Education and Skills
Questionnaire responses
ASN Teachers

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ASN TEACHERS NAMED SUBMISSIONS
JENNIFER GORMAN

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
I am a primary teacher in a special needs school

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?
West Dunbartonshire Council

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
The impact I can have on the children. Seeing them developing new skills and becoming more independent (I work with children with severe and complex learning needs) and fulfilling their potential. I came into teaching to work with children and help them learn and this is the most rewarding part of my job.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I hope I can continue until I retire but I will be honest, if I could find an equivalent job that allowed me to do what I want to do in teaching but was out of the education system I would consider it. I want to teach children. I don’t want to be tied up in administration, attending committee meetings, developing curricular areas just for the sake of ticking a box to say we’re doing it. I want to work on the things that will have a direct impact on my daily teaching, planning for the needs of my class and focussing on their development. I often feel my own class is neglected because there are too many other school/ authority level initiatives that need attention. I am physically exhausted trying to fit everything in and cannot see how I could continue at this pace until I am 67 or older—I am 40 just now.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I really have no desire for promotion. I want to teach children. Promoted posts remove you from the classroom and replace that experience with paperwork and pressure to deliver all the extra initiatives I mentioned earlier. There is very little direct impact on pupils. Interaction with the children is limited by the management role and it is not the kind of job where you can dip in and out, teaching some classes and being a part time manager. The stress I see headteachers under would not entice me of that. I have family members who are or have been head teachers so I am speaking from an informed position, not just a perceived image. The expectations on promoted teachers are totally unrealistic.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

My school is an SEN school and this environment is not suited to everyone. It can be a challenging environment to work in and the needs of the children can be overwhelming for some people to cope with. Planning to meet the educational needs of the our children can also be a challenge as the documents provided for teachers to use to structure their planning are aimed at mainstream pupils with fairly typical develop. When it comes to planning for the learning of our children we are often starting from scratch or trying to source resources from other areas. We are breaking the learning into much smaller steps than CfE allows for and some children are still working on achieving the milestones from the pre-birth to 3 documents. It can be very demoralising when the authority resources cannot be applied to our children and need to be adapted to become relevant and useable. This all adds to the
workload pressures and the feeling of value as an employee, which can put a lot of teachers off working in this sector.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?
I’d say there is an issue with recruitment and retention across the board. I’m not aware of any specific specialisms struggling. There can be a negative image associated with working in ASN and moving from this area back to a mainstream environment is very difficult as there is a perception of a lack of skills and not keeping up with developments. As an ASN practitioner I’d say the opposite is actually true and we are very skilled in redesigning learning to meet individual needs but this is not valued if we look to move back into mainstream and we feel disadvantaged in applying for posts. This perception can be a hindrance to people working in SEN.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
I think the image of education in the public domain can be very negative. It is often used as a political football and the effects can be very demoralising. The McCrone agreement went a long way to making teaching more appealing but the conditions given then have been eroded year after year. The pay has been diminishing in real terms since the boost of McCrone and the pay rise last year actually resulted in a reduction with the changes in National Insurance. The future for teaching looks quite uncertain so anyone considering it may be put off by that and teachers who can see an alternative plan for them may be more inclined to follow another path that looks more certain.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?
If so:
- What are these measures?
- How well are they working?
- Are these changes a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?)

The number of staff has reduced due to cuts in budgets and limits on recruiting replacement teachers. We have had vacancies which have had supply teachers, then additional vacancies arise and the supply teacher applies and is appointed but this still leaves a gap in staffing. For example, we have maternity leave positions in school. Then a teacher leaves, the post is advertised and the supply covering the maternity leave is appointed but they cannot fill the vacancy without opening up a vacancy where the maternity leave is. There is no supply cover available long term so we are still a member of staff down. It’s a complicated picture to paint but the result is that we are understaffed and there is no cover.
Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)
I’m not aware that children are missing opportunities but teachers are working over their contracted hours to ensure that the children have all the opportunities we can give them.

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?
I would describe morale among staff as at rock bottom. Everyone is working at full capacity and there is the feeling that it still isn’t enough. More ‘opportunities’ arise than there is time to do them and they always involve more work to be done in your own time. I’m running out of my own time to do any more but then you feel you are leaving colleagues to do more work. I have taken on more and more additional roles because somebody needs to do them. There is not enough time in the curriculum to teach everything so I run a lunch club to teach RE to those children who require a Catholic education. I am trying to compile an appropriate French and Spanish curriculum to deliver the 1+2 language programme which is very difficult for non verbal children struggling to communicate in English. Other teachers have similar commitments. The expectations on teachers are becoming unbearable and the burden of parental responsibility being shifted onto schools is a huge contributing factor.

Additional comments
If you have any other comments please include them below:
I enjoy teaching and I feel strongly that it is one of the most valuable things I could do. I value the opportunities I am given to improve the lives of the children I work with and the experience of their families. This is what should be at the core of our work. I feel this often gets lost in the drive for improvements and the needs of the children get drowned out by society’s demand for schools to fix social problems and take on the role of raising children.
Let teachers teach without competition to meet the needs of the child.

DR ANGELA KELLY

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
Principal Teacher in a rural primary school with responsibility for ASN, French, Literacy and cultural co-ordinator. I also run the choir and percussion group after school.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?
Coalburn Primary School, South Lanarkshire

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
Pupils are the biggest positive….every day is different! The implementation of curriculum for excellence has given the pupils more choice in how their learning happens. Pupils have a say in what they want to learn and are being
encouraged to transfer learning skills. This is a huge positive. It allows pupils to truly feel valued for their strengths. I also believe that active learning and outdoor education have helped engage more learners and learning.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I believe that I would like to specialise more in ASN and help improve the standards of teaching required for pupils with additional needs.

I believe more has to be done to support class teachers who increasingly find themselves with pupils in their class whom they do not know how to help adequately. I believe in inclusion but also feel that training has to be put into place at university level for all aspiring teachers.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I am currently actively seeking promotion to depute headteacher. I do not ever want to be a headteacher. Having worked closely with headteachers, I am aware of the political and financial constraints being put upon education resources. There have been many great initiatives that are then not followed up with support or guidance. GIRFEC has been a good forward move yet not all those involved share as they should. The additional hours and paperwork expected for senior management is too much at present. Staff are not ever recompensed for additional work, responsibilities or general resourcing yet are asked again and again to give more of themselves and their time.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

The fluctuating role in a rural school is the only problem we have had. When the role drops, a member of staff is put to another school until the role rises again.

Having an NQT as also caused issue. We have requested that we do not lose a permanent member of staff this year when the role drops and that, instead, we do not receive and NQT until the role re-rises.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

Teachers who have committed themselves initially to ASN or nursery often find it very difficult to get back into mainstream teaching.

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

General morale among staff is currently quite good but there is room for huge improvement. In general, staff are not feeling valued or appreciated at present. The council headquarters have been aware for some time that things have not been as they should. Many staff have reached out to quality improvement officers, quality link officers and members of the learning
community. As yet, no assistance has been offered. Historical issues in other schools have led staff to believe that they will be penalised if they try to get support or advice in other ways.

**Additional comments**

If you have any other comments please include them below:

There are no clear remits for promoted posts as Principal teachers and as deputes. As a result, there is a lack of consistency across the board where some Principal teachers find themselves doing more than depute heads.

**IRENE STOVE**

**Q1** What type of teaching role do you have? (Secondary – Additional Support Needs)

**Q2** Whereabouts do you work?

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

**Q4** What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?

I enjoy working with young people and helping to prepare them on their journey to independent living. I like teaching pupils new skills which I know will help them in a meaningful way in future life.

The holidays!

My colleagues.

I have worked in the same school most of my teaching career and I enjoy being part of this community.

