

The MTPT Project Coaching Impact Report

August 2025



Women aged 30–39 remain the largest group leaving the teaching profession, with 8,438 departures in 2024 (20.5% of all leavers). While this reflects ongoing challenges for mothers balancing teaching and family life, it is a notable improvement from 27% attrition in 2017. Female teachers in this age group now comprise a third of the workforce, and with 67% of them being mothers, supporting their retention is critical.

Reports from the Teaching Commission and Public Accounts Committee underline the need for improved parental leave, flexible working, and return-to-work support to reduce the gender pay gap and sustain career progression for mothers.

The MTPT Project's 1:1 coaching programmes, offered since 2019, have demonstrated positive impacts on teacher wellbeing, retention, and occupational mobility during parental transitions.

Survey data show 71% of participants were still in the state sector 3–4 years post-maternity leave, outperforming the national retention rate of 61.3%.

Coaching also boosted promotions and salary increases, helping to address gender pay gaps that widen after teachers become parents.

However, persistent barriers around flexibility and school culture mean some participants used coaching to exit teaching for family-friendly roles elsewhere.

The MTPT Project recommends embedding parental transition coaching nationally to retain diverse talent, support women's progression into leadership, and reduce the long-term attrition of mothers in teaching.



Executive Summary



The MTPT Project's *2025 Coaching Impact Survey* evaluates the effectiveness of The MTPT Project's 1:1 coaching programmes in supporting teachers during parental leave and their return-to-work period. This work is set against a backdrop of high attrition rates among women aged 30-39, who continue to represent the largest demographic leaving the teaching profession—primarily due to the challenges of balancing motherhood and teaching.

Key findings from the survey highlight the positive impact of coaching on teacher retention, wellbeing, occupational mobility for mothers and post-maternity leave working patterns.

Consistently positive intersectional impacts are also seen, with over-representation of participants from Black and Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, suggesting potential of the coaching programmes to retain diverse talent in the workforce.

However, the survey also revealed that when flexible working and supportive school cultures were absent, coaching empowered participants to leave teaching for roles better aligned with family life and wellbeing needs.

“The coaching gave me confidence with a new identity as a working mum, to be assertive, to make time for myself (guilt free) and not feel like I should turn down work opportunities just because I am a mum. It is hard to navigate through and is not always easy spinning so many plates, but I think it would be harder had I not had the coaching. The tools it gave me, and having someone who listened without judgement was invaluable.”

Trust-Wide Subject Consultant, London



Key Findings

Retention

There is good evidence to suggest that 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project **retains** teachers within the profession in the three years following maternity leave.

- 71% of MTPT coaching participants were retained in the state school sector 3-4 years post-maternity leave in comparison to 61.3% of maternity returners, nationally
- Medium-term retention amongst MTPT coaching samples remains consistently above the national average across our 2023 and 2025 reports

Wellbeing

1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project has a significantly positive impact on participant **wellbeing**:

- 41 out of 43 respondents said that MTPT coaching 'helped' or 'helped a lot' with their wellbeing over the parental leave, or return-to-work period.

Occupational Mobility

Taking part in 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project significantly boosts **occupational mobility** for mothers three years following maternity:

- 65% of respondents experienced some form of upgraded occupational mobility, in comparison to 13% of mothers in all industries (Harkness et al., 2019)
- For those who remained in the profession, 53% experienced some form of upgraded occupational mobility
- Remaining at the same employer within the education sector was more likely to result in upward occupational mobility in comparison to moving to a new employing school / MAT



Working Pattern

The majority (76%) of coaching participants changed their working hours in some way in the three years since beginning their 1:1 coaching, including nearly two thirds (63%) of those who remained in the profession.

The desire for greater flexibility than is offered by the teaching profession is still associated with attrition amongst MTPT coaching participants.

There was greater variety in the *type* of flexible working accessed by those who left the profession, including moving into full-time roles with greater flexibility, moving from career-breaks into part-time working outside teaching, and moving into supply work.

“It helped me realise the type of leader that I wanted to be if I were to lead, and the importance of having a leader I believed in. Being able to focus on the areas of education that are most important to me brings me a huge amount of happiness in my day-to-day role.”

English Intervention and Impact Lead, South East



Recommendations



Data from respondents who began their 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project in 2021-22 suggest that:

Parental transition coaching is a positive tool for mother-teachers.

It can **boost retention** in the 3-4 years following maternity leave.

It has a positive intersectional impact, retaining **ethnically diverse talent** within the workforce.

It should be adopted nationally to improve **teacher wellbeing** over the first five years – to include parental leave and the return-to-work period.

It should be used as a way of **supporting women's progression**, increasing the representation of women at leadership level, and closing the gender pay gap.

It should be used to support mothers to understand **how to work part-time and flexibly** in a way that feels fulfilling and enables them to remain in the profession.

It should be **funded by regional partners** to facilitate retention across geographical locations when mothers relocate and to release mothers from obligations associated with a toxic school culture.

Parental transition coaching is a positive tool for retention and progression at school level *especially when* other supportive organisational factors are embedded.

Schools and Trusts should invest in and signpost parental transition coaching for their staff *before* the commencement of parental leave.

