



Department
for Education

Evaluation of the Return to Teaching pilot programme

Final report

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Executive summary

A major priority for education policy is to recruit and retain sufficient teachers to meet the current and future requirements of the education system. One important source of teachers is those who have left teaching in the public sector.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) established the Return to Teaching pilot programme in 2015. This funded secondary schools facing recruitment shortfalls to attract qualified teachers who were not teaching in the English public sector and support them to return to the profession. The pilot focused on recruiting returners¹ to teach EBacc subjects² in secondary schools. It was advertised on the Return to Teaching website and promoted through national marketing. The programme offered in-school support from January to October, 2016. In November 2016, the NCTL announced a new Returners Engagement Programme Pilot (NCTL, 2016), providing funding for the design and delivery of new school-led programmes of support. This evaluation focuses purely on the Return to Teaching pilot programme.

The evaluation aimed to understand the effectiveness of the Return to Teaching pilot. It:

- a) assessed the impact of the pilot in securing additional ‘returners’ back into teaching
- b) examined the aspects of the pilot that worked well, and why, to provide recommendations for the format of any future rollout.

This report draws on the following data sources:

- Findings from an online survey of ‘non-supported potential returners’. These were potential returning teachers who registered on the Return to Teaching website but had not applied for a place on the pilot by the end of March 2016. The findings are based on 577 responses (from a sample of 1,300, representing a 44 per cent response rate).
- Findings from an online survey of ‘supported returners’. These were potential returning teachers who went on to receive support as part of the Return to Teaching pilot. We received 241 responses (from a sample of 379, representing a 64 per cent response rate).
- Thirty telephone interviews³ with supported returners
- Twenty-three telephone interviews with staff in schools which provided support

¹ Note that the term ‘returners’ includes some teachers who have qualified but never taught and those who have not taught in the English state system.

² EBacc subjects are: English, maths, history/geography, chemistry, physics, biology, computer science and modern foreign languages.

³ Interviews took place between April and September 2016.

- Management information (MI) on supported returners, gathered from schools
- Registration data gathered when potential returners expressed their interest in returning to teach on the Return to Teaching website
- Data from the 2016 School Workforce Census (SWC) matched to the sample of supported and non-supported returners, to identify whether they had returned to teaching in the state-funded sector.

Who were the potential returning teachers?

- Teachers who registered on the Return to Teaching website wanted to teach a range of subjects, most commonly English, modern foreign languages, history/geography, science and maths. The majority were eligible to apply for the Return to Teaching pilot programme; although a minority wanted to teach in primary schools.
- They had most commonly left teaching between ten and fifteen years ago (37 per cent).
- Less than half (44 per cent) had post-qualification experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector. The remainder had not taught since training, had taught another age group, or had taught abroad.
- The main reasons for leaving teaching were: to raise a family (20 per cent); change career (19 per cent); or to teach elsewhere e.g. overseas or in the non-state sector (14 per cent). The main reasons for wanting to return focused on the intrinsic value of teaching (for example, missing the profession and wanting to inspire the next generation).
- Just under half (47 per cent) were certain that they would return to teaching in an English state school, as indicated by a rating of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale, where 5 is 'completely certain'. A further 15 per cent were uncertain (as indicated by a rating of 1 or 2)
- Returners faced a variety of barriers in returning, including: a lack of recent experience and knowledge, concerns about workload, a lack of flexible/part-time job opportunities and a lack of confidence. The main kinds of support that they felt would help them to return were: classroom experience, updating knowledge and skills; help with searching and applying for jobs and mentoring.
- The analysis identified five different types of returner: an idealist, primarily motivated by their passion for teaching (35 per cent); an opportunist, interested in the pay/conditions of teaching or unemployed (16 per cent); a career breaker, returning because their family had grown up (11 per cent); a mover, with no previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector (13 per cent); and a pragmatist – people who had a range of other reasons for returning (24 per cent).

What influenced returners to apply for the programme, and how were they selected?

- Two-thirds of non-supported returners were aware of the Return to Teaching pilot. They had two main reasons for not taking part: there was no local support available; or they were unclear about the support offer. About one-quarter were not ready to access support because they had not made a firm decision to return to teaching.
- Supported returners were typically: female (76 per cent); pragmatists (41 per cent) or idealists (29 per cent); taught a range of EBacc subjects; had left teaching within the last ten years; and lacked experience of teaching in the English state secondary sector (54 per cent, including 24 per cent who were primary trained).
- Interviews with 30 supported returners identified a desire for school experience and confidence building as the main reasons for applying to the programme. Features of the programme that appealed were its flexibility to fit around other commitments, it was free and they did not have to commit to returning before receiving support.
- Interviews with 23 school representatives found that they commonly used application forms, skills audits and interviews to select applicants for support. Schools found that some returners were easier to support than others, due to their knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities. Some were of such high quality they needed very little support.
- Most of the school interviewees had supported fewer returners than they initially intended. This was largely due to a lack of suitable applicants. Schools which selected potential returners they thought would benefit most from their support found it easier to support their returners than schools which accepted all who applied for support. Interviewees said it was challenging to accommodate returners' diverse support needs, especially in relation to those lacking classroom experience.

How successful was the pilot in securing additional returners back into teaching?

The pilot's target was that around 3,000 teachers would register an interest in returning to teaching, around 650 of whom would receive support and return to teaching an EBacc subject on a permanent contract in a state-funded secondary school by Autumn 2016⁴. The following figures are based on returners who had received support from the

⁴ The goal was to have the returners employed by the time of the 2016 School Workforce Census which took place in November 2016.

programme and returned to teaching by November 2016, which was the date set for judging the success of the programme. It is possible that there were some additional returners who secured a teaching post in a state-funded school after November (and would therefore not have appeared in the 2016 SWC) but they are not included here.

- In practice, 5,729 teachers registered their interest in returning to teaching by summer 2016, representing almost twice the target for registration. A total of 354⁵ returners received support from the programme between January and September 2016. Twenty-seven⁶ of them (eight per cent) were identified as teaching EBacc subjects in permanent teaching posts in state-funded secondary schools in November 2016.
- A further 35 returned to teaching in a state-funded school (but either not in a permanent position, or not teaching an EBacc subject in a secondary school), providing a combined total of 62⁷ (18 per cent) of the supported returners who successfully gained employment teaching in the state-funded sector. This compares to around four per cent of non-supported returners who returned to teaching in the state-funded sector even though they did not receive support. However, a comparison of the return rate for supported returners with non-supported potential returners is likely to over-estimate the impact of the programme, as supported returners were already more certain of returning before taking up support.
- The cost per additional returner teaching an EBacc subject in a permanent teaching post in a state-funded secondary school is estimated to be £37,400. This is similar to the cost of training a new teacher, but does not take account of other considerations, including the fact that returners are older and therefore likely to have a shorter career than a newly qualified teacher (NQT).
- The return rate among career breakers was double that of other groups of returners (though this finding should be treated with caution because it is based on relatively small samples of returners).
- Supported returners' ratings of their certainty about returning and confidence in returning were statistically significantly higher after they had received support.

⁵ The numbers of returners supported differs to the number stated in a Freedom of Information (FOI) response in February 2017. The number reported at this time was 426, as this was the number who had been recruited to the programme. Some returners were subsequently withdrawn from the programme, or failed to commence training. As such the number actually supported is lower.

⁶ Note that the return rates quoted for both supported and non-supported returners are likely to represent an under-estimate, due to missing data.

⁷ The numbers of employed returners cited here differs to that given in an FOI response in February 2017. School Workforce Census (SWC) data was used to respond to the FOI in February 2017, which showed that 49 returners were employed at that time; however, the dataset was only finalised in July 2017. This report used the completed SWC data, and therefore shows a higher number of 62 employed returners.

- Interviews with returners and schools identified three common barriers to employment for supported returners: the timing of the pilot, which meant that there were few teaching posts immediately available in September 2016 (especially for those who received support after May); the continuing support needs of some returners; and the limited availability of part-time work.

How well did the programme meet returners' needs?

- Just under half of supported returners (44 per cent) felt that the pilot programme had met their needs. The interviews suggested that a key reason for this was that supported returners had not received sufficient practical teaching experience.
- Prior to completing the pilot, potential returners identified the main barriers to returning to teaching as a lack of recent teaching experience and knowledge, concerns about workload, a lack of flexible or part-time teaching opportunities and a lack of confidence.
- Compared with non-supported returners, more supported returners stated that a lack of experience, knowledge and skills was a barrier to returning and fewer supported returners felt that workload was a barrier.
- Returners had diverse support needs and wanted support with a range of aspects of returning to teaching. Their main area of need was classroom experience, especially delivering lessons as well as observing others teach.
- Supported returners identified a wider range of support needs than non-supported returners, which could have contributed to their decision to apply for the Return to Teaching programme.
- Supported returners stated that the most useful elements of support were practical teaching experience and observing other teachers. While the majority of supported returners were satisfied with the content and quality of the support they received, fewer were satisfied with the *amount* of support they had received. As might be expected, those who had received more of the planned support were more satisfied with the amount of support they received.
- Schools gave a number of reasons why they did not give returners the opportunity to teach, including the need to establish the quality of returners and concerns about possible disruption to lessons.
- About half of supported returners were satisfied with the process of applying to schools for support.

Marketing the Return to Teaching pilot programme

- Online browsing was the most common way that all returners had heard about the pilot programme
- Advertising for the programme had been seen by a higher proportion of supported returners compared with non-supported returners.
- Sixty-six per cent of non-supported returners had heard about the pilot programme.
- Sixty per cent of returners who had heard about the programme had seen the advertising.
- The three main ways returners had seen the advertising were: websites, Facebook and the national press.
- Returners had a range of views on the importance of marketing in encouraging them to apply for support. Similar numbers of supported returners rated the advertising campaign as 'very important' and 'not at all important', in encouraging them to apply for support.

Suggested improvements and what worked well

The main improvements suggested by both supported returners and schools are given below.

- Increase the number of schools offering support to ensure that potential returners are able to access support locally.
- Provide support earlier in the school year (especially from January to May).
- Identify returners who have the greatest potential to benefit from support (for example those who have taught in English secondary schools fairly recently, have kept up to date with requirements, but need some current teaching experience to help them get back into teaching).
- Ensure returners get practical classroom experience and help in getting employment.

The aspects of the pilot which had worked particularly well are listed below.

- It was based in schools which were able to offer current, real-world experience.
- It was free to access.
- It was designed to provide a programme of support tailored according to returners' needs.
- School staff organised their support well, communicated with other staff, provided returners classroom experience, mentoring and assistance with getting employment.

Conclusion

This study has found that the Return to Teaching programme was successful in attracting people to register an interest in returning and supported some qualified teachers to return to teaching. However, the number of returners was low and the cost per additional returner was similar to that of training a new teacher. It is also worth bearing in mind that the programme costs are additional to the costs of initial teacher training for participating returners. Although a returner would be more experienced than a newly-qualified teacher, our evidence suggests that they would also have a shorter potential career. For these reasons, the pilot was unlikely to represent good value for money. The lack of success was primarily due to issues with timing, recruitment challenges and the suitability of some participants, as well as a lack of practical teaching opportunities available in some of the participating schools.

Nevertheless, encouraging qualified teachers to return to teaching is a worthwhile activity. The research findings suggest that 'career breakers' have the greatest potential to make a successful return with minimal support. They would be particularly attracted by an offer of part-time work. Other returners would require greater support depending on their experience of teaching, the amount of time out of teaching and the reason they left in the first place. The research also identified a number of features of the pilot which performed well, including that the programme largely offered the kind of support returners were seeking and provided the flexibility to suit individual returners' needs. These findings provide a useful knowledge base for the development of further policy initiatives aimed at returners, who currently represent an under-used source of teachers.

1 About this report

1.1 The policy context

A major priority for the educational policy agenda is to recruit and retain enough teachers to meet the current and future requirements of the education system. The demand for secondary school teachers is expected to grow over the coming years as the number of pupils in state-funded secondary schools is projected to increase by 19 per cent between 2017 and 2026 (DfE, 2017a). The number of teachers who leave the state-funded sector each year has also increased from 46,130 in 2011 to 50,110 in 2016, further adding to the demand for teachers.

The number of new secondary trainee teachers, the largest source of teacher supply, has been below the target numbers set by the Teacher Supply Model since 2013/14, opening up shortfalls between teacher supply and demand (DfE, 2016). This has been particularly the case for teachers of physics, maths, computing, and modern foreign languages, where the shortfalls have been greater and longer-standing. Regional variations in teacher demand and supply are also likely to contribute to vacancies being more difficult to fill in some areas.

Qualified but inactive teachers returning to the profession are an important alternative source of teachers. Government data (DfE, 2017b) shows that in 2016 there were 243,900 qualified teachers aged under 60 who were currently out of service and had previously taught in the state-funded sector, with 76,500 of these aged under 40. The number of teachers who returned to teach in the state-funded sector increased from 16,010 in 2011 to 17,230 in 2016. Some inactive teachers may want to return to teach in the state-funded sector but face barriers to re-entering that could be overcome with tailored support. The Return to Teaching pilot programme aimed to provide such support to potential returners.

1.2 The Return to Teaching pilot programme

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) established a pilot to encourage qualified teachers to return to teaching. This funded secondary schools to attract and support qualified teachers who were not currently teaching in the English public sector to return to teach EBacc subjects (English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences, computer science and a modern foreign language). Schools and returners were recruited by the NCTL in autumn 2015 and schools started offering support from January 2016.

In addition to teachers who qualified in England, the pilot was open to teachers who had Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) but had originally trained outside of England and Wales⁸. Further details of the eligibility criteria for returners are provided in Appendix A.

The pilot aimed to attract additional returning teachers through both a national marketing campaign and more localised marketing activity. Potential returners were encouraged to register with the Return to Teaching⁹ website and were sent information about the participating schools. Participating schools also received details of potential returners in their area who were interested in taking up support. The target was to have around 3,000 teachers register an interest in returning to teaching, around 650 of whom would receive support and return to teaching by Autumn 2016¹⁰.

Grant funding was available to partnerships of schools which had experience of School Direct¹¹ and had struggled to recruit trainees¹² in EBacc subjects. Participating schools were expected to offer a package of support tailored to tackle obstacles to re-entry, such as lack of recent classroom experience or up-to-date curriculum/subject knowledge. The total cost of grant payments to schools for delivering the pilot was £586,900, with an average grant cost per participant of £1,425.

Suggested examples of support are set out below.

- Subject knowledge training which followed a similar format as that established by the Teacher Subject Specialism Training (TSST) grants in Maths and Physics, forming part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) teacher supply package announced in March 2015¹³.
- Training to update knowledge of classroom practice, behaviour management, assessment frameworks and other current education initiatives.
- Access to classroom experience and mentoring support.

A total of 60 schools offered training from January 2016, following a bidding round for grant funding in autumn 2015. The distribution of school partnerships across English regions is shown in Table 1 below.

⁸ This applies to teachers trained in Scotland and Northern Ireland, the European Union, the European Economic Area, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA: see [the government's guidance on QTS](#)

⁹ [Return to Teaching website](#)

¹⁰ The goal was to have the returners employed by the time of the 2016 School Workforce Census which took place in November 2016.

¹¹ [School Direct](#) offers initial teacher training courses designed by groups of schools in partnership with a university or a school-centred initial teacher training provider.

¹² Applications were invited from schools experiencing a shortfall in recruitment against their school-led initial teacher training places.

¹³ See [Government plans to attract and train maths and physics teachers](#)

Table 1 Regional location of school partnerships offering support

Region	Number of school partnerships
South East	16
East of England	11
West Midlands	9
London	8
North West	7
East Midlands	3
South West	3
Yorkshire and Humber	3
North East	0
Total schools	60

Source: National College for Teaching and Leadership

The table shows that the South East and East of England had the greatest number of partnerships offering support. There were no successful schools from the North East in the application round, so some potential returners from the North East were directed across the regional border to schools offering support in Yorkshire and Humber.

In March 2016, it was decided to extend the pilot period from the end of March 2016 until the end of the summer term (mid-July 2016) and to allow participating schools to continue to support returners in the autumn term. The reasons for this were to encourage greater take-up among returning teachers, to enable existing schools to continue recruiting and supporting returners.

In November 2016, the NCTL announced a new Returners Engagement Programme Pilot (NCTL, 2016), providing funding for the design and delivery of school-led programmes of support. The Returners Engagement Programme was informed by and designed to address the lessons learnt from the Return to Teaching pilot programme.

1.3 Evaluation design

The evaluation was carried out between March 2016 and August 2017. It followed on from a scoping phase to identify the most suitable design and methods for the study.

The study aimed to:

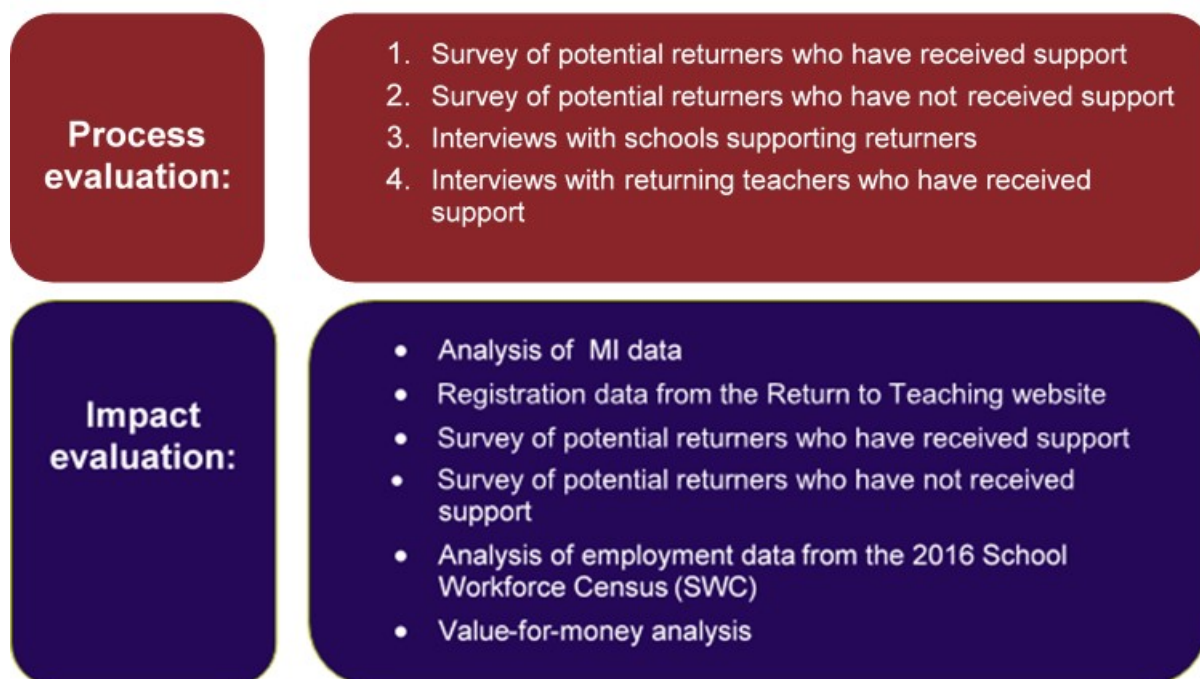
- a. assess the impact of the pilot in securing additional returners back into teaching
- b. examine the aspects of the pilot that worked well, and why, to provide recommendations for the format of any future rollout.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- Placing the pilot in the context of wider teaching workforce trends and requirements, including: considerations of the demand for teachers of particular subjects and for teachers in different areas of the country; and the need for schools to offer greater flexibility around part-time teaching positions.
- Identifying the role of central marketing in attracting potential returners back into teaching.
- Understanding the specific support needs of different groups of potential returning teachers (for example those who have recent/current experience of teaching compared with those who have taken a career break); and how successfully the pilot has met these needs.
- Considering the success of the pilot in relation to the counter-factual (i.e. what would have happened without it) and in relation to the possible 'deadweight' implications of providing support to returners who may not have required it to encourage a successful return to teaching.

