

Staffing Secondary Schools in the Nineties



Research Report Summary



Staffing Secondary Schools in the Nineties

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Foreword

Because of our continuing concern about staffing shortages in schools we have commissioned further research by Professor Alan Smithers and Dr Pamela Robinson, of Manchester University, to examine the effect of the national curriculum and local management of schools (LMS) and to predict trends in the future.

Our right to be concerned still about teacher shortages is supported by the disturbing results of the research which shows that headteachers are still experiencing considerable difficulties in staffing their schools. Here, in a summary of the

research findings, we publish a sample of the weight of evidence to be found in the full report. The implications of the national curriculum and local management of schools on staffing make disquieting reading.

The recent White Papers published by the Government to encourage more young people to continue in education and training beyond 16, and the initiatives taken by others, can only be fully realised if we resource our schools properly. It is the responsibility of all those with an interest in education and training to ensure that the foundation for expansion is soundly laid.



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Current Staffing

1. In a national representative sample of 208 schools in 1990, 40% reported that they were under-staffed. Of these, 57.9% said that they coped by using teachers from other subjects, 31.4% by having larger classes and 10.6% by fewer periods. One of the reasons for inadequate staffing was difficulty in filling vacancies.

2. During the calendar year 1990 the 208 schools, with a staff establishment of 10,607, gave rise to 1,307 vacancies. Headteachers reported that in 9.0% of the cases no appointment could be made, and in a further 24.4% one was made only with great difficulty. This occurred not just in the 'shortage' subjects, but ran across the whole range of the national curriculum, as *Table 1* shows.

3. The main reasons the headteachers gave for not being able to make satisfactory appointments were no applicants (24.2%), too few applicants (33.8%) or poor quality of applicants (36.9%).

Too few applicants:

- *'The difficulty in recruiting French, Welsh and science staff make implementation of these subjects a nightmare prospect, especially when Key Stage 4 (KS4) comes on stream. Options are already restricted, classes are in the 25-30 range for most subjects so there is not much room for manoeuvre. I've an awful feeling, too, that it will be the special needs pupils who will suffer from the lack of expertise available in schools.'*

11-18 Comprehensive, Wales

- *'Teacher supply is desperate. Advertisements on MPG or MPG +A (main professional grade + allowance A) produce little response. The last few such advertisements have produced no appointment or, in most cases, the appointment of the only 'suitable' applicant.'*

11-18 Grammar School, South East

Table 1: Difficulty in Filling Vacancies

Subject	Per Cent of Vacancies
	Great Difficulty or Not Filled
Modern Languages	52.8
Music	44.2
Science	41.1
PE	34.4
Geography	33.4
Maths	26.8
History	25.0
English	25.0
Technology	22.6
Art	14.6

- *'The teacher shortage now appears to be across the whole range of subjects. I did not receive a single applicant from a college or university even for the March advertisements.'*

11-16 Comprehensive, East Anglia

Poor quality of applicants:

- *'I have really struggled to find good quality teachers. In modern languages I've invited people for interview who a few years ago I would have totally disregarded. I cannot emphasise enough how demoralising it is to let unqualified and temperamentally unsuited people into the profession simply because there is no one else.'*

11-18 Comprehensive, South West

- *'My major concern relates to the quality of the teaching staff which will be available in future years. Recently we have experienced difficulty in making suitable appointments due to the small number of applicants for the posts. The number of male applicants for MPG posts has declined considerably.'*

11-18 Comprehensive, West Midlands

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- *'Teacher supply is becoming a real problem with several posts now occupied by teachers who some years ago would not have been offered an interview. Such is the decline in both number and quality of applicants for jobs in this area (not just one school).'*

11-18 Comprehensive, South East

4. The difficulty of making appointments could be expected to show in the appropriateness of the qualifications of those appointed and the quality of teaching. The headteachers reported that, on average, about one in eight classes in years 7-9, and one in ten in years 10, 11 were taught by teachers lacking a main qualification in the subject. About a quarter of the teaching was described as adequate or less. *Table 2* shows that technology and modern languages came out worst, and art and English best.

5. Headteachers are increasingly making temporary appointments, a quarter of which had arisen because there had been no suitable applicant for a permanent post, 30.2% to maintain flexibility in staffing while making changes, and 32.6% to cover for maternity leave, illness and secondments.

Impact of national curriculum

6. There was an expectation, as we can see in *Table 3*, that the national curriculum, on balance, would increase the requirement for staff, particularly in those subjects which have yet to form part of a core curriculum, which maths and English effectively are at present. However, this data was gathered in late 1990 before the new arrangements for KS4 had been announced so that it is likely that the anticipated demand for modern languages and technology is the most significant. The increases here should be matched by reductions elsewhere since the teaching week will be the same. The continual modifications to the national curriculum are a source of considerable concern to headteachers:

Table 2: Quality of Teaching

Subject	Per Cent Adequate or Less	
	Years 7-9	Years 10,11
Technology	33.9	35.2
Modern Languages	30.6	34.3
Music	37.0	31.4
History	38.6	30.8
PE	26.1	29.7
Maths	21.1	23.6
Geography	25.7	23.3
Science	24.3	21.4
Art	21.7	20.3
English	21.7	18.1