Line managers should receive specific training to support colleagues throughout the expectancy, leave and return-to-work period to maintain their intention to remain in the profession.

Schools should continue to embed flexible and part-time working practices as appropriate to their settings, and greater variety and creativity should be applied to our use of flexible working as a retention measure.

More data is needed to better understand the impact of parental transition coaching on teacher retention.



The government should publish maternity attrition figures as part of the School Workforce Census, or a separate annual or bi-annual report.

Further research should be conducted exploring the impact of a period of parental leave on the occupational mobility of teachers and school staff.

Further research should be conducted to better understand how to support retention within the profession, and mothers' career progression when they relocate.

"I still refer to my notes from the coaching session; I still work on my targets and think like a coach when I am struggling or reacting to a situation. It's really improved my relationships with staff to this day and in my personal life."

Secondary History Lead Practitioner, London



Introduction

Workforce Statistics

Women aged 30-39 remain the largest demographic to leave teaching every year: in 2024, 8,438 women in this age bracket left, making up 20.5% of total leavers (School Workforce Census, 2025). The MTPT Project and New Britain Project's 2025 Missing Mothers report emphasised once again that too many of these colleagues are leaving because motherhood is incompatible with teaching.

However, there is reason for optimism here: this attrition figure is down from 27% in 2017 to 20.5% in 2024, and from 9,147 women in 2023 to 8,438 in 2024. And female teachers in this same age bracket now make up a *third* of our workforce. 67% of female teachers aged 30-39 are mothers, rising to 77% in the 40-49 age bracket (NFER, 2024).

The importance of improving conditions such as parental leave and pay, building a culture of flexible working, and supporting colleagues during the first year of their return to work has also been highlighted by the Teaching Commission (Teaching Commission, 2025) and the Public Accounts Committee (House of Commons, 2025).

We may now be seeing the positive impact of these changes: the evolving educational landscape, the support of The MTPT Project and related organisations are transforming teaching into a sustainable career choice for mothers.

The MTPT Project's Coaching Programmes

Since 2019, The MTPT Project has offered a number of 1:1 and group coaching programmes for teachers during the parental leave and immediate and extended return-to-work period. The 1:1 programmes offer participants between 4 to 6 coaching sessions with a qualified and experienced MTPT coach, external to their organisation.

In 2023, we completed our first Coaching Impact Survey to measure the impact of our 1:1 Accreditation and Parental Leave coaching programmes on participant wellbeing, occupational mobility and retention, particularly within the 30-39 demographic.

This report found that coaching over the maternity and return-to-work period has an overall positive impact on teacher wellbeing and occupational mobility in the medium term. (MTPT, 2023)



This positive occupational mobility includes both formal promotions, and salary increases, which could potentially have a positive impact on the overall gender pay gap in education.

A definitive figure for this gender pay gap is difficult to pinpoint, as it varies significantly depending on the data source, phase, setting and level of seniority.

A 2023 BBC article citing the Gender Pay Gap Service, for example, put this gap at 20.4% (BBC, 2023). 2024 data from the School Workforce Census, however, puts this at 14% in primary, and 6% in secondary, in favour of men (DfE, 2024.a). For some multi-academy trusts, however, gender pay gaps can be as high as 40-50% (Cumiskey, 2024)

This pay gap is slight amongst classroom teachers, but increases after seven years' experience, corresponding with the late twenties / early thirties point at which teachers are likely to become parents. Amongst part-time class teachers at both primary and secondary level, there is a slight gender pay gap in favour of women.

A more significant gap occurs at leadership level, again with this split occurring – and increasing – after 6-7 years' experience. This suggests that classroom teaching is more compatible with motherhood, in comparison to leadership where women and mothers still appear to face barriers. (DfE, 2024.a)

As most of this gender pay gap can be traced to child penalties (IFS, 2022.a), there is therefore good evidence that maternity coaching can be used as a tool to reduce the gender pay gap in education.

Data exclusive to this report reveals that the teaching profession has a 30.5% maternity attrition rate over a three-year period. This rises to 38.7% four years after the return-to-work period. Of the 10,411 teachers who took a period of maternity leave in 2018-19, 4,029 were lost from the profession by September 2020 (FOI, 2025).

We recommend that this attrition rate is tracked and published on an annual basis to better understand retention associated with maternity leave.

One trend found in our 2023 Coaching Impact Survey was that coaching empowered participants to decide on the working conditions they needed after becoming mothers. In several cases, MTPT coaching resulted in positive outcomes to flexible working requests – a factor that The Key Group have recently found to be essential to post-maternity retention (The Key, 2025).



However, the lack of appropriate flexibility within school roles still presents a barrier to colleagues remaining in the profession. When flexibility, positive school cultures, or progression opportunities were not available, coaching in fact helped our participants to leave the profession entirely and move into more family-friendly and fulfilling employment.

2025 Reporting Sample

Between 2021 and 2022 72 participants began 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project: 71 mothers, and 1 father. Around half of these participants were funded by the DfE Equality and Diversity fund, their employing school or MAT, a subject-specific sponsor, or their union. The remaining half benefited from pro bono coaching capacity within The MTPT Project coaching team.