The evaluation had two main strands focusing on the process and impact of the pilot, as set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The evaluation design



NCTL provided data to the evaluation team on the people who had registered on the Return to Teaching¹⁴ website, those who had applied for support from the Return to Teaching pilot programme as well as details of schools providing support. The NFER used this information to identify potential returners who were not receiving support by the end of March 2016 and those who were receiving support in early June 2016.

1.4 Data presented in this report

This report presents findings based on the following data sources.

- An online survey of ‘non-supported returners’. These are defined as potential returning teachers who registered on the Return to Teaching website but had not applied for a place on the pilot by the end of March 2016. The findings are based on 577 responses (from a sample of 1,300, representing a 44 per cent response rate¹⁵). The survey findings were gathered between April and August 2016.
- Findings from an online survey of ‘supported returners’. These are defined as potential returning teachers who received support as part of the Return to

¹⁴ Note that people registering with Return to Teaching were advised that their details would be used for research purposes.

¹⁵ The survey was sent to 1,315 people who had registered on the website and provided correct email addresses. Those who had achieved a place on the Return to Teaching pilot programme or whose applications were in progress were subsequently excluded, as were people who were identified for contact as part of the DfE STEM returners pilot (to avoid cross over with the evaluation for that programme).

Teaching pilot programme. The NFER received 241 responses (from sample of 379, representing a 64 per cent response rate¹⁶). The sample of supported returners was drawn in early June 2016 and the survey took place between mid-June and early October 2016.

- MI data on 587¹⁷ returners who had applied for support, gathered from schools by NCTL each month (we used the latest available data gathered in October 2016).
- Registration data gathered by NCTL on 1,342 potential returners who expressed their interest in returning to teach on the Return to Teaching website and provided further information via surveys/MI data.
- Thirty interviews with supported returners, conducted between April and September 2016.
- Twenty-three interviews with staff in schools which provided support, conducted between April and September 2016.
- Data on the characteristics of supported and non-supported returners who successfully returned to a teaching post in the state-funded sector from the 2016 School Workforce Census. Individuals were matched using identifying information from the MI (supported returners) and registration data (non-supported returners). This included information about individuals' characteristics (such as their age and gender), type of contract (e.g. which school and whether part-time) and the subjects taught.

The team drew up an analysis specification for agreement with NCTL in advance of the analysis. Quantitative data from the surveys, MI, registrations and the 2016 SWC were matched together to form a cohesive dataset (see Appendix B for further information on sample representation and analysis of the quantitative data). We also ran a trial on incentives for the non-supported returner survey (see Appendix C). Details of the survey invitation email and questions are provided in Appendix D.

Interviews were conducted by telephone: interviewers took notes and also audio-recorded the interviews (with respondents' permission). The evaluation team assured interviewees that they would not be identified to the NCTL or in any reports arising from the research. Interview data were analysed using a qualitative data analysis package (MaxQDA).

¹⁶ Fifteen individuals responded to both surveys – their responses were removed from the non-participating returner survey.

¹⁷ This comprised 407 successful applicants, 100 of whom expressed an interest but did not apply for a place, 43 unsuccessful applicants, 36 whose applications were in progress, and one whose status was not recorded. The data was gathered throughout the pilot and last updated at the end of September 2016.

Interpreting the results from the supported returner and non-supported returner surveys

Since not all the supported returners and non-supported potential returners responded to the respective surveys, the results are a best estimate of the values for the population the respondents were sampled from. The margin of error states that we can be 95 per cent confident that any percentage we quote is within a certain number of percentage points of the population value.

Table 2 shows the number of returners in the population that were sampled, how many responded and the corresponding margins of error.

Table 2 Sample sizes and margins of error for the surveys

	Number sampled	Number of responses	Margin of error
Supported survey	379	241	+/- 4%
Non-supported survey	1,300	577	+/- 3%
Comparisons between the two	1,300/379	577/241	+/- 5%

We can be 95 per cent confident that the reported percentage of supported returners is within four percentage points of the population value. We can be 95 per cent confident that the reported percentage of non-supported returners is within three percentage points of the population value. For a difference between supported and non-supported returners, we can be 95 per cent confident that any percentage difference is within five percentage points of the population difference.

2 Who are the returning teachers?

Summary of key points

- A total of 5,729 teachers registered on the Return to Teaching website by June 2016 (more than the target of 3,000).
- Potential returners wanted to teach a range of subjects, most commonly English, modern foreign languages, history/geography, science and maths. The majority of registrants were eligible to apply for the Return to Teaching pilot programme; a minority (11 per cent) wanted to teach in primary schools.
- The potential returners had most commonly left teaching between ten and fifteen years ago. Less than half (44 per cent) had post-qualification experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector. The remainder had not taught since training, had taught another age group, or had taught and trained exclusively overseas (i.e. the sample included international teachers).
- Their main reasons for leaving (or not pursuing a career in teaching) were: to raise a family, change career or to teach elsewhere (e.g. abroad or in the non-state sector). Their main reasons for wanting to return (or take up a career in teaching) focused on the intrinsic value of teaching (for example, missing the profession and wanting to inspire the next generation).
- Just under half (47 per cent) were certain that they would return to teaching in an English state school, as indicated by a rating of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale, where 5 is 'completely certain'.
- Returners faced a variety of barriers in returning, including: a lack of recent experience and knowledge, concerns about workload, a lack of flexible/part-time job opportunities and a lack of confidence. The main kinds of support that they felt would help them to return were: classroom experience, updating knowledge and skills; help with searching and applying for jobs and mentoring.
- The analysis identified five different types of returner: idealist; opportunist; career breaker; mover; and pragmatist.

2.1 Introduction

A total of 5,729 people had registered an interest in returning to teaching on the Return to Teaching website by June 2017, which represents almost twice the target number. This section focuses on the characteristics of 1,145 potential returning teachers who both registered an interest with the Return to Teaching website and provided additional information via surveys and/or MI data. It looks at the subjects they wanted to teach, when they left teaching and their experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector. It also considers the reasons they left teaching and wanted to return, their barriers

and support needs. The section ends by presenting information about different types of returner and their particular support needs.

2.2 What subjects did they apply to teach?

When potential returners registered their interest with the Return to Teaching website, they provided some basic information about themselves, including what subject they would prefer to teach. Their responses are set out in Table 3.

Table 3 What subjects did returners apply to teach?

	%
English	21
Modern Languages	20
History/geography	13
Science subjects	13
Maths	10
Computer Studies	6
Primary	11
Other	5
No response	1
N = 1,145	

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Return to Teaching registration data

The table shows that most returners wanted to teach English and modern languages. History/geography, science subjects and maths were each cited by between ten and 13 per cent of registrants. Also note that 11 per cent wanted to teach in the primary sector.

2.3 When did they leave teaching?

When potential returners registered their interest with the Return to Teaching website they were asked when they left teaching (the question included an option for those who had never taught). Their responses are detailed in Table 4, below. Note that this information was missing for about a third (33 per cent) of returners included in this sample.

Table 4 When did returners leave teaching?

	%
Before 2000	5
2000 - 2005	37
2006 - 2010	9
2011 - 2015	11
Never held a teaching post	5
No response	33
N = 1,145	

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
Source: Return to Teaching registration data.

Over one-third (37 per cent) of returners had left teaching between ten and 15 years ago and one-fifth (20 per cent) had left teaching in the last ten years. Five per cent of returners had left before the year 2000 and a further five per cent had never held a teaching post.

2.4 How much experience of secondary teaching did returners have?

The surveys asked potential returners whether they had any experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector. Their responses are detailed in Table 5, below.

Many (44 per cent) survey respondents had some experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector and a further quarter (24 per cent) had completed their training, some of whom had also completed their qualification year. However, just over one-quarter (28 per cent) of survey respondents had no experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector. This could be because they had trained to teach another age group or they had trained and/or taught abroad. This means that the sample included international teachers, although we do not have specific data on the number of people who had trained and only ever taught abroad¹⁸.

¹⁸ See also Section 3.5.2 which addresses the diverse needs of the supported returners.

Table 5 How much experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector did returners have?

	%
None	28
Training year only/Training year plus an additional qualifying year	24
Up to four years	15
From four up to ten years	18
Ten years or more	11
No response	3
N =818	

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016

2.5 Why had potential returners left the profession?

Details of why potential returning teachers had left teaching were gathered in two ways. Schools participating in the Return to Teaching pilot obtained this information from supported returners and recorded it as part of the MI data on 568 people. The NFER survey of 577 non-supported returners also asked why they left teaching in the English state sector, using the same categories as in the MI. The survey offered a number of different reasons and invited respondents to specify any other reasons that were not listed. We applied factor analysis¹⁹ to the combined results and identified 11 main reasons for leaving the profession. These are set out in Table 6.

¹⁹ Factor analysis is a statistical technique for identifying patterns in responses. The objective of factor analysis is to reduce the number of variables required to explain the data from the original large number to a smaller set of underlying ‘factors’ which can be related to the original variables.

Table 6 The main reason for leaving teaching in the English state sector

	%
To raise a family	20
Career change	19
Teaching elsewhere (abroad, non-state sector)	14
Unable to secure a teaching post	7
Workload or ill health	7
To care for other family members	3
Financial reasons	2
To complete further studies	2
Made redundant	2
Lack of career progression	1
(Early) retirement	<1
There is no one main reason	2
Other reason	12
No response	9
N =1,145	

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and MI data from schools, 2016.

The table shows that returners had a diverse range of reasons for leaving the profession. The most common were: to raise a family (20 per cent), to change career (19 per cent) and teaching elsewhere (including in the non-state sector and abroad – 14 per cent). Fewer returners identified other reasons, such as being unable to secure a teaching post, workload or ill health. The ‘other’ reasons²⁰ were most often because: the returner had trained overseas and had never worked in the English state sector; because of stress, burnout, pressure from colleagues or being unhappy in school; or a lack of support in school. Poor pupil behaviour or dissatisfaction with the profession were each cited by a small minority.

The interviews with 30 supported returners provided some further insights into why these returners had originally left teaching. Just under half of them had left to raise a family.

²⁰ The reasons reported here are based on an analysis of responses to the non-supported returners’ survey which asked those who answered ‘other’ to say what this was. The MI data did not contain this information.

Other reasons for leaving included being unhappy or feeling unsupported in their previous school, a lack of confidence or resilience, relocation, or poor health. Three of the returners we spoke to had never taught in the English state system²¹. Most of those interviewed had been doing multiple activities since leaving teaching – most commonly raising a family. Interestingly, the returners who left to raise a family tended not to see themselves as having ‘left teaching’, but rather considered themselves to be ‘taking a career break’. Around half of the interviewed returners had remained involved in education in some way since they left, for example through working as a TA, providing supply cover or working as a private tutor.

2.6 Why did they want to return to the profession?

The NFER team again used combined data from the survey of non-supported returners and the MI data supplied by schools to identify the main reasons why potential returners had expressed an interest in returning to teaching in the English state sector. The survey offered a number of different reasons and invited respondents to specify any other reasons that were not listed. It then invited respondents to identify the main reason from those they had selected. The MI contained the same categories as the survey and schools identified the main reason given by each potential returner who applied to them for support. We used factor analysis to identify groups of responses to the multiple response question in the survey. This identified six main groups of reasons for wanting to return. The resulting groups were then applied to the combined data and the results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Why did you express an interest in returning to teach in the English state sector?

	%
Intrinsic motivation (missed the profession, make a difference, passion for their subject, inspire the next generation)	42
Family has grown up	11
Extrinsic motivation (pay, benefits, progression or holidays)	4
Unemployed/unable to establish an alternative career	4
There is no one main reason	7
Other reason	23
No response	9

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.
Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and MI data from schools, 2016.

²¹ Some of these issues were addressed through the support provided in the pilot, as set out in Section 5.6 (confidence building)

The table shows that the main group of reasons potential returners gave for wanting to return focused on the intrinsic value of teaching: because they missed the profession, wanted to relay the passion for their subject, inspire the next generation or make a difference to young people's lives. Reasons selected by smaller numbers of people included that their family had grown up, the extrinsic benefits of working in teaching (pay, benefits, progression or holidays) and unemployment/being unable to establish an alternative career. About a quarter (23 per cent) said they had another main reason for wanting to return. These other reasons²² included: an enjoyment of teaching; moving to the UK from abroad; dissatisfaction with their current career; because teaching fitted with family life; because it would enable them to use/build on their existing qualifications and skills; and for financial necessity.

2.7 How certain were they of returning?

All of our 818 survey respondents were asked how certain they were of returning to teach in an English state school when they registered their interest on the Return to Teaching website. They were asked to rate their certainty on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very uncertain', and 5 being 'completely certain'. Just under half (47 per cent) felt certain about returning, indicated by a rating of 4 or 5. Fifteen percent were uncertain (as indicated by a rating of 1 or 2). Further information about returners' certainty of returning to the profession is given in Section 4.8.

In the previous 12 months, 43 per cent of all 818 survey respondents said they had *contacted schools* with a view to returning to teach in the English state sector. Over one-third (37 per cent) had more proactively sought employment and had *applied for a teaching post* in the English state sector.

2.8 What barriers do potential returning teachers face?

We asked all of our 818 survey respondents (both supported and non-supported returners) to identify their barriers to returning to teaching in the English state sector. The surveys offered a number of different barriers and invited respondents to specify any additional barriers that they may have experienced. A subsequent question asked respondents to select one main barrier to teaching. We applied factor analysis to the results, which identified ten main barriers. These are set out in Table 8.

²² The reasons reported here are based on an analysis of responses to the non-supported returners' survey which asked those who answered 'other' to say what this was. The MI data did not contain this information.

Table 8 What is your main barrier to returning to teaching?

	%
Lack of recent experience and references, up-to-date skills and awareness of recent policy	28
Concerns about workload	12
Lack of flexible/part-time opportunities	11
A lack of confidence	11
Lack of local or relevant positions	9
Concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management	9
Concerns about pay, progression or job security	6
Previous difficulty with applying for a teaching position	5
No specific barriers	3
Not having the relevant qualifications	2
Other barrier	4
N = 818	

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

Potential returners identified a wide range of main barriers to returning to teaching, concerning both teacher-related issues and school-related issues. A lack of recent experience and knowledge was identified by over one-quarter (28 per cent) of our survey respondents. This category included: classroom experience; up to date knowledge, skills and awareness of recent policies, assessment and practice. It also included not having any recent job history or references. The Return to Teaching pilot programme offers returners practical experience and professional development to update their knowledge and skills in order to address returners' lack of recent experience.

Fewer returners cited specific barriers that may be harder to address, including a lack of confidence and concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management. These barriers would require a more tailored response that allows returners to build confidence, and acquire skills for classroom management. A lack of flexible or part-time positions, a lack of local or relevant positions, and concerns about workload, are issues that require more systemic change in working conditions and job opportunities.

We also looked at whether respondents' barriers to returning were associated with any particular subject specialism. Only a few differences were observable. A lack of local teaching positions was less of an issue for maths teachers than for any other subject (which probably reflects a general shortage of maths teachers). More computing and

science teachers identified concerns about pay or benefits and a lack of local teaching positions than teachers from other subject areas. This could be due to these individuals facing a drop in salary from an industry job in the computing or science sector, and to fewer shortages in this subject area. Lastly, more history and geography teachers identified a lack of posts for their skill or experience level as a barrier to returning than teachers from any other subject.

2.9 What support would help returners to get back into teaching in the English state sector?

All 818 survey respondents were asked what type of support they thought would help them get back into teaching in the English state sector. The types of support returners identified are shown in Table 9 below.

The responses showed that returners were seeking support with a range of aspects of returning to teaching, possibly reflecting the variety of returners and their diverse support needs. The most popular types of support they thought would help them to return were the opportunity to gain classroom experience and the opportunity to develop classroom skills. Help with searching and applying for jobs was also important, as was mentoring support.

The 'other' types of support that would help returners get back into teaching in an English state school included: financial support (e.g. to pay for childcare while they participated in a support programme, support with travel costs or funding for a paid course); support with switching sector or subject; and updates on education policy/curriculum changes.

Table 9 What types of support would help potential returners to get back into teaching?

Type of support wanted	%
Experience in a classroom (including teaching practice and observation)	77
Developing classroom skills (including subject knowledge, behaviour management, pedagogy and confidence)	74
Help with searching and applying for jobs	58
Mentoring	40
ICT Support	26
Other	10
N = 818	

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

All 818 survey respondents were also asked what features of support would be important to them. They were presented with a list of four options, and given the opportunity to specify any other important feature. The most commonly selected feature was 'support available at a school near to where I live' (64 per cent), followed by flexible start and finish dates (43 per cent); and intensive or fast track support (40 per cent). Support available outside normal working hours was selected by 22 per cent of respondents. Only six per cent identified another feature and their comments were quite diverse. The main other type of support mentioned was financial support (see Section 5 for further details on the support needs identified by returners who took up support).

2.10 Types of returning teachers

As shown in the previous sections, teachers who expressed an interest in returning to teach in the English state sector had a variety of different reasons for leaving and motivations for returning to the profession. Returning teachers also differed in the amount of previous experience they had had teaching in English state secondary schools and when they left teaching.

Latent class analysis, a statistical method for identifying clusters of individuals with similar characteristics, identified five distinct groups of returners according to: how much experience of state secondary teaching they had; when they left teaching; the reason they left teaching; and their motivation for returning. The main distinguishing characteristics of the types of returner (highlighted in dark blue) are detailed in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Distinguishing characteristics of returner types

Characteristic of returner	Type of returner				
	Idealist	Opportunist	Career breaker	Mover	Pragmatist
Motivated to return by passion for teaching: a chance to inspire and make a difference	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Motivated to return by pay, progression, or holidays	0%	27%	0%	0%	0%
Motivated to return because currently unemployed	0%	26%	0%	0%	0%
Motivated to return because family has grown up	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Main reason for leaving teaching: to raise a family	16%	15%	68%	18%	14%
No previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector	0%	27%	24%	100%	26%
Never held a teaching post	2%	5%	6%	25%	10%
Motivated to return by another reason	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; NFER survey of supported returners, 2016; Return to Teaching registration data; and MI data supplied by schools.

The descriptions which follow are based on the results of the latent class analysis, each illustrated with an individual example from among our interviewees. The research team also looked at the barriers²³ identified by different types of returner and have included this information in the descriptions below. An analysis of support needs showed that all returners identified similar needs, regardless of type. There were a few differences in the features of support that were important to different types of returner and these are detailed below.

²³ Similar proportions of all types of returner identified the following barriers: a lack of recent experience, up-to-date skills and awareness of recent policy; a lack of local or relevant positions; previous difficulties with applying for posts; not having the relevant qualifications; or stated that there were no barriers to returning.

Idealist

Idealists were distinguished by their motivation to return because they missed the profession, wanted to relay the passion for their subject, inspire the next generation or make a difference to young people's lives. However, 16 per cent of this group said they had left teaching to raise a family. They all had previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector.

Idealists made up around a third of each of our supported and non-supported survey respondents (29 per cent and 33 per cent of respondents, respectively).

Fewer Idealists (27 per cent) identified a lack of confidence as a barrier to returning than any other group.

An English teacher had taught for four years in English state secondary schools and held a senior leader role. She left the profession ten years ago because she felt unsupported by senior colleagues in her last school. She retrained to work in the legal profession and studied for a higher degree. During her studies she taught adults and this reawakened her passion for teaching. Despite her previous unhappy experience of teaching at secondary level, she had always enjoyed teaching and missed the profession. She wanted a job she felt was worthwhile, where she could inspire and motivate young people to learn and develop. She wanted the opportunity to share her passion for English literature with young people. She applied to the Return to Teaching programme to observe current teaching practice in a local school before applying for a teaching post.

Opportunist

Opportunists were primarily motivated to return to teaching by pay, progression or holidays or because they were currently unemployed. This group included some people who were inexperienced in English secondary teaching: over one-quarter (27 per cent) of this group had no previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector and a further five per cent had never held a teaching post. Fifteen per cent had left teaching to raise a family.

Only one per cent of our supported survey respondents were opportunists, compared to 30 per cent of the non-supported survey respondents.

More opportunists (cited by 32 per cent) cited concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management as a barrier than other types of returner. Fewer opportunists identified support needs across all categories than the other types of returner.