**Q5** Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I would like to teach until I retire but I am concerned that I will not make it, full time, to retirement. I worry that I will not manage to keep up with the demands of the job as I get older. I plan to try and wind down in next 10 years.

**Q6** What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I am a Faculty Head. There is no financial incentive for me to go to DHT level. I also see the DHT role as a pretty thankless task where they have to deal with the difficult aspects of the job and not get the positives that you get from being at the chalkface. They are never really off duty. I have been asked to act up on several occasions but have so far declined as I would also worry about the impact this would have on my department and the support that pupils would get.
Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

There is very little opportunity for promotion in teaching – which means that most teachers are stuck on poor levels of pay for what is a very demanding job. With fewer promoted posts and the Faculty system, there is limited support to probationer teachers in Secondary schools. You may be a Home Economics Teacher in a school where the Faculty Head is a Technical Teacher –so you have very little subject specialist support.

Financial cuts mean that there are fewer supports available in schools for vulnerable pupils – school counsellors, community education etc in a background of Inclusion makes the job even more challenging. Everything is put back to the school and ultimately the class teacher.

Constant curricular and exam changes is demoralising and increases workload.

GIRFEC has meant that we have detailed reports to do to request the simplest form of support from outwith school – and often these requests are then rejected.

SEEMIS – a very frustrating system.

The volume of emails that teachers have to go through each day, while trying to prep, teach and mark, is ridiculous. When I started teaching email did not exist and if someone wanted to get in touch they phoned or wrote a memo or letter. Email now takes up a significant part of my day and I end up doing a lot of my email at home at silly o’clock at night.

We have lost teachers to the central belt where the housing is more affordable and staff know that there are fewer staff shortages – so they are less likely to have to cover other classes. School houses have been sold off – so there is no support for staff moving into the area. Schools have to use their own budget for any relocation packages that are agreed and this means that there is a limit to how many teachers out with the area they can afford to employ.

We rarely get out to do training as there is no cover. Most CPD activities are now done at weekends, after school or during school holidays – what other profession has to do this??? Unpaid in our own time.

Continual curricular and exam changes – is demoralising and time consuming.
A lot of new teacher realise that there are easier ways to earn a living!

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

We have not had a Home Economics teacher in our school for at least 4 years. We also struggle to get Science teachers, Modern Languages, Technical, Art and English.
Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
Better pay and conditions. Weighting and incentives to work in hard to recruit areas.
Address the issues mentioned in Q7.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?
If so:
- What are these measures?
  Pupils have to go to other schools to get Home Economics and subjects that they can't get in our school. We get pupils from across the city coming to us for subjects that they can't get in their school.

We had a multi school Head Teacher for a term while they recruited an Acting HT for our school.

Support Assistants do not get time now to support classroom teachers and help in non-teaching duties as they are needed to support high tariff pupils be included in a mainstream environment. This often involves them working 1 to 1 with a challenging pupil who can't cope in a mainstream class.

- How well are they working?
  Some pupils, particularly those with ASN can’t cope with travelling around the city to attend classes and will opt out by dropping subjects or changing to a different course so that they don’t have to travel.

Joint Headship meant that the DHT team were stretched and this put further pressure on Faculty Heads.

PSA staff are not teachers and can’t manage the needs of pupils with ASN without teacher input – this then means that very vulnerable pupils receive a less than adequate educational experience. It puts undue pressure on PSA staff who are poorly paid.

- Are these changes a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?)
  Permanent

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)
Yes – Home Economics, Technical subjects. If a pupil does not experience these subjects in the BGE stage then they are unlikely to opt for them in
Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

Quite Low. Workload is a big issue. We see colleagues not coping and being off long term. Our morale has improved since the new Acting Head has been appointed. We are about to close and merge with another school in a new build – so our Inset training days and after school meetings have tended to be around some of these issues which have impacted on the time we have as a school to work on current issues and developments – this is frustrating and means that we struggle with continuing development work.

Additional comments

If you have any other comments please include them below:

It saddens me to see young staff struggle with workload issues and student teachers feeling overwhelmed by their teaching practices. I love my job despite the issues that make it challenging.

JOANNE THOMSON

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?

I am an additional need teacher, currently given up a permanent job to do 2 temp fixed term jobs; one working with Syrian Refugee children and another working with a pupil who is unable to be included in mainstream due to her attachment/PDA difficulties. I am an RE, complex needs, learning support, and ex Guidance Teacher and ex Principal Teacher SEBN.

I am an EIS Union Rep, and organise a Regional EIS ASN network meeting for teachers in Scottish Borders Council. I am an EIS member of the JCG for Scottish Borders Council.I am a member of the EIS Scotland Network.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?

Scottish Borders Council (previously City of Edinburgh and East Lothian)

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?

Always the children, their appreciation no matter how small, and the glimpses of learning, critical thinking and development we as teachers are humbled to note as part of our duties.

The variety of roles in teaching, and the diversity of the methods of delivering. As a parent, I came into teaching when my children were small, and the holidays supported me to care for my children- not so much now.
Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I am currently considering leaving teaching for alternative employment or teaching abroad in the private sector. I am certainly planning and intend to reduce my weekly teaching hours.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I enjoy leading and putting new systems into place, supporting staff deliver their best. I have been employed in 3 Principal Teacher positions. On 2 occasions I stepped down due to weak leadership systems and unreasonable and unsupported workload - I logged working 70 hours per week.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

1. Lack of pay increase - lack of value in the eyes of government of the job of a teacher.
2. Too many changes in secondary curriculum design, assessments and SQA courses, in too short a period. This is specifically aimed at the Scottish Government introducing Named Person/GIRFEC, Curriculum for Excellence, changes to secondary assessment and qualifications, (changing from Access 1 and 2 to National 1, 2 - new training to look at content, time to review, adapt or rewrite planning for courses etc). Named person legislation has had a huge impact on the authorities trialling it, in terms of the 'meeting' times for Head Teachers, DHTs and learning support not to mention new paperwork, minutes etc etc. (Why was the paperwork not introduced centrally and pushed to all authorities to save each developing its own? not to mention an IT system to suit?)
3. Lack of detail and clarity of Curriculum for Excellence actual delivery of 'themes' /outcomes in lessons and the 'matching' at secondary to meet the SQA 'subject specific' assessment criteria. (maybe we should have moved to the International Baccalaureate but the depth of subject knowledge, something Scottish Education is hailed for, would be lost).
4. Head Teachers/senior leadership teams lack of response/unwillingness to reduce workload and tackle bureaucracy (current example of them being unwilling to agree to reduce marking of Unit assessments in secondary despite this having been agreed by George Swinney), evidence gathering around lesson planning and outcomes for inspections.

In the Scottish Borders it also appears to be location. Young teachers do not want to locate to rural areas away from perceived 'city services'. However, numerous changes to service design are a factor too, including cuts to support teachers and learning assts, unexplained tariffs in terms of allocation of support hours to support teachers with complex needs pupils - this has resulted in many taking early retirement. Another is the admin bureaucracy - multiple IT systems, several passwords to access various CPD, registration,
email, risk assessment, different computer systems for different levels of teachers etc, can you believe we have 2 computer screens on our desk.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

Sciences- due to the change in National certificates the science courses at different levels tackle different topics and the school timetabler designs duel, triple and quad level courses in the same class- there is a minimum amount of hours to teach a higher course, but if you have Nat 4, 5 and Higher (and advanced Higher) in the same class how can you deliver, differentiate, teach four topics in the same class? More teachers in schools and reduced classes would help.

ASN- class teacher numbers must remain, but Councils can cut ASN services, and whilst change must be embraced, long term planning is absent at Parliament and authority levels- e.g. an unsupported child may go into mainstream without the individualised support and suffer loss of esteem, withdraw and self-exclude. The impact on not providing support to this child to remain included, means reduced opportunities for them in the workforce, e.g. visits to colleges, work experience etc. The costs will be in unemployment, mental health etc.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?