43 of these participants completed the 2025 Impact Survey, a return rate of 61%.

“It has had a huge impact. It gave me the confidence to pursue CPD which has really enhanced my skills and networks, and it provided an incredibly supportive and friendly ear when I was struggling a lot in my first term in my new role. I’m a really passionate advocate for The MTPT Project. My family now have the life I wanted. I feel enormously lucky. The confidence this network gave me to pursue promotion, and survive the first year and beyond, played a very significant part in all this.”

Assistant Head (Director of Sixth Form), North West

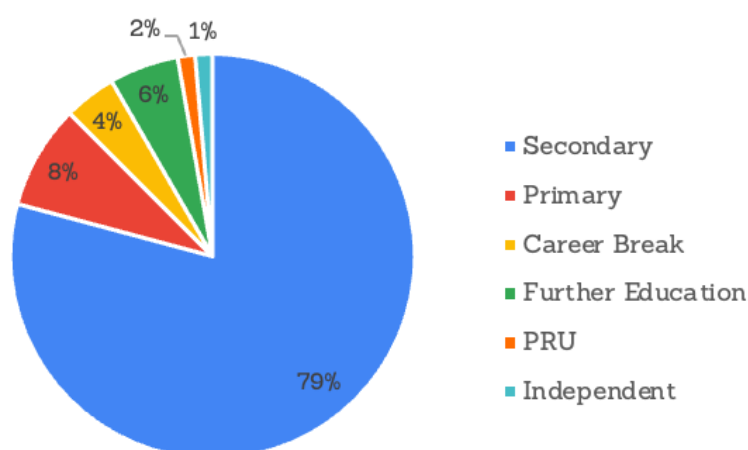


Key Characteristics of Coaching Participants



In this first section of the report, we outline the key characteristics of the 72¹ participants who began coaching in 2021-22.

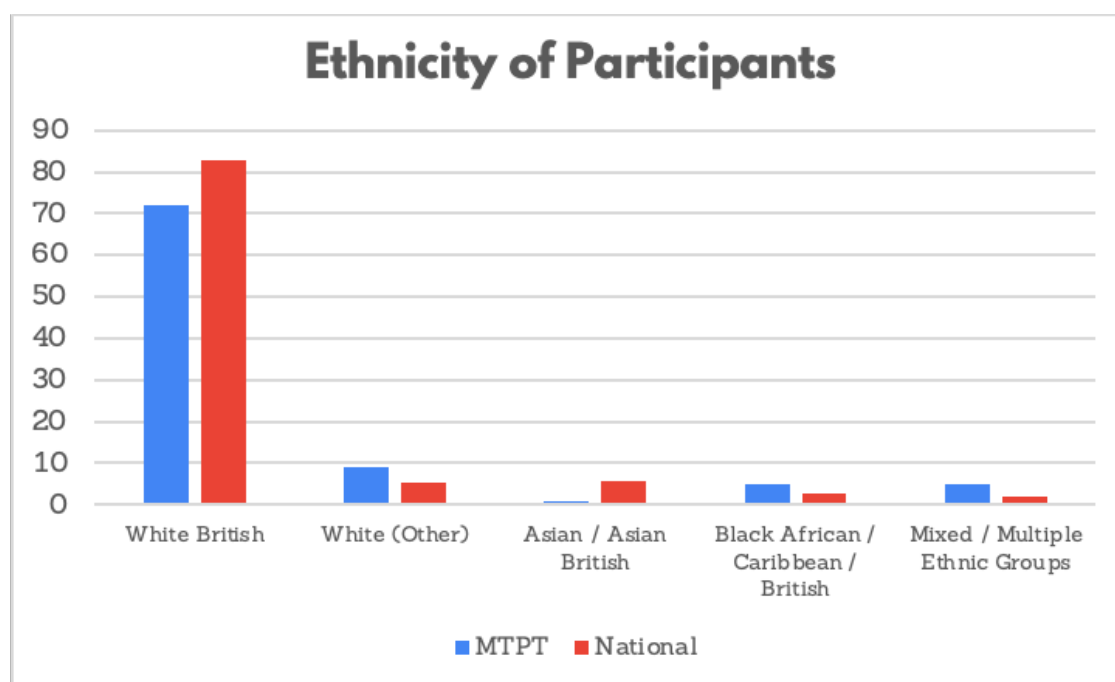
Participant School Phase / Type



Once again, we see that the demand for coaching comes primarily from colleagues working in secondary schools. There has been a reduction in primary participant engagement from 17% in our previous report, to 8% in this sample.

Given that the percentage of female colleagues working in primary settings is higher than at secondary level, this low engagement with our programmes is worthy of further exploration.

The over-representation of colleagues from Black and Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups in comparison to School Workforce Census statistics indicates that MTPT coaching can have a positive intersectional impact.



¹ Improvements in our tracking of identity characteristics now means that we can report on the whole sample size, rather than being restricted to the survey respondents as we were in our 2023 report.



These positive figures (in comparison to national workforce statistics) were reported on in our 2024 Diversity and Inclusion report (MTPT, 2024). It is The MTPT Project's aim, however, that the ethnicity of participants on our programmes is representative of the *student* population, rather than the teaching workforce.

