15 JUNE 2020

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
EDUCATION COMMITTEE INQUIRY

GATSBY

INTRODUCTION

1 Over the last fifteen years as part of its work in supporting science and engineering education, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation as sought to improve the recruitment and retention of specialist science teachers. This submission will focus on this area of work, although Gatsby will submit additional evidence regarding the impact of COVID-19 on practical science and careers education in schools, over the coming weeks.

2 Gatsby has worked in partnership with government and others on several initiatives to sustainably increase the recruitment and retention of specialist science teachers in English schools. These include:

- piloting the first Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) courses for both pre-initial teacher training (ITT) and serving teachers lacking a physical science specialism;
- developing a mentoring programme to support early career teachers;
- modelling the effects of salary on teacher retention; and
- monitoring job vacancies and analysing patterns of recruitment and advertising in schools

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION: ADVERTISING FOR TEACHERS DROPPED SUDDENLY AT THE START OF THE PANDEMIC

3 Over the last three years, Gatsby has worked with SchoolDash (education data specialists) to monitor the patterns of advertising and recruitment in schools. Evidence shows that teacher recruitment typically shows a clear seasonal pattern, reaching a peak immediately after the Easter holidays and gradually tailing off over the summer. This means that the closure of schools coincided with the peak period of teacher recruitment.

4 Recent SchoolDash research for Gatsby[1], carried out in partnership with Teacher Tapp who undertake daily surveys of teacher sentiment, (link to summary in Appendix A) showed that recruiting activity in English secondary schools, as measured by posts advertised on school websites, fell suddenly in mid-March. By early April advertising was down by about 50-60% compared to the same period last year. This fall took place against a backdrop of an extremely buoyant recruitment market until early March. Subsequent research[2] showed that although the market saw some recovery, unseasonably low recruitment was seen throughout April.

5 At least some of this fall in advertising can be explained by a reduction in teachers moving roles. As part of the same research, at the end of March, Teacher Tapp asked their panel of teachers about their intentions to actively seek new roles for the next academic year. The survey showed, perhaps unsurprisingly, that many teachers who had previously been thinking about changing jobs this summer had reconsidered.

6 Follow-up research, due to be published in June, shows that teacher turnover will certainly be lower. In primary schools the proportion who told Teacher Tapp they had handed in their notice fell to just 5% on 4th May 2020, down from 9% exactly one year earlier. Half of all primary teachers told Teacher Tapp they believed all the teaching staff in their school would be staying put next year; in a normal year this figure is closer to one-third. The figures for secondary schools are slightly less marked, however 57% of secondary teachers report that there are no teacher movements expected in their department, compared with 44% one year earlier.

[1] https://www.schooldash.com/blog-2004.html#20200408
[2] https://www.schooldash.com/blog.html#20200506

7 Lower teacher turnover is not necessarily a bad thing; although if it is due in this instance to the COVID-19 pandemic, it may mean that once initial apprehension has passed, there is greater movement in January and Easter next year therefore causing more disruption for students.

8 In addition, a smaller number of vacancies is likely to mean that some Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) will find it hard to secure teaching roles. These NQTs will sit across all subjects and phases; and, therefore, will certainly include shortage-subject teachers. Even if there are reduced number of vacancies in the short-term, it is extremely unlikely that the long-standing shortage of teachers of subjects such as maths and physics will permanently disappear. It is crucial that these shortage-subject NQTs do not leave the profession if they are unable to secure roles in the short-term.

9 **We therefore recommend that government monitor the number of NQTs who remain unemployed and consider appointments on a short-term supernumerary basis, to ensure shortage-subject teachers are not lost from the profession. More generally, such measures could provide additional capacity to help with potentially greater demand for teachers in September due to teacher absences, shielding and social distancing measures.**

NQTS: THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

10 The closure of schools in March 2020 will have had a considerable impact on those who were undertaking initial teacher training and who will become NQTs in September. These NQTs will have missed a significant portion of their second school placement. This placement would normally allow trainees to take on an increased workload and develop their classroom practice. In the science subjects, this placement would also allow trainees the opportunity to develop skills for teaching practical work. NQTs entering schools in September, having been out of schools for six months and possibly lacking confidence, will currently be expected to take on an almost full timetable, a huge jump from their first placement earlier in the year. There is no doubt that they will require additional support.

11 **We recommend that government considers implementing a reduced timetable for NQTs in the autumn term. Schools should also be encouraged to provide sympathetic timetables such as allowing NQTs to teach multiple classes from the same year group and where possible to teach only within their specialism to reduce workload.**

12 It is likely that the disruption to teacher training will continue into the next academic year. We know that teacher training providers are concerned that schools may decide not to allow trainee teachers into schools to undertake placements if strict social distancing measures are in place.

13 **We therefore recommend that government urgently convenes a panel of experts from teacher training providers and schools to work out clear expectations about what needs to be put in place to enable teacher training placements.**

14 We know that economic uncertainty tends to bring more teachers into the profession. UCAS is already reporting an increase in applications to teacher training courses next year. It is vital that we capitalise on any increased interest in teaching as a career. However, almost 50% of maths and physics teachers leave the profession within five years[3], so the big teacher-shortage problem will never be solved by recruitment alone. We must ensure that shortage-subject teachers tempted into teaching remain in the profession even when the economy starts to rebound and better paid career opportunities are presented outside of the

[3] Sibieta, Luke: Teacher Shortages in England, Analysis and Pay Options. Last accessed 28th May 2020: https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Teacher-shortages-and-pay_2020_EPI.pdf

teaching profession[4]. Professional development and subject-specific support has been shown to improve retention[5]. The roll-out of Early Career Framework has the potential to deliver much of this support although the generic framework currently lack significant subject-specific support.

15 **We therefore recommend that a subject-specific component of the Early Career Framework is urgently developed to support shortage subject teachers entering the profession.**

APPENDIX A

SchoolDash, Teacher Tapp, Gatsby Charitable Foundation; Vacancies and Viruses: Teacher Recruitment in the Time of a Pandemic April 2020

[4] Sims, Sam: What Happens When You Pay Shortage-Subject Teachers More Money? Simulating the Effect of Early-Career Salary Supplements on Teacher Supply in England. Last accessed 28th May 2020: https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/datalab-simulating-the-effect-of-early-career-salary-supplements-on-teacher-supply-in-england.pdf

[5] Sims, Sam: Increasing the Quantity and Quality of Science Teachers in School. Last accessed 28th May 2020: https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/increasingscienceteachers-web.pdf