A maths teacher had taught for two-and-a-half years in an English state secondary school more than 30 years ago. Her main reason for leaving the profession was that she had found it difficult to manage pupils' challenging behaviour. Since leaving, she had been working in the IT sector before being made redundant. Her main motivation for returning to teaching was to gain employment and she was considering teaching alongside other employment options. She applied to the programme to get some current experience of schools and teaching.

Career breaker

Career breakers' main reason for leaving teaching was to raise a family and they were primarily motivated to return because their family had grown up. About a quarter (24 per cent) of this group had no previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state-funded sector.

Just over a third of the respondents to both the supported and non-supported survey sample were career breakers (14 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively).

More career breakers (46 per cent) cited a lack of flexible or part-time teaching opportunities as a barrier to returning than any other type of returner. Career breakers were least likely to cite concerns about pay, progression or job security than other types of returner (cited by nine per cent of career breakers). More career breakers (39 per cent) identified a lack of confidence as a barrier than any other type of returner. In relation to the features of support they wanted, more career breakers (77 per cent) than other type of returner selected 'support available at a school near to where I live' as an important feature. Also, a relatively high proportion of career breakers (47 per cent) said that flexible start and finish dates were important to them.

A geography teacher had taught for eight years in English state secondary schools and held senior leader positions. Her reason for leaving the profession was to have a career break to raise a family. Since leaving, she had been caring for her children full time for seven years. She always intended to return to teaching once her youngest child started school. She is passionate about teaching and confident in her teaching abilities. She applied to the programme because she was aware of the significant changes in education in the years since she had last taught.

Mover

Movers had no previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector and a quarter had never held a teaching post. Fifteen per cent of respondents to both the supported and non-supported survey were movers.

Movers were least likely to identify a lack of flexible or part-time positions as a barrier to returning (18 per cent of movers identified this as a barrier). Few movers (11 per cent) cited concerns about pay, progression or job security. Movers cited support needs (across all categories, apart from help with ICT) more than any other type of returner.

A Spanish teacher had gained an undergraduate degree and a masters in teaching modern foreign languages in Spain. He taught briefly before leaving to work in tourism. He was unable to obtain another teaching post in Spain due to a shortage of teaching jobs so he moved to England to seek employment. He had never taught in an English state secondary school but had gained QTS as a teacher of social sciences. He applied to the programme to gain teaching experience in an English school and get a better understanding of the education system. He was also looking for support to find a job as a teacher of modern foreign languages.

Pragmatist

Pragmatists were primarily distinguished from the other groups because they were motivated to return by reasons other than those listed in the survey or MI²⁴. About one-quarter (26 per cent) had no previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector and ten per cent had never held a teaching post.

Forty-one per cent of our supported survey respondents were pragmatists, compared to 11 per cent of the non-supported respondents.

Compared with the other groups, a relatively high proportion (26 per cent) of pragmatists cited concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management as barriers to returning to teaching. In addition, a relatively high proportion (48 per cent) said that flexible start and finish dates were important features of support for them.

A biology teacher had previously taught for five years: two years in English state secondary schools and three years overseas. Although she enjoyed teaching, she never viewed it as a lifelong career. She decided to leave the profession over 15 years ago to undertake further education. Having gained a masters degree and a PhD she went on to work in research. She considered returning to teaching after starting to become dissatisfied with aspects of her current role. She applied to the programme to 'dip her toe back in the water and see what it [teaching in schools] was like'.

²⁴ As noted earlier, these reasons included: an enjoyment of teaching; moving to the UK from abroad; dissatisfaction with their current career; because teaching fitted with family life; because it would enable them to use/build on their existing qualifications and skills; and for financial necessity.

3 What influenced returners to apply for the programme and how were they selected?

Key messages

- Two-thirds (66 per cent) of non-supported returners were aware of the Return to Teaching pilot. They had two main reasons for not taking part: there was no local support available; or they were unclear about the support offer. About one-quarter (23 per cent) were not ready to access support because they had not made a firm decision to return to teaching.
- Supported returners were typically: female (76 per cent); pragmatists (41 per cent) or idealists (29 per cent); taught a range of EBacc subjects; had left teaching within the last ten years (though 15 per cent left over ten years ago and 11 per cent had never held a teaching post); and lacked experience of teaching in the English state secondary sector (54 per cent, including 24 per cent who were primary trained).
- Interviews with 30 returners identified a desire for school experience and confidence building as the main reasons for applying to the programme. Features of the programme that appealed were its flexibility to fit around other commitments, it was free and they did not have to commit to returning before receiving support.
- Interviews with 23 school representatives found that they commonly used application forms, skills audits and interviews to select applicants for support. Schools found that some returners were easier to support than others, given their knowledge, skills, experience and personal qualities. Some were of such high quality they needed very little support.
- Most of the school interviewees had supported fewer returners than they initially intended. This was largely due to a lack of suitable applicants. Schools which selected potential returners they thought would benefit most from their support found it easier to support their returners than schools which accepted all who applied for support. Interviewees said it was challenging to accommodate returners' diverse support needs, especially in relation to those lacking classroom experience.

3.1 Introduction

Some returning teachers applied for support from the Return to Teaching pilot programme, others were not aware of the programme or were aware of it but did not take part. This section sets out the reasons given by non-supported survey respondents for not taking up the offer of support. It also looks at why the supported returners chose to

apply, and how schools selected participants and responded to their needs. The section ends with a descriptive profile of the supported returners.

3.2 Why non-supported returners did not receive support from the pilot programme

The survey of non-supported returners included some questions about the Return to Teaching pilot programme. The first of these questions provided information about the programme and asked returners whether they were aware of it. Two-thirds (66 per cent) said they were aware of the programme; 21 per cent said they had not heard of it and ten per cent were unsure. The 359 who were aware of the programme (excluding the four per cent of returners who previously said they had decided not to return to teaching) were asked why they were not receiving support from the programme. They were presented with a list of possible reasons and given the option to specify any other reason that was not in the list. The responses are set out in Table 11.

Some of the reasons were related to the returners' circumstances rather than to the programme. About a quarter of respondents (23 per cent) had not yet made a firm decision to return to teaching; 16 per cent still intended to apply for support; 13 per cent stated that the support was not available at the right point in time for them and six per cent had already secured a teaching job. Other reasons related to the reach, format or content of the pilot programme. For example, around a third of the potential returners stated that there was no local support available or said they were not clear about the support on offer (despite having heard of the programme). Further, 12 per cent stated that the hours of support offered did not suit their current personal or work commitments; 11 per cent could not afford to access the support; ten per cent did not want to teach an EBacc subject; and eight per cent stated that the programme did not offer the support that they needed²⁵.

Twelve per cent of respondents specified an 'other' reason for not taking part. These included: that they lived abroad; they wanted to teach in primary schools; or they were waiting for a school to get back to them about their potential involvement.

Section 7 of this report makes recommendations for the format of any future support drawing on some of answers to this question.

²⁵ Almost half of these respondents stated that the support they needed was support to return to teach in the primary sector.

Table 11 We understand that you are not currently receiving support from the Return to Teaching programme. Please could you tell us why?

	%
There is no local support available	33
I'm not clear about the support on offer	32
I am not yet ready to access support as I have not yet made a firm decision to return to teaching	23
I still intend to apply for support through the Return to Teaching programme	16
The support was not available at the right point in time	13
The hours of the support offered did not fit with my current work/personal commitments	12
I couldn't afford to access the support	11
I do not want to teach an EBacc subject in a secondary school	10
The programme does not offer the support I need	8
I have already secured a teaching job	6
I accessed alternative support	4
I am receiving support from a school as part of the Return to Teaching programme	3
I did not want to teach at the local school offering support	2
Other	12
No response	1
N = 359	

A filter question: those who said they had heard of the programme and did not say they had decided not to return to teaching.

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

3.3 The profile of the supported returners

We received 241 responses to our survey of supported returners. The achieved sample was representative²⁶ of the total sample of supported returners in the MI data provided

²⁶ In relation to gender, subject and length of time out of teaching.

by the NCTL (see Appendix B). Providing details of the achieved sample offers the following insights into the profile of supported returners.

- Seventy-six per cent of respondents were female, and 23 per cent were male.
- Forty-one per cent of the supported survey respondents fell into our pragmatist group. Twenty-nine per cent were idealists, 15 per cent were movers, 14 per cent were career breakers and just one per cent were opportunists.
- The respondents were supported by 48 different schools.
- The main subjects our respondents applied to teach were: modern languages (23 per cent), English (21 per cent), history/geography (15 per cent), science subjects (13 per cent), Mathematics (12 per cent), and computer studies (five per cent)²⁷. This profile of subjects is similar to that in the overall registrant data set.
- Just under half of supported survey respondents²⁸ (46 per cent) had left teaching within the last ten years (24 per cent had left in the last five years). Fifteen per cent left over ten years ago, and 11 per cent of our respondents had never held a teaching post.
- The main reasons they gave for leaving teaching were: to raise a family (21 per cent); to teach elsewhere (abroad or in the non-state sector) (21 per cent); or for a change of career (20 per cent).
- Their main motivations for returning to teaching were: intrinsically motivated (they missed the profession, wanted to make a difference, their passion for their subject, or to inspire the next generation) (cited by 39 per cent) or because their family had grown up (13 per cent).
- Their barriers to returning were a lack of recent experience, up-to-date skills and awareness of recent policy (84 per cent); a lack of confidence (36 per cent); a lack of flexible or part-time jobs (25 per cent); concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management (23 per cent), concerns about workload (22 per cent) and a lack of local or relevant teaching positions (20 per cent).
- Over half of the respondents lacked experience in the English state secondary sector: 28 per cent had no secondary teaching experience in the English state sector; 19 per cent had only completed their training year and a further seven per cent had only completed their training year plus an additional qualifying year. One quarter (24 per cent) of respondents had four or more years of experience.

²⁷ Note that people who were identified for contact as part of the DfE STEM returners pilot were excluded from the survey sample, to avoid cross over with the evaluation for that programme.

²⁸ Data on the length of time that non-supported teachers had been out of the profession is not currently available. The data gathered at registration was too inconsistently recorded to be analysed at this stage.

- About one-quarter (24 per cent) had experience of primary teaching in the English state sector. Most of these respondents had less than four years of experience in the primary sector.
- Just over half (51 per cent) of respondents had received all or most of the support that was planned for them by the time they completed the survey. Fifteen per cent had received 'about half of the support'; 13 per cent 'a small amount' of support; 11 per cent were not sure, and seven per cent had not yet received any support²⁹.

3.4 Why supported returners applied for support

Turning now to returners who were receiving support, their reasons for returning and support needs were similar to those identified by all potential returners (see Section 2.6 and 2.9).

We asked the 30 returners we interviewed why they had applied for support, and what appealed to them about the programme. The main reasons they gave for applying to the pilot programme was to spend time in schools to refresh their classroom skills and to improve their confidence. Some of our interviewees applied for support in the hope of securing a teaching job or to convert from primary to secondary level teaching. Teachers who trained abroad and had no previous experience of teaching in England said their main reason for applying to the programme was to learn about teaching in the English state education system.

In addition to the opportunity to facilitate their return to teaching, interviewees also identified specific aspects of the programme that appealed. These included: access to support that fitted around their other commitments (for example, work commitments, childcare, other caring responsibilities); that the programme was free of charge; and that they were not required to make a commitment to return to teaching as a prerequisite of receiving support.

Section 5.3 provides further detail on the types of support that supported returners felt would help them to get back into teaching.

3.5 Schools' assessment of suitable applicants

We asked our 23 school-based interviewees how they identified returners' support needs, and about the extent of differentiation in the support they required.

²⁹ Respondents who had not yet received any support were routed away from any questions about support received, satisfaction, confidence or certainty after support, and were not asked to rate how far the support had met their needs. See Appendix D for more details of the survey.

3.5.1 The application process

Schools commonly used an application form, a skills audit, or a combination of both to assess applicants' needs. They also used interviews or 'informal chats' with applicants, either face-to-face or by telephone, where they discussed returners' strengths and weaknesses in relation to teaching standards. In a few cases, schools also observed returners teaching a lesson (or part of a lesson). Some school interviewees said they had specifically looked for a positivity about or commitment to returning to the profession. Through these processes it became evident to schools that applicants had a very diverse range of support needs, which some had not anticipated when they initially applied to be part of the pilot programme.

3.5.2 The differing support needs and quality of returners

All 23 school interviewees stated that some returners were much easier to support than others. They observed that returners needed different levels of support, ranging from very substantial to very little. The reasons for this included:

- **How recently they had taught in an English state secondary school.** If returners had been absent from the profession for a short period (less than five years) they usually needed less support than if they had been out of teaching for longer.
- **Whether they had experience of the English state secondary education system.** Where this was lacking (for example for those who had trained and taught overseas), returners usually needed more support than those who had previous experience within the English system.
- **Whether they had a sufficient command of the English language** (including both knowledge and use of English). For example, one interviewee found that a returner who gained their teaching qualification overseas had good conversational skills in English but their specialist vocabulary for teaching maths was poor.
- **Whether they had experience of secondary school teaching in the state sector.** Returners who only had experience of teaching in primary school, middle school or FE settings had greater support needs than those who had previous experience of teaching at secondary level.
- **The depth of returners' subject experience.** Interviewees said that subject specialists usually required less support than returners who were converting to an EBacc subject from another subject area. An interviewee contrasted the needs of two returners: one had very limited knowledge of the Key Stage 4 curriculum and needed considerable support to meet the standards to teach GCSE; whereas the other was a 'fantastic' subject specialist who could work independently, knew about recent changes to assessment standards and needed little support.

- **The amount of time the returner could give to the process.** If a returner did not have time available to devote to the support or found it difficult to attend lessons during the school day, because of existing employment or childcare commitments, for example, then meeting their support needs was more challenging for schools.
- **The personal characteristics, attitudes and expectations of returners.** Interviewees said that levels of support varied considerably depending on returners' levels of confidence, resilience, motivation and professionalism. Some returners had unrealistic expectations that they would receive more support than the school could accommodate. This was particularly associated with returners changing subject specialism and teachers who had trained and taught overseas. Schools noted that some returners expected more support than the programme was designed to offer.

School interviewees stated that the quality of applicants was variable. However, some said it was difficult to identify the extent of returners' needs at enrolment stage, and these only became apparent during the course of support. For example, one school assumed that a returner who had not completed her NQT year and had taken a career break to have a family would have been one of the more difficult returners to support due to her lack of teaching experience. This proved not to be the case, and the returner was successful in gaining a teaching job at the end of the programme. In other cases, schools noted that the quality and employability of individual applicants was so high that they questioned their need to get support from the pilot programme. Interviewees felt that these applicants could have 'walked into a job'. However, schools also noted that some applicants were very difficult to support and doubted that these returners would make it back to the profession. Returners who were more difficult to support included those: who had never taught in the UK; had spent considerable time out of teaching; were changing phase or subject; lacked confidence and needed considerable reassurance; or lacked 'professionalism' (for example, they arrived late or did not attend when agreed).

The following example is based on an interview with a member of staff at one of the schools providing support.

A school recruited a number of returners to its programme but found the quality of applicants to be highly variable. Returners' support needs ranged from some who just needed an update on their subject knowledge to others who needed a significant amount of support across a range of areas before they could meet the necessary standards.

Staff reflected that those with the most extensive support needs had previously left the profession as a result of negative experiences, including challenges with pupil behaviour or feeling isolated and unsupported at school. These individuals typically had issues with low confidence, self-esteem and anxiety, and not all of them were fully committed to the idea of returning. The school interviewee said: *They didn't leave because they are strong teachers, they left because of reasons such as managing behaviour and at the back of their minds they may well be thinking 'do I want to return to this?'*

The school found that these returners took up much more staff time than they had initially anticipated. While the majority of returners completed the programme, two dropped out part way through as they felt they would be unable to cope with returning to the classroom in the near future.

3.5.3 Selection criteria

The interviewees' schools supported between one and 22 returners. The majority supported between six and ten returners each. All but three of the school staff we spoke to had recruited fewer returners than they had initially intended. This was largely due to a lack of suitable applicants. Some schools were highly selective and only accepted the strongest candidates who would require minimum levels of support to get back into teaching. As one said: 'If you've got weak people going back into the profession that's not really helping, just because you've got another body'.

All but six of the 23 school interviewees had rejected at least one applicant; some had rejected as many as seven. Reasons for rejecting applicants included: not being eligible for the programme (not having QTS or not wanting to teach an EBacc subject); because they lacked teaching experience or experience of the English secondary sector; poor English and/or communication skills; performing poorly in their assessment interview; for not being of high enough quality; or lacking subject knowledge. Some schools rejected candidates who required support beyond what the school could accommodate (for example, a school rejected someone who had been out of teaching for 25 years and who needed a full reintroduction to the system, rather than the simpler 'refresher' programme the school had planned to offer). Schools also supported fewer returners than they had intended because they had few applications, or because of limited staff time to dedicate to recruiting, assessing and supporting the returners. The diversity of the returners' needs also limited some schools' capacity for providing support to larger numbers of returners.

Other schools were keen to support all returners who had applied to them, regardless of their level of support needs, as one interviewee explained: ‘The vast majority [of returners who applied] are not ones you’d select if you had a big field, but actually needs must when you haven’t got teachers in front of kids.’ The difficulty of supporting some of these less strong/high quality applicants led some interviewees to reflect on their initial decisions, stating that in the future, they would be more selective. The lack of scrutiny by some schools of whom they chose to support was influenced by their lack of choice of applicants and the short timescales in which to recruit and deliver the support and qualify for the programme funding.

3.5.4 The balance of common and bespoke elements of support

Given the diversity of returners’ needs, the support provided by schools was, as intended, tailored to address the needs of individual returners. However, most schools identified some common types of support, and delivered certain elements to all of their returners. These included: CPD sessions on policy developments, behaviour management, assessment and subject knowledge enhancement.

Some schools found it harder to offer more bespoke support or classroom experience and instead focused their programmes on the more standardised common support elements that could be delivered away from the classroom. Further information on the different types of support provided and returners’ views is provided in Section 5, which explores how far the programme met returners’ needs.

4 How successful was the pilot in securing additional returners back into teaching?

Summary of key points

- Twenty-seven³⁰ of the 354 returners who received support from the Return to Teaching pilot (eight per cent) were identified as teaching EBacc subjects in permanent teaching posts in state-funded secondary schools in the November 2016 School Workforce Census (SWC)³¹.
- A further 35 returned to teaching in a state-funded school (but either not in a permanent position, or not teaching an EBacc subject in a secondary school), providing a combined total of 62 (18 per cent) of the supported returners who successfully gained employment teaching in the state-funded sector. This compares to 40 (less than one per cent of) non-supported returners who took up a permanent teaching post in an EBacc subject in the state-funded secondary sector even though they did not receive support.
- However, the comparison with non-supported potential returners is likely to over-estimate the impact of the programme, as supported returners were already more certain of returning before taking up support.
- Return rates were higher among career breakers than other groups of returners.
- The research team estimated the cost per additional returner teaching an EBacc subject in a permanent teaching post in a state-funded secondary school to be £37,400. This is similar to the cost of training a new teacher, but does not take account of other considerations, including the fact that returners may have lower retention rates. They are also older and therefore likely to have a shorter career than a newly qualified teacher.
- Supported returners' ratings of their certainty about returning and confidence in returning were statistically significantly higher after they had received support.
- Interviews with returners and schools identified three common barriers to employment for supported returners: the timing of the pilot which meant that there were few teaching posts immediately available in the following September (especially for those who received support after May); the continuing support needs of some returners; and the limited availability of part-time work.

³¹ Note that the SWC is likely to provide a slight under-estimate of the actual number of returners due to missing data.

4.1 Sources of data on employment and their limitations

This evaluation used three data sources to give an indication of the success of the pilot in securing employment in teaching for returners: matching individuals to their records in the 2016 SWC, the supported survey (and non-supported survey, for comparison) and the MI data, which was only collected for supported returners.

The definition of supported returner employment that schools were incentivised to achieve was: a permanent teaching position (can be part-time or full-time) in a secondary EBacc subject in a state-funded school in England by November 2016.

There are limitations on each data source which impact on its reliability as a measure of employment in teaching, which could result in an under- or over-estimate of the true employment rate.

