are] happy, then you’re far more likely for there to be retention So, obviously you can’t make everyone happy all of the time, but there are certain ingredients where if, you know, use those ingredients, then you will find people who are happy And that’s generally in any team. You could be working in a school, working in a hospital, working in a restaurant, this is all part and parcel of leadership: how do you make sure that your troops are happy, and a happy team is the team that works— will work much better And that’s the point here: that if you got stressed out, disengaged, unhappy teachers, then the quality of education is not going to be as good as when you’ve got a workforce who are happy or valued and the look forward to coming to school.

XYZ: To what extent was that policy successful?

HeadT33: I think, again, we’re dealing with human beings here. So, there will be moments where there is high morale and there will be times when there are low morale, due to multiple factors. And quite often it’s to do with the time of the year. So, if I were close to a time where there is— let’s say, we start at the beginning of a term and we’ve just had a holiday then you find people much more relaxed, far more relaxed in the school As you go further on into the term, you find people much more tired and there are issues perhaps that they’ve had to do deal with, and then they need a break and that’s when you find when people are— you know, the staff morale is a lot less. But I think when we are talking about people who deciding to leave, we just simply don’t have people who running out of the door in our school. So, I think that can always be seen as a positive. Whenever somebody wishes to leave our school it’s because— and that’s exactly for parents who leave with their children, they don’t leave because they think they want to run away from
the school, rather because they are— they need to go you know they want to go abroad possibly or there are factors which are out of their control. So, I’m not saying that people— we have staff who are totally satisfied by being part of the school. Yes, every school has teachers who might express their opinions about their dissatisfaction I think we don’t have it to an extent where people want to, staff want to leave and not come back.

**XYZ:** Has there been any recent changes to the policy? and why? Does the management intend to make changes in the near future and why?

HeadT34: Yeah. I suppose workload issues, I think Workload issues— So, our commitment to make sure that we are always every year that we are monitoring and reviewing the workload. So, the latest one is to look at marking and to eliminate marking in September.

**XYZ:** Any other changes you can think of?

HeadT35: There are other issues to do with workload such as, you know, being more flexible with some deadlines.

**XYZ:** Thank you very much for your time

Interview 2

*Date:* 23/4/2018

*Key:*

XYZ = The interviewer

RetainedCT = Retained Classroom Teacher in a state-funded primary school in London (more than 5 years since joined the school)

*Transcript:*

**XYZ:** Please tell me about yourself and your history in this school briefly

RetainedCT1: I am a class teacher and I have been in school for about 9 years.

**XYZ:** Ok So, you joined the school about 9 years ago?

RetainedCT2: Yeah. A class teacher I joined the school about 9 years ago . . . and I took the full range of primary school subjects including some of the faith subjects.

**XYZ:** What could attract a teacher like yourself to this school?

RetainedCT3: Clearly it would have to be a teacher who wanted a career in primary education. The first instance, I think, in particular in this school, having taught in another primary school, there is a very good ambience between the staff and the teachers. Very good cooperative or cooperation between teachers.

**XYZ:** You mentioned that you worked for other schools, in your former schools what could cause a teacher to leave?

RetainedCT4: Oh! Well, I would say if there’s any friction particularly between maybe the senior staff and the class teacher. If there were friction between that (them) I think occasionally perhaps maybe friction between teachers but generally that does not cause a teacher to leave, they are differences in opinions should I say sometimes. But if there is any untoward feeling between the senior management and the teacher, then it does cause a great deal of stress. It did in my previous school with the teachers There was much greater turnover of staff because of friction between them and the management.

**XYZ:** What else?
RetainedCT5: I think there’s today there’s an element of workload as well and teachers have always worked very hard with their preparation and a lot of creativity, but I think there’s a greater emphasis on administration systems and organisations that need to be in place in order to monitor the development and the teaching, the learning and the progress of pupils through the school and gradually this seems to be—and a lot more emphasis on meetings. So, a lot of the time that teachers have previously had for prep for creativity in developing their teaching materials, this type of thing, there is less time for it and there’s much greater amount of reliance on prepared courses, audio visual courses, computer courses, which the teachers also having to read and study and adapt to suit their class.

XYZ: Based on your experience in this school could you list the factors that would make a teacher remain for such a long period of time -9 years?

RetainedCT6: Well obviously there are personal reasons why they want to stay in terms of they probably living in the area and wanting to work in— close to where they live, that’s from a personal viewpoint. But also, if you enjoy your work and if you enjoy the place where you work then I do not—and also from the point of view of the children: like to be familiar in primary with a teacher. They like that, if you like, the routine of knowing who’s teaching them and purely because you enjoy your job or what you do. Yes.

