



NQT Quality improvement study

4.2 Recruitment

The survey did not address recruitment, since this was covered in some depth in the environment map report. The data below is based on the case studies and telephone interviews.

4.2.1 Advertising

Data about how and where schools chose to advertise teaching posts was derived from interviews with SLT members in 250 schools. In general, responses to advertised teaching vacancies varied by where and when the advert is placed. Depending on school's budget, job openings tended to primarily be advertised on the LA job bulletin or via the LA job pool, especially among secondary schools (79 out of 100 secondaries, and three of ten special schools, but only ten of 115 primaries). Among those that mentioned using their LA's website, three were primaries, three secondaries, and one special school; four secondaries and one special school advertised by word of mouth; one primary and one secondary hosted advertisements on their school website. Among other websites used to advertise teaching posts, two Catholic secondaries used the *Catholic Teachers Gazette's* website (e-ctg.co.uk); five primaries and two secondaries used eteach.com; and two further secondaries used jobshop.com.

Where resources allowed, ten primaries, 19 secondaries, four independent and three special schools reported advertising nationally in Times Educational Supplement (TES), and three primaries, four secondaries, four independent, and two special schools used their local newspaper/s.

Data from the 'environment map' survey was similar to the qualitative findings. The 'environment map' reported that SLT respondents most commonly advertise for posts appropriate for NQTs in local authority web sites or bulletins, followed by the TES and local press. Primary and secondary schools have different practices in placing advertisements, as do independent schools and non-independent schools and there are regional differences. The proportions of NQTs using each source differed from the proportions of SLTs advertising in them.

Among the 50 NQTs interviewed as part of the case study element of the research themselves, the majority (43) told us they prefer to use searchable websites when looking for teaching posts to looking at physical newspapers or school bulletins. Whilst most schools seem to prefer the TES, nearly half of the NQTs (20) interviewed in this study told us they prefer the eteach.com site to TES because it allows them to filter out information and specify whether schools takes on NQTs (presumably, the TES website has less functionality). In response to various types of adverts, interviewed NQTs reported that they prefer those that stipulate that the vacancy is open to NQTs, and provide enough information about the school and catchment area.

Whilst all schools agreed that the timing of adverts is crucial, there was no overall agreement on the best time to advertise for September recruitment. For example, around a fifth of the 50 case study school schools (seven primaries and four secondaries) preferred to advertise early in the summer term *"to get the best applicants but not too early because*



NQT Quality improvement study

some NQTs may be still embedded in teaching practice and they may not be looking for jobs” (primary school). A further quarter of case study schools (4 primaries, 7 secondaries, 1 independent, and 1 special school) preferred to advertise in spring term (May) to ensure they are “fairly early in the field.” One headteacher commented:

“All the strong NQTs... get jobs straight away and so we need to be putting adverts out at the beginning of spring in order to get good quality NQTs. If recruitment starts in the summer or autumn term, this has an effect on quality of applicants as the(y) tend to be the ones that have not been successful elsewhere.” (Primary Headteacher).

A smaller number of schools (five secondaries, one primary and one special school) chose to advertise at different times in the year, preferring to wait until they knew the numbers of students on roll, and how many teachers have either handed in their notices for maternity leave, sick leave or have resigned in-year.

Nearly half of the case study schools (three primaries, 10 secondaries, three independent, and two special schools), reported that all advertised teaching posts are permanent unless they have doubts in their NQTs’ teaching capability (a caveat noted by one primary and one secondary school), are uncertain about student numbers (three primaries) or the post is covering a staff on maternity (one primary, four secondaries), sick leave, or sudden teacher resignation/s (three primaries and two secondaries). It is worth noting here that secondary schools were more likely than primary to offer permanent posts as primary school intake varied each year therefore temporary posts more appropriate due to budgets.

4.2.2 Recruitment via ITT providers

A quarter of case study schools (six primaries, ten secondaries, and one independent) reported actively using teaching practice to aid recruitment, particularly if they had difficulties recruiting. Of course this *“does not..... guarantee them a job”* especially when the *“NQTs are in a competitive school and the governors and the school are committed to employing the best candidates for the job.”* (SLT member, primary school)

In addition, a handful of schools (five secondaries and three independent) said they preferred to use their contacts with their local ITT providers to advertise their vacancies (using either the institution’s Blackboard site or bulletin board). A small number of schools involved in this study reported that they preferred to recruit from within their unqualified GTP trainees who have hands-on experience of their school’s specification (three out of the 11 secondaries that mostly recruit from the EBRs). Only one school mentioned the possibility of recruiting from within their temporary or supply teaching workforce.



NQT Quality improvement study

4.2.3 The application process

SLT members from the case study interviews noted that because “*applications ... can all look similar, and it is hard to short-list on a very standard form,*” (Secondary SLT member) some schools (2 primaries and 3 secondaries) look for an application that gives them “*a flavour of ... things the candidates have done (e.g., travelled, have done some school teaching or similar experience*” (Secondary SLT member). For many schools -particularly primaries - interview panels also sought applications that: show evidence of candidate’s passion and interest in teaching (noted by ten primaries, three secondaries, two independent and one special school); refer to the candidate’s academic qualifications by level, subject and grade (six primary schools, two secondaries, one independent).