The employment rate from matched SWC data is likely to be the most accurate measure of returners employed in teaching. However, it may underestimate the number employed because of mismatched or missing records: either due to inaccurate MI data that failed to match with a corresponding record in the SWC, or incomplete records within the SWC itself. The extent of incomplete records in the SWC is unknown, but may disproportionately affect teachers that are newly employed in a school, because schools may not report the most recent contracts when the SWC data is collected in November.

The survey measure of employment in teaching is the self-reported response to the question 'Have you taken up a teaching post in the English state sector?'. The term 'teaching post' could have been interpreted as including employment in the HE or FE sectors; as a supply teacher; or possibly as a teaching assistant. It could also include teaching a non-EBacc subject.

The MI data contained a training status variable, with one response being 'Training complete – in employment'. From the accompanying notes recorded by school staff, it is clear that some of the returners with this status were employed in the HE or FE sectors, as supply teachers or teaching assistants. For others, their employment role was unclear (for example, a school name is given without a specified role).

These limitations suggest that both the survey and MI measures are more likely to overestimate the true employment rate. However, these measures could also have failed to capture some genuine cases of employment that were subsequently achieved. This is because the MI data was collected in September 2016 and responses to the survey were received between June and October 2016.

Finally, these figures should not be interpreted as additional employment achieved as a result of the support returners received because some of those who successfully gained employment might have gained employment in the absence of support. See section 4.4

for a discussion of the counterfactual employment rate and rate of additional employment.

4.2 Employment rates for supported returners

MI data from September 2016 shows that 354³² potential returners started receiving support from a school as part of the Return to Teaching programme. Sixty-two³³ individuals were identified in the November 2016 SWC, showing they had successfully returned to teaching. However, only 27 were employed on a permanent contract to teach an EBacc subject in a secondary school, which was the target outcome of the pilot. Nine were employed in primary or special schools and 25 were employed on a fixed term, temporary or service agreement contract in a secondary school. One of those permanently employed by a secondary school for whom data was available³⁴ was not teaching an EBacc subject.

Table 12 summarises the available data on the broader measure of supported returners successfully returning to teaching in a state-funded school (regardless of phase, contract type and subject taught). Despite the caveats outlined above, the data gives an impression of the employment rate of supported returners in teaching, though not necessarily in a permanent teaching post as a secondary teacher of an EBacc subject.

³² The numbers of returners supported differs to the number stated in a Freedom of information (FOI) response in February 2017. The number reported at this time was 426, as this was the number who had been recruited to the programme. Some returners were subsequently withdrawn from the programme, or failed to commence training. As such the number actually supported is lower.

³³ The numbers of employed returners cited here differs to that given in an FOI response in February 2017. School Workforce Census (SWC) data was used to respond to the FOI in February 2017, which showed that 49 returners were employed at that time; however, the dataset was only finalised in July 2017. This report used the completed SWC data, and therefore shows a higher number of 62 employed returners.

³⁴ Around a third of secondary schools had no SWC data on which subject each teacher teaches because their management information system does not allow for subject data to be collected. Ten returners permanently employed by a secondary school had missing subject information.

Table 12 Measures of employment outcomes for supported returners

Measure of employment	Source	Proportion employed	Limitations
Successfully matched to a teacher record in the 2016 SWC	SWC	18% N = 62/354	Could underestimate the true employment rate due to mismatched records.
Have you taken up a teaching post in the English state sector? = "Yes"	Supported returners survey	22% N = 53/241	Could include employment in HE, FE, as teaching assistant or supply teacher and non-EBacc subjects. Might miss successful employment because of the timing of data collection.
Training status = "Training complete – in employment" ¹	MI data	25% N = 89/354	

The three sources of data, together and in the context of their limitations, indicate that around one-fifth of returners who received support successfully gained employment in teaching by the following November.

Findings from our interviews resonate with these figures. Eight of the thirty supported teachers we interviewed had secured a teaching post in an English state school. Three of these were temporary positions. Four posts were in the same school or group of schools that had provided the returner with support. In addition, one interviewee had secured a post in an independent school.

The survey data showed no relationship between the proportion of supported returners who had taken up a teaching post and the amount of support that they had received. The proportion who said they had taken up a teaching post in the English state sector was 19 per cent for those who had received a small amount of support, 24 per cent for those who had received half or most of the support and 20 per cent for those who had received all of the support.

The proportion of supported returners who said they were in employment was higher for those who had accessed other support to help get them back into teaching (32 per cent) compared to those that had not (19 per cent). However, this may reflect those seeking further support being more prepared and motivated to return anyway, rather than the impact of the other support on employment.

4.3 Employment rates for non-supported returners

Having established the return rate among returners who received support from the programme, it is important to estimate whether any of them might have returned even if they had not received support. Two data sources give an indication of the employment rate among non-supported returners: matching individuals from the registration data to their records in the 2016 SWC; and the same employment question from the non-supported survey. A third measure of the employment rate in the population (almost all of whom did not receive support) was derived from national data (DfE, 2017b). This includes the number of teachers returning to teach in a state-funded secondary school in November 2015 and the number of qualified teachers out of service aged under 60 who had left secondary teaching (derived from an extract of the Database of Teacher Records in March 2015).

Table 13 summarises the available data on the employment of non-supported returners. The SWC data shows that four per cent of non-supported returners were identified as employed in teaching, although it is likely to underestimate the employment rate among non-supported returners because of mismatched records. Fifty-one of the 207 registrants who were identified in the SWC were permanently employed and teaching in a state-funded secondary school, which represents one per cent of non-supported returners. We know that 30 of these were definitely teaching an EBacc subject and 11 were definitely teaching a non-EBacc subject. Ten non-supported returners were permanently employed by a secondary school, but had missing subject information. Therefore, up to 40 non-supported returners were permanently employed teaching an EBacc subject in a secondary school, which represents less than one per cent of registrants.

The survey found that 12 per cent of non-supported returners said they had taken up a teaching post in the English state sector, although this is likely to overestimate the employment rate in teaching because it may have been interpreted to include employment in roles other than as a secondary school teacher of an EBacc subject. Nationally, six per cent of qualified secondary school teachers returned to the state-funded sector in 2015 (DfE, 2017b).

Table 13 Measures of employment outcomes for non-supported returners

Measure of employment	Source	Proportion employed	Limitations
Successfully matched to a teacher record in the 2016 SWC	Registration data and SWC	4% N=207/5,134	Likely to underestimate the true employment rate due to mismatched records.
Have you taken up a teaching post in the English state sector? = "Yes"	Non-supported returners survey	13% N = 67/577	Likely to include employment in HE, FE, as teaching assistant or supply teacher and non-EBacc subjects. But might miss successful employment because of the timing of data collection.
Returners to the state-funded sector in 2015 SWC divided by out of service teachers aged under 60 who were last in service in a secondary school.	Database of Teacher Records and SWC	6% N = 7,288/ 126,800	Not derived from returners registering an interest in receiving support: many likely to be less motivated to return, others may not have felt they required support to return.

Sources: School Workforce Census, 2016; NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and School Workforce in England: November 2016 SFR25/2017, Table 22; analysis of School Workforce Census, 2015.

Similar to the supported returner employment rate, each source of data has limitations which affect its reliability, as set out above. The employment rate from matched SWC data is likely to underestimate the number employed in teaching because of mismatched records. This is particularly the case for the registration data because the data from the returners who registered their interest in returning to teaching but did not take up support was only matched using name and region (it did not include date of birth or teacher reference number), which reduced the accuracy of the match.

4.4 Exploring additionality

As well as the limitations on the datasets, comparisons between the employment figures for supported and non-supported returners are not valid estimates of the programme's additionality because non-supported and supported returners were different in important respects that are related to their likelihood of returning to teaching. Supported returners' survey responses suggest that they were more likely to return to teaching irrespective of the support they received. For example, 61 per cent of supported returners said they were certain or completely certain of intending to return to teaching in an English state

school (as indicated by a rating of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale), compared to 42 per cent of non-supported returners (see Table 19 for further details). Also, more of the supported returners had already taken steps towards returning. For example, 48 per cent of supported returners said they had contacted schools in the 12 months prior to applying for support, compared with 40 per cent of non-supported returners³⁵.

The non-supported survey asked respondents when they were planning to return to teaching. Their responses are detailed in Table 14 below.

Table 14 When non-supported returners were planning to return

	%
I have decided not to return to teaching	4
In the coming academic year (2016/17)	30
In the next academic year (2017/18)	11
In 3 years or more	5
I am undecided	41
I have already returned to teaching in the English state sector	8
No response	1
N=577	100

Responses may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Forty-one per cent of the non-supported respondents stated that they were undecided about when they would return. The same proportion (41 per cent) of non-supported returners intended to return in the next two years, either in the coming academic year (30 per cent) or the following year (11 per cent). A small proportion³⁶ (eight per cent) had already returned to teaching at the time of the survey and a further four per cent had decided not to return.

The difference in employment rates between the supported and non-supported returners could therefore be affected by differences in the composition of the groups, and their certainty in or speed of returning. For this reason, comparing return rates among supported and non-supported returners is likely to result in an over-estimate of how much additional employment was achieved as a result of the support itself. In particular,

³⁵ Non-supported returners were asked whether they had contacted any schools with a view to returning to teach in the English state sector in the last 12 months.

³⁶ Note that this is lower than the 13 per cent who said they had 'taken up a teaching post in the English state sector'. This could be because some of these people had secured a teaching post and would be starting work in the coming academic year (which was another response option for this question).

returners who did not apply for support are likely to be less motivated to return than the average supported returner.

Sub-group analysis comparing non-supported returners was undertaken to try to obtain a better estimate of the counterfactual (i.e. what would have happened to participants in the absence of the Return to Teaching programme). The hypothesis underlying this analysis was that non-supported returners who did not live near a provider were more likely to face practical barriers to taking up support, rather than motivational barriers. Practical barriers are less likely to be linked to willingness to return to teaching than motivational ones, so the return rate of non-supported returners was predicted to be slightly higher in these areas (because they included some highly motivated individuals who were unable to access support), and could therefore provide a better comparison of the programme's impact.

The analysis showed that non-supported returners who lived more than 30 kilometres away³⁷ from the nearest support provider had an employment rate of three per cent, which is lower than the average for all non-supported returners (four per cent). This is the opposite of what was initially expected. The likely explanation is that fewer employment opportunities were available in the comparison areas. Schools participating in the Return to Teaching pilot had to show evidence of difficulties in filling vacancies. This suggests that the sub-group of non-supported returners who did not have providers near them tended to live in areas where there were fewer vacancies. This sub-group of non-supported returners may have also lived in more sparsely populated areas that have fewer schools and therefore fewer opportunities to return to teaching. This analysis did not therefore shed any additional light on the true employment rate among people with appropriate qualifications who were interested in returning to teaching.

4.5 Employment rates for different types of returner

The employment rate differed between types of returner (identified through latent class analysis of their survey responses), though some of this variation is likely to have occurred by chance because of small sample sizes. Table 15 shows the return rates of different types of returner (defined as teaching in a state-funded school according to the SWC data). Table 16 shows the self-reported return rates of different types of returner using the survey data. Both tables include the number of respondents in each category because of the small numbers involved.

³⁷ The analysis was based on English postcode and therefore excluded returners from outside England.

Table 15 Return rates among different types of returner, based on the 2016 SWC

Type of returner	Supported returners		Non-supported returners	
	Employment rate (%)	N	Employment rate (%)	N
Idealists	19	118	5	184
Opportunists	*	11	4	165
Career breakers	35	46	5	65
Movers	12	51	1	80
Pragmatists	14	125	3	64

Sources: School Workforce Census, 2016.

* The proportion of supported opportunists is not reported as it is based on only eleven cases.

Table 16 Self-reported return rates among different types of returner, based on the survey data

Type of returner	Supported returners		Non-supported returners	
	Employment rate (%)	N	Employment rate (%)	N
Idealists	21	68	15	180
Opportunists	*	3	8	154
Career breakers	39	33	12	66
Movers	11	35	15	80
Pragmatists	23	91	13	36

Sources: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

* The proportion of supported opportunists is not reported as it is based on only three cases.

The employment rate was particularly high (35 per cent in the SWC data and 39 per cent in the survey data) amongst supported career breakers. This suggests that either career breakers were the most ready to return, or that the support was particularly effective for career breakers, or that both are important factors. It is impossible to establish which of these explanations is most accurate from the data and it is important to view this apparent relationship with caution, given the relatively small numbers involved.

4.6 The profile of supported returners compared to all returners

There are some observable differences in the profile of the supported returners when compared to the profile of all returners, nationally (based on analysis of the 2015 SWC).

Supported returners who went on to secure employment in teaching were mostly in their thirties and forties (81 per cent, N = 50/62), which compares to 65 per cent of all the teachers who returned to teach in the state-funded secondary sector in 2015. A greater proportion of supported returners who went on to secure employment were also female (85 per cent, N = 53/62) than among returners more generally (64 per cent). The proportion of supported returners employed in teaching on a part-time contract (40 per cent, N = 25/62) was higher than among all returners (28 per cent). Supported returners employed in teaching were more likely to be teaching EBacc subjects (95 per cent, N = 35/37) than returners more generally (57 per cent). This may be because support was only offered to returners who wanted to return to teach EBacc subjects, and because participating schools had faced challenges in filling vacancies in EBacc subjects. One-third of supported returners employed in teaching were teaching languages (32 per cent, N = 12/37), compared to just six per cent of all returners.

Table 17 shows an estimate of the proportion of qualified out of service teachers who returned to teaching in the state-funded sector in 2015. Inactive secondary school teachers were identified from the Database of Teacher Records (DTR) as qualified out of service teachers who were previously in service in an English secondary school. Returners have been identified as entrants in the 2015 SWC who have a record of previous service in the DTR. The data shows that younger inactive teachers are more likely to return to teaching in the state-funded sector, though they are smaller in number. It also shows that the differences between male and female return rates within each age band are very small.

Table 17 Return rate of qualified out of service teachers, by age and gender

Age group	Gender	Number of inactive teachers ¹	Number of returners	Return rate
20-29	Male	2,300	321	14%
	Female	5,200	759	15%
30-39	Male	9,500	923	10%
	Female	22,800	1,745	8%
40-49	Male	13,000	753	6%
	Female	25,800	1,384	5%
50-59	Male	17,300	588	3%
	Female	30,800	815	3%

Sources: School Workforce in England SFR25/2017, Table 22 and School Workforce Census, 2015.

¹Qualified teachers out of service (excluding those who are receiving a pension from the Teachers Pension Scheme) in March 2015 who were previously in service in a secondary school.

4.7 Cost effectiveness of the pilot

Data on the total grant cost of the pilot was provided to NFER by the NCTL. The data shows that the total cost of grant payments to schools for delivering the pilot was £586,900. The funding covered support for 412 returners who started training, implying an average grant cost per participant of £1,425.

Eight per cent of supported returners were permanently employed teaching an EBacc subject in a state-funded secondary school. This implies that the average cost per supported returner employed was £17,800.

We can compare the above cost with the average cost of initial teacher training to consider the cost of the Return to Teaching pilot against possible alternative ways of increasing teacher supply. Research by Allen *et al.* (2016) suggests that the average cost of teacher training per trainee employed in teaching after one year³⁸ ranged between £33,300 and £46,900, depending on the training route. The cost per returner employed is therefore less than the average cost of training a new teacher.

However, there are several reasons why comparing these alternatives directly may not be appropriate. First, some of the supported returners who gained employment may have

³⁸ Allen *et al.*, (2016), author's calculations using Table 8.1: 'Average central cost (secondary)' plus 'Average school cost (secondary)', divided by the mid-point of the one-year retention rate (secondary).

done so without support. This would represent the 'deadweight' cost of the programme: i.e. providing support for participants who would have been employed anyway. The average cost per *additional* supported returner employed is the most relevant figure to draw wider comparisons with, for example, the cost of teacher training.

As discussed in Section 4.4, comparisons between the employment rates for supported and non-supported returners are not valid estimates of the programme's additionality because non-supported and supported returners were different in important respects that are related to their likelihood of returning to teaching. Assuming that half of the supported returners who gained employment would have done so without support and the other half gained employment as a result of the pilot implies that the average cost per *additional* supported returner employed was £37,400. This figure is within the range of costs for training new teachers, depending on training route (Appendix B considers a range of scenarios for the rate of additional employment, and the implications of each for cost effectiveness).

Another important consideration in judging the cost-effectiveness of the pilot is the subsequent career lengths and longer-term retention rates, which may differ between trainee teachers and supported returners. For example, research by the Department for Education (DfE, 2017c) found that the odds of returners leaving teaching after their first year back in teaching is 60 per cent higher than average³⁹. However, the odds of teachers in the first few years of their career leaving teaching is also higher than average (DfE, 2017c).

We directly compared the retention rates of returners and NQTs using data from the School Workforce Census, and found that returners have lower retention rates than NQTs over the medium term. Among the cohort of returners that returned to work in a secondary school in 2011, 32 per cent were out of service four years later and a further two per cent had retired. This compares to 29 per cent of the cohort of NQTs who started working in a secondary school in 2011, but who were not teaching in the state-funded sector ('out of service') in 2015.

Our comparisons of cost effectiveness are also complicated by the fact that they do not include the initial cost of training returners in the first place, because supported returners are qualified teachers (though these costs would have been borne by other countries in the case of teachers who trained outside the UK).

Despite the uncertainty and complexity of drawing cost effectiveness comparisons with alternative sources of teacher supply, it seems unlikely that the Return to Teaching pilot offered good value for money. This is because, making reasonable assumptions about

³⁹ It is possible that participation in the programme will increase the odds of returners staying in the profession because they are better prepared to return, but we are not currently able to identify whether this is the case.

the rate of *additional* permanent employment teaching an EBacc subject, the average cost per additional employed returner was similar to or higher than the average cost of training a new teacher. Further considerations, such as shorter subsequent careers of returners compared to new trainees and the cost of training returners in the first place, suggest that the cost effectiveness of the Return to Teaching pilot is relatively poor over the longer-term.

4.8 Impacts on returner certainty and confidence about returning to teach

This section considers self-reported impacts of the Return to Teaching pilot programme on teachers' certainty and confidence about returning to teach (as opposed to actual rates of re-employment).

4.8.1 Certainty of returning

All 818 survey respondents (both supported and non-supported returners) were asked how certain they were of returning to teach in an English state school at the time they registered their interest on the Return to Teaching website. They were asked to rate their certainty on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very uncertain', and 5 being 'completely certain'. Their responses can be seen in Table 18, which also includes a breakdown of responses by whether or not they received support from a pilot school.

Table 18 When you registered on the Return to Teaching website, how certain were you of your intention to return to teaching in an English state school?

	% all returners	% supported returners	% non-supported returners
1 Very uncertain	4	3	4
2	11	7	13
3	33	25	37
4	22	24	22
5 Completely certain	25	37	20
No response	4	3	4
Total n	818	241	577

Responses may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016

The table shows that just under half (47 per cent) of all survey respondents felt certain about returning, indicated by a rating of 4 or 5. Fifteen per cent were uncertain (as indicated by a rating of 1 or 2).

As mentioned earlier, the table also shows that supported returners were more certain about returning to teaching than non-supported survey respondents at the time they registered with Return to Teaching (and before they had decided whether or not to apply for support). Thirty-seven per cent of the supported returners indicated that they were ‘completely certain’ of returning to teaching, compared to 20 per cent of the non-supported returners. It seems likely that this greater certainty could have motivated these returners to participate in the pilot programme.¶

The survey of supported returners asked how certain they were of returning to teaching since taking part in the pilot programme (although not all of them had finished receiving support at the time of the survey). There was an increase in their level of certainty, with 72 per cent of supported returners rating their response as a 4 (27 per cent) or 5 (45 per cent) after receiving support, compared with the 61 per cent who rated their certainty as a 4 (24 per cent) or 5 (37 per cent) when they registered their interest with Return to Teaching. This difference was statistically significant. There was also a trend for returners who had completed all of their support to report a greater increase in certainty after receiving support (an increase of 0.6 points on average, compared with 0.2 points for all supported returners). This suggests that those who had completed their support increased their certainty of returning more than those who were still receiving support at the time of the survey.