XYZ: Any other factors, external or internal that you could think of?

RetainedCT7: Well I find generally teachers change their employment if they’re looking to take on a different role and there’s not that role available in their school, then they will look to do the training and move on to a different school. OK? But otherwise I think it is not unusual that if the teacher is happy in their employment, happy in their place of work, then in certainly primary education, they do tend to stay for longer periods of time I think it’s generally when people have a career development needs or personal needs: having babies and things like that, that they would want to either take a long leave of absence or to move from the place where they are working.

XYZ: In your opinion, what would cause a teacher to leave a state funded London primary school?

RetainedCT8: Well, I think a lot of the reasons today is because in the past people would’ve said: ‘Oh! teachers have wonderful long holidays’ which isn’t quite the case. We have very long working days because there is a lot more to do. There’s additional administration as I have already mentioned. There’s so much to mark, much more planning to do, the different targets and objectives which have to be met in the marking and in the planning. So, this also takes over a proportion of your holiday time. So, I think generally one of the reasons that’s one of the biggest reasons why teachers leave is because there is so much more work to do these days, you know, you don’t get time during the working week for, you know, any family or personal activities because you are required to assess more than before. Not just the work but attendance of meetings and the only, in my earlier career, the only time I was required to attend after school was, sort of, maybe at the end of term or something like this A couple of meetings here or there And after school I had time to mark my books, I have time to set up my lessons for the next day, and I had time to even enjoy part of my evening. These days that is not the case. Your day is much longer So, I think really maybe it isn’t only related to keep teaching because society is changing as well but I would say because people are finding it difficult particularly if they have young families to handle an immense workload and managing their family life as well So, I think really—and also, I think that sometimes or there has been a greater— there’s—this again is a very important reason there’s been a change in the behaviour of children and a change in the behaviour of parents in view of the respect that they have towards teachers. In the time I grew up whether I was fighting, or anything wrong, my parents would always see that the teacher was right and a punishment or anything untoward the school would mean a punishment at home, whether it be not watching the television or whatever it might be However, these days there is much more incidents of bad behaviour of children in the school, in all schools or majority of schools any way, the many accusations levelled at teachers, which less than 2% of them are ever accurate, about things the teacher may have been perceived or the child has decided to say the teacher has said or done and which is detrimental to the teacher’s person and their career.
and their career development for that matter and for that reason many teachers have left the profession. Often, the child by the parent is perceived as being right in whatever allegation and immediately thinking that the teacher is in the wrong as opposed to having an open mind to this and investigating properly as well. So, it’s behaviour I think also of — not all children, there are a lot of very good children and very good parents still, but there is a growth in the incidence of bad behaviour in schools and not just in past is being secondary but these days it happens in primary schools as well.

**XYZ: Could you elaborate a little bit on the point of parents?**

RetainedCT9: The point I was making was a comparison I think myself along with many other children when I was young we all knew that we behaved in school because if the teacher had cause to complain mentioned to our parents or to punish us in any way then our parents would know about it and I’ll parents will probably punish us as well or certainly speak to us about our behaviour. So, they would respect, the general manner in which the teacher was helped was one of respect, and today there are many parents who if the child decided I don’t like this teacher or teacher told me to sit up straight and I don’t like it and just so, you know, any example of, I’m trying to think, so I’m going to go home and tell my parents that the teacher, you know, swore at me or something, and I’m just obviously making this up, then the parent would automatically assume that the teacher had done that without asking the teacher, would automatically think that their child — not the case with all parents, but there is a growing incident of parents who would automatically assume that that must be the case of their child has told them.

**XYZ: How would this affect the teacher?**

RetainedCT10: Well it depends which steps are taken beyond there. Because usually schools have their structures and management systems where they would have a little investigation and discussion with the teacher, with the parent, with the child, to try to get to the root of things, but some parents can still perhaps pursue this, or for any reason the parent isn’t satisfied, there might be some parents that decide: ‘well I want to take this further’ In some parents instead of going to the school they might choose to go to the local authority and complain about a teacher. So, all of those things are damaging to the character of the teacher and it’s inferring something which is not the case and also damaging to the teacher’s career and prospects. And just to add to that as well, it could lead a teacher to leave the profession, obviously, but also I have always felt that if a record could be kept of a teacher and allegations made, because it does not necessarily it can be kept, that this allegation was made you know and then if it came up again that it will come up: oh this allegation was made and this person did it again or whatever So, if there was sort of records hopefully it will never work but hopefully it never happens in the first place but if for any reason a record was kept of this, then I feel by the same token there has to be a record kept of the allegation made by the child. Because if an adult has to take that through their career, then I think the child should take that on to the next school. So, that people are aware that this can happen That this child is prone to making allegations, but they’ve not been proven in those instances because I really think something that’s like that needs to happen in those sort of instances because it can affect a lot of other people thereafter.