1. Pay rise. Incremental bonus to teachers who have more than 12 years’ service.
2. Look at Nordic model to increase non-contact time to be in line with those teaching professionals who have 15-20 contact teaching hours (as opposed to Scottish Teachers with 22.5 hrs) This will allow time to plan, mark, create new lessons based on changes to qualifications and leave time for meetings with parents, discipline etc. Nordic partners are paid alongside doctors.
3. Reintroduce Principal Teachers and cut the Curriculum Faculty roles. This would reintroduce leadership opportunities and create manpower to deal with discipline, as well as focus stronger on teaching subject specific specialisms. Budgets would need to increase to support this, but retention, career progression and recruitment would be enhanced.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?

If so:
• What are these measures? In Primaries, multiple scools with one Headship- and composite classes are normal
• How well are they working? Stress of the HT, ill health, extra headship duties dumped on Principal Teachers and DHTs without pay. Composite classes- for senior level subjects impossible to sustain
• Are these changes a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?) - no its to save money

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils *as a result of staff shortages* that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)

I am aware the choice of 3 sciences is limited in some schools. I was supply in a school last year for a day, and the pupils did not have a trained RE teacher, the social subjects dept. geography or history teacher was teaching this course- this is an issue. In another school, pupils had been waiting for months for a Home Ec teacher. I am aware there are shortages in Maths, and computing specifically.

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

very low- workload specifically hours working a week- 50hrs ish, beurocracy, staff absences and not being able to access cover (due to the government cutting supply teachers’ salaries for short term cover), additional workloads with GIRFEC planning with lack of admin support.

**Additional comments**

The presumption of mainstream in reality is untrained (because to train them would cost money) staff dealing with pupils with increasingly complex needs with local authorities not having the money to put in the specialist resource required. I am specifically speaking of rural authorities, incl autism, communication disorders, and severe physical impairment at secondary. Specialists are leaving the service as corners and services are increasingly cut. Every child has the right to be educated in their local school...with the right individualised support in place, which includes trained staff, adapted resources and classrooms, soft play etc., and Councils are not meeting this cost. The consequence is dissatisfaction of teaching staff, stress, ill health, extra pressure on existing staff, staff leaving.

**NORMAN THOMSON**

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have? (please specify if you are working at primary or secondary school or other, if you are a supply teacher, and any subject specialisms or other roles)

Principal Teacher in Additional Support Needs School. Part of SLT and year Head for S5. Teacher of Social Studies/Modern Studies to N5 & SQA coordinator and CPD coordinator for school.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?

Glasgow City Council ASN Sector N.E.(Parkhill Secondary-Haghill Campus)

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
I have taught in SEN now ASN sector for 24 years. It has been the ‘making a difference to disadvantaged children’ (currently N.E Glasgow) that keeps me motivated, despite constant changes to way curriculum is developed.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)
Will teach until I retire.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?
Currently at SMT level in my sector, but HT would incur to much responsibility and take time away from teaching part of the job.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)
Financial reward is an obvious challenge for new teachers. My daughter was earning my PT salary within 2-3 years of starting employment.
Teaching does not hold same condition of respect as one did.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?
IT, PE and Home Ec. Again outside salaries being more attractive.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
More ‘aggressive ‘advertising as in England (TV and Press).
Assisted housing packages for new teachers in rural areas.
Guaranteed pension at 65 for next 30 years.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?
If so:
• What are these measures?
• Changes in the use/availability of support assistants.
• How well are they working………Not. Struggling to keep number of SA up to provide support required for Nurture and for increasing volume of pupils on Autistic Spectrum
• Are these changes a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?)
Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)

We are fortunate in piloting our Enterprise Academy for Vocational courses delivered in ASN setting for Horticulture, Food Technology, Housekeeping (via new bedroom from Hilton group built in school) and Business/customer support. See link>

http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/15124765.Enterprising_pupils_helped_to_find_work/#

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

Constant demand of paperwork – despite Government led initiative in reducing bureaucracy to stop this happening. Because all staff in school are motivated towards ‘making a difference’.

ASN TEACHERS ANONYMOUS SUBMISSIONS

ANONYMOUS 1

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?

I am currently a supply teacher at a special school. I resigned from my permanent post in August as a Primary Teacher, after a long fight with LA to have my entitlement to a permanent contract recognised and then a further fight to have my permanent contract in one school for both days. However I was moved by the LA to a school and job type which was entirely unsuitable for me having recently returned to school after an absence due to cancer treatment. Having had cancer I was not going to waste any more time fighting when supply would offer a better life/work balance. I’. only seven years post probation and think it is really sad that the actions of the LA have resulted in this.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?

Highland Council

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?

Seeing children blossom and enjoy learning

Knowing that, even though contact is sometimes for a short time, that I can have a positive impact on children.

That my words of encouragement, praise and understanding can empower great change that will have a ripple effect in communities.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I am already taking steps to leave the profession.

I find the hours required to be put in to be the first class teacher I would expect to teach my child are too many and onerous. I have never worked full
time, other than my probationary year, as the job requires way more hours than stated. Even working 2 – 3 days a week I put in more than full time hours. Often working over weekends and holidays to prepare lessons. This results in not only resenting the job but to a decline in health as own exercise time takes a hit, loss of relationships and friends as I’m always working! And feeling s of guilt when things on teaching slip to look after or enjoy family.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

Much higher financial reward and more layers of management below me to share the burden, too many head teachers I see work even harder and longer hours than class teachers but loose the child contact that brings the intrinsic motivation found in teaching. All seem to be heading for burnout.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

Recruiting – Highland area have lots of rural schools with little provision for affordable housing and limited opportunities for employment of spouse/partner to boost earnings that would make housing more affordable.

Retaining – Teachers are working at full stretch, way more hours than they are paid for, are not appreciated by the public at large who have some misconception that teachers do little more than nanny / entertain children arriving at 9 leaving at 3 or 4 and have all those holidays! Do not have sufficient support to meet the needs of children with additional support requirements particularly in mainstream classes and becoming more evident in special schools. Those who are wise or possibly a little less altruistic leave before they are destroyed.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

Special needs in mainstream and special schools. With budgets constantly shrinking while needs are constantly increasing there comes a tipping point where it is no longer a desirable job to be involved in.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?

Pay a decent wage with better conditions of service.

Recognise that the hours worked are far more than are contracted.

Properly fund the support needs of children both in mainstream and special ed. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) and (2009) felt like a breath of fresh air when released and amended but in reality it is unrealistic in terms of financial backing and only implemented properly if parents are able and willing to fight for their child’s provision. Often teachers are directed not to speak to parents about what the lack of support looks like in class or to advise them to complain about the lack of provision for their child. This creates a divide between those who are educated and motivated...
and of strong personality and those who lack these qualities and skills, adding to the attainment gap.

Reduce class contact time to give teachers more contracted time to meet the increasing demands on teachers.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?

Yes

multi school headships have increased in highland area and are permanent, this adds to the burden of class teachers who in effect take on management roles without any financial reward or extra time released from class. No matter how small a school I feel strongly that one of the teachers should be paid and released from class at least to the level of principal teacher. These teachers are often teaching across multiple stages some even P1–P7 in one class.

Reduction in use of supply cover for classroom assistants not sure if this is permanent or temp. but has led to a lot of pressure in providing for children with additional support needs without their regular support.

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

Very Low

Exhaustion, no work life balance, additional stresses every day with staff absence not being covered, additional support for one pupil having a direct impact on less support for other pupils. Staff miss breaks as no cover for pupils requiring 1:1 support.

