



**leadership**  
matters

Survey of the experiences of  
school/college leaders (2016)



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## Introduction

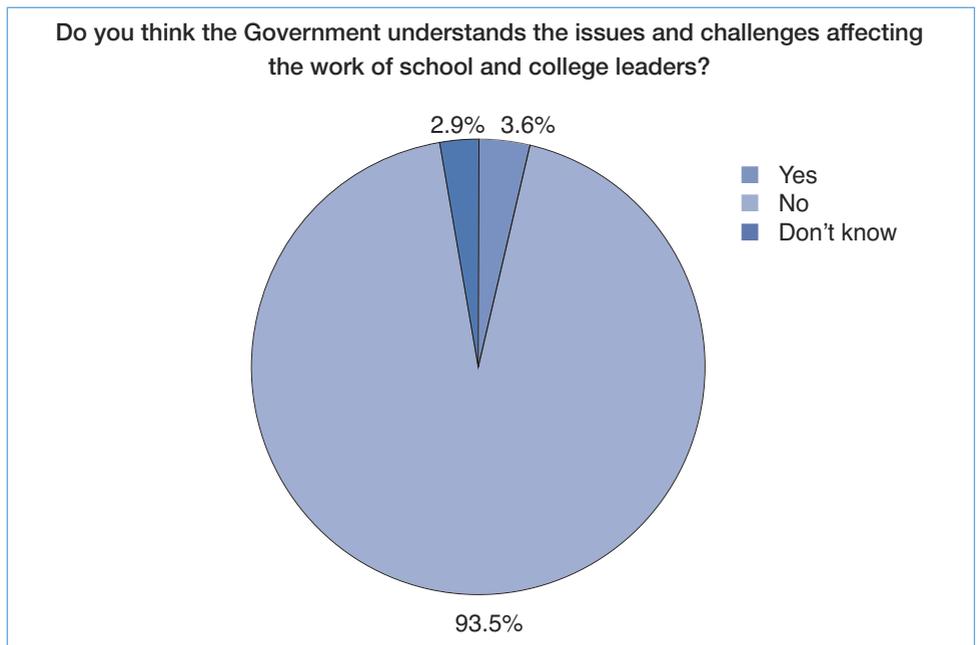
The NASUWT surveyed school and college leaders across the United Kingdom, between July and September 2016, on the nature of their work, the issues and problems that they currently face, and their experiences as members.

A total of 520 school and college leaders responded to the survey, including a cross section of headteachers, deputy and assistant headteachers and middle leaders.

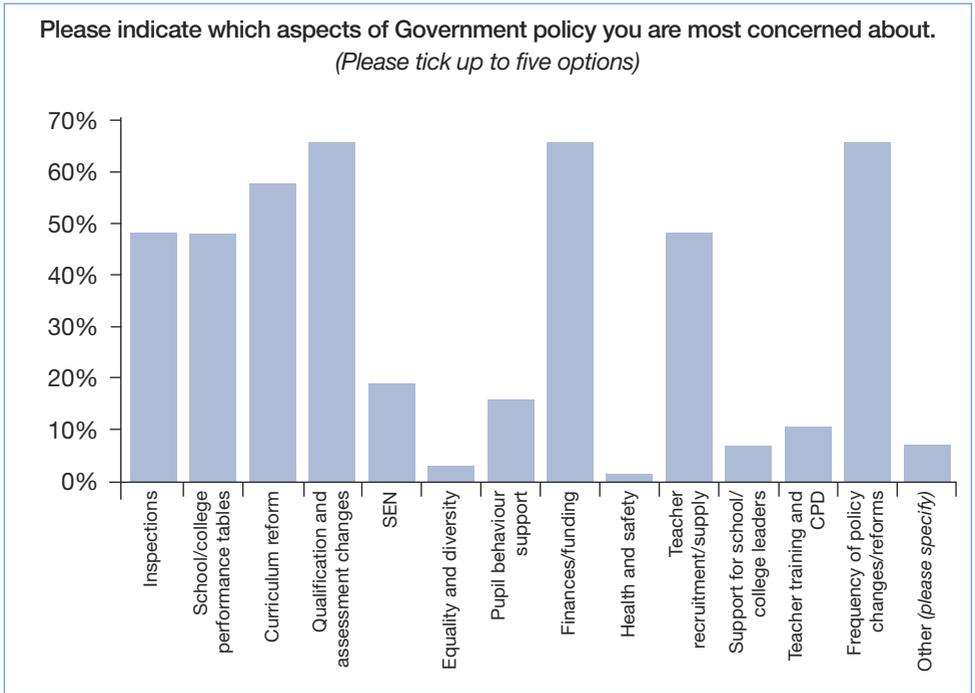
## The Survey

### The Government's Education Policies

School and college leaders were asked whether the Government understands the issues and challenges affecting the work of school and college leaders. 93.5% of the respondents stated a resounding no. When asked if they believed the Government's education policies would help improve educational standards for pupils in their school or college, 88% were categorical that they would not.