For the period 2021-22, therefore, our participant target was 27% representation from Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage backgrounds. We are getting close to this target at 21%, but there is a notable lack of engagement with our 1:1 coaching programmes amongst Asian colleagues.

“Coaching was invaluable in reducing my anxiety around returning to work post maternity leave. Moreover it has given me more confidence long term in terms of evaluating what is important to me and negotiating my worth-this perspective and renewed confidence will have a long term impact on my career.”

Secondary Assistant Head, South West



Impact of 1:1 Coaching with The MTPT Project



In this second section of the report, we explore the impact of 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project against four key measurables:

- Wellbeing
- Occupational mobility (progression, promotion and salary)
- Flexible working
- Retention

Wellbeing

Poor wellbeing is a common push factor for teachers in all demographics to leave the profession, and women aged 30-39 are not immune to this trend. 57% of female teachers aged 30-39 that leave the profession do so because of poor mental health or wellbeing, and just 27% of those who left were satisfied with the support offered to them by their school over the maternity transition period (Missing Mothers, 2024).

Even when mothers remain in the profession, only 38% are satisfied with their maternity transition support, and just 4% state that *positive* mental health or wellbeing encourages them to remain in the profession (MTPT, 2021).

In comparison, the positive impact of coaching on mothers' wellbeing is undeniable: **41 out of 43 respondents** said that MTPT coaching had 'helped' or 'helped a lot' with their wellbeing over the parental leave or return-to-work period. **42 participants** (98%) said that they would recommend the coaching to a colleague.

Comments regarding mental health and wellbeing shared by survey respondents included a focus on:

- Confidence over the return-to-work period
- Managing transitions at work
- Achieving a sense of balance
- Better understanding their own values and priorities
- The ability to dedicate time and energy to family life
- A sense of growth, empowerment and clarity

It is important to note that there is *not* necessarily a correlation between positive wellbeing and retention. In fact, of those



participants who said that MTPT coaching had a positive impact on their wellbeing, only 56% were still working in a state school setting in 2025. In some cases, participants realised – thanks to the coaching process – that *leaving* state school education would be the best thing for their wellbeing.

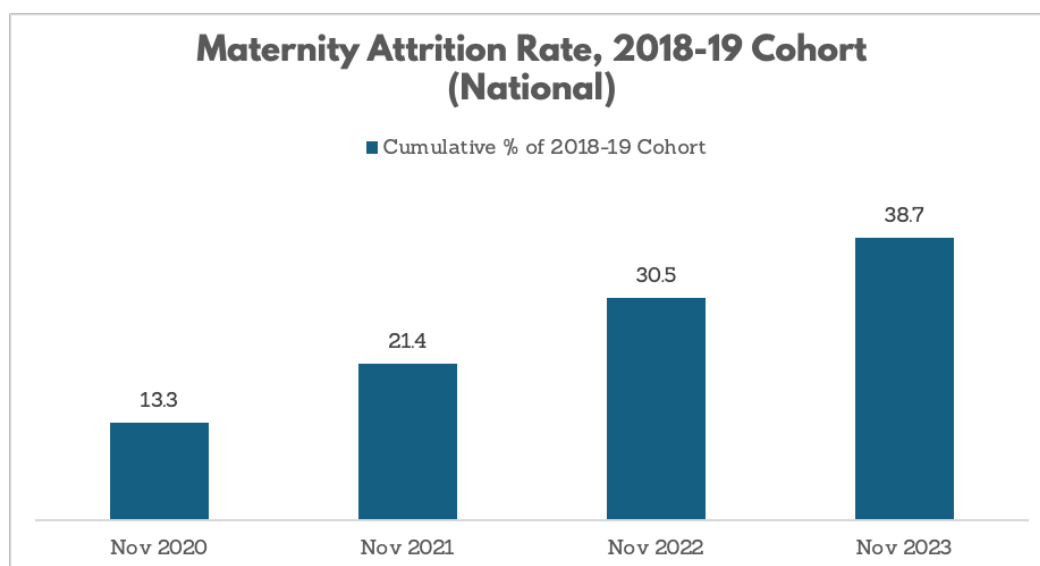
“Coaching enabled me to reflect on my strengths and be confident in my own abilities. It also helped me to define my priorities and boundaries as a new parent and teacher. This greatly impacted my wellbeing as a new mum. I was able to talk to my coach openly and discuss even basic issues such as daily routines, in addition to professional goals, which assisted a smooth transition to work, reduced stress and improved my emotional wellbeing.”

Primary Senior Leader, London



Retention

Data exclusive to this report shows that 38.7% of maternity returners leave the profession in the four years following their maternity leave. For the 2018-19 maternity cohort, this represents a loss of 4,029 teachers from the profession over a four-year period.



For the 2018-19 cohort, this attrition was most intense in the first year of the return-to-work (13.3%). A slight increase in attrition was then seen between the second and third year after maternity leave (FOI, 2025).