Additional comments

I am in my early 50s and struggle with the work load, unless there are huge changes on the demands put on teachers I shall not manage to teach till the higher retirement age. I am retraining at the moment as a Forest School Leader to take smaller groups of children into outdoor learning but even that will be difficult to sustain till my late 60s.

ANONYMOUS 2

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?

I work in a mainstream primary school as a teacher. I work in an ASN (additional support needs) supported classroom within the school up to lunch. I then cover McCrone non class contact in the lower stages or teach SFL (support for learning) small groups in the afternoons.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?

Aberdeen City Council

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
Seeing the impact our role has on vulnerable children especially and being able to support them in the challenges they face. Having a supportive management and staff at my current school. Career progression possibilities. A fast-paced and exciting job – never boring. Feeling like the job is of value and importance – the ability to make a difference.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I might reluctantly consider leaving early due to the immense workload and pressure of the job. It is extremely tiring and stressful and I would worry about the effect on my health and enjoyment of the job if I have my own family or when I am much older (50+).

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

The ability to lead positive change would encourage me along with a desire to progress my career professionally. The increased pressure along with less teaching time could deter me. Having a family could also deter me.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

The cost of living in Aberdeen and remoteness compared to the central belt. The shortage of teachers generally. Many teachers leaving the profession after a short time.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

I’m not sure.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?

Increased wages to reflect the true nature of the job. Continue with incentives like cash payments and housing benefits to move to the area.

The expectation on teachers and true workload needs to be looked at and addressed. It is impossible to complete all that we are required to as further initiatives and priorities are continually added.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?

If so:

- What are these measures?
- How well are they working?
- Are these changes a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?)

I am only in my second year as a fully qualified teacher and no changes have been made since I have been at the school apart from management having to cover classes for a lot of their time. This has been due to shortages/absence and this has an impact on their workload and responsibilities and a knock-on effect across the school as management aren’t always available. This is particularly difficult in a school with the enhanced provision of two ASN classrooms. These changes are intended to be temporary.

**Q11** Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)

Our ASN (additional support needs) supported classes close at lunchtime as there aren’t enough staff to cover much needed SFL (support for learning) and McCrone non class contact time. This means our ASN children either have to cope in their mainstream settings all afternoon or not be in school. This can have a huge impact on their learning. It is also worrying when I am in another class and there is an incident in the afternoon where I could not support them. The ASN classroom is much more highly staffed than the mainstream class with only six or seven pupils usually accessing it at one time with myself and two support staff. With the current inclusion policy it is a vital resource.

**Q12** How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

I would say quite good as most staff are very supportive of each other and there is a positive ethos in the school. Staff are well informed by management and included in discussions.

At times staff can feel frustrated by the overwhelming workload and lack of time to complete all that they are required to do. New priorities and initiatives can add a huge amount of stress to teachers.

**ANONYMOUS 3**

**Q1** What type of teaching role do you have?
I am a trained primary teacher working in an ASN department within a primary school.

**Q2** Whereabouts do you work?
Fife Council

**Q4** What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
Knowing that you have a positive impact on the lives of others.
Helping others to achieve their potential.
The relationships you form with the pupils.
The changing daily challenges, no two days are ever the same.
Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)
I would like to teach until I retire but not sure if this will be possible due to the levels of violence, being hit and kicked that happens daily. Not sure that it will be physically possible at nearly 70.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?
Encourage: support, time to learn skills required, manageable workload.
Discourage: expectations, we are teachers, trained to work with children, we are not financial experts yet heads are expected to manipulate ever shrinking budgets on top of their daily work. Time, paid for 35h yet working even longer hours than teachers, who often work more than 60 a week.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)
I think we can recruit teachers but teacher training does not prepare people for the reality of the profession.
Hours- most jobs you work close to the advertised hours- teaching is easily 60h a week and that’s people being effective with their time.
Skills- expectations to manage a range of pupils with wide spectrum of behaviours within a class of 30+ with reducing support. The change in mainstream pupils is notable. Children who previously were 1:1 in specialist provision due you needs or behaviours are now in small group setting with ratios of 2.5:1 if you are lucky. Pupils who were well supported in small group settings are now unsupported in 30+ settings. You cannot possible meet the needs of all in these situations and fail everyone to an extent.
Expectations- there is very little opportunity for quality cpd, unless self funded. Yet the issues within the classroom are ever changing. ASD, ADD, ODD, English as an additional language, a massive range of learning difficulties. All of these need individual attention and teaching but this can’t be managed and leads to disenchantment. We are told to raise attainment and close the gap but are not given effective tools, e.g.- training, staff, equipment. We jump through all the hoops but every time the goal posts are changed.
Lack of understanding and respect for the job- engine can teach because we all attended school! Not true, the skills of a good teacher go far beyond academic prowess. This is why trainee teachers need time in the classroom to learn these skills. How do you manage behaviour? Keep 30 pupils on task whilst working 1:1 etc. These skills take confidence to use and time to develop. Universities teach the academic side rather than the skills needed so it can be a shock when people have their first class.
Also the amount of demonization in the press, by governments, Cosla etc. Whatever goes wrong it’s a case of teacher failure, never system or the curriculum or the failing infrastructure that we work within.
Whilst teaching is rewarding for new teachers it is scary, daunting hard work, unpredictable, very family unfriendly, stressful and often, unfortunately
unsupported due to lack of support from over stretched senior management teams.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?
I know we struggle with ASN teacher recruitment. Many people struggle to work in an environment where you are expected to do the job of a mainstream teacher, with a smaller class size, but with really difficult behaviours and many people suffering low level violence throughout the day and higher level aggression regularly. With cuts to staffing levels we cannot support pupils in accessing mainstream activities, not with quality life skills (a very short sighted approach, save money now only to have to spend more when the pupil leaves school and needs lifelong help in these areas). Secondary subjects where pay and conditions are significantly better in roles out with education.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
Stop lying in your recruitment adverts. They make teaching sound easy, like a 9-3 job with support and training opportunities. They suggest there are opportunities for progression with the profession that no longer exists unless you either want to move out of the classroom or kill yourself being a depute with a full time roll but also teach on 0.5 as well Support teachers, provide quality cpd Scotland wide, make sure all teachers have a chance to learn skills they need now without spending their own money to do it. More online learning from the government would be great, like the OU it will log cpd as you do it without having to waste time filling in online cpd logs etc.
Make sure the buildings we work in are fit for purpose. Your offices aren’t falling apart around you, you have enough seats, tables etc. you ict equipment does the job you require and you don’t lose Internet connection daily because another class turned on the computers. You want us to produce the workforce of the future using tools that were obsolete a decade ago or within buildings that are not maintained or fit for purpose.
Pay should reflect the job. On paper it looks good but by the time you work out your hourly pay (I don’t know anyone who can manage their workload within 35 or even 40h) and take off what you spend out your own pocket on resources you realise working in Aldi or Ludlow is better value for your pocket. Seriously!
Create opportunities for people who want career options and want to progress further.
Stop recruiting headteachers with no people skills, who can’t manage staff teams and are bullies. It happens too often that bullying in teaching as seen to be a promote bless skill?

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?
If so:
• What are these measures?
• How well are they working?
• Are these change a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?)
No measures except keep doing what you do, achieving the same with less. Staff morale, especially with pupil support staff is very low. Headteachers are stretched class sizes are getting bigger, forced relocation within local authorities. Job losses in a recruitment crisis. We model future change to funding, except for it to reduce in real terms yet pupil numbers and needs to increase It is becoming a race to the bottom with no glimmer of hope of change.

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)
Not at primary level we offer everything. We now have no peripatetic teachers offering specialised lessons, we can’t offer all children the inclusion that they could manage as they need staff to support them but we don’t have any.