School and college leaders were asked to indicate which aspects of Government policy most concerned them.



Two thirds (66%) said that they were concerned about finances and funding, the frequency of policy changes and reforms, and qualifications and assessment changes. Almost half (48%) were further concerned about teacher recruitment and supply, school performance tables and inspections.

### Financial Issues and Funding of Schools

School and college leaders were asked whether the financial position in their school or college had affected its ability to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum to pupils during the academic year 2015/16. Almost three quarters of respondents (71%) said the ability to offer this had worsened.

*“Due to the speed and number of changes to curriculum, it is not possible to cover costs of resourcing for these courses. My students have no textbooks (MFL) so are at a disadvantage in terms of independent learning etc.”*

*“Decreasing resources with increasing demand is an illogical position to be in.” (Northern Ireland)*

*“Support services are gradually being withdrawn and not replaced.”*

*“We’ve had to make some redundancies, reducing opportunities for students.”*

*“To avoid redundancies, we have had to cut the range of courses offered.”*

*“The number of options has been reduced as the number of staff has. Teachers teach outside their specialism regularly.”*

*“Financial constraints put a strain on budgets for new resources to make learning exciting.”*

66% of school and college leaders stated that they were not confident about the financial health of their workplace for the academic year 2016/17.

*“My five-year plan shows I will be in deficit. I may have to look at redundancies. I already rely heavily on voluntary staff to facilitate activities such as outdoor learning, pupil support and trips and visits.”*

*“Continued cuts mean that we are reducing resources for children, staffing and support for children and families.”*

*“Our budget is squeezed and does not allow for the recruitment of experienced teachers or provision of quality enrichment activities.”*

*“We have already been told that we are running in deficit for 2015-16 and staffing is insufficient, wellbeing/morale is low and therefore more supply will be needed.”*

*“We have a large deficit and have faced four years of redundancies, with more expected this year.” (Wales)*

*“Small, specialist courses have had to be cut as they are too expensive, thereby reducing our provision for those students at greatest risk of exclusion.” (Scotland)*

## Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

Over two thirds (67%) of school and college leaders described greater difficulties in recruiting teachers during 2015/16 than in previous years. There were particular difficulties in the curriculum areas of English, Maths and Sciences and in Key Stage 2.

*“I am aware of vacancies in these areas which have had no or little interest with regards filling the posts, despite our school being desired.”*

*“We have managed to recruit, but xxxxx is a popular place. However, where we used to have many applications for every job, we have recently been calling all four applicants and sometimes not even had a pool of four.”*

*“Limits to funding mean that offering time or [Teaching and Learning Responsibility] TLR payment is not feasible. As a result, there have been no applicants for some middle leadership roles.” (England)*

Almost half (46%) of respondents stated that they had experienced more difficulties in retaining qualified teachers than last year.

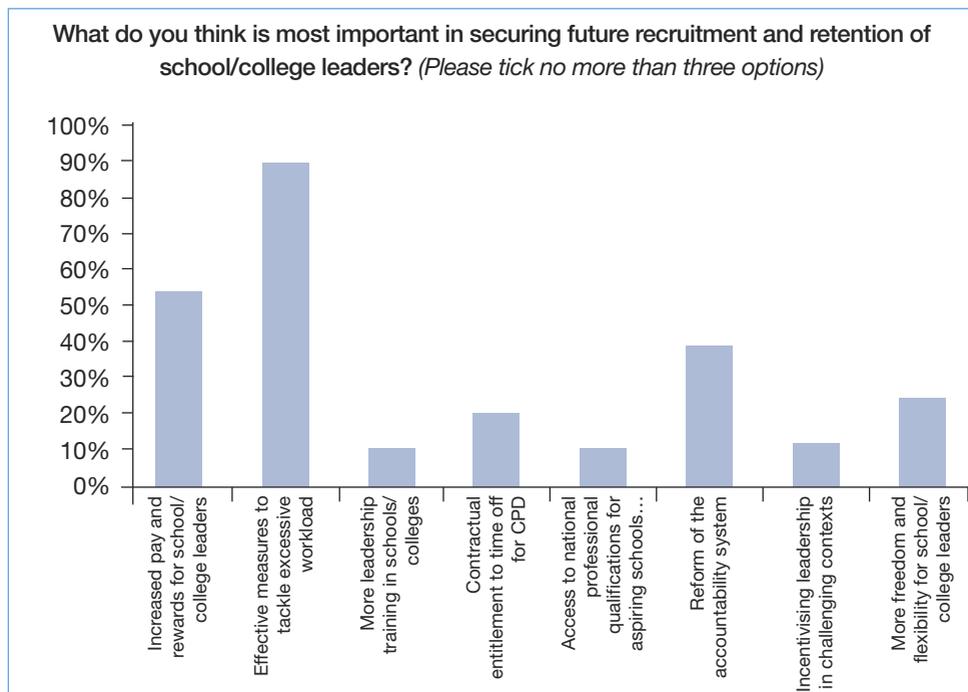
When asked if the Government’s education policies would help improve the recruitment and retention of teachers at their school or college, 92% of school and college leaders stated that they would not.