4.8.2 Confidence about returning and securing a teaching post

Although 61 per cent of the supported returners were relatively *certain* about returning to teaching before they received support from the pilot, they were less *confident* about returning to teaching or securing a teaching post.

As reported in Section 2.7, the supported returner survey asked two questions about confidence: first, about returners' confidence in returning to teaching and second, about their confidence in securing a teaching post. Table 19 shows their self-reported confidence in returning before they received support from the programme.

Table 19 How confident did you feel about returning to teaching/securing a teaching post before receiving support from the pilot programme?

	Returning to teaching %	Securing a teaching post %
1 Not at all confident	12	26
2	25	32
3	29	24
4	17	12
5 Completely confident	15	5
No response	1	1
Total n	241	241

Responses may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

Just under one-third (32 per cent) of supported returners felt confident about *returning to teaching* before receiving support from the pilot (as indicated by a rating of 4 or 5 on the five-point scale). Over one-third (37 per cent) rated their confidence about returning to teaching as low as 1 or 2 on the five-point scale.

When asked how confident they felt about *securing a teaching post* before receiving support from the pilot, only 17 per cent of supported returners were confident about securing a post (rating their confidence as a 4 or 5). Over half (58 per cent) of supported returners rated their confidence about securing a teaching post as just a 1 or 2 on the five-point scale.

The survey of supported returners also asked how confident they felt about returning to teaching and securing a teaching post after receiving support. Their answers to these questions are shown in Table 20.

Table 20 How confident do you feel about returning to teaching/securing a teaching post now that you have received support?

	Returning to teaching %	Securing a teaching post %
1 Not at all confident	6	10
2	9	16
3	22	26
4	36	25
5 Completely confident	25	22
No response	1	1
N	241	241

Responses may not sum to 100 due to rounding.
Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

Following support, around three-quarters (72 per cent) of respondents were confident about returning to teaching and around two-thirds (61 per cent) were confident about securing a teaching post (as indicated by rating their levels of confidence as a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale).

Comparing answers to these questions before and after support, it is clear that returners felt their level of confidence was higher after receiving support. The differences in confidence ratings before and after support were statistically significant⁴⁰.

Supported returners who had received all of their planned support showed larger gains in confidence about returning to teach (by 1.3 points on average, compared with 0.7 points for all supported returners) and securing a teaching position (by 1.3 points on average, compared with 0.9 points for all supported returners).

4.9 Reasons for not taking up a teaching post

As noted earlier, by the time of the survey (mid-June to early October, 2016) 53 supported returners (22 per cent of those who responded to the survey) said they had taken up a teaching post in the English state sector (though not necessarily a permanent post teaching an EBacc subject in a secondary school). The survey asked the remaining 177 respondents who said they had not yet done so why this was the case. It offered a

⁴⁰ Note that significance tests were carried out on selected cross tabulations of outcomes that the team hypothesised would be affected by receiving support. Results were obtained using Chi Squared tests and considered statistically significant at probability of less than 0.05.

number of possible reasons and invited respondents to specify any additional reasons that they may have. Their answers are shown in Table 21.

Table 21 Reasons for not taking up a teaching post

	%
I have applied, but not yet been successful	48
I have not yet applied, but intend to	23
There are no local vacancies	16
There are no vacancies in the school I am receiving support from	14
There are no part-time posts available	13
I have decided not to return to teaching	6
Other reason	20
No response	1
N = 177	

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

About half (48 per cent) of the supported returners who had not taken up a teaching post at the time of the survey stated that this was because they had applied for a post, but had not yet been successful. A further quarter of respondents (23 per cent) stated that they had not yet applied but intended to do so. Only six per cent stated that they did not intend to return to teaching. This suggests that a considerable number of the supported returners were seeking employment at the time of survey completion and could therefore have provided a potential source of applicants for vacancies in January 2017, when there were fewer new entrants available.

Smaller proportions of the supported returners pointed to other barriers that were preventing them from securing employment. Sixteen per cent indicated that a lack of local vacancies meant that they had not taken up a teaching post; 14 per cent reported that there were no vacancies in the school in which they were receiving support; and 13 per cent said that there were no part-time jobs available.

Although 20 per cent of respondents gave another reason for not taking up a post, there was little commonality in their responses. Ten people said that they wanted to teach in another sector (such as in higher or further education, or in an independent school) and three said they were seeking another type of employment in schools, such as a TA or a supply teacher, which may indicate a miss-match between the goals of individual returners and those of the programme. A few mentioned barriers faced by teachers from outside the UK, such as a lack of experience teaching in UK schools, or that they were currently living abroad.

This pattern of responses was reflected in the interviews with supported returners. As reported earlier, nine of the thirty supported returners we interviewed had secured a teaching post by the time the interviews took place (between April and September 2016). Of the remaining 21:

- 17 had not yet secured employment but intended to: five had applications pending; five did not yet feel ready to apply and were seeking more experience or school placements; four were waiting for an appropriate post to be advertised; two were waiting for a part-time position to be advertised and one had made an unsuccessful application.
- one had moved into a TA role
- one had moved to the independent sector
- and two had decided not to return to teaching.

The interviews with 23 schools offered further insights into why supported returners had not (yet) secured a teaching post, including: the timing of the pilot; the continuing support needs of returners; and the limited availability of flexible or part-time employment.

By participating in the programme, most of the school interviewees felt that they had committed to increasing returners' readiness to return to teaching, rather than committing to offering them employment. Schools provided support with finding employment by signposting returners to vacant positions and brokering opportunities with other schools in their partnership(s) or locality, where possible. Some schools guaranteed that returners would be invited to interview where a suitable position became available at their school, but stressed that there was no guarantee of them gaining employment as a result of receiving support. However, some school interviewees acknowledged that not all returners had fully understood this when they applied to the programme.

In some cases schools felt that returners needed more experience before applying for a teaching job and signposted them to other vacant positions within the school, such as teaching assistant and cover supervisor.

The timing of the pilot programme meant that many schools had already filled their recruitment gaps by the time the returners had completed the programme. Several of the school staff and supported returners we interviewed said they had 'missed out' on applying because teaching posts had been advertised and filled earlier in the spring. Some returners were still receiving support at the end of the summer term and did not feel ready to apply for posts until the autumn. Therefore it was too early for them to have secured a teaching post by the time most of the interviews took place.

Some school interviewees said that some of their returners needed more extensive support than they had anticipated, in order to be confident and ready to return. In a few cases, they were not sure whether an individual would ultimately be suitable to return.

As noted above, some returners had applied for jobs but were not successful at the application or interview stage. Interviewees reported that the main reason for this was a lack of recent classroom experience (particularly when compared to NQTs who would have had more time to establish themselves in a school). We asked school interviewees whether they would prefer to employ an NQT rather than a returning teacher. Most said that they had no preference and would always choose the best candidate – whether that person was a returner or an NQT.

Interviewees also commented on the limited availability of flexible or part-time jobs. About half of the school staff we spoke to said their returners were seeking part-time posts. Similarly, half of the 30 interviewed returners said they were seeking part-time employment but they did not often see such posts advertised. Some had opted to apply for full-time posts, hoping that they might be able to negotiate a part-time role if their application was successful. Of the 18 supported returners we interviewed who had not yet secured employment, six said that the lack of part-time jobs was still a barrier to them returning to the profession.

5 How well did the pilot programme meet returners' needs?

Summary of key points

- Just under half of supported returners (44 per cent) felt that the pilot programme had met their needs. The interviews suggested that a key reason for the disappointment with the programme was that supported returners had not received sufficient practical teaching experience.
- Prior to completing the pilot, the main barriers to returning to teaching reported by all 818 returners were: a lack of recent teaching experience and knowledge (for 28 per cent), concerns about workload (12 per cent), a lack of flexible or part-time teaching opportunities (11 per cent) and a lack of confidence (11 per cent).
- Compared with non-supported returners, more supported returners stated that a lack of experience, knowledge and skills was a barrier to returning (84 per cent versus 70 per cent) and fewer supported returners identified workload as a barrier (22 per cent versus 38 per cent).
- Returners had diverse support needs and wanted support with a range of aspects of returning to teaching. Their main area of need was classroom experience, especially delivering lessons (as well as observing others teach).
- Supported returners identified a wider range of support needs than non-supported returners, which could have contributed to their decision to apply for the Return to Teaching programme.
- Supported returners stated that the most useful elements of support were practical teaching experience and observing other teachers.
- While the majority of supported returners were satisfied with the content and quality of the support they received (60 and 71 per cent, respectively), fewer were satisfied with the *amount* of support they had received (49 per cent). As might be expected, those who had received more of the planned support were more satisfied with the amount of support they received.
- Fifty-four per cent of supported returners were satisfied with the process of applying to schools for support.
- Schools gave a number of reasons why they did not give returners the opportunity to teach, including the need to establish the quality of returners and concerns about possible disruption to lessons.

5.1 Introduction

This section of the report revisits the barriers to returning to teaching for the supported returners, then moves on to consider the support that returners felt they needed to get back into teaching. It sets out what support returners received from the pilot programme, and their satisfaction with the content, quality and amount of support. It also explores how far the returners felt the pilot had met their needs.

5.2 The barriers faced by supported returners

As set out in Section 2.8, the main barriers to returning for all returners (n=818) were a lack of recent teaching experience and knowledge (28 per cent), concerns about workload (12 per cent), a lack of flexible or part-time teaching opportunities (11 per cent) and a lack of confidence (11 per cent).

We looked at whether the barriers reported by survey respondents differed between the supported and non-supported returners. There was very little difference in the barriers they reported. The only notable differences were that more of the supported returners stated that a lack of experience, knowledge and skills was a barrier than the non-supported respondents (84 per cent versus 70 per cent, respectively), and fewer supported returners felt that workload was a barrier to returning than the non-supported returners (22 per cent versus 38 per cent).

5.3 Support returners felt would help them to get back into teaching

As set out in Section 2.9, the 818 survey respondents were seeking a range of support, possibly reflecting the variety of returners and their diverse support needs. Table 22 below shows the differences between the types of support supported and non-supported returners wanted, based on factor analysis which identified the ways in which responses to this question grouped together.

Table 22 Types of support wanted by potential returners

Type of support wanted	% supported returners	% non-supported returners
Experience in a classroom (including teaching practice and observation)	86	63
Developing classroom skills (including subject knowledge, behaviour management, pedagogy and confidence building)	85	60
Help with searching and applying for jobs	62	50
Mentoring	49	29
ICT Support	29	21
Other	5	11
Total n	241	577

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Sources: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Supported returners wanted a wider range of support than non-supported returners. Those who received support from the Return to Teaching programme identified five types of support to help them get back into teaching, on average, compared to an average of 3.5 types selected by non-supported returners. This greater need for support may have motivated this group of potential returners to participate in the pilot programme.

The pattern of responses selected by supported and non-supported returners was otherwise fairly similar. Both groups cited the opportunity to gain classroom experience and develop classroom skills most often.

Classroom experience (teaching practice and observing teaching) was also the main type of support the 30 returners we interviewed said they were hoping to receive from the pilot programme. In addition, some wanted to learn about new developments in teaching since they had last taught (for example, how to use Assessment for Learning techniques, ICT in the classroom, and analyse performance data) and to update their subject knowledge (including an update on changes to the curriculum and schemes of work). Other types of support the returners we interviewed said they wanted to receive were: job references; the opportunity to spend time with other teachers 'to get a feel for the job'; and to access CPD courses covering a range of themes.

5.4 The importance of local and flexible support

As detailed in Section 2.9, flexible programmes of support in the local area were key requirements for potential returners, regardless of whether or not they received support. The pattern of responses were similar between supported and non-supported returners, although a greater number of those who took part in the pilot programme said that flexible start and finish dates were important to them (54 per cent) compared to non-supported returners (45 per cent).

Most of the 30 supported returners we interviewed said they were looking for support at a school near to where they lived that they could access at a convenient time. Several said it had been important to plan a timetable of support around their other commitments, such as child care and work.

An English teacher completed a PGCE and then took a career break to have children before completing her NQT year. She has been out of teaching for ten years. She applied to the Return to Teaching pilot programme in order to gain classroom experience. She valued being able to arrange the support around her child care commitments and spent three days per week in the school in the summer term. She was able to attend CPD sessions, classroom observations and do some teaching practice. The school did not have a fixed end date for the support and offered her an option of gaining further experience in September if this was something she felt she needed. This helped to make her feel fully prepared to return.

5.5 Support received

The survey of supported returners asked which types of support they received from the Return to Teaching pilot programme. Respondents were presented with a list of options and could specify any other type of support that was not listed. Their responses are set out in Table 23.

Table 23 Types of support received during the Return to Teaching pilot programme

Type of support received	%
Experience in a classroom (including teaching practice and observation)	82
Developing classroom skills (including subject knowledge, behaviour management, pedagogy and confidence)	76
Help with searching and applying for jobs	49
Mentoring	30
ICT Support	23
Other	8
N=241	

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

The table shows that these returners received support with a variety of aspects of returning to teaching, reflecting the diversity of returners and the range of their support needs.

Three-quarters (76 per cent) of supported returners stated that they had received support with developing their classroom skills. This included subject knowledge, behaviour management skills and pedagogical development. Returners who received these types of support were also likely to have stated they had received support with confidence building, possibly as a result of feeling better informed or having refreshed their knowledge and understanding.

The 30 returners we interviewed explained that subject knowledge enhancement, behaviour management support and pedagogical development typically took place in workshops, seminars or CPD sessions away from the classroom. Returners either dipped into or attended a series of sessions that were sometimes part of a broader CPD programme for NQTs or ITT students, or were provided specifically for returning teachers. Examples included: sessions on changes in the educational landscape; subject-specific sessions (providing updates on curriculum changes, lesson planning, schemes of work, and examinations); assessment and data; behaviour management; SEN and ICT.

Almost half of the supported returners (49 per cent) had received help with searching and applying for jobs. Most of the 30 interviewed returners had received, or had been offered support to seek and secure employment. This support usually took the form of help with completing job applications, writing CVs and structuring personal statements. Returners said that school staff had also helped them by reading through drafts of application forms prior to submission, and providing a reference. Some returners received specific support

with interview preparation, through taught sessions on interview techniques including mock interviews where returners were given constructive feedback. A smaller number of returners received help with job searching and signposting. This included schools directing returners to available teaching positions either within the school delivering the programme or through wider school partnerships or networks. Interviewed returners also spoke of the benefits of the programme in enabling them to work with positive and encouraging school staff who gave them the confidence to apply for jobs when they might not otherwise have done so. Around half of the 30 interviewees said they were clear that employment was not guaranteed as part of the programme. Several said that while employment was not guaranteed, they would have a good chance of getting an appropriate vacancy in the school where they had received the support.

Just under a third of interviewed returners said they had received mentoring support. This included: providing updates on changes to the educational landscape and to school processes; observations of teaching and feedback on teaching practice; subject-specific support (including changes to the curriculum, lesson planning, schemes of work and marking); and encouragement and confidence-building. Some returners received mentoring support from senior leaders including assistant head teachers, heads of departments and SCITT programme leads. Others had mentors who were class teachers working in their specialist subject areas.

Other types of support that interviewed returners received included: observing individual pupils or whole classes; shadowing teachers; small group work with pupils; working with or as a TA; and access to school resources and materials.

5.6 What were the most useful elements of support returners received?

The survey of supported returners asked what type of support they had received. If they had received more than one type of support, they were re-presented the selected types of support, and asked which had been the most useful. Seventeen per cent of supported returners who had had more than one type of support felt that it was not possible to identify the most useful element of support.

The responses of those who identified a most useful element (based on the factor analysis groupings) are set out in Table 24.

Table 24 Proportion of returners who found a particular type of support the most useful, having received that type of support

	%	N
Experience in a classroom - teaching and observation	57	162
Developing classroom skills - e.g. subject knowledge, behaviour management, pedagogy, confidence	34	156
Help with searching and applying for jobs	20	99
Mentoring	15	64
ICT Support	3	49

The number of respondents in each row differs because supported returners were only asked which type of support they found most useful of the types of support they received and if they received more than one type of support.

Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

Returners reported that the most useful specific elements of the support that they had received were experience in the classroom (e.g. the opportunity to gain current teaching practice and to observe other teachers). A third (34 per cent) of those who had received support to develop their classroom skills identified this as the most helpful type of support they had received. We also asked interviewed returners about the most useful element of support. In addition to gaining classroom experience and developing classroom skills, interviewed returners also identified that one of the most valuable elements of the programme was the bespoke nature of support they received. Having access to a programme which had been designed to meet their specific needs was particularly beneficial. Further, several interviewees highlighted that the schools running the programmes were outstanding and as such they were able to observe high quality teaching which was particularly beneficial.

5.7 Satisfaction with the content, quality and amount of support, and the process of applying

Supported returners were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the content, quality and amount of support they received. They were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'completely dissatisfied' and 5 being 'completely satisfied'. Their responses are shown in Table 25.

Table 25 Levels of satisfaction with the amount, content and quality of support they had received

Level of satisfaction	Amount of support %	Content of support %	Quality of support %
1 – Completely dissatisfied	6	2	3
2	16	11	6
3	27	23	16
4	25	30	29
5 – Completely satisfied	24	30	42
No response	2	4	4
N=217	100	100	100

Responses may sum to more than 100 due to rounding.
Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

The majority of supported returners were satisfied with the quality of the support they received (71 per cent rated their level of satisfaction as a 4 or 5). Supported returners appear broadly satisfied with the content of the support (with 60 per cent rating it as a 4 or 5).

Around a half (49 per cent) of returners were satisfied with the amount of support they had received. As might be expected, their levels of satisfaction with the amount of support they had received varied according to how much of their planned support they had received by the time of the survey: 59 per cent of those who had received all of the support were completely satisfied with the amount they had received. However, this suggests that some returners who had completed their programme of support were left wanting more.

The majority of those who were completely dissatisfied with the amount of support were those who had had only a small amount of support (50 per cent), or half of the support that was planned for them (17 per cent).

5.7.1 Satisfaction with the process of applying to schools

Just over half (54 per cent) of supported returners were satisfied with the process of applying to schools for a place on the programme (by rating their level of satisfaction as a 4 or 5 on the same 5 point scale, with 5 being ‘completely satisfied’). Sixteen per cent were dissatisfied (as indicated by rating their satisfaction as a 1 or 2).

Forty-one per cent of the supported returners felt that the application process could be improved. They suggested four main improvements:

- Faster response times from schools
- Better information about the pilot programme, such as clearer information on how it worked and what it would involve
- Access to more local schools⁴¹
- Improvements to the spreadsheet of schools that were participating in the programme, to make it less 'clunky' to navigate.

The findings from the survey were reflected in the interviews with supported returners. The majority of the 30 supported returners we interviewed had found the application process for the pilot programme straightforward. Those who were less satisfied mentioned the frustrations listed above.

5.8 How far did the support meet returners' needs?

Supported returners were asked to what extent they felt the pilot programme had met their needs. They were asked to rate if their needs had been met on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not at all', and 5 being 'fully met'. Just under half (44 per cent) of supported returners felt that the pilot programme had met their needs, choosing to rate their response as a 4 or 5. Seventeen percent felt that the pilot programme had not met their needs (as indicated by giving a rating of 1 or 2).

The 30 returners we interviewed were similarly divided as to whether the support they received had met their needs. Some felt that it had entirely met their needs because they had received all the necessary support to enable them to return to teaching. Within this group of returners were some who had relatively low level support needs (for example, they had only been out of teaching a short while and/or had considerable teaching experience) and recognised that their needs could be easily fulfilled by the programme.

Features of good support highlighted by interviewed returners included: well organised and structured programmes; where school staff had dedicated time to support returners (including having an allocated mentor); and where there was good communication between a lead school and partnership schools. It was also vital that any support offered was good quality and of sufficient depth and detail; that returners received the necessary amount of support and that support was tailored to meet their specific needs.

Interviewees who felt that the programme had partially met their needs identified many benefits of participation, but there were also some areas where they wanted further support. Those who felt that the support had not met their needs also referred to the same areas of support as being inadequate. In particular, these interviewees wanted more direct teaching experience and classroom practice, and increased contact with

⁴¹ Note that there were no participating schools in the North East of England.

mentors. Also, when asked if there were any remaining barriers to them returning to teaching, interviewees frequently referred to the need for more practical teaching experience (as set out in Section 4.4).