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?
Low
There is no change in the pipeline.
We were given a half-baked curriculum that didn’t even cover the learning for many of my pupils but told we had to use it. It still isn’t finished or fit for purpose all these years later. It takes so much time to use a curriculum that is ineffective also all those hours spent over the last 6 years developing the curriculum within local authorities only for the Scottish government to produce benchmarks out of nowhere, but these are still draft.
Management are not always supportive.
Behaviours and needs in classroom increasing but no support to manage these.
Wages are falling, pensions are far worse but cost way more.
Working hours increasing.
Lack of CPD opportunities that don’t cost us personally and/or use our weekends.

ANONYMOUS 4

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
I am a class teacher at a secondary school for pupils with Complex Learning Needs.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?
Glasgow City Council

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
I believe in what I do. I genuinely believe that a committed and compassionate teacher can make a real difference to a young person’s life and future. I see access to appropriate and meaningful education as one of the greatest agents for change in society, particularly in terms of social justice.
I find my work extremely interesting. I have opportunities to be creative, to have fun and to build meaningful relationships. The challenges of my job mean that I am constantly learning, both formally and informally through my everyday experiences and interactions with pupils and colleagues.

I work with incredible people – my pupils, my colleagues, other professionals. Often this is what inspires and energises me.

The holidays are the same as my own children’s holidays – this makes a huge difference to our family life, and also to our finances.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I hope to teach until I retire – I love what I do, and have no desire to find another career outside of education. However, with the ever-moving retirement age, I am concerned by how fit I will be to continue to teach into my late sixties. My job demands high levels of energy. In my specific sector, it also requires a degree of physical fitness. I have, over the years, seen colleagues at the end of their career who were exhausted by the demands of the profession. I would love to see a system where teachers in their last working years could spend more time mentoring younger and less experienced staff members, and were less classroom committed. I believe this would safeguard their health, enable people to work for longer, and would be of enormous benefit to schools as it would give more experienced staff a vehicle to share their skills and expertise, and would mean that teachers newer to the profession were more supported.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I would seek promotion to senior management for the opportunity to have a more strategic role in shaping and influencing school policy and practice. In the two decades since I qualified, I have had opportunities to learn a lot about how schools work, how pupils learn, and how staff can be motivated. My professional and life experience in this time mean that I have a real contribution to make. Greater access to acting roles, to mentoring programmes and to training in leadership and management (without the commitment of Masters level study) would be extremely helpful in making this possible. I am aware of a perception across education that promotion of younger members of staff (particularly those under 35) to all roles has become the norm. In recent years, the appointment of someone over 45 to a promoted post has become exceptional, leading to a tendency to view anyone who has not been promoted by this stage as being “past it”. I am personally aware of several people who have not applied for promoted posts for this reason. This applies in particular to women teachers, who are, for a variety of reasons, most likely to have taken time out of their careers, to have worked part time, or to have postponed seeking additional responsibilities in order to meet family commitments. I am quite sure that Local Authorities and individual schools have no desire to discourage older teachers from applying
for these posts. However, I feel they have some work to do in ensuring that such applicants are confident that they would not be wasting their time.

I would hesitate before applying for a headteacher post, for a number of reasons. The biggest disincentive is the lack of time head teachers are able to spend with pupils. This is something I have seen in both mainstream and special education – head teachers are constantly called to meetings with local authority committees, head teachers’ committees and a whole variety of working parties. Very few head teachers (or even deputes) have any class contact time. Most of us went into teaching to spend time with young people. A job where I’m not present consistently enough to really get to build a relationship with pupils holds little appeal to me. I would also be very concerned by the workload.

Headteachers’ lists of tasks and responsibilities seem to grow constantly, without any additional resources or time in which to complete them. Every new initiative, policy or pilot requires a school response – they come thick and fast, and the HT has to lead the school in dealing with all of them, as well as respond to the needs of pupils, staff, parents and just run the school. Policies must be constantly updated and revised to fit with new policy and curricular initiatives. The frustrations of budgetary constraints (e.g. having to buy felt tipped pens for three times what they are worth from an approved provider) and negotiating for basic repairs and maintenance from the local authority are exhausting. It is becoming an increasingly political role. In a small school, all of this will come with a pay packet only slightly higher than that of a depute – it is difficult to see why anyone would do it!

I am also concerned by the new qualifications required. I have spent the past four years working towards an M Ed in Inclusive Education. New policy states that, to be eligible to apply for a head teacher’s role, I would have to start again, and gain a Masters level qualification in Leadership. Although funding has been promised for this, I don’t really think I can put my family through another year (at least) of supporting me while I juggle the combined commitments of family, school and study. Realistically, those of us who have specialised too soon are going to miss out (I don’t imagine future cohorts will make the same mistake. Anyone with any ambition will avoid the Masters in Inclusion or Autism etc. in favour of the new qualifications for headship, leading to significant skills and knowledge gaps when future generations of school managers will all have the same specialism.) Teachers who have family commitments which prevent them from accessing these courses early in their career will likely be discouraged from even considering this route – which will further the trend towards appointing very young senior management teams with limited life and classroom experience.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

Workload is a huge challenge. Teachers are concerned about maintaining a work-life balance. I have met several teachers who have chosen to work on short to medium term supply for years now, as it absolves them of all the admin and paperwork, and enables them to have a family life.
Teachers have been vilified by the media over the twenty-two years since I joined the profession. We know the truth of it – by and large we are ordinary people, who are willing to learn, to change and to work hard, who want the best for their pupils, but who would also quite like to have a reasonable quality of life for themselves, too. However, according to the press, and to successive Westminster governments, we are a collection of bad tempered, lazy, cowardly Luddites, clinging to an old system and milking the economy in order to fund our long holidays and exorbitant pensions. We seldom seem to get anything right, and all of society’s ills are ours to resolve. Even industry press paints a depressing picture of over worked, disrespected victims near breaking point. Why would anyone aspire to joining us?

In my own sector, I suspect the lack of resources, training and funding, and the over-large classes (relative to the very complex needs of our pupils) puts people off. Our pupils are wonderful, but they are challenging, and we cannot guarantee new staff that they will receive the support they might want.

Recent insecurity about the future of our school, and of our sector has also been an issue. Many people believe that specialist schools like ours will not exist in the future. Who wants that hanging over them? In such a small sector, opportunities for promotion and progression are also very limited. In recent years, we have lost excellent teachers to other schools which offered them more job security and a more predictable future.

Finally, I think that many teachers don’t even realise that we exist. All the recent talk about attainment relates to pupils who can access traditional exams and qualifications. What our learners do simply isn’t valued in the same way. When people do talk about ASN or special needs, they don’t usually mean us. Media (or government) reports on inclusion or additional support needs are usually relating to mainstream schools, units attached to them, or very occasionally schools for pupils with additional support needs but not complex needs. We are invisible, which makes it hard for anyone to visualise themselves having a future with us.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

Complex Learning Needs – the far end of ASN, including working with Challenging Behaviours, and pupils with significant communication difficulties.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?

We need to make teaching something that is respected and attractive, and which kids can aspire to. Many current teachers are the children of teachers. However, my own secondary aged kids have said that there is no way they would become teachers, as they have seen the amount of work I bring home. Some positive stories in the media and from politicians would be nice – and not all about fads or results. Stand up for teachers!

In my sector, retention would be helped by acknowledging the highly individual needs of pupils in our sector (CLN) and accepting that one size does not fit all in terms of CfE. A more specialised approach to the needs of
these learners (for example those used in Northern Ireland or Wales) is urgently required. Let teachers get on with doing what the pupils need, rather than spending time trying to extract meaningful targets and objectives for children who will spend their whole lives working well below the earliest level out of a curriculum aimed at and written for neurotypical youngsters.

Centralising the approach to new initiatives – thousands of teachers working on their responses to the same new policies or documents all at the same time is a waste of man hours. People will want to teach if they are allowed to teach. If they had wanted to produce text books or policy statements they would have chosen a different career.