*“Massive redundancies year on year do not paint a positive picture for applicants. Also, as more staff leave – over 20 this coming week, they are almost all not being replaced and this has created a real sense of concern and worry within the community. This does not aid increasing intake – but worsens the school’s reputation.”*

Many school and college leaders reported that their institutions were taking a variety of actions to deal with recruitment difficulties.

Almost half (47%) of respondents said their school or college was using more supply agency teachers and two fifths (40%) were appointing teachers to teach non-specialist subject areas. There was also a rise in the number of unqualified teachers being used (28%) .

School and college leaders were asked what would be the most important strategies which could be used to secure future recruitment and retention of school and college leaders. 88% stated that there would have to be more effective measures to tackle excessive workload and over half (54%) believed increased pay and rewards would help. Only half of the respondents had received incremental pay progression in the last year, 2015/2016. Almost two fifths (38%) said that a reform of the accountability system would aid recruitment and retention of school and college leaders.



## School and College Leaders' Careers and Professional Development

School and college leaders were very positive about the importance their school or college placed on their professional and career development, with two thirds (67%) of respondents saying it was excellent or good. However, when asked how confident they were that their school or college had the support it needed to enable it to meet their current and future training and continuing professional development (CPD) needs, almost half (49%) had concerns about this.

## Health and Wellbeing of School and College Leaders

Over half (51%) of school and college leaders stated that their place of work did not take seriously their health and wellbeing.

Three quarters (75%) of respondents feel their workload is unmanageable and over half (54%) said their working hours had increased substantially in the last year, with over a third (34%) saying they had experienced a slight increase.

80% of school and college leaders said they did not have a reasonable work/life balance.

*"I am the head of a small school, with teaching commitments, and have no assistant or deputy because I cannot afford to pay extra for one. The expectations of my role are unrealistic and the Government expectations place increased demands on my staff which then affects me. The stress levels are becoming ridiculous and I have seriously questioned if it is worth it. As a headteacher, I have zero job satisfaction! My only glimpses of enjoyment are from spending time with children."*

*"Workload and accountability is excessive and damages my own health and the relationships with staff and pupils. Teachers are utterly undervalued by government and the only reason to continue until retirement is the difficulty in changing career paths in my early fifties and missing the thrill of teaching students."*

*"The long hours, approximately 70 hours a week, and the stress of accountability, make work relentless."*

When asked whether they believed the Government's education policies would help to address the workload of school and college leaders, 94% of respondents stated that they would not.

*"I am a headteacher and I find the pressure, on some days, unbearable. I have developed eczema through stress and I am being tested for stomach ulcers. I have been in post one year. I plan to leave in no more than five years as I cannot envisage spending the rest of my working life with the high level of anxiety the job brings."*

*"I have no work/life balance, constant stress and pressure from the head in preparation for Ofsted. Facing unrealistic working hours and bullying in the workplace."*

*“I don’t believe in what the Government are asking us to do as a profession. It is causing increased stress and anxiety for both pupils and staff in schools.”*

*“The relentless criticism is very demoralising. I love leading an inclusive school but the Government are making this more and more difficult to do well.”*

## Conclusion

The NASUWT research indicates that the vast majority of school and college leaders do not have confidence in the Government’s education policies. They do not have confidence that the Government understands the pressures on school and college leaders who are faced with constant challenges from changing legislation and reforms.

School and college leaders have serious concerns regarding the financial future of their schools and colleges and believe that worsening financial situations will impede their ability to do their job. Continued financial uncertainty, coupled with real-terms funding reductions, is making the task of leading and managing schools and colleges impossible according to many school and college leaders.

The evidence from this survey highlights that, if the Government wants to retain and recruit new school and college leaders, it needs to address the issues which are making leadership increasingly unattractive and to listen and respond to the concerns of leaders about workload, funding and low morale.

The evidence from the NASUWT Leadership Matters Survey highlights that if the Government does not act immediately to support school and college leaders, both the quality of education and the recruitment and retention of school and college leaders will be seriously compromised.

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