We looked at the extent to which supported returners received the support from the pilot that they originally indicated they wanted when they registered on the Return to Teaching website. To do this, we used the original types of support before they were grouped by factor analysis. Table 26 shows the percentages of returners who received the type of support they had said they needed to help them to get back into teaching.

Table 26 Percentage of returners who received the support they felt they needed.

Type of support received	% who received what they needed	Number who said they needed it
Observing other teachers	78	170
Help with job applications/interviews	50	131
Pedagogical development	49	99
Opportunity to gain current teaching experience	49	185
Behaviour management support	49	119
Confidence building	48	132
Developing subject knowledge	47	120
Mentoring	37	118
Another type of support	36	11
ICT Support	34	70
Support in finding a teaching job with the right hours	14	64
N = 241		

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

The table shows that there was considerable discrepancy in the extent to which returners received the specific kinds of support they had felt they needed to get back into teaching. Typically, less than 50 per cent of returners said they had received the types of support they felt would help them to get back into teaching. This finding could go some way to explain why only 44 per cent of supported returners felt that the support had met their needs.

As set out in Section 5.3, 82 per cent of supported returners were seeking classroom experience (including teaching practice and observing other teachers). But Table 27 shows that only 49 per cent of those who wanted teaching experience received it. It

appears instead, that returners were more often given the opportunity to *observe* other teachers (78 per cent of those who wanted to observe other teachers were given the opportunity). Our interviews with schools and returners provided insights into why some returners did not get as much practical teaching experience as they would have liked.

- Some returners' needs were extensive and the programme was not long enough to give schools enough time to prepare them to be fully competent to deliver a lesson. One interviewee with responsibility for a group of schools explained: '*They [the supporting schools] were very clear that they didn't want them [returners] to teach until they had quality assured them. The challenge is for most of the returners that we took on, they weren't the mums who were returning from maternity leave who had just been out for a little bit, we had those who really didn't have much experience.*'
- Classroom teachers did not always have time to support returners to plan and teach a lesson. Some returners felt they were 'getting in the way' in the classroom and were concerned about adding to teachers' already busy workload.
- Some returners reported that classroom teaching staff had not been fully briefed about the programme by those coordinating the support in school. This meant that staff were unclear about why the returner was in their class and what opportunities and experiences they required. Some returners also found that class teachers did not allow them to deliver a lesson because they had not been officially informed that returners were qualified teachers.
- The programme ran during the summer term, when schools were preparing for examinations. Some returners found their visits coincided with the exam period. This meant pupils were either in exams or revising, so there were limited opportunities for returners to teach a class.
- A few schools asked returners to set up school experience placements themselves and gave them school contact details to follow up. Some returners were not committed to pursuing this and they missed out on the opportunity to get any teaching practice experience as a result. There were also examples of returners who said that they had been proactive in contacting schools but that their requests were ignored.

Figure 2 provides the stories of two returners who had different experiences of the Return to Teaching pilot.

Figure 2 Examples from the interviewed returners

An English teacher and key stage coordinator had previously taught for ten years before taking a ten-year career break. Her main reason for applying to the programme was to gain in-depth support tailored to her individual needs.

No schools in the local area were participating in the pilot programme so she travelled to a participating school in another area, one-and-a-half hours from home. The school devised a generic programme of support for all participating returners which consisted of ten hour-long twilight sessions on different aspects of teaching.

She felt that the programme had not met her needs because the theoretical sessions were 'too basic' and did not provide her with the updates she required. In her view, the sessions were more appropriate for an NQT than a teacher with ten years of experience. She felt that she could have easily got the information covered in the sessions by reading up on it herself. Although she met with teachers from the English department outside of the twilight sessions to talk through some of her specific queries, she felt they were all too busy to spend time with her because they were preparing students to take GCSE examinations.

Her experience of the programme had a negative impact on her motivation to return: *I don't think this has skilled me up enough to do it.... It was just like dipping your toe in. I feel that I know a bit more now but I don't feel like I know anywhere enough still. In fact, all it's done is terrify me, because [teaching] is so different. There is no way I could apply for a job and go back in now, I would just sink straight away. It's put me off rather than encouraged me, I think.*

An ICT teacher with four years of experience left teaching because she found it stressful to work in a highly target-driven school. She moved abroad for a few years before returning to the UK. She wanted to return to teaching because she missed the classroom environment.

Her main reason for applying to the Return to Teaching programme was to gain recent teaching experience and get a reference so she could apply for teaching jobs. Also, because the ICT curriculum has a greater focus on programming now, she felt she needed to 'get up to speed' in this area.

The school tailored its support to meet her specific requirements and agreed a timetable to suit her. She spent two weeks observing lessons across all year groups which she found a useful refresher. She started teaching parts of lessons with Years 7 and 8 and then taught Year 9 classes once she felt more confident. She had weekly meetings with a mentor (an ICT teacher). He provided support with schemes of work and helped address her concerns about teaching the new curriculum. The school gave her access to its IT network which she used to access subject-specific information and other resources.

This returner said the programme improved her confidence and met her needs 'one hundred per cent'. Despite initial fears about returning to an unsupportive school environment, she found the teachers very helpful and welcoming. At the end of the programme she secured a temporary teaching job. This was outside the partnership of schools providing support as they had no vacancies at that time.

6 Marketing the Return to Teaching pilot programme

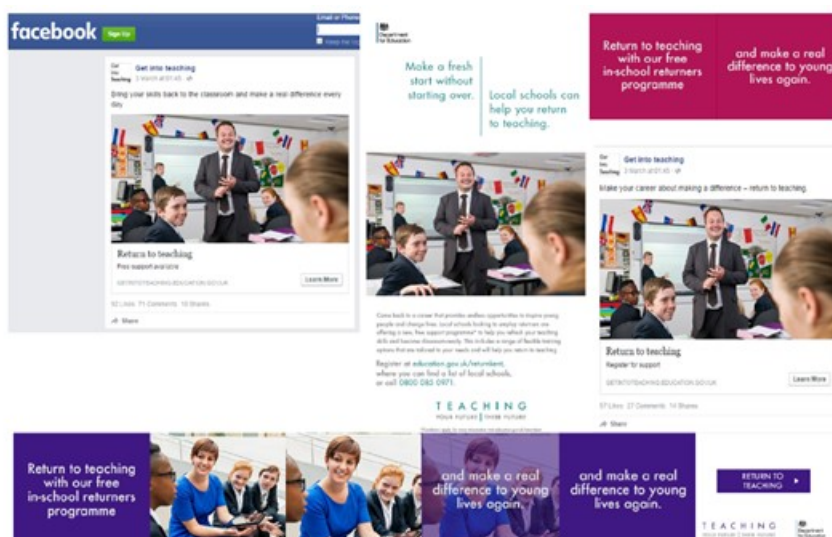
Key messages

- Sixty-six per cent of non-supported returners had heard about the pilot programme.
- The majority (60 per cent) of returners who had heard about the programme had seen the advertising.
- Online browsing was the most common way that all returners had heard about the pilot programme (54 per cent), followed by the national advertising campaign (19 per cent).
- A higher proportion of supported returners (63 per cent) had seen the advertising when compared with non-supported returners (53 per cent). Further, supported returners were more likely to have seen advertising in more than one place.
- The three main ways returners had seen the advertising were: websites (32 per cent), Facebook (20 per cent) and the National press (12 per cent).
- Returners had a range of views on the importance of marketing in encouraging them to apply for support. Similar numbers of supported returners rated the advertising campaign as 'very important' (26 per cent) and 'not at all important' (23 per cent), in encouraging them to apply for support.

6.1 Awareness of the national marketing campaign

As noted in Section 2.1, the pilot was successful in encouraging potential returners to register an interest with the Return to Teaching website. The surveys included a number of questions about the national marketing campaign. Both surveys presented respondents with a montage of marketing material that had been used to promote the pilot programme. This is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Montage of Images from the national marketing campaign



Respondents were asked if they had seen any similar images and if so where. Their answers are shown in Table 27.

Table 27 Have you seen any advertising similar to the images [in Figure 3]?

	% All returners	% Supported returners	% Non-supported returners
No	40	32	44
Yes, on a website	32	45	27
Yes, on Facebook	20	10	25
Yes, in National press/newspapers	12	11	12
Yes, at an event	6	11	3
Yes, in local press/newspapers	4	7	3
No response	4	5	3
Total N	818	241	577

More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

Fifty-six per cent of all returners said they had seen the advertising somewhere. Forty per cent said they had not seen any marketing and four per cent did not respond. As might be expected, a higher proportion of supported returners said they had seen the marketing material compared with non-supported returners (63 per cent compared with 53 per cent respectively). The distribution of the responses also shows that a greater proportion of the supported returners had seen advertising in more than one place, compared with the non-supported returners.

The marketing material was most commonly seen on websites (32 per cent), followed by Facebook (20 per cent) and then the National press (12 per cent). There were however some differences between groups. Proportionally more supported returners (45 per cent) had seen marketing on a website compared with the non-supported returners (27 per cent). On the other hand more non-supported returners (25 per cent) had seen marketing on Facebook compared with the supported returners (10 per cent).

6.2 Non-supported returners' awareness of the pilot programme

One of the possible reasons for non-supported returners not applying is that they were not aware of the programme. The survey of non-supported returners asked whether they were aware of the Return to Teaching pilot programme. The majority (66 per cent) of the non-supported returners said they had heard about the programme, 21 per cent had not heard about it and ten per cent said they were unsure.

The research team looked at awareness of the national advertising campaign for non-supported returners⁴² in more detail. To do this we looked at the responses of the 370 non-supported returners who were aware of the programme and cross tabulated this against their awareness of the advertising campaign. This showed that the majority (60 per cent) of non-supported returners who were aware of the programme had seen the advertising and 39 per cent had not.

6.3 How did potential returners become aware of the pilot programme?

We asked the 379 non-supported returners who said they had heard about the programme how they had heard about it. This question was also asked of the 241 supported returners. Their combined responses are shown in Table 28.

Over half (54 per cent) of respondents had heard about the pilot programme through online browsing. Nineteen per cent said they had heard about it through the National Advertising Campaign, which was largely based online. Respondents were least likely to have heard about the pilot programme at a local event delivered by a school, through Twitter, or a phone call from a school offering support through the Return to Teaching programme.

⁴² We only addressed the awareness of the programme among non-supported returners because supported returners must have been aware of the programme in order to participate.

Table 28 How did you hear about the Return to Teaching pilot programme?

	%
Through online browsing	54
The national advertising campaign for Return to Teaching	19
A friend/contact told me	11
Through an email from Get into Teaching	9
Facebook	9
Through a local school	5
At a Train to Teach event	5
Through a phone call from a Get into Teaching agent	5
Other (e.g. supply agency, own research, teaching union)	4
Through a phone call from a Return to Teaching programme school	2
At a local event delivered by a School	1
Twitter	1
No response	2
n = 620	

A filter question for non-supported returners: Were you previously aware of the Return to Teaching pilot programme?
[Yes]

More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016.

In a further piece of analysis we compared responses from supported and non-supported returners. The results showed that among those who had heard of the Return to Teaching pilot programme, supported returners were more likely to have heard about the programme through a wider range of sources than non-supported returners.

6.4 The importance of the national advertising campaign in encouraging registration and applications for support

The surveys asked respondents for their views on the importance of the national marketing campaign in both encouraging registrations on the website and encouraging potential returners to apply for support. The surveys asked all 566 respondents who had seen the marketing to rate how important the marketing had been in encouraging them to register on the Return to Teaching website. They were asked to rate the importance on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not at all important', and 5 being 'very important'. Responses are shown in Table 29.

Table 29 How important was the national advertising campaign in encouraging you to register on the Return to Teaching website?

Scale point	% response
1 (Not at all important)	38
2	13
3	16
4	14
5 (Very important)	18
No response	1
N=566	

A filter question: Have you seen any advertising similar to the images (in Figure 6.1)? [Yes]

Sources: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016: and NFER survey of supported returners, 2016

The responses were widely distributed: 18 per cent rated the advertising as ‘very important’ and 38 per cent of respondents rated the advertising as ‘not at all important’ in encouraging them to register on the Return to Teaching website.

We also asked all 241 supported returners to rate the importance of the national advertising campaign in encouraging them to apply for support from the Return to Teaching programme. Their responses are shown in Table 30.

Table 30 How important was the national advertising campaign for the pilot programme in encouraging you to apply for support?

Scale	% response
1 (Not at all important)	23
2	5
3	10
4	15
5 (Very important)	26
I was not aware of the campaign	17
No response	5
n=241	

Source: NFER survey of supported returners (2016)

Returners gave a range of ratings in answer to this question. A similar number of people said the campaign was ‘very important’ (26 per cent) as those who said it was ‘not at all important’ (23 per cent) in encouraging them to apply for support. Seventeen per cent of respondents said they were not aware of the campaign and a further five per cent did not respond.

7 Suggested improvements and what worked well

Summary of key points

The main suggested improvements were to:

- increase the number of schools offering support to ensure that potential returners are able to access support locally
- provide support earlier in the school year (especially from January to May)
- identify returners who have the greatest potential to benefit from support (for example those who have taught in English secondary schools fairly recently, have kept up to date with requirements, but need some current teaching experience to help them get back into teaching)
- ensure returners get practical classroom teaching experience and help in getting employment.

The aspects of the pilot which had worked particularly well were:

- it was based in schools, which were able to offer current, real-world experience
- it was free to access
- It was designed to provide a tailored programme of support according to returners' needs
- school staff who organised their support well, communicated with other staff, provided returners classroom experience, mentoring and assistance with getting employment.

7.1 Introduction

This section summarises the improvements to the Return to Teaching pilot programme suggested by returners and schools, and sets out what worked well, and why. The primary sources for this section were the interviews with supported returners and school-based interviewees, but we have also drawn on some information from the surveys of potential returners.

7.2 Suggested improvements

We asked all of our 53 school and returner interviewees if they had any suggestions for how the programme could be improved. We also asked the 241 respondents to the supported returner survey if they had any suggestions to improve the programme.

The main improvements suggested by both supported returners and schools are set out below.

- For support to be provided earlier in the school year (especially from January to May, if not in the previous autumn term), so that returners were in a position to apply for jobs advertised earlier in the year that start in the following academic year. Returners and school-based interviewees felt that the support was provided too late in the school year, and that offering it earlier would have been more beneficial to returners. Interviewees commonly suggested that the support falling into the summer term limited the opportunity for returners to secure teaching posts for September.
- For longer periods of recruitment and support. Schools felt that timescales for recruitment and providing support to returners in the pilot⁴³ were too short. Some returners said they would have liked more time in their host school and felt that the length or extent of support was insufficient.
- For a more standardised programme with more 'organised' or 'formal' programmes of support. Some school-based interviewees suggested that providing returners with access to online support programmes or having defined programmes of support with set content and attendance requirements might be more beneficial, and help to reduce the burden of providing entirely bespoke support.
- More marketing and greater promotion of the programme (nationally and locally). Better information about the pilot programme, including clearer information on how it worked and what it would involve (note that 32 per cent of the respondents to the non-supported returners survey said they were not clear about the support on offer).
- A more centralised, streamlined and better managed application process. Returners said that the database of participating schools needed to be easier to use and suggested that schools needed to be quicker to respond to enquiries and applications. Similarly, a few school-based interviewees said they would have valued a more streamlined and accessible applicant database.

Improvements suggested by returners only are set out below.

- More opportunity to gain current teaching practice or classroom experience. This was suggested by 20 per cent of the survey respondents, and around one-third of the supported returners we interviewed.
- Help to gain employment⁴⁴, such as support with job applications, mock interviews and/or more commitment to helping the returner to secure a post. The interviewed returners also suggested that financial incentives for returning teachers would be

⁴³ Schools applied in October 2015 and were initially expected to recruit returners and deliver programmes between January and July 2016, though the support period was later extended to October 2016.

⁴⁴ This was suggested by ten per cent of survey respondents.

beneficial, such as matching the pay that returners were on when they left the profession⁴⁵.

- Support that is specifically targeted to returners and tailored to individual needs. Returners suggested that this was more beneficial, than asking them to link into what the school already provides for other groups, such as ITT students. Similarly, some interviewees suggested that the programme needs to be more flexible and bespoke (which could also allow the support to be tailored appropriately to returners who had previously held senior positions in schools).

The main improvements suggested by school-based interviewees only are set out below.

- More central support; for vetting applicants, and for helping schools to identify whether some returners were eligible for support. A few school interviewees requested a reduction in the administration associated with the programme, for example they questioned the need to return MI data on a monthly basis.
- More funding. Some school interviewees felt that the work involved in supporting some of their returners was considerable and disproportionate to the amount of funding they received. This was particularly the case when schools were supporting returners from overseas or those who had been out of the profession for an extended period of time. A few interviewees suggested that the financial incentive for schools was diminished by the tight timescales in which they were expected to deliver support and secure employment for returners.
- Provide specific support and guidance for returners wishing to move from the primary sector to the secondary sector.
- Consider the needs of returners who trained or taught outside the UK system and whether they can be accommodated within this programme. Some school interviewees pointed out that these teachers required additional support to prepare them to teach in the English state system which could not reasonably be provided within the funding and timescales of the Return to Teaching pilot.

School interviewees had the following reflection on their own selection practice.

- Schools should be more selective about which candidates they choose to support. Some school interviewees pointed out that it was important to understand why the returner had left the profession, assess the extent of support required and consider the likelihood of them returning to teaching more fully, before offering them support.

⁴⁵ Note that this is a decision for individual schools and could not be mandated at programme level.

We asked non-supported returners why they had not taken up the support from the Return to Teaching pilot programme (see Section 3.2). Their responses offer further suggestions for improvement.

- One-third (33 per cent) stated that there was no local support available. Increasing the reach of the pilot would therefore have increased the numbers of returners who could access the support, though this would need to be balanced with the availability of teaching posts.
- One-tenth (11 per cent) of non-supported returners stated that they could not afford to access the support. They also suggested that financial support (for childcare, relocation or salary substitution) would help them to get back into teaching. Offering some form of financial support for returning teachers to participate in any subsequent support for returners might therefore be worthy of consideration.

7.3 What worked well and why?

This study has identified a number of features of the pilot that worked well. These include some features of the programme itself, as well as the way schools put it into practice.

The programme features that worked well were:

- it was based in schools, which were able to offer current, real-world experience
- it was free to access
- it was designed to provide a tailored programme of support according to returners' needs.

At school level, the following aspects were key to success for both returners and schools:

- good organisation, resourcing and communication
- selection, needs assessment and devising a programme to meet individual needs
- classroom experience, including actual teaching experience
- mentoring support and assistance with employment
- commitment of individual returners.

The features of the programme that appealed most to returning teachers were that they would get practical support at a local school, free of charge. This combination worked well for potential returners who were certain that they wanted to teach but felt less confident about their ability to do so without support or up to date teaching experience and references. (The more traditional route of getting this experience would have been through supply teaching.)

Other positive features depended on the actions of schools and returners. Some schools were particularly well-organised in allocating responsibility to the programme to a senior member of staff (or a manager responsible for a group of schools) to plan and implement the programme. These people led the programme in their school or group of schools. They worked to recruit the potential returners, identify their skills and support needs, decide on the programme of support and monitor individual progress. They also ensured that designated mentors had sufficient time to meet with their returners and that other staff were aware of the returners' presence in the school.

In relation to recruitment, some schools were more selective than others, which they felt had enabled them to identify the returners with the greatest potential to return to the profession and to benefit from the support they could offer. They used a combination of applications, interviews and needs assessments to ensure the programme worked well for the school and for the returners they supported.

It was important to devise a programme suited to each returner's needs. This could include some elements of existing programmes for students on initial teacher training, induction or NQT support, but these elements needed to be fitted into a broader programme of support. In this way schools ensured programmes were relevant to each returner, rather than expecting returners to attend existing programmes that were not necessarily well suited to their needs.