Clarifying exactly how schools and teachers are to deal with violent incidents would, I believe, have a positive impact on retention. All children have the right to an education, and to be supported in that education. If a child is repeatedly violent in a classroom, then they are not coping with their environment and we are not meeting their needs. Schools and teachers need to have clear routes for dealing with these situations in a manner which is respectful to the rights and needs of all. Teachers don’t like to fail kids.

Addressing issues of workload – the huge amount of reporting, the constant reinvention of the wheel, none of which actually benefits a single pupil is sapping teachers of the will to continue. Guidelines on issues such as target setting and tracking are vague, and practice varies from school to school. Years of inspection induced anxiety means that many schools still don’t know precisely what we are expected to formally record, and so attempt to record everything. A simple document from Education Scotland, saying “These are the standards required in terms of recording. These are the documents the Inspectors may ask to see” rather than vague headings and reassurances would do more to reduce unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy than anything else. It would be a wonderful thing if schools could assess the function of tracking and recording solely on the basis of how it impacts learning and teaching rather than how it enables them to “keep right” with the inspectors.

The new benchmarks, while well intentioned, came after schools had spent weeks, months and years deriving our own outcomes, which are now to be thrown to the wind. The benchmarks were needed...several years ago. Learn from this experience. New initiatives should be piloted before being rolled out, and given as working documents, something “plug and play”, which we can amend as required.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?

We are currently understaffed. One teaching job has been advertised twice, and both times nobody turned up to interview. I am not aware of any strategy to address this. The post is currently part-covered by a supply teacher. I do not know what the council intends to do about this.

Class sizes are growing, but the council maintains that we are overstuffed. Pupil teacher ratios are standardised, despite this being a specialist provision
(Getting It Right for Every Child only takes us so far). Appeals for additionality are protracted and rarely successful. Ratios include management staff, even those who are not class committed. Pupil experiences are becoming increasingly limited as a result, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to support pupils with challenging behaviours.

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)

There have been multiple occasions when pupils have not accessed out of school activities (e.g. PE, college, Work Experience, Rebound therapy) because of staff shortages. Pupils do not have access to specialist subject providers (historically this has not always been the case).

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

Morale is very low. We are all concerned about our future and the future of our school. We know that we could do so much more for our pupils. This is their only chance at an education, and for many of our learners school will be the most interesting, social and exciting time of their lives, and yet we are failing them because we are under resourced. That hurts.

Being forced to use a curriculum which is couched in terms of linear progression, and which starts at a level inaccessible to most of our learners is soul destroying. The thought of having yet another initiative which doesn’t match the needs of our learners forced on us, and taking us away from the work that pupils really need for us to do is exhausting. We love what we do, and we believe in it, but we are not convinced that our work is seen or valued by anyone outside our own school community.

Additional comments

If you have any other comments please include them below:

I have hesitated to complete this. I don’t like being negative about my job – I love my job – and a great deal of what I have had to say has been negative. I have chosen to remain anonymous because I wish to progress in my career, and I don’t want to shoot myself in the foot. I’m also not sure that anyone is particularly interested in the experiences of a teacher in a very small, crumbling school for pupils with Complex Learning Needs. However, that last reason for hesitation is also the reason that I have completed this questionnaire. We are almost invisible, and almost inaudible, but not quite. I hope that this questionnaire will be read, and that this time the needs and future of these young learners and their teachers will be taken into account. One of the greatest strengths of the Scottish Education system is that it was and is conceived as a force for equity and justice. Please use that strength and take this opportunity to plan and support a workforce that can deliver a truly inclusive education system, in which no learners are overlooked.

ANONYMOUS 5

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
Additional Support Needs Teacher in a Primary School

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?
Dundee City Council

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
Working with children, seeing them make progress. The relationship you build up with them. Witnessing that moment when they suddenly understand.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)
I will teach until I retire.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?
I am not interested in seeking promotion. I prefer to work face to face with the children. What discourages me is the fact that headteachers nowadays are more like managers and accountants than teachers. Any headteacher I know is always under enormous pressure.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)
We don’t have difficulty retaining teachers; our staff is pretty constant apart from when staff go on maternity leave. We are a big school which is constantly growing so any new staff are because of that growth. Our main difficulty is getting supply cover for maternity leave. One year we were 7 staff short and no or very little supply cover was given. This put tremendous strain on the rest of the staff. Myself having to be both class and ASN teacher. Management too having to fulfil two roles. This continued for 9 months that year. It is still continuing now. We again have staff off on maternity leave with...

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?
Staff morale is very low at the moment. No-one feels they can do their job properly because of the constant staff shortages and constant changes we are being asked to implement, workload issues and bureaucracy too are major factors. I note that the Scottish Government is currently trying to declutter the curriculum. Let’s hope this makes a difference.

ANONYMOUS 6

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
I work in secondary Additional Support Needs school and teach a range of ASN subjects as well as classes of pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties.

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?
South Lanarkshire

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
Being able to make an impact on pupils’ lives and learning and being able to see the progress they make over time.
Remuneration and holidays are also good.

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)
I would consider leaving teaching if a less stressful role with similar benefits was available. A concern is that the workload and expectation will continue to rise in the decades between now and I retire which would potentially force me out of the profession. I would hope to retire early regardless of what occupation I am in.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?
Training opportunities, subsidised course fees, increased salary, local job opportunities.

Increased workload, longer hours and increased stress would put me off.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)
Difficult to encourage mainstream teachers into ASN as once you’re in this field, it’s difficult to get out of and back into mainstream. Many teachers are reluctant to work in an ASN school as the pupils are unpredictable and there’s an increased risk of violence.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?
The school (and others I’ve been in) have had difficulty finding applicants for CLD and ASD based posts as they are very challenging and you need to be quite experienced in them to do the job well.

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
Better medium and long term planning re: staffing by the Scottish Government. More permanent jobs made available, higher FTE ratios in schools for teachers and support staff.

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)
Pupil choices after BGE are limited more so than in a mainstream school due to staffing levels. It means many students have to drop a number of subjects
they enjoy or are good at and I believe this has a more pronounced effect on their learning than a mainstream pupil who for example has to drop a science – our pupils have to drop science or tech for example.

**Q12** How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

Quite good – main factor that influences it is workload, paperwork and expectations from management and parents.

**ANONYMOUS 7**

**Q1** What type of teaching role do you have?
Teacher on supply ASN Secondary

**Q4** What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
The interaction with young people. Making a positive difference to their lives. The intellectual stimulation. The interaction with and support from colleagues and staff. The self-improvement aspect/cpd.

**Q5** Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I would like to teach until I retire but the Nat 5 in 1 year system means most schools are only giving 6 options at Nat 5 and that has hit my subject, Geography badly. While vacancies are down and some schools are switching to social subject positions, the colleges seem to be putting through the same number of NQTs as before. I am now on supply in sfl as I cannot move as my own kids are settled in their school. I feel the 3 year BGE is a disaster for my own kids and for my own prospects. Scotland used to pride itself for its diverse curriculum. Now each faculty’s brief to teachers is to make BGE fun in order to attract numbers at Nat 5. Continuous assessment has been abandoned due to workload pressure from EIS so young people are subjected instead to massive exam stress in S4. If we don’t go back to 2 years BGE, 2 Nat 5, 1-2 Higher then we'll face a terrible decline in our education for all concerned.

**Q6** What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I would prefer if promoted staff still taught as much as possible. I feel the promotion race often leads to very negative politics and undermines the status of teachers. I don’t feel the salary rise reflects the increase in work or responsibility. It would be better also to return to subject heads as having Geography as a social subject or humanities is inaccurate as at least half of our content is more science.