Prospective employees also looked for application forms that show evidence of candidates’ having worked with children (noted by one primary, one secondary and two special schools) or evidence of having engaged in voluntary work with children (one primary). A primary head teacher noted that:

“We chose someone who can talk about strategies, up-to-date policies, positive behaviour management, and sometimes you get a feel for somebody about whether they are going to respect children/ how they are going to interact, if they can talk about experiences with children- we often ask that, them mentioning their enthusiasm, and wish to work with children.” (Headteacher, primary)

SLT members were often attracted to someone or something different in applications, and some indication that applicants have thought about how they can impact on the school. As one primary headteacher noted:

“We don’t like applications that use the phrase ‘I have.’ We are more interested in what they are going to do- not what they have done. Have they looked at the school information and can they suggest how they can help. We want people who are looking forward rather than back. We are also put off by people who think that that have nothing to learn and feel that they are doing the school a favour by applying...” (Headteacher, primary)

Supporting information in the form of references from placement mentors were considered crucial to NQTs’ job application for a significant minority of our case study schools (six primaries, six secondaries, one independent, and two special schools); however ITT providers’ references are not considered reliable, being either too generic or too positive (two special schools, Four primary and one secondary). Elaborating on this, one headteacher explained: “*They (the ITT providers) may not know them (trainees) well enough,*” or as another deputy headteacher (primary) explained, they are “*Too positive and don’t give a picture of the full person.*” However, as one headteacher noted, “*Occasionally, they (ITT references) might help to filter out someone who would be completely unacceptable*” (Headteacher, primary).



NQT Quality improvement study

4.2.4 The interview day process

Job interview panels usually involved the headteacher and deputy head and sometimes a head of department and/or a senior member of teaching staff. This was consistent amongst both primary and secondary schools. On the interview day, almost all case study schools (47) stated they offer their candidates a tour of the grounds and the opportunity to meet the student council, and/or chat with other members of staff and pupils. Candidates for primary posts typically sit through a rigorous one-day assessment process that can involve some or all of the following: presenting a topic of their choice; teaching a short lesson to a group of pupils (either in their placement school or their prospective school) (19 primaries and 21 secondary schools).

Schools expected their successful candidate to have reflected on the components of the lesson and not, as one headteacher said, “*just say it was a good lesson because at the end of it everyone went away happy or whatever.*” They expected them to “*dissect it (the observed lesson) and say why it turned out like that*” (Secondary SLT member). The importance given to the lesson in the overall interview process depended on the school’s philosophy and whether the candidate was known to the school prior to the interview day. Three schools (two secondaries and one primary) reported that they are happy to offer the post to someone who has taught a good lesson rather than to someone who did an average interview and vice versa. Four schools (two secondaries, one primary and one independent) based their decision on a balance of teaching and the interview.

Unlike other types of schools, the four special schools in this study do not require their candidates to teach a lesson on the interview day. Instead, they may be asked to respond to a short written task (two special schools) or sit through a long interview that is scenario based (one primary and two special schools).

Among the factors highlighted by SLT members as constituting a successful interview were evidence of candidate’s: good subject knowledge (noted by ten secondaries and five primaries); confidence; communication skills; enthusiasm for the catchment area; understanding of the demands of the post; ability to build some connection with students (two secondaries, four special schools, and ten primaries noted this); genuine interest in developing their career as a teacher; and desire to work in the school. Schools prefer someone with a degree of professionalism, and commitment; with a range of skills, flexible, ambition and that are receptive to advice but also have some ideas of their own and is willing to lead.

4.2.5 Difficulties

Our telephone and case study visits appear to show that, unsurprisingly, special schools struggle the most to find suitable teachers who have adequate understanding and training in teaching children with moderate to significant learning difficulties. Headteachers of special schools believe this is down to ITT providers concentrating their bulk of their training on mainstream teaching and learning.

Our data also shows despite large number of applicants applying to teaching posts in secondary schools across the country, many secondary schools seem to continue to



NQT Quality improvement study

encounter some difficulties in recruiting suitable subject specialists in English (six secondaries), sciences (13 secondaries and four independent), mathematics (13 secondaries and two independent), D&T (six secondaries and one independent), ICT (four secondaries), humanities (one secondary), MFL (eight secondaries and one independent), RE (three secondaries), and geography (one secondary). Despite this, “rarely,” claimed one headteacher, do schools “*take on just anyone*” (Headteacher, secondary). They prefer to generally adopt the attitude that “*nobody’s better than [just] somebody*” (Secondary SLT member).

From the perspective of NQTs, difficulties in securing teaching posts were mostly related to their lack of teaching experience. Many NQTs (40) in this study claimed they had felt concerned about the prospect of ever finding a teaching post. Other concerns highlighted were: the prospect of applying against colleagues from their ITT course; the fact that the emphasis on the interview day meant that it “*was just a matter of how you performed on the day.*”

4.2.6 Summary

- Timing of recruitment is important; for September starts some preferred to recruit in the spring term, while others preferred to wait until early summer when all candidates will have completed placements. Secondary schools were more likely than primary schools to offer NQTs a permanent contract in the first instance.
- In line with findings from the environment map survey, when schools place advertisements they are more likely to use the internet and, when looking for vacancies, trainees are even more likely to look online (e.g. far more NQTs prefer to use e-teach compared with the number of schools that use it). LA job bulletins, the LA pool and local press, as well as hardcopy advertisements in the TES, are still used widely.
- Schools overwhelmingly give preference to application forms written to the job specification, with personal accounts of experience, interest, future plans. They prefer to interview applicants who come across as enthusiastic, passionate (especially among primary candidates), and have a breadth of experience and interest in other extra curricular activities. Negative factors seem to include changing jobs regularly, an inability to sell themselves, and low standards of literacy which is consistent with the 'environment map' survey findings.
- According to our data, the selection event generally consisted of a tour of the school and teaching a lesson as well as an interview and sometimes presentation, with the event usually lasting a full school day. The interview process is reported by NQTs to be fairly rigorous. The interviewers look for evidence of ability to differentiate, creative teaching and behaviour management techniques. Many NQTs reported being surprised at how many applications they had to make to secure their first teaching post, suggesting that overall there is no shortage of trained teachers beyond specific subject and geographic areas or NQTs are concentrating their efforts on a limited number of schools.