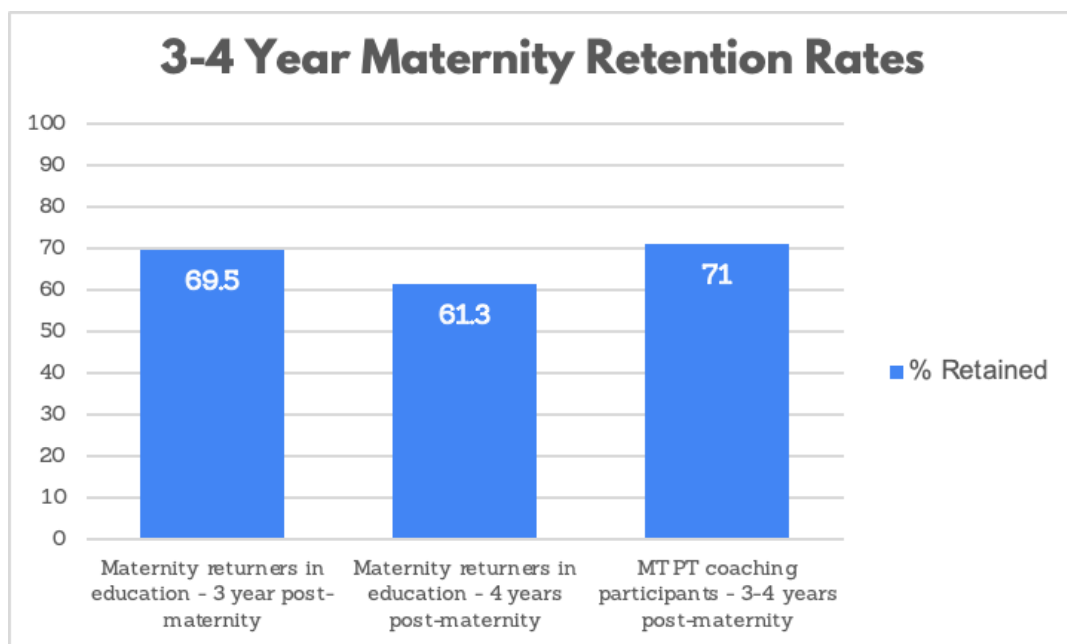
In comparison to other public sector industries, the attrition rate of 13.3% within the first year is similar to the 13.5% seen in the armed forces (MoD, 2022), but the 21.4% cumulative attrition rate over two years is significantly higher than seen in the NHS, where the two-year retention rate stands at 90%. (IFS, 2022.b)

Going forwards, we recommend that the maternity attrition rate is tracked and published on an annual basis to better understand retention associated with maternity leave.

This tracking would enable us to to account for the potential impact and consequences of COVID and lockdowns felt between 2020-2022, and to compare with the attrition rates of other demographics.

When starting their coaching in 2021-22, 35 of our 43 respondents were employed by a state school and were on maternity leave, or had returned to work in the last year. 71% of these 35 participants were still working in the state system in 2025.





It is encouraging that this 71% is higher than the 61.3% national retention rate four years following maternity leave, even if the sample size is small. In our 2023 Coaching Impact Report, this retention rate amongst MTPT coaching participants was 77%.

The consistency of these higher-than-average retention rates suggests that national access to coaching support over the extended return-to-work period could act as a retention measure for mother-teachers.

Even though 29% of our MTPT coaching participants sampled in this report did eventually leave state school teaching after a 3-4 year period, none expressed an intention to leave the profession when they initially signed up for coaching.

This echoes findings from Edurio showing that parents are slightly *less* likely to consider resigning than non-parents, and much lower for expectant parents (Edurio, 2025).

Indeed, the motivation for seeking coaching from both those who were retained by 2025, and those who left, were similar:

- Balancing career progression and parenting responsibility following leave
- Navigating the confidence gap and identity change as a professional parent
- Support with anxiety associated with the return-to-work period



- Strategies to balance parenting and work, including leadership roles
- Commitment to personal and professional growth

The only outlying theme for those who eventually left in the profession by 2025 was the desire during, and shortly following the parental leave period, for part-time roles, job-shares, flexible working and flexibility within school cultures.

This is consistent with findings from the DfE's *Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders* survey where over a third of leavers were working in roles offering part-time and flexible hours, where they had previously worked full-time in schools (DfE, 2024.b).

Indeed, 35% of respondents in this (MTPT) report stated that the need for more effective working practices was one of the reasons that they went on to exit the profession.

Four other factors were also cited as significant push factors amongst those participants who had left the profession by 2025:

- Desire for better work-life balance and wellbeing
- Values misalignment or disenchantment with the sector
- Geographical relocations, including moving abroad
- Career advancement in other industries

However, as we see later in this report, respondents are not necessarily seeking these criteria in non-education industries.

“I needed flexibility and coaching helped me to realise that other working patterns / options were available. I realised my workplace was not offering the flexibility I needed to manage work and childcare.”