**Q7** What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)
Clearly there is an undersupply in STEM and computing and an over-supply in Geography, History and Modern Studies. There is unfortunately a high demand to work in East Lothian as it's an easy commute from Edinburgh and a nice place to live. The catch 22 situation for me is that, while there a lots of jobs in other areas, especially the north east, here there are few opportunities to get a position teaching Geography and while I am keen to teach SFL and have 5 years secondary teaching experience overseas, schools seem to look for more experience in a Scottish subject in order to give an SFL position.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

As above

Q9 Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?

Higher salaries or non-financial incentives for computing and technology teachers. More active recruiting into colleges for computing PGDE students. Fewer places for PGDE Geography students, particularly at Strathclyde. Also, more teachers could be retrained across to computing from other subjects as we are all fairly ICT-literate.

Q10 Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?

Not that I am aware.

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)

Some schools have withdrawn Geography. The biggest and most disastrous change is reduction from 8-10 to only 6 choices at NAT 5.

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?

I’ve been at 6 schools in the last 3 years. Where the Head is good and open there seems to be fewer internal problems and discontent. In schools with better-off catchments or better behaviour cultures there is much less stress for teachers. Each faculty is very affected by the personality of the faculty head. It seems that the spirit of the CFE is now widely applied to young people it is not applied to staff relationships which can be very top-down and non-restorative, especially at NQT phase. I’ve had several colleagues going home in tears on a regular basis due to treatment by superiors.

Additional comments

It seems urgent to address these issues before huge and irreversible damage is done to Scottish Education. Private schools can tweak things to teach the same Standard Grade structure of 2-2-2 years stages (eg Heriots) and so maintain the integrity and diversity of their systems. Broad General is becoming a very watered down pool of lost talent in a fight to win numbers at
the end of S3 transition to Nat 5. The moves are clear to merge social subjects into a new single subject. Geography is such a key subject for our future leaders to understand the world in a holistic way and this is likely to be lost or greatly diminished.

The Nationalist slant in textbooks is embarrassing but less concerning than having the National 4 qualification now being read as a “fail”. By most young people and, in all probability, by employers.

The intentions of the CFE are awesome but the reality of society needing certification and therefore exams means that we are sleep-walking into a calamity while everyone clamours about workload and pensions. I believe this has to quickly become the national conversation before too many young people are let down and teachers lost.

ANONYMOUS 8

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
Secondary Special School

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?-
East Ayrshire

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
Raising Attainment
Working with young people
Team working

Q5 Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)
Will teach till retirement

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?
Time away from pupil contact
Paperwork

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)
Needless Paperwork, Behavioural Issues, Pay

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?
Guidance
Q9  Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
   More tester type secondments
   Less red tape
   Increase in pay

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?
   Quite Low- Stress due to needles paperwork
   Lack of time to develop appropriate materials (a constant in special ed)

ANONYMOUS 9

Q1  What type of teaching role do you have?
   I am currently working as an ASL teacher (4 days per week) in a Primary School after 17 years as a class teacher in the same school and 3 years’ supply teaching prior to that.

Q2  Whereabouts do you work?
   Aberdeenshire Council

Q4  What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
   The children, the holidays, the fact that I am always learning.

Q5  Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)
   I am considering leaving early and for alternative employment. I reduced my school working hours two years ago for the reasons outlined here and I already work part time for an educational publishing company.
   Reasons for seeking alternative employment are:
   The lack of coherent and experienced leadership at school level for a number of years which has impacted on staff morale and staff development.
   The development of CfE where schools have had to unpick the curriculum in order to teach it in a coherent process. This has been disheartening when we know that every school/cluster/authority has had to ‘reinvent the wheel’.
   The failure of GIRFEC where we cannot get it right if the environment, staffing and resources are not there or are not managed properly within a school.
   The disregard of managers/authority leaders for teachers’ contractual rights i.e. McCrone or non contact time. This may be outwith their control but even being seen to consider this problem would go some way to helping staff morale.
   The work load of the classroom teacher; the curriculum, social needs, increasing need for parenting roles.
The lack of training and guidance available for new roles e.g. an ASL teacher.
The perception that promoted staff are seemingly using their position as a stepping stone for further promotion and do not seem to really have the interests of the children, school and community they work for at heart.

Q6 What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to head teacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I started the Chartered Teacher route when it first began and reached half way before stopping for financial reasons. I then went to complete it a year later but my Line Manager said it wouldn’t be worth bothering with (perhaps he knew something I didn’t)! Management is not a role I consider to be suitable for me and nothing would encourage me now to seek a senior management post (and I have never applied for one). Senior management posts increasingly appear to be awarded to candidates who can use the correct educational terms and promote themselves during interview but do not have the necessary experience to actually do the job. Learning on the job is of course necessary but not to the extent that experienced class teachers have to be consulted in order for senior management to do their job, or when they are asked a question about the curriculum by a class teacher they have no answer to give.

Q7 What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

Challenges in recruitment - low starting salary, workload is huge for an NQT, training and support is inconsistent and varies from school to school/cluster to cluster/authority to authority. I feel our NQTs do not get the management and guidance they deserve daily which impacts on the pupils; in an ideal world a member of staff could be dedicated solely to this role.

Challenges in retaining - staff morale, poor salary for the responsibility for the job we do, staff not being given chance to undertake development, no individual staff reviews for some years, a management team that appear uninterested in developing staffs’ skills and do not appear to value staff and their experience, a management team that do not acknowledge (or even know about) the amazing learning experiences that go on daily in the classrooms in their school, a management team that allows struggling staff members to struggle on, a management team that allows some staff to get by with little or no effort.

Q8 Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

Can't comment on secondary.

All roles in primary education seem challenged in terms of recruitment and retention; support assistants, primary teachers and specialist teachers. Specialist support has diminished over the years which means pupils are not being taught the necessary skills - a generalist primary teacher cannot teach a subject to the depth and quality that a subject specialist can.
Q9  Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?
Focus on staff morale, pay and conditions.
Increase the team and lessen the load in every school.
Pay supply staff their appropriate level so that we have supply availability again.
Have clear pathways to follow in every authority in order to deal with behaviour as well as additional needs and the diagnosis of additional needs.
Promote experienced teachers to management roles (the senior teacher role used to require 9 years of service I think). Experience counts.

Q10  Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)? If so:
Permanent - We have composite classes - due to our pupil numbers.
Permanent - We have less much support assistant time in the classrooms meaning less practical activities can be done properly, some children do not get the attention and support they need.
Temporary but long term - Some of our DHTs are covering class teacher vacancies or McCrone/non-contact time vacancies and absences (when they can).

Q11  Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)
ASL is important in a primary school. It shouldn't be an optional extra. ASL staff should not be used as supply teachers. Until I became ASL in 2016/17, since December 2013 children with additional support needs in our school were being dealt with sporadically or not at all due to long term staff absence. Certain children's needs were not investigated as they should have been, resulting in frustrated and angry parents, extra pressure for class teachers and children not being helped as they should.
Art, music, drama and P.E. should not be considered extras either. Whilst class teachers do what they can, specialist teachers are far better! Some children thrive on the arts or sport and not in other areas.

Q12  How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?
Very low morale; key factors that influence it being inconsistent, inexperienced and ineffective management, lack of leadership, experience not being seen to be valued, huge workload; if teachers worked the 35 hours they are contracted for, many would be leaving school mid-week with their hours fulfilled
lack of funding for resources; many of us are resourcing our classroom out of our own pockets

the feeling that you can’t get anywhere with a particular child because of the bureaucracy involved and no one at senior level being able to answer your questions,

the feeling that the class teacher is always picked up if they are wrong and rarely praised for the good work they do,

new initiatives being brought in without consultation at school/cluster/authority level and with no real follow through of how they are working,

mixed messages from cluster/authority which differ from Education Scotland advice.

