

# How do we stop teachers from quitting?

Dr Joshua Fullard

## Summary

- Since 2010 teachers have experienced a real terms reduction in salaries of up to 13 percent. During the same period average earnings have increased by two percent in real terms
- Today less people are interested in perusing a careering in teaching and more teachers are leaving
- The decision to leave teaching is motivated by a range of different factors from low salaries and unmanageable workloads to (lack of) autonomy and poor school leadership. But it is challenging to identify the role that each of these individual factors have
- My latest research is focused on understanding the factors that influence the decision to leave
- Intentions to leave the profession increase more when things get worse than they decrease when things get better. This suggests that preventing cuts is more important than rolling out more generous benefits and that schools benefit from implementing sustainable policies
- Teachers are systematically misinformed about the earnings profile of alternative careers - the median teacher underestimates population earnings by £6,000
- The inaccuracy in beliefs is, at least partially, keeping schools staffed. If teachers' beliefs about alternative employment opportunities were more accurate, we expect teachers would be more likely to leave

## Methodology

I use new data on teachers to a) provide descriptive evidence on teachers' intentions to leave the profession, b) investigate the role of beliefs about labour market outcomes on leaving intentions and c) assess the accuracy of beliefs.

I also use an experiment to investigate the role that different factors (such as pay, class sizes and school leadership) have on teachers' intentions to leave the profession.

## Key findings

- Higher wages would reduce teachers' intentions to leave the profession. But the effect is small so only a large increase in wages is likely to have a meaningful effect, but this would be expensive to implement
- Policies focused on reducing working hours and improving school leaders would be more cost effective

## Author's main message

My research shows that the effect of wages on teachers' intentions to leave the profession is small and expensive to implement. Other factors such as school leaders and working hours play a larger role in the decision to leave. But this does not mean that the government should continue to neglect teachers' pay.

There are wider benefits of paying teachers higher salaries. It improves teacher motivation and has an impact on recruitment, attracting candidates of more diversity, higher quality and with the ability to fill specific subject shortages.

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### References

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