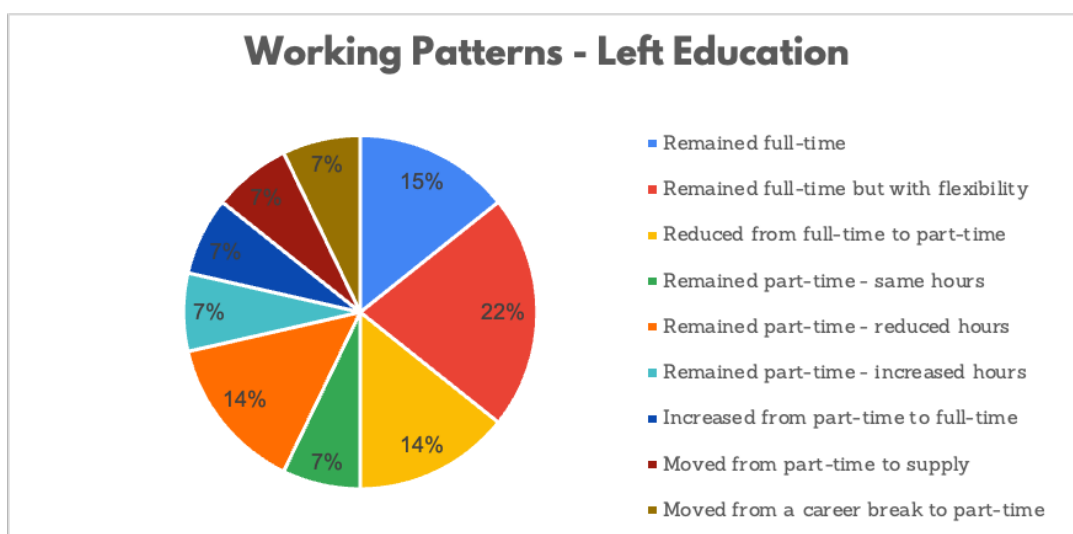
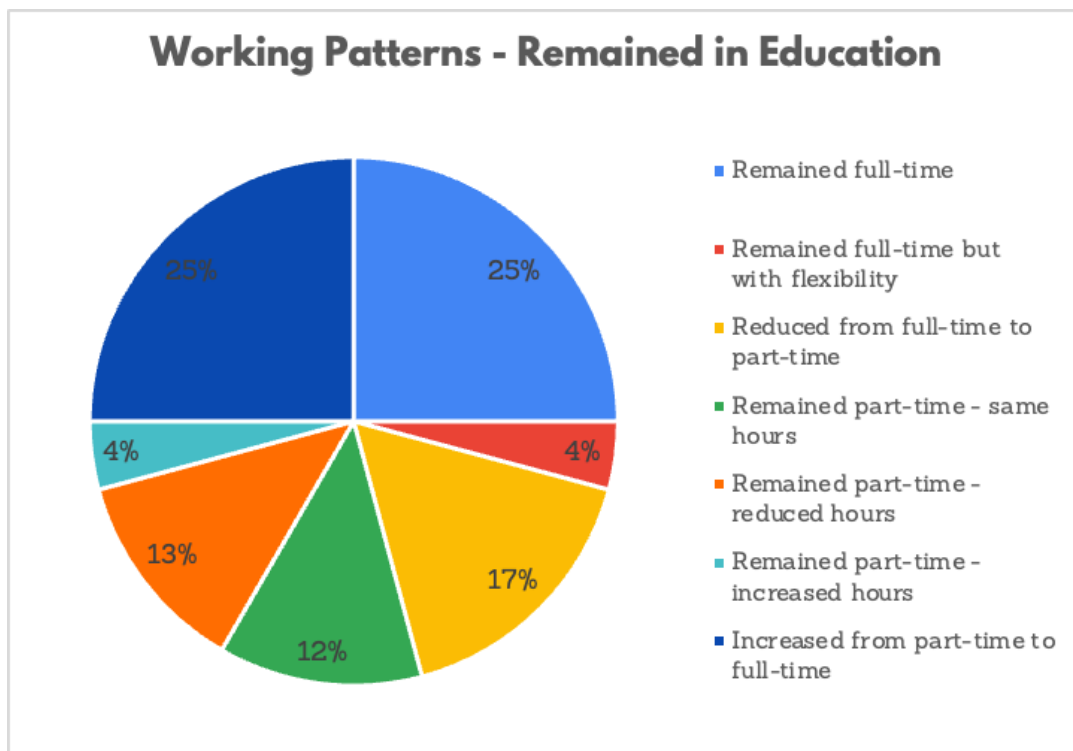
ITT Assessor (Former Secondary Teaching and Learning Lead), London



Working Pattern

68% of total respondents changed their working hours in some way after beginning their 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project, and two thirds said that MTPT coaching 'helped' or 'helped a lot' to sustain their working pattern or adjust to new working pattern.

A change in working hours was more prevalent for those leaving the sector (76%) than those remaining in the sector (57%). For leavers, the *type* of change was also more varied than for those who remained.



There was no clear trend regarding the change in working pattern and whether participants began their coaching on / following their first, second or third parental leave.

Just over half (54%) of the 26 participants working in state schools in 2025 said that MTPT coaching 'helped' or 'helped a lot' to sustain their current hours, or secure a new working pattern. This 54% is lower than the impact that respondents felt that the coaching had on their wellbeing and occupational mobility, which could suggest that the availability of suitable flexibility still feels like an aspect of the profession that is beyond individuals' control.