As highlighted earlier in this section, one of the greatest barriers to employment for returners is a lack of recent teaching experience. For this reason, schools that enabled potential returners to have experience of teaching (coupled with guidance and feedback) provided the support that returners needed.

Mentoring support was important for returning teachers. Those who were mentored by a sympathetic and experienced teacher (preferably someone working in their subject area) appreciated the practical support and encouragement they received. Mentors were helpful in providing feedback on returners' readiness to return and supporting them in their job applications.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role of individual returners' commitment to be pro-active in making the most of the opportunities the programme provided.

8 Discussion and conclusion

This report has drawn on a rich dataset of potential returning teachers, though we would not claim that they are necessarily representative of the wider population of qualified ex-teachers who may wish to return to secondary teaching in England.

The first aim of this research was to assess the impact of the pilot in securing additional teachers back into teaching. The findings suggest that the impact of the pilot was limited, given that we were only able to identify 27 participants who had secured a permanent contract to teach an EBacc subject in a state-funded secondary school by November 2016 (which was the main objective of the pilot). A further 35 participants had returned to teaching (though not in a permanent position in a state-funded secondary school, teaching an EBacc subject) by November and several others may have done so subsequently. Note though that some of these people may have gained employment in the absence of support.

The research identified three main reasons for the low return rate, namely: the timing of the pilot; the diversity of potential returners; and the ability of schools to meet returners' needs.

The timing of the pilot was challenging, because it resulted in returners seeking jobs after schools had finished recruiting teachers to start work in September. In addition, the initial slow uptake and decision to extend the programme meant that some people were still receiving support in the autumn term and were not in a position to apply for a teaching post until after November 2016.

The pilot was successful in getting potential returners to register their interest with the Return to Teaching website, exceeding the target by a considerable margin. However, not all those who registered an interest on the website were eligible for the pilot, which was focused on teachers of EBacc subjects in English state-funded schools. A minority of those who expressed an interest were not eligible for the support programme because they wanted to teach non-EBacc subjects or in other sectors (including primary school).

Of those who were eligible for the Return to Teaching pilot, not all were certain that they wanted to return to teaching. Some had registered an interest because they were considering their options, including some who took up support because they wanted to see what teaching was like now, rather than seeing the programme as a means of securing employment. In addition, less than half had any post-qualification experience of teaching in an English state-funded secondary school.

Schools found that some returners were easier to support, and had a greater potential to return to the classroom than others. Similarly, some returners did not feel that they had got the support they needed to return to work.

The second aim of the research was to examine the aspects of the pilot that worked well, and why, to provide recommendations for the format of any future rollout. The aspects of the pilot that worked well are highlighted in Section 7. These can be summed up as follows: the programme enabled returning teachers to get classroom experience (including teaching experience in some cases) and updated knowledge to improve their readiness and confidence to return to teaching. The fact that it was tailored to meet individuals' needs, free to access, could fit around returners' existing commitments and provided mentoring were all positive aspects.

Most potential returners identified a range of barriers to returning, including that they lacked recent experience, knowledge, skills and references. Some of the barriers were related to structural features of teaching, such as concerns about workload and a lack of local relevant positions. A lack of part-time positions was a particular barrier for returners with young children.

There are a number of implications of this study which could be built upon in future efforts to attract and support qualified teachers to return to teaching. The diversity of returners' characteristics and needs invites careful consideration of the focus of future support and its associated marketing. The research identified five distinct groups, with different profiles and support needs. One finding worthy of further consideration is that people who had taken a career break to raise children had the highest return rate following support. Other groups were less certain about returning or had particular needs (especially teachers who had trained and taught abroad) which were more challenging for schools to address.

Not all the potential returners who signed up on the website were aware of the pilot programme. In terms of marketing and information, the research found that online browsing was the key way in which potential returners became aware of the pilot programme. National advertising appears to have played a relatively small role in encouraging potential returners to apply. The implication here is that future programmes need to focus primarily on online marketing, but that consideration also needs to be given to the timing of such marketing so that it coincides with the period when potential returners are considering returning to teaching.

The main reasons that potential returners had not applied for the pilot was that they were not clear about what was on offer or that there was no support available in their area. The need for information could be easily addressed, for example through a web page, brochure and/or profiles of supported returners. Providing support for returners at a local school is much more difficult to address within a national pilot, though it could be worth considering how to encourage more schools to take part (as long as there is a realistic opportunity for employment in the area, or returners are prepared to travel/move to take up work). There were also some administrative challenges which need to be addressed, in checking whether potential returners are eligible to participate and in exchanging information between potential returners seeking support and schools offering support.

Turning now to the quality of returners, schools found that not all returners were equally well suited to the programme, or possibly to teaching as a career. Some were of high quality and ready to return with minimal support. Others were less well suited to returning and required considerable amounts of support from schools. This research suggests that schools which were more selective were better able to support the returners they took on.

The main type of support returners wanted was practical experience of classroom teaching. This needs to be made a requirement for schools taking part in the programme. Other learning for schools includes: the need for clear communication with other staff and providing access to mentors.

In terms of any future programme, this research suggests that consideration should be given to: the timing of the programme (support needs to take place earlier so that returners are able to apply for jobs from January onwards); the expectation that schools offering support either have posts available and/or will assist returners to find employment; and whether any elements could be covered through alternative means (for example online courses to update returners on common areas of knowledge, such as curriculum changes or assessment, possibly involving input from subject associations). Other wider issues concern the need for some potential returners to receive funding to participate; and for schools to consider offering part-time employment⁴⁶.

8.1 Conclusion

This study has found that the Return to Teaching programme was successful in attracting potential returners to express an interest and supported some qualified teachers to return to teaching. However, the number of returners was low and the cost of securing an additional teacher via the programme was estimated to be similar to the cost of training a new teacher.

There are some important differences between a returner and an NQT. For example, most returners are more experienced in teaching than an NQT, which could make them potentially more valuable to the profession. On the other hand, the costs of the pilot are additional to the costs of initial teacher training for returners and a returner is likely to have a shorter career in teaching than an NQT.

For these reasons, we find that the pilot was unlikely to represent good value for money. The lack of success was primarily due to issues with timing, recruitment challenges and questions over the suitability of some participants, as well as a lack of practical teaching opportunities available in some of the participating schools.

⁴⁶ The findings from this research contributed to the new Returners Engagement Programme Pilot launched in 2016 (NCTL, 2016).

Nevertheless, encouraging qualified teachers to return to teaching is a worthwhile activity, particularly when schools are facing staffing shortages. The research findings suggest that 'career breakers' have the greatest potential to make a successful return with minimal support. They would be particularly attracted by an offer of part-time work. Other returners would require greater support depending on their experience of teaching, the amount of time out of teaching and the reason they left in the first place. The research also identified a number of features of the pilot which performed well, including that the programme largely offered the kind of support returners were seeking and provided the flexibility to suit individual returners' needs. These findings provide a useful knowledge base for the development of further policy initiatives aimed at returners, who currently represent an under-used source of teachers.

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Appendix A: Returners' eligibility criteria

For the purposes of the Return to Teaching pilot, participants were required to fit into the criteria below:

- Have qualified teacher status (QTS), or have Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status **and** have a membership with the Education and Training Foundation (ETF)
- Are not currently holding a permanent or fixed-term teaching post in a state-maintained or independent school or college in England
- Are not currently barred/banned from teaching and do not have a previous conviction (spent or unspent) that would prevent them from working with children
- Teachers who wish to return to teach part- or full-time, on a permanent or temporary basis
- Are qualified teachers that have previously worked in further education but are not currently working in the further education sector
- Qualified teachers that have previously worked in, or currently work in, higher education
- Teachers who have had a teaching post in the past (regardless of how long ago) and are now working outside of teaching.
- Teachers that are not working at all (i.e. are parents/carers and/or are unemployed). However, this does not include teachers returning from an official period of maternity or paternity leave as their leave will be part of their current employment contract.
- Teachers who are currently supply teaching, but are not employed by, or have a contract with, a school.
- Teachers who have previously taught, but are not currently teaching, in the primary sector
- Teachers who are not currently teaching but have previously taught in the independent sector
- Teachers who gained their QTS in England but are currently teaching outside of the UK or have taught overseas, and are planning to/have now returned to England to teach
- Teachers from overseas, as long as they are qualified to teach in England (i.e. have QTS)
- Teachers that have been qualified for at least a year (excluding newly-qualified teachers (NQTs)) but have never taught.

Appendix B: Sample representation and analysis of quantitative data

Sample representation

The NFER compared the characteristics of the teachers that responded to the supported returner and non-supported returner surveys with the respective populations of returners that they were sampled from to check the samples' representativeness. Chi-square significance tests were conducted to test whether they were representative samples. The tests indicated that the samples were both representative of their respective samples. The achieved sample representation for both surveys is shown in Tables 32 and 33 below.

Table 31 Representation of participating supported returners compared to sample population

		Sample		Responses	
		Number	%	Number	%
Gender	Male	92	23	61	25
	Female	303	76	178	74
	Missing	5	1	2	1
Subject	English	105	26	54	22
	Maths	52	13	29	12
	Science subjects	57	14	37	15
	History/ Geography	38	10	24	10
	Modern Languages	90	23	65	27
	Computer Studies	21	5	14	6
	Other	37	9	18	7
When they left teaching	Before 2000	74	19	43	18
	2000-2005	58	15	41	17
	2006-2010	86	22	58	24
	2011-2015	96	24	55	23
	Never held a teaching post	43	11	26	11
	Missing	43	11	18	7
		N = 400		N=241	

Gender ($\chi^2=0.65$, $p=0.72$); Subject ($\chi^2=3.05$, $p=0.80$); When they left teaching ($\chi^2=2.88$, $p=0.72$)

Responses may not sum to more than 100 due to rounding.

Sources: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Table 32 Representation of participating non-supported returners compared to sample population

		Sample		Responses	
		Number	%	Number	%
Region	London	203	15	65	11
	South	508	38	235	41
	Midlands	183	14	82	14
	North	335	25	145	25
	Other	113	8	50	9
Subject	Primary	204	15	100	17
	English	260	19	116	20
	Maths	138	10	43	7
	Science subjects	189	14	77	13
	History/ Geography	154	11	63	11
	Modern Languages	195	15	93	16
	Computer Studies	82	6	36	6
	Other	120	9	49	8
When they left teaching	Before 2000	71	5	33	6
	2000-2005	632	47	273	47
	2006-2010	112	8	55	10
	2011-2015	165	12	60	10
	Never held a teaching post	63	5	30	5
	Missing	299	22	126	22
		N=1342		N=577	

Region ($\chi^2=5.30$, $p=0.26$); Subject ($\chi^2=5.74$, $p=0.57$); When they left teaching ($\chi^2=2.28$, $p=0.81$)

Responses may sum to more than 100 due to rounding.

Sources: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical technique for identifying patterns in responses. The purpose of factor analysis is to reduce the number of variables required to explain the data from the original large number to a smaller set of underlying 'factors' which can be related to the original variables.

The NFER used factor analysis to identify patterns of response among individuals which suggest items that were responded to in similar ways. These responses can therefore be combined to reduce the number of variables needed in the latent class analysis (see next section).

Latent class analysis

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) is a statistical method for identifying unmeasured class membership among subjects using categorical and/or continuous observed variables. The NFER used LCA to divide respondents into clusters of individuals that gave similar responses to:

- the main reason they left teaching in the English state sector
- the main motivation for returning to the profession
- the year the returner left teaching
- how much experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector they had.

The LCA identified that five distinct clusters of returners, based on their responses, fitted the data best⁴⁷. These were named according to their distinguishing characteristics. The full set of variables that defined the clusters are summarised in Table 34. The characteristics that contribute to distinguishing a particular group are highlighted.

⁴⁷ Definition of best fit is the model that minimised the Bayesian information criterion, a measure of how well a statistical model fits the data.

Table 33 Characteristics of groups identified by latent class analysis

Characteristic of returner	Type of returner (%)				
	Idealist	Opportunist	Career breaker	Mover	Pragmatist
Motivated to return by passion for teaching: a chance to inspire and make a difference	100	0	0	0	0
Motivated to return by pay, progression, or holidays	0	27	0	0	0
Motivated to return because currently unemployed	0	26	0	0	0
Motivated to return because family has grown up	0	0	100	0	0
Motivated to return by no one main reason	0	47	0	0	0
Motivated to return by another reason	0	0	0	0	100
Main reason for leaving: career change	25	20	2	15	28
Main reason for leaving: teaching elsewhere	15	15	10	15	19
Main reason for leaving: to raise a family	16	15	68	18	14
Main reason for leaving: workload/ ill health	8	13	4	9	5
Main reason for leaving: financial reasons	3	2	2	2	2
Main reason for leaving: to complete further studies	3	2	2	4	1
Main reason for leaving: lack of career progression	1	1	0	1	1
Main reason for leaving: made redundant	3	3	2	3	1
Main reason for leaving: care for other family members	4	1	2	2	3
Main reason for leaving: retirement	0	1	0	2	0
Main reason for leaving: unable to secure teaching post	8	6	2	15	7
Main reason for leaving: there is no one main reason	2	8	0	1	2
Main reason for leaving: other reason	12	13	5	14	18

Characteristic of returner	Type of returner (%)				
	Idealist	Opportunist	Career breaker	Mover	Pragmatist
No previous experience of secondary teaching in the English state sector	0	27	24	100	26
Experience: training year/ training & qualifying year	36	24	22	0	30
Experience: Up to four years	23	14	18	0	17
Experience: From four up to ten years	21	23	29	0	16
Experience: Ten years or more	20	12	6	0	11
Left teaching before 2000	5	10	6	4	15
Left teaching 2000-2005	63	62	63	29	49
Left teaching 2006-2010	9	11	16	26	12
Left teaching 2011-2015	21	12	9	17	14
Never held a teaching post	2	5	6	25	10
N =	393	179	127	148	265

Responses may sum to more than 100 due to rounding.

Sources: NFER survey of supported returners, 2016; and NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Cost effectiveness analysis

An assessment of how cost effective the pilot was in securing its intended outcome of returners being re-employed on permanent contracts as secondary EBacc teachers needs to focus on the additionality of the pilot and account for deadweight. Additionality refers to achieving successfully-employed participants who *would not* have been employed in the absence of the pilot and deadweight refers to providing support for participants who *would* have been employed in the absence of the pilot. The grant cost per *additional* participant employed is therefore higher than the cost based on the simple employment rate because some of the supported returners are likely to have returned even in the absence of the pilot.

Because the evaluation was unable to establish a valid estimate of the additional effect of the support on participants' employment, there is uncertainty about what the cost effectiveness of the pilot was, in terms of the cost per additional participant employed.

Table 34 below estimates the cost effectiveness of the pilot under different scenarios. The different scenarios are based on the possible range of 1-8 per cent of additional teachers who would not have returned to teaching in the absence of the programme. We know that at least eight per cent of supported returners went on to gain permanent employment teaching an EBacc subject in a state-funded secondary school. The estimates provide a range of costs:

- if none of the supported returners who gained employment would have returned without the support, then the cost per additional returner employed was £17,800.
- assuming that half of the supported returners who gained employment would have done so without support and the other half gained employment as a result of the pilot, the average cost per *additional* supported returner employed was £37,400.
- if seven per cent of the supported returners who gained employment would have returned without support, and only one per cent returned as a result of the programme, then the cost per additional returner employed is £142,500.

Note that these calculations do not take account of the further 35 people who returned to teaching in the state sector but not in a permanent position or not teaching an EBacc subject in a secondary school.

Table 34 Estimates of cost per additional participant permanently employed teaching an EBacc subject in a state-funded secondary school

Returner employment rate (A)	Counterfactual employment rate (B)	Rate of <i>additional</i> employment (A-B)	Cost per additional participant employed
8%	7%	1%	£142,500
8%	6%	2%	£71,200
8%	5%	3%	£47,500
8%	4%	4%	£35,600
8%	3%	5%	£28,500
8%	2%	6%	£23,700
8%	1%	7%	£20,400
8%	0%	8%	£17,800

Sources: School Workforce Census, 2016; NCTL cost data.

Appendix C: The survey incentives trial

Key points

- The response rate among the group offered a conditional incentive was statistically significantly higher than the response rate in both the control and the unconditional incentive conditions.
- The response rate was statistically significantly higher in the conditional incentive condition on both measures, i.e. completing one question and completing the full survey.
- There was no evidence that incentives had biased participants' responses to survey questions.

Overview

We used the non-supported returners survey to run a trial of two different types of incentives designed to encourage completion.

A recent review (Singer and Ye, 2013) investigating the use of incentives in surveys suggests that incentivising face-to-face, telephone and paper surveys is beneficial as it improves both survey and item response rates, reducing the likelihood of non-response error. Additionally, research suggests incentives can help decrease bias by improving sample representativeness (Simmons and Wilmot, 2004) through encouraging survey participation in groups that would otherwise not respond because of low intrinsic motivation. This is supported by research repeatedly finding that incentives are especially successful at improving response rates for surveys which have low intrinsic appeal to participants (Singer, 2002; Singer and Ye, 2013; Simmons and Wilmot, 2004). However there is limited evidence on the role of incentives in increasing response rates in web-based surveys in England (Singer and Ye, 2013; Fan and Yan, 2010).

There are two main types of incentives: conditional and unconditional. Conditional incentives are those where participants have to do something before receiving a reward. Unconditional incentives are those where participants receive the reward first, regardless of whether or not they actually participate in the study. Both types have been found to impact positively on response rates (Simmons and Wilmot, 2004).

The ability of incentives to increase response rates is of particular policy interest, given the general reduction in survey response rates over the past 20 years (Groves, 2006). Reductions in response rates have led to increasing concern about the possibility of sample bias and have reduced confidence in the ability of surveys to accurately describe populations (Groves and Peytcheva, 2008). This is because if a survey has fewer respondents, there is proportionately less data to work from and this poses a greater risk

of non-response bias. Non-response bias arises in circumstances where the response is uneven across groups, leaving some groups poorly represented. In this case the survey is less likely to represent the wider population. For example, response bias was identified as the main cause of misleading results from opinion polls taken before the 2015 UK general election (Sturgis, 2016).

Goritz (2006) provides one of the few papers to assess the use of incentives in web-based surveys. This meta-analysis of 32 studies found that incentives encouraged people to both start online surveys (Odds ratio= 1.19; 95% CI: 1.13 to 1.25) and finish them (odds ratio = 1.27; 95% confidence interval: 1.12 to 1.14). For online surveys, it is not clear what type of incentive (conditional or unconditional) is most effective as few studies have directly compared types of incentive (Fan and Yan, 2010).

It has been argued that offering incentives increases the risk of getting biased responses (Simmons and Wilmot, 2004). This is because the incentive may positively influence the respondent's mood towards the survey 'patron' (i.e. the body responsible for commissioning or administering the survey). If this is the case, the respondents' answers to questions are likely to be positively biased. Although the majority of studies have found no effect on the response distribution when incentives are used (Singer and Ye, 2013), the potential for response bias should be considered.

The incentives trial described here aimed to address some of the gaps in the evidence base. It focused on the online survey of non-supported returners, because unlike the supported returners, this group did not receive support from the Return to Teaching pilot programme and could therefore be assumed to have less intrinsic motivation for completing the survey. The trial aimed to establish whether using small financial incentives (a £5 Amazon gift voucher) significantly improved the response and completion rates of online surveys compared to a control (no incentive). It also compared the effectiveness of the two types of incentive (i.e. conditional or unconditional) in improving the response rates.

Aims

The trial aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences in the extent of survey participation and completion between the groups?
2. Is an incentive more effective than no incentive in encouraging online survey participation and completion?
3. Is a conditional incentive more effective than an unconditional incentive on survey participation and completion?

Methods

The NFER drew up a protocol for the trial in advance. All non-supported potential returners were assigned to one of three experimental conditions using simple randomisation. This was done by randomly ordering participants and then allotting a third of them to each condition. The three conditions were: no incentive (the control condition), conditional incentive (£5 Amazon gift voucher sent to respondents soon after completion of the survey), and unconditional incentive (£5 Amazon gift voucher offered in the invitation email, without requiring survey participation). The sample used in the trial consisted of the entire sample of 1,342 potential respondents available in March 2016, with between 447 and 448 participants in each group. All potential respondents received an email invitation to complete the survey. The only differences between conditions were:

- the unconditional incentive group received instructions on how to redeem their gift voucher;
- the conditional incentive group were informed that they would receive a gift voucher on completion; and
- the control group email made no mention of an incentive. (Once the survey was closed, the NFER sent a £5 Amazon gift voucher to the control group, and people in the conditional incentive group who did not respond, so all participants eventually had the same access to the incentive.)