**XYZ: What would cause a teacher to remain?**

RetainedCT11: I mean in terms of wanting to remain: if you’re feeling happy with your work, if you’re feeling happy within your work place, with your rapport with your colleagues and management, and if you feel you have the opportunities that you want to develop in your career.

**XYZ: Is there anything that stands out or can I ask you to put them in order?**

RetainedCT12: I think if a teacher feels that they don’t fit in. If they feel that there is friction. What they do is not appreciated. Teachers work hard they are used to dealing with good and bad behaviour and managing that the whole of the time on a day-to-day basis. But I think if they are not appreciated if there is friction and a lack of opportunity to discuss in a rational way with management, if they require, if this friction— that I think that is the big one that makes people feel that they are not wanted here. Lack of appreciation, you know. If there’s a problem with any element of the teaching, then the senior team should be supporting
and helping a teacher with that or guiding or arranging for in some way for the support or the understanding of the knowledge that is required and as long as that is ongoing. But if there is anything, which is coming across, which is personal that is showing a lack of respect that is showing— then I think that that is the one where teachers feel— would feel—that would be the one that would be the worst. Because you’ve dealt with a difficult situation. You’ve made sure you’ve given all the paper work and dotted all the ‘i’s and crossed all the ‘t’s, you’re doing all of this. You may not have everything 100% correct, but as long as you are appreciated as a person and if it comes across anyway that you’re not or that you are not considered in a— not appreciated then I think that is probably one thing that stands out.

**XYZ: What comes after that?**

RetainedCT13: It’s difficult to say because I think it’s a mixture of everything. But given that you have behaviour issues to deal with good and bad, that you have a lot of work to do extra to the teaching in terms of meetings, and all the other things, the tracking of children’s progress, parents’ meeting, some coffee mornings and plays and topics and topic weeks, and all of these other things, I think it’s important that there is a good rapport and a good communication with the team that you’re working, all of them and, you know, because and an appreciation is the fact all that you are doing.

**XYZ: Thank you**

Interview 3

*Date:* 16/4/2018

*Key:*

XYZ = The interviewer

NewCT = New Classroom Teacher in a state-funded primary school in London (less than 5 years since joined the school)

**Transcript:**

**XYZ: Today is the 16th of April 2018 I’m interviewing a teacher who teaches year 5**

NewCT1: Yes.

**XYZ: And she has joined the school recently I believe in September you started?**

NewCT2: Yes, I have.

**XYZ: OK So please tell me about yourself and your position in this school**

NewCT3: OK So, I have recently started [in] this school and I work as a class teacher in upper key stage 2. This is my fourth year being a teacher and it’s the first time I’ve been in upper Key Stage 2.

**XYZ: Right So, you’ve worked for other schools Could I ask you what would make a teacher like yourself leave that school and move to a school like ours?**

NewCT4: The biggest factor for me is because I wanted to be in a faith-based school.

**XYZ: Aha**

NewCT5: And also, I felt like this was a school that could award me opportunities to progress, if I wanted to go to other positions.

**XYZ: Right. So CPD is a factor basically**

NewCT6: Yes.

**XYZ: OK Could you explain to me a little bit more about what did you mean by ‘this school give you opportunities to progress more’?**
NewCT7: So, when I was researching about the school, one of the things that the headteacher said to me is: ‘if people would like to go on training or they want to do courses we provide these courses for them and even if we don’t have that certain position available within our school and they’d like to go elsewhere we still give them the training and we provide it for them’ and he’s also said to me about how if I’d even want to do a course at a university that would be available as well if I wanted a certain position So, I felt like with the training I could get here it could help me go far, if I wanted later on in my career.

XYZ: Yes, excellent. So, I think you partially answered the question anyway but I’m going to ask it anyway what would attract a teacher like yourself to work for this school? You’ve already mentioned something, but you know.

NewCT8: Yes, Yeah. Definitely about the CPT— Because obviously currently I’m doing my masters and I have paid for it and sorted everything out myself.

XYZ: Yup

NewCT9: But I know there are some schools that if you do want to carry on the further education they do help you out and you can be training within school time and I felt like that would be available here.

XYZ: Yes

NewCT10: And also, I wanted to work in a faith-based school as well

XYZ: Right What would make a teacher continue to work for this school?

NewCT11: I think one thing that would definitely keep me if I felt like I was being appreciated and I could have an impact on the school as well on the wider school life so not just my classroom, but also, I could effect change within the school and if I felt like something would help the school in the right direction my voice would be heard. Yeah.