Whether participants remained in, or left the profession, a change to working hours was often associated with a better sense of work-life balance.

However, those who remained in the profession reported facing workload and financial challenges when working part-time, and four participants (15%) sacrificed aspects of leadership when securing new working hours.

"I had the confidence to ask my new employer to work 4.5 days a week so I could collect my son from school once a week. Although I have now returned to full time, it was through the coaching and flexible working workshops I felt confident to ask."

Secondary English Teacher, London



Occupational Mobility

Nationally, 13% of mothers 'upgrade' their occupational status and move up the career ladder 3-5 years following childbirth, whereas 18% 'downgrade'. In the same period, 26% of fathers upgrade, and 18% downgrade their occupational status.

When mothers move employer, 32% upgrade and 21% downgrade, in comparison to 40% of fathers who upgrade their occupational status when moving employer, and 23% who downgrade (Harkness et al., 2019).

Figures from The Key Group's *What happens to teachers after maternity leave?* potentially indicate that maternity leave negatively impacts teachers' occupational mobility. In this report, resignation rates were lowest amongst the maternity sample. This is most notable when compared with the 44% of male teachers resigning from their employing school over a four-year period.

This "leaving" rate does not mean that teachers in this sample have left the profession entirely. Rather, it could suggest other groups are enjoying greater freedom of movement to new schools (including to take up promoted positions) than their post-maternity leave counterparts.

As we do not have data regarding maternity-related occupational mobility in the teaching profession, we recommend that further research is done to better understand the impact of maternity leave on women's occupational pathways in the teaching profession.

As we saw in our 2023 report, 1:1 coaching with The MTPT Project has a significant positive impact on mothers' occupational mobility in comparison to the national trends that are available (across all industries).

In total, 86% of respondents experienced some form of occupational mobility within and outside state school teaching in the 3-4 years after beginning coaching. This mobility includes:

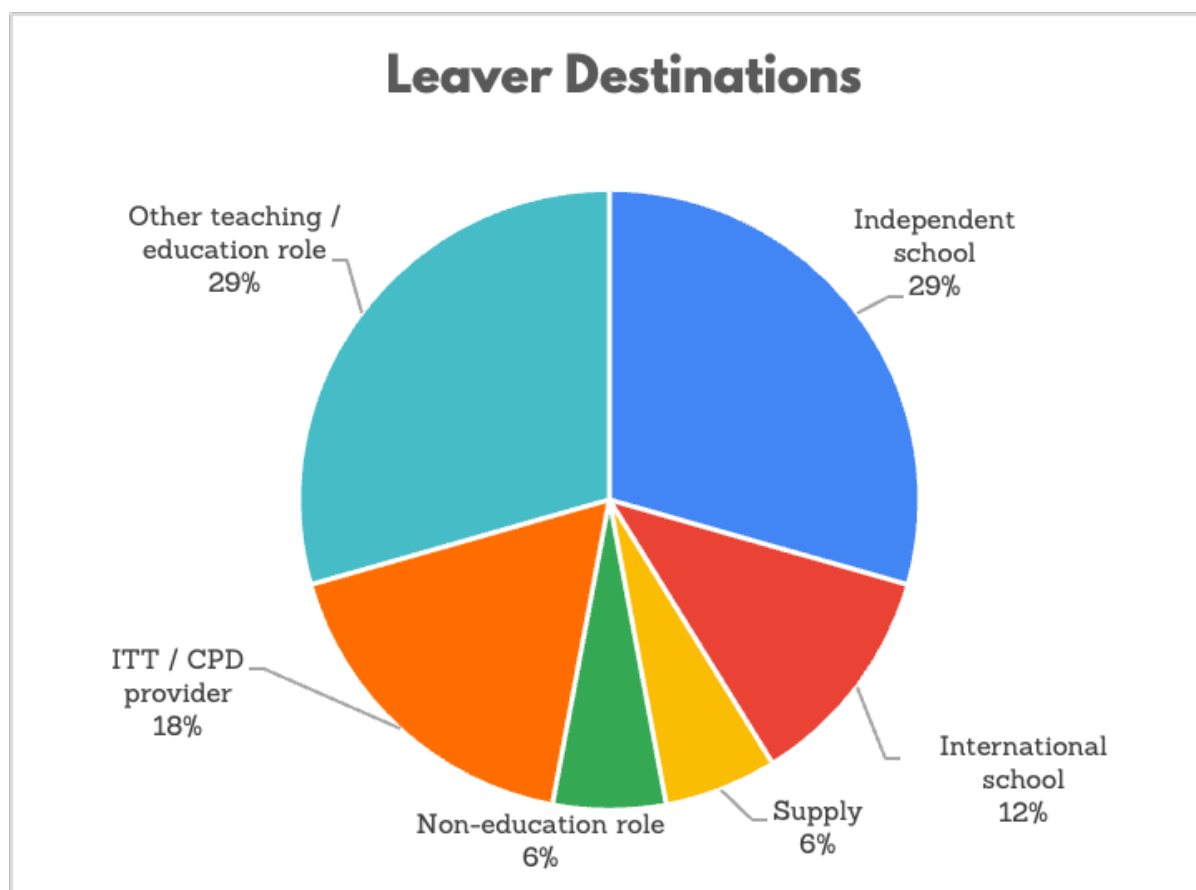
- A formal promotion within their employing school, at a new school, or outside the state education sector
- A move to a new school or employer – involving an increase, decrease or no change to salary
- A salary increase within, or outside of the education sector

There was a much higher rate of movement to a new employer within our sample (68%) than the national average for all industries (25%) in the three



years following a return from maternity leave. This included moving to a new employer outside of the state school education sector.