Additional comments

If you have any other comments please include them below:

I think the comments I have made give some indication of the depth of feeling I have for the current state of the teaching workforce. It is sad that so many excellent teachers have decided to retire early or look for alternative employment, yet that is the reality. My views are not in isolation and are evident in conversations in staff rooms and on teaching social media forums. Please take the time to look and ask and listen!

I am aware of the notion that teachers are known to be great at moaning, however I think there are points here to be taken very seriously. Industrial action was taken by teachers in the 1980s when the workload was less than it is now. Should any teaching union request members to work to rule today and keep to the 35 hour working week, the public would notice that our education system would fall apart very quickly. It is run, and has been run, on the goodwill of the workforce for a long time. This goodwill cannot be relied on any more. These issues should be addressed when it is the children and our country's future that is ultimately at stake.

ANONYMOUS 10

Q1 What type of teaching role do you have?
   Primary teacher- ASN School

Q2 Whereabouts do you work?
   North Ayrshire Council

Q4 What are the positives that keep you in the teaching profession?
   Making a difference to the lives of young people.
   Enjoyment of working with young people and variety that each day provides within school.
   Salary.
   Holidays.
Q5  Do you consider that you will teach until you retire or do you consider leaving early or for alternative employment? (If you consider leaving, please specify why if it relates to your enjoyment of your role)

I would love to teach till I retire but I fear the increasing workload and pressure to work hours which are not sustainable will force me to leave. I worry about starting a family and being able to manage teaching full time and the pressures of teaching too.

Q6  What would encourage you to seek promotion to senior management, including to headteacher level? What would discourage you from seeking promotion?

I would be encouraged to seek promotion for increased salary and to take a role which developed my interests. Mandatory additional qualifications would discourage me from applying for promotion. I feel experiences are more important than qualifications.

Q7  What do you think are the main challenges, if any, in recruiting or retaining teachers (and other staff) at your school? (please feel free to provide details of practical experiences)

Lack of consistency with timetable due to staff shortages- teachers losing NCCT regularly and on version 28 of timetable for this session. Teachers unable to plan to meet the needs of the pupils as timetables change so often with very little notice.

Violence and aggression of pupils- staff injured regularly with no appropriate reviews to manage/minimise risks. Incident reports passed to management but not actioned appropriately. Support from SMT has been sought and staff reprimanded for raising issues and not being ‘positive’ or working as a team. Teachers have little or no say on their timetable. Eg. Primary teachers are teaching SQA qualifications with no training or choice in subjects.

Specialist teachers are being used as supply teachers and expected to teach every subject. Eg. Music specialist teaching literacy/maths/all other curricular areas.

Class sizes have increased within the school with more severe needs and behaviour more challenging. Less support staff to support these classes.

Very few staff within school are CAMHS trained and staff who are not available when needed due to class commitments. Radios removed from each classroom and only selected classes can use them but there is no staff available to respond to them if used to seek emergency help.

Eg I have a class of 8 pupils with a variety of ASN needs. There are 2 pupils in the class that have medical needs that at times require emergency first aid. I have been told to send a pupil to another class to seek support if needed or shout for help. Pupils within the class are not always able to respond to emergency situations. There are several pupils in class that have can be violent at times. I regularly have to evacuate class as there is no support assistant timetabled to support the class.
PRD has not been completed for two years as staffing shortages mean these have been cancelled and not rescheduled.

**Q8** Which particular subject specialisms/support roles face the greatest challenges with recruitment or retention?

Classroom assistants do not want to work within our setting as role is much greater than mainstream settings.

**Q9** Do you have any suggestions for how challenges with recruitment and retention might be addressed?

CPD and PRD prioritised within education.

ASN schools treated as an area for greater salary to compensate for increased risks.

**Q10** Have any measures been put in place as a result of changes to staffing numbers in recent years at your school (examples include multi-school headship/leadership teams, composite classes, changes in the use/availability of support assistants)?

If so:

- What are these measures?
- How well are they working?
- Are these changes a permanent or a temporary measure (ie is it covering vacancies at present or is it to reflect the number of teacher/other posts has reduced?)

We had a head teacher appointed 2 years ago as Head teacher of two ASN schools within the authority. This did not work as the candidate did not split the time fairly and was not accountable for his actions. Staff from other school would call to speak to HT as he said he would be based within our school that day but he had told us that he would be at the other school. Our school was left to be run by a Depute Head Teacher that was new to the role and didn’t know her own remit. Lots of job were left not done including submitting SQA results and pupils were left with no qualifications despite completing the work. SMT covered this up and it was reported in local newspaper and staff were blamed even though they didn’t know this was happening. North Ayrshire investigated this and SQA attended school to moderate the units. Head teacher went off long term sickness and an Acting Head Teacher was appointed to our school.

We have larger class sizes as we have had a full-time teacher off sick since last June so the class that they were supposed to have was split up as there was no supply teacher. This has meant that a few classes have maximum of 10 pupils in each class with only one support staff. Some pupils that should have moved to secondary end of school have been forced to stay in primary classes due to class sizes. This was supposed to be a temporary measure but has become long term as absence continues. It is hard to meet the needs of all pupils when there are 10 pupils in a class with very limited access to support staff.
Several teachers have been off sick this session and multiple cover timetables have been put in place to cover classes. This have resulted in teachers losing lots of NCCT and not being able to plan appropriately. Timetable changes have meant that some classes are being left without a teacher and a classroom assistant is left to teach home economics lessons. This was supposed to be a temporary measure but the head teacher has indicated that it is likely to continue next year due to budget cuts and as we have been ‘coping’ with shortages of staff NAC will likely decrease our staffing numbers entitlement next year.

When teaching staff are sick senior classes are put together for large periods of time- 16 pupils within one class with no classroom assistant and 1 teacher (10 maximum class size). The classes have very different levels of needs and it is very difficult to meet the needs or deliver planned curriculum. Some classes are split up at times with a few pupils going to each class if there is no teachers available to cover.

Q11 Are there any subject choices or other opportunities that are not available to pupils as a result of staff shortages that you consider would be valuable? (please specify)
PE- specialist
Technical education

Q12 How would you describe general morale among staff (very good / quite good / quite low / very low) and what are the key factors that influence it?
Morale among staff is very poor within the school. We have all pulled together to ensure we do the best for the pupils that we teach. We continually lose NCCT and have no consistency in what we do as every day we do not know which classes we will teach until we are issued with a cover timetable. We are scared to talk about issues and have no opportunities to openly discuss them as when we do we are reprimanded for not being positive. It is not fair on the pupils that we are teaching and many staff are being pushed to breaking point. There have been several long-term teacher absences this year as well as a few short-term illnesses. There have been numerous (at least 7) classroom assistants leaving our school within the last year and only 2 have been replaced.

ASN TEACHERS GENERAL COMMENTS

ANONYMOUS 11

I have been a teacher since 2002 and have stayed in the same school - a residential school for children with autism. In the time I have been a teacher approximately 20 teachers have come gone from my school alone. There are a range of reasons for people moving on; having to access the same curriculum as mainstream whilst dealing with severely challenging behaviour, limited opportunities to progress, being labelled a 'specialist' and being unable to move to other schools, working out with an authority (isolation, lack of support) and having to create all resources yourself are some of the reasons for people moving on.
Pay is another concern for teachers as the work put in and hours worked are not reflected in pay scales. The expectations for the gtc professional updates are too high on top of the expected workload for teachers. This seems like a tokenistic exercise that no one seems to rally take seriously and hopes are that it will 'fizzle out'.

I was also speaking to a girl who is desperate to get in to teaching. She spoke about the problems that she is finding getting in to a post Grad course - limited places for applicants and interviews that don't give an opportunity to show knowledge and understanding of education.