XYZ: So, these things would make a teacher like yourself continue

NewCT12: Yeah.

XYZ: I mean you’ve been working for a while and you felt certain things, right?

NewCT13: Yes.

XYZ: OK These things that It’s the same question but the other way around: in your opinion what could cause a teacher to leave a (staff) funded London primary school I mean this is a state-funded so, what would make a teacher think of leaving?

NewCT14: I think one of the things is definitely a lack of progression if you felt like you weren’t going to get anywhere no matter how hard you worked, and you felt like your efforts wouldn’t be appreciated I think the team that you work on has the impact. So, if you feel like you’re working in a really good team that would make you want to stay because you know you’ve got a good— you’ve got good people around you— But definitely a lack of progression would make you want to go elsewhere. Somewhere that you knew that you could progress that you could people would see your abilities and they’d help you work on them and get better and go to other positions if you’d like to.

XYZ: Anything else you’d like to add to the factors that will make [a] teacher leave or stay?

NewCT15: I think sometimes as well if your ethos doesn’t align with those of the school, that could make you want to leave as well.

XYZ: Could you elaborate on ethos . . . what do you mean by ethos?

NewCT16: For example, the fundamental beliefs of the school if you don’t have the same or if you don’t agree with it, it might make you want to leave So for example, if you want to work in a faith-based school, the ethos of that faith if it’s of your own, you’d probably want to stay because you have similarities and you
have the same belief. So, it makes it easier for you so for example and but it doesn’t have to be religious beliefs they can be anything like the core values of the school of you, the core values that you follow your life, I think it’s easier for you to want to be in a place.

**XYZ: Excellent Anything else you’d like to add?**

NewCT17: No.

**XYZ: OK That’s fine Thank you very much That’s it really!**

Appendix II – Questionnaires

Anonymous Questionnaire 1: Existing Classroom Teacher

Participant 1: Existing Classroom Teacher 1 (ExistingCT1)

Date: 23/4/2018

Do you intend to continue to work for the school in the coming years?

Yes

If the answer is Yes, then please answer the questions below:

What makes you decide to continue to work for the school (in order of importance)?

1. It’s a faith school
2. The relationships built so far
3. The convenience of travel
4. Planning that has been built on so far
5. Training is provided
6. The fear of change

Participant 2: Existing Classroom Teacher 2 (ExistingCT2)

Date: 16/4/2018

Do you intend to continue to work for the school in the coming years?

Yes

If the answer is Yes, then please answer the questions below:

What makes you decide to continue to work for the school (in order of importance)?

1. Religious aspect
2. Room for growth - CPD
3. Staff - friendly

Participant 3: Existing Classroom Teacher 3 (ExistingCT3)

Date: 1/5/2018

Do you intend to continue to work for the school in the coming years? No

If the answer is NO , then please answer the questions below:

* When are you planning to leave? End of school year
* Why are you considering leaving? Opportunity arised elsewhere
* What can the school do to rectify this? No action required
* Are you going to work for another primary school? If the answer is No, then please explain below
Anonymous Questionnaire 2: Classroom Teacher who left the school

Participant 1: Former Classroom Teacher 1 (FormerCT1)

Date: 9-4-2018

What made you leave the school (in order of importance)?

1. put on capability procedure for 1 year and term too long
2. someone comprehensively complained about my general teaching practise that put me in even more trouble
3. management never really speak . . . to you at a personal level, heart to heart talk, they are not on your side feeling
4. one has to explain oneself to them for other things negative points that they have picked up over a term in a meeting that you have been brought in for a particular negative reason, tired of explaining away

Was there anything that the school could have done to make you change your decision? If the answer is Yes, then please explain below

They put me on capability procedure for not marking for a year. Capability procedure to me means that my job is on the line and I do not want to be in that position. They could have shortened the period to a term. Then check on weekly bases to see if marking is up to date. This long negative period made me very edgy and was not able to deal with problems that arose with a cool head.

Are you still working as a primary classroom teacher?

Working as supply teacher - no marking /planning

Participant 2: Former Classroom Teacher 2 (FormerCT2)

Date: 8-4-2018

What made you leave the school (in order of importance)?

1. Better opportunity (in terms of location + money)
2. A bigger school (7 form entry academy)
3. Moving to another country
4. Issues with parents/teachers relationship
5. Staff member not pulling their weight

Was there anything that the school could have done to make you change your decision? If the answer is Yes, then please explain below

Offered me more money as it may have helped with housing

Offered a place for my kids at the school as this would have tempted me to stay

Are you still working as a primary classroom teacher?

Yes. I am still working as a primary school teacher.