However, respondents are overwhelmingly leaving to continue to work in education in some form: 16 of the 17 respondents who left the profession in the three years after starting their 1:1 coaching were still working in an educational role by 2025, just not in the state sector.



2

44% of total respondents secured a salary increase over the 3-4 year period, including 39% who increased their salaries whilst working in a state school. This is a much lower percentage than seen in our 2023 report, where 69% of total participants received a salary increase.

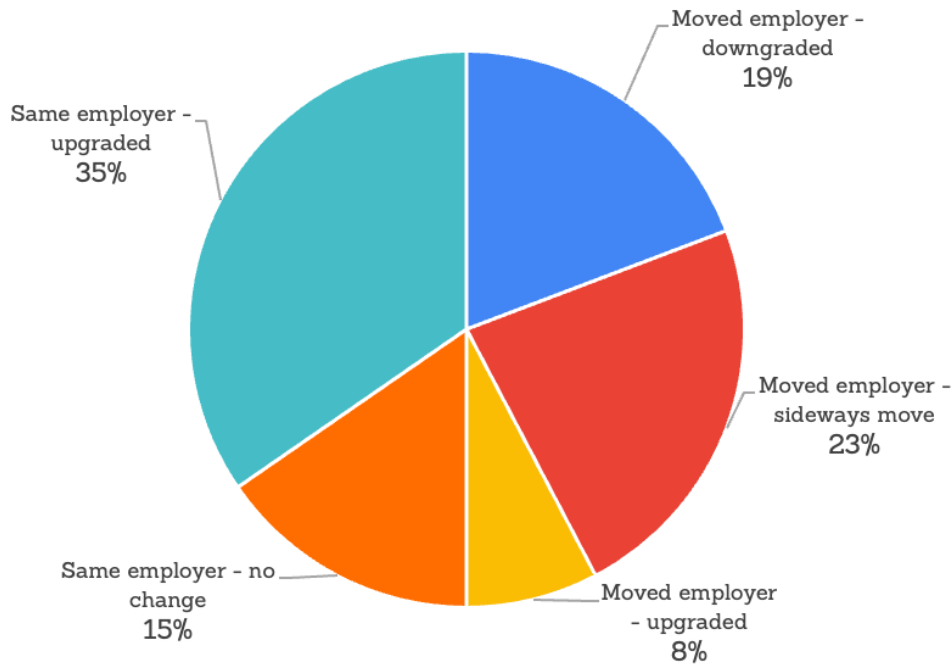
Occupational mobility for the respondents who had remained in state school teaching was mostly positive with more than half (53%) of those who remained in the profession securing a promotion or increase in pay.

79% of respondents who had experienced this occupational upgrading within education said that MTPT coaching had 'helped' or 'helped a lot' with their progression.

² "Other teaching / education role" includes tutoring, online education organisations, home educating networks, or educational charities



Occupational Mobility - MTPT Coaching Participants (remained in state school education)



In the graphs above, we can see a clear difference between the pathways of respondents who remained at their employing school, and those who moved schools.

Half of respondents who began their coaching in 2021-22 had moved schools by 2025 with just 8% of these movers upgrading their employment status. This is lower than seen in our previous report, where 60% of respondents had moved schools within the 3-5 years following the start of their coaching and 47% upgraded their employment status when doing so.

Nationally, mothers who move employers are more likely to upgrade their occupational mobility (32% vs 8% in our MTPT sample) *but also* more likely to downgrade (21% vs 19% in our MTPT sample).

For the 15 respondents who moved schools, the primary motivators were a geographical relocation, the need to escape an unhappy school or the desire for change or progression.

The mothers who accepted occupational downgrades did so because of a relocation, or to move to a school with a more sustainable, values-aligned culture. Interestingly, respondents did *not* say that they sacrificed their level of responsibility when moving schools to secure part-time or flexible working.



Instances of upgraded occupational mobility **when remaining with the same employer** were far higher for our respondents in comparison to national figures. Of the respondents who remained in the profession, 35% stayed with their pre-leave employing school *and* secured a salary increase or promotion, in comparison to 8.5% of mothers in all industries.

Three quarters of the respondents who remained and experienced upgraded occupational mobility within their pre-leave employing school said that MTPT coaching 'helped' or 'helped a lot' with this progression.

In total, six colleagues relocated in the three years since starting their 1:1 coaching (14%), and a third remained in the profession, in comparison to three quarters of respondents who relocated in our 2023 report and also remained in the profession.

"I have changed Trust and been promoted to Deputy Head of school at an alternative provision – a new sector for me. I now work more locally to home and have a much better work life balance in a school with a not-for-profit nursery."

Deputy Head of School (Secondary PRU), London



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