- *'Forward planning is impossible while KS4 remains so uncertain. Constant changes and discussion concerning foundation subjects create an impossible situation and unrest among the staff.'*

11-18 Comprehensive, Inner London

- *'Impossible to make long-term plans until KS4 is the subject of statutory orders giving a clearer view of requirements of teacher allocation.'*

11-18 Comprehensive, South Wales

- *'I do not believe in the national curriculum! I don't believe the government believes in it any longer. I think it is more reasonable to think of a national curriculum in KS1, 2 and 3 and a possible extended core in KS4. I'm not convinced even about the extended core. I don't believe we can staff modern languages for all. Many modern language graduates would rather teach English as a foreign language (EFL) which is an easier option.'*

11-18 Comprehensive, West Midlands

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Curriculum Table 3: Impact of National

Subject	Per Cent of Schools		
	Periods Required		Difference
	More	Fewer	
Modern Languages	53.7	5.1	+ 48.6
History	45.2	7.8	+ 37.4
Geography	44.6	7.9	+ 36.7
Technology	46.3	10.2	+ 36.1
Music	41.2	6.8	+ 34.4
Science	37.9	6.8	+ 31.1
Art	28.8	9.6	+ 19.2
English	22.6	12.4	+ 10.2
Maths	19.2	13.6	+ 5.6
PE	15.3	19.8	- 4.5

Effects of LMS

7. Headteachers generally welcomed the opportunity of delegated budgets, but were concerned that their actual staffing costs were greater than they would be receiving under the formula. Two-thirds said that this was likely to be the case, because they had older more experienced staff (76.9%), a higher than average number of allowances (42.7%) or a number of protected posts (23.1%).

8. The headteachers therefore expected, as *Table 4* shows, to have to make savings on teaching staff resulting in a higher pupil: teacher ratio (PTR). But they also hoped to be able to use some of the savings to improve the number of support staff and the availability of books and equipment:

- *'In theory, under the authority's scheme, my school is a relative winner. In practice I have lost two teachers, a clerk, a part-time technician and an assistant caretaker. How successful I am in balancing my budget I just don't know because to date I haven't been given any meaningful data. The future of financial year 91-92 is obscure.'*
11-16 Comprehensive, North West

- *'LMS has some advantages – local flexibility in particular. However, the fact that teachers in my school cost an average of £1,500 more than the borough average presents me with an ongoing cut each year (3% for the next three years). In my view this is a fundamental flaw in the whole scheme and renders the original advantages useless.'*
11-16 Comprehensive, Greater London

- *'In a school suffering from falling rolls there comes a point at which the school can no longer offer a full curriculum. There will be an increase in the number of jobs available for staff paid at lower rates therefore an increase in young staff, part-time and temporary contracts. The ebb and flow of staffing will increase with a consequent destabilising of schools. Schools with particular social difficulties in vulnerable areas will not be able to cope with fixed costs (maintenance, etc). Money will therefore be saved from staffing lines to other lines to cope with these problems. Fluctuating numbers will also have a serious effect on staffing.'*
11-18 Comprehensive, North West

Table 4: Effects of LMS

Staffing & Resources	Per Cent of Schools		
	Expected Change		Difference
Improve	Worsen		
PTR	21.6	47.6	- 26.0
Teaching Staff	26.3	38.7	- 12.4
Secretarial & Clerical Staff	48.7	23.3	+ 25.4
Technical Staff	38.2	19.9	+ 18.3
Books	38.3	28.2	+ 10.1
Materials	40.6	26.0	+ 14.6
Equipment	42.6	30.3	+ 12.3
Repairs	43.6	37.2	+ 6.4

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Conclusion

9. Schools are currently finding great difficulty in meeting their staffing requirements. Future demand for staff will be affected by the two major changes in school organisation: the national curriculum and LMS. The precise details of both have yet to fully emerge, but it seems likely, as we can see in *Table 5*, that they will pull in opposite directions with the national curriculum establishing an ideal requirement, which budgetary constraints will make it difficult to meet. Hence we may be faced with the paradox of teachers being made redundant while there are shortages. Scarce resources will mean difficult decisions.

10. Staffing secondary schools in the nineties is likely to remain a problem. How much of one exactly will depend on the success of the government in ensuring adequate teacher supply and the initiative of headteachers in raising the income towards being able to afford the staff needed to teach the national curriculum once that has been settled.

NB. Requests for copies of the full research report should be made to Professor Alan Smithers and Dr Pamela Robinson at the School of Education, Manchester University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.
Tel: 061-275 3446.

Table 5: Changes in Teaching Staff: Projections to 1993-94

Subject	Per Cent	
	National Curriculum Requirement	Affordable Under LMS
Maths	+ 4.9	- 2.6
Science	+ 5.2	- 8.2
English	+ 3.0	- 2.2
Technology	+ 5.9	- 3.1
Modern Languages	+ 19.1	- 4.0
History	+ 19.0	- 3.1
Geography	+ 17.0	- 4.3
Art	+ 9.9	- 2.7
Music	+ 20.4	- 2.9
PE	+ 4.8	- 4.1



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