Results were calculated using a statistical package (SPSS 21) and the statistical significance was analysed using a series of t-tests. Chi squared tests were also performed and Odds Ratios (OR) calculated, where appropriate.

Results

The NFER team analysed the results of the trial. The first area of interest was the proportion of each group who accessed the survey and responded to at least one question. Results are shown in Table 35 below.

Table 35 Proportion of respondents in each group who answered at least one question

Group	% Response rate
Conditional incentive	50
Control group (no incentive)	43
Unconditional incentive	40
N=1,342	

Source: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Fifty per cent of participants in the conditional incentive condition responded to at least one question in the survey compared to 43 per cent in the control condition and 40 per cent in the unconditional incentive group.

T-tests showed a statistically significant difference in survey completion between groups. Conditional incentives statistically significantly improved the response rate over both not incentivising the trial (OR= 1.35, 95% confidence interval 1.04-1.76) and using unconditional incentives (OR=1.53, 95% confidence interval 1.18-2.00). This statistic means that those in the conditional group had 53 per cent higher odds of responding to one question compared with the unconditional incentive group and 35 per cent higher odds of responding compared with the control.

The analysis demonstrated the unconditional incentive did not significantly affect the response rate compared with the control, as no significant difference was found between the control and the unconditional incentive group. Thus for this survey the conditional incentive condition appeared more effective than either the control or the unconditional incentive condition in encouraging participants to answer at least one question.

When considering the completion rate of the entire survey, the same pattern was demonstrated, as shown in Table 36.

Table 36 Proportion of respondents in each group who completed the survey

Group	% Response rate
Conditional incentive	49
Control group (no incentive)	42
Unconditional incentive	38
N=1,342	

Source: NFER survey of non-supported returners, 2016.

Forty-nine per cent of participants in the conditional group completed the survey compared to 42 per cent in the control group who were offered no incentive and 38 per cent of those who were offered an unconditional incentive.

Conditional incentives significantly improved survey completion rates above the other two conditions. The conditional incentive group had 38 per cent increased odds of completing the survey compared with the control (OR=1.38, 95% confidence interval 1.06-1.79) and 62 per cent increased odds of completing the survey compared with the unconditional incentive (OR=1.62, 95% confidence interval 1.24-2.12).

The unconditional incentive did not significantly affect the response rate compared with the control. Conditional incentives were therefore more effective at facilitating survey completion compared with the other two groups.

An extra piece of analysis was then performed. This was to identify any evidence that incentivising the survey had positively biased participants' responses in favour of the survey 'patron'. The team analysed the responses to Questions 16 and 17 of the non-supported returner survey. Question 16 asked 'Have you seen any advertising similar to the images above' and question 17 asked 'How important was the national advertising campaign for the Return to Teaching programme, in encouraging you to register on the Return to Teaching website'. The researchers hypothesized that these two questions were the most open to this kind of bias, as they were asking respondents to tick or rate the visibility and effectiveness of the marketing campaign devised by the organisation which had commissioned the survey.

A series of t-tests were used to assess if there were any significant differences in responses between groups. No significant differences in participants' responses to either question were found between groups. This suggests that the use of incentives in this survey did not significantly alter the distribution of the responses to these questions which could have been prone to positive response bias.

Discussion

The conditional incentive significantly improved the response rate and completion of this online survey compared to no incentive. It also improved the response rate statistically significantly above the unconditional incentive condition, which was of the same financial value and type. Our results are consistent with recent research from the USA (Decamp and Manierre, 2016) which found that conditional incentives of \$5 significantly increased response rates for online surveys, thereby improving sample representativeness.

The relatively low response rate for the unconditional incentive group was unexpected, because previous research (Simmons and Wilmot, 2004) had suggested that unconditional incentives would be equally or more effective in improving response rates. We do not know the reasons for this but can speculate that the low response rate for this

group may have been influenced by participants' suspicion of fraudulent email communications. It is possible that the offer of an unconditional incentive may have raised suspicions about the authenticity of the communication. This could have reduced the likelihood of response to the survey and negatively affected the response rate among this group.

The analysis also found that responses to questions that were open to positive response bias were not significantly affected by incentivising the experiment. Our findings agree with the majority of other research in this area (Singer and Ye, 2013), which has found that incentives did not affect the distribution of responses to survey items.

Altogether, this trial found that for this web-based survey of potential returning teachers, using conditional incentives significantly improved the response rate to answering one question and the entire survey, with no evidence of positive response bias. Unconditional incentives were not found to be effective in improving the response rate and performed no better than the no-incentive control.

Appendix D: The surveys of non-supported and supported returners

[Survey for returners who did not receive support (email text)]

Subject: Your views about returning to teaching

Dear X

You recently registered your interest in returning to teaching on the Return to Teaching website. As someone who has expressed an interest in returning, you can help us to understand what kinds of support teachers like you need to get back into a teaching post.

We would be very grateful if you were willing to spare up to 10 minutes to complete this online survey about why you left teaching, and what might help you to return. We would still like to hear from you even if you have changed your mind about teaching.

Here is the link to the online survey: [INSERT LINK]

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is the Department for Education's executive agency with a remit to improve the quality of the education workforce. They have launched the Return to Teaching pilot programme to attract and support qualified but inactive teachers back into the profession to teach EBacc subjects, and commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to evaluate it.

We understand that you are not receiving support from the Return to Teaching pilot programme, so we would really like to hear from you. If you are currently receiving support from a school in the Return to Teaching pilot programme, we will be contacting you shortly for your feedback.

Your answers will be treated confidentially. We intend to link survey data to administrative data collected by the Department for Education, for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the Return to Teaching programme. You will not be identifiable in any data or report provided to anyone else outside the research team.

If you have any queries about this survey, the intended data linking, or would like further information about the evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact XXX at NFER on XXX or by email to XXX. If you would like to contact NCTL with regard to this survey, please contact the NCTL research evaluation and surveys team by email to XXX.

Thank you very much for your help.

Supporting Returning Teachers [home page of survey]

Thank you for agreeing to complete this short survey, which should take no more than 10 minutes.

Please note, if the survey is left inactive for over 20 minutes you will be timed out. Please use your personalised link in your email to resume completion. If you exit the survey before the end, any answers that you have given may still be analysed.

1. What were the reasons that you left teaching in the English state sector?

Please select all that apply⁴⁸.

Change of career to a non-education related role	
Change of career to an education-related role	
To teach outside of the UK state sector	
Financial reasons	
To complete further studies	
Ill health	
Lack of career progression	
Made redundant	
Workload	
To raise a family	
To care for other family members	
Moved abroad	
Retirement/early retirement	
Unable to secure a teaching post	
Other reason (please specify)	
There is no one main reason	

⁴⁸ Note that in the online version, response options to questions of this design were rotated, in order to avoid bias resulting from the order of the options.

[If the respondent selected more than one option, their selection was re-presented with the question: 'Please indicate which reason is closest to the main reason that you left teaching in the English UK state sector'.]

2. Why did you express an interest in returning to teach in the English state sector?
Please select all that apply

Family has grown up	
Unable to establish an alternative career	
Missed the profession	
Pay, benefits or progression	
Currently unemployed	
The holidays available to teachers	
To inspire the next generation	
To make a difference to young people's lives	
To relay the passion for my subject	
Other reason (please specify)	
There is no one main reason	

3. What, if any, are the barriers to you returning to teach in the English state sector?
Please select all that apply

There are no specific barriers that are stopping me from returning to teaching	
A lack of recent classroom experience	
A lack of up to date curriculum/subject knowledge	
Being unaware of current policies/assessment/practice	
No recent job history/references	
Previous difficulties with applying for a teaching position	
A lack of part-time teaching positions	
A lack of flexible working opportunities	
Not having the relevant qualifications	
A lack of local teaching positions	
Concerns about pay or benefits	
A lack of posts available for my level of skill/experience	
Concerns about workload	
Concerns about career progression/further development	
Concerns about job security	
Concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management	
A lack of confidence	
Other (please specify)	

4. When are you planning to return to teaching?

I have decided not to return to teaching	
In the coming academic year (2016/17)	
In the next academic year (2017/18)	
In 3 years or more	
I am undecided	
I have already returned to teaching in the English state sector	

5. Please identify which, if any, of the following types of support would help you to get back into teaching in the English state sector (*please select all that apply*)

Developing subject knowledge	
Behaviour management support	
ICT support	
Help with job applications/interviews	
Support in finding a teaching job with the right hours	
Opportunity to gain current teaching experience	
Observing other teachers	
Pedagogical development	
Mentoring	
Confidence building	
I don't need any support	
Other (please specify)	

6. Which, if any, of the following features of support would be important to you?
Please select any that apply

Flexible start and finish dates of support	
Intensive/fast track support	
Support available outside of usual working hours	
Support available at a school near to where I live	
Other (please specify)	

About you

7. When you registered on the Return to Teaching website, how certain were you of your intention to return to teaching in an English state school?(on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very uncertain and 5 is completely certain)

1	2	3	4	5
Very uncertain				Completely certain

8. How much experience of **secondary** teaching in the English state sector do you have?
(Please indicate the number of years you have taught in secondary schools, whether it was full- or part-time).

None	
Training year only	
Training year plus an additional qualifying year	
Up to four years	
From four up to ten years	
Ten years or more	

9. Do you have any experience of **primary** teaching in the English state sector?

Yes	
No	

[If yes, route to Q10, if no or no response, route to Q11.]

10. How much experience of **primary** teaching in the English state sector do you have? (Please indicate the number of years you have taught in primary schools, whether it was full- or part-time.)

None	
Training year only	
Training year plus an additional qualifying year	
Up to four years	
From four up to ten years	
Ten years or more	

11. When you registered your interest on the Return to Teaching website, how long had you been 'out of teaching' in the **English state sector**? Please select the most appropriate option

Less than one year	
From one up to two years	
From two up to four years	
From four up to ten years	
Ten years or more	
I have never taught in the English state sector	

12. In the last 12 months, have you contacted any schools with a view to returning to teach in the English state sector?

Yes	
No	

13a. In the last 12 months, have you applied for any teaching posts in the English state sector?

Yes	
No	

13b. In the last 12 months, have you taken up a teaching post in the English state sector?

Yes	
No	

The Return to Teaching programme is a pilot and was established in 2015 to attract and support qualified but inactive teachers back into the profession to teach EBacc subjects in secondary schools. The support could include:

- free refresher training in subject knowledge
- updates on classroom practice and behaviour management
- access to classroom experience and mentoring

The support is offered by a range of participating schools, which are also looking to employ returning teachers.

14. Before reading the information above, had you heard about the Return to Teaching programme?

Yes	
No	
I'm not sure	

[Q15 was suppressed for respondents who selected 'No' or 'I'm not sure' to Q14 and those who select 'I have decided not to return to teaching' in Q4.]

15. We understand that you are not currently receiving any support from a school as part of the Return to Teaching programme. Please could you tell us why?
Please select all that apply

I'm not clear about the support on offer	
There is no local support available	
I have already secured a teaching job	
I do not want to teach an EBacc subject in a secondary school	
I did not want to teach at the local school offering support	
The support was not available at the right point in time	
The hours of the support offered did not fit with my current work/personal commitments	
I couldn't afford to access the support	
I am not yet ready to access support as I have not yet made a firm decision to return to teaching	
The programme does not offer the support I need (please specify what support you need)	

I accessed alternative support (please specify what alternative support you accessed)	
I still intend to apply for support through the Return to Teaching programme	
I am receiving support from a school as part of the Return to Teaching programme	
Other (please specify)	

16. Have you seen any advertising similar to the images above?

No	
Yes, on Facebook	
Yes, on a website	
Yes, in local press/ newspapers	
Yes, in national press/ newspapers	
Yes, at an event	

Q17 is suppressed for respondents who selected 'No' or 'I'm not sure' to Q 14.

17. How important was the national advertising campaign for the Return to Teaching programme, in encouraging you to register on the Return to Teaching website?(on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important).

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important				Very important

[Q18 was suppressed for those who select 'no' or 'I'm not sure' to Q14.]

18. How did you hear about the Return to Teaching programme? (Please select all that apply)

The national advertising campaign for Return to Teaching	
Through a local school	
A friend/contact told me	
At a Train to Teach event	
At a local event delivered by a school	
Through online browsing	
Through a phone call from a Get into Teaching agent	
Through a phone call from a Return to Teaching programme school	
Through an email from Get into Teaching	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Other (please specify)	

[If Q18 option G is selected]

19. How helpful did you find any support or advice you received from the Get into Teaching agent? (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful				Very helpful

[If Q18 option I is selected]

20. How helpful did you find any advice you received in the emails from Get into Teaching? (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful				Very helpful
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[If Q18 option H is selected]

21. How helpful did you find any support or advice you received from the Return to Teaching programme school? (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful				Very helpful
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you very much for helping with our research. *[Those in the conditional incentive group (see Appendix C) also received the message: 'Please click here to access your Amazon gift voucher'.]*

[Survey for returners who received support from a school as part of the Return to Teaching pilot programme (email text)]

Subject: Your views about returning to teaching

Dear X

We understand that you recently registered your interest in returning to teaching and applied to join the Return to Teaching pilot programme. As someone who has received support from a school, you can help us to understand what kinds of support teachers like you need to get back into a teaching post.

We would be very grateful if you were willing to spare up to 15 minutes to complete this online survey about the support you have received. We are keen to hear about participants' experiences – both positive and negative – in order to improve the programme. **If you are about to receive support or have only just started, please wait until later in the summer or early autumn before responding to the survey.**

Here is the link to the online survey: [INSERT LINK]

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) is the Department for Education's executive agency with a remit to improve the quality of the education workforce. They have launched the Return to Teaching pilot programme to attract and support qualified but inactive teachers back into the profession to teach English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects, and commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to evaluate it.

Your answers will be treated confidentially. We intend to link survey data to administrative data collected by the Department for Education, for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the Return to Teaching programme. You will not be identifiable in any data or report provided to anyone else outside the research team.

If you have any queries about this survey, the intended data linking, or would like further information about the evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact XXX at NFER on XXX by email to XXX. If you would like to contact NCTL with regard to this survey, please contact the NCTL research evaluation and surveys team by email to XXX.

Thank you very much for your help.

Supporting Returning Teachers [home page of survey]

Thank you for agreeing to complete this short survey, which should take no more than 15 minutes.

Please note, if the survey is left inactive for over 20 minutes you will be timed out. Please use your personalised link in your email to resume completion. If you exit the survey before the end, any answers that you have given may still be analysed.

1. Before you enrolled on the pilot programme, what were the main barriers to you returning to teach in the English state sector? *Please select all that apply*⁴⁹

There were no specific barriers stopping me from returning to teaching	
A lack of recent classroom experience	
A lack of up to date curriculum/subject knowledge	
Being unaware of current policies/assessment/practice	
No recent job history/references	
Previous difficulties with applying for a teaching position	
A lack of part-time teaching positions	
A lack of flexible working opportunities	
Not having the relevant qualifications	
A lack of local teaching positions	
Concerns about pay or benefits	
A lack of posts available for my level of skill/experience	
Concerns about workload	
Concerns about career progression/further development	
Concerns about job security	
Concerns about pupil conduct and classroom management	
A lack of confidence	
Other (please specify)	

⁴⁹ Note that in the online version, response options to questions of this design were rotated, in order to avoid bias resulting from the order of the options.

2. When you registered on the Return to Teaching website, how certain were you of your intention to return to teaching in an English state school? *Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very uncertain and 5 is completely certain.*

1	2	3	4	5
Very certain				Completely certain
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How confident did you feel about returning to teaching before receiving support from the pilot programme? *Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is completely confident.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all confident				Completely confident
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. How confident did you feel about securing a teaching post before receiving support from the pilot programme? *Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is completely confident.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all confident				Completely confident
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your support needs

5. When you registered on the Return to Teaching website, which of the following types of support did you feel would help you to get back into teaching in the English state sector? *Please select all that apply*

Developing subject knowledge	
Behaviour management support	
ICT support	
Help with job applications/interviews	
Support in finding a teaching job with the right hours	
Opportunity to gain current teaching experience	
Observing other teachers	
Pedagogical development	
Mentoring	
Confidence building	
I don't need any support	
Other (please specify)	

6. Which, if any, of the following features of support, were important to you? *Please select all that apply.*

Flexible start and finish dates of support	
Intensive/fast track support	
Support available outside of usual working hours	
Support available at a school near to where I live	
Other (please specify)	

Your experience of the Return to Teaching programme

7. How satisfied were you with the process of applying to schools for support? Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being completely dissatisfied and 5 being completely satisfied.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely dissatisfied				Completely dissatisfied

8a. Do you feel that the application process could be improved?

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

8b. *[For those who answered 'Yes' to Q8A]* Please tell us how you feel the application process could be improved.

9. How much of the support that is/was planned for you as part of the Return to Teaching programme have you received? *Please select one*

I'm not sure	
All of the support	
Most of the support	
About half of the support	
A small amount of support	
None	

[If respondent selected 'none' to Q9, they were routed to Q17.]

10a. Which of the following types of support have you received during the Return to Teaching pilot programme? *Please select all that apply*

Developing subject knowledge	
Behaviour management support	
ICT support	
Help with job applications/interviews	
Support in finding a teaching job with the right hours	
Opportunity to gain current teaching experience	
Observing other teachers	
Pedagogical development	
Mentoring	
Confidence building	
Another type of support (please specify)	

[If the respondent ticked more than one option, their selection was re-presented with the following question]

10b. 'Of the support you have received, what has been most useful?'

Please select one

[An option 'It is not possible to identify one most useful element' was included.]

11. Please use this space to tell us anything else that you would like to say about the most useful elements of the programme/support.

12. How certain are you now of your intention to return to teaching in an English state school? Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very uncertain and 5 is completely certain.

1	2	3	4	5
Very certain				Completely certain

13. How confident do you feel about returning to teaching now that you have received support? Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is completely confident.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all confident				Completely confident

14. How confident do you feel about securing a teaching post now that you have received support? Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is completely confident.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all confident				Completely confident

15. Overall, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of the support you have received from the pilot programme: *Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being completely dissatisfied and 5 being completely satisfied.*

a. the content of the support? (e.g the topics/areas that were covered)

1	2	3	4	5
Completely dissatisfied				Completely dissatisfied

b. the quality of the support? (e.g the standard/professionalism of the support)

1	2	3	4	5
Completely dissatisfied				Completely dissatisfied

c. the amount of support?

1	2	3	4	5
Completely dissatisfied				Completely dissatisfied

16. To what extent do you feel that the pilot programme has met your needs? Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not at all, and 5 being, it has fully met my needs.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				It has fully met my needs

17. Do you have any suggestions to improve the programme?

18a. Have you accessed any other support (in addition to support from the Return to Teaching pilot programme) to help you to get back into teaching?

Please select one

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

18b. If yes, what other support have you had?

--

About you

19. How much experience of **secondary** teaching in the English state sector do you have? Please indicate the number of years you have taught in secondary schools, whether it was full- or part-time.

None	
Training year only	
Training year plus an additional qualifying year	
Up to four years	
From four up to ten years	
Ten years or more	

20. Do you have any experience of **primary** teaching in the English state sector?

Yes	
No	

If yes, route to Q21, if no or no response, route to Q22

20. How much experience of **primary** teaching in the English state sector do you have? Please indicate the number of years you have taught in primary schools, whether it was full- or part-time.

Training year only	
Training year plus an additional qualifying year	
Up to four years	
From four up to ten years	
Ten years or more	

22. In the 12 months prior to applying for support, had you contacted any schools with a view to returning to teach in the English state sector?

Yes	
No	

23. In the 12 months prior to applying for support, had you applied for any teaching posts in the English state sector?

Yes (less than 5)	
Yes (5 or more)	
No	

24. Have you taken up a teaching post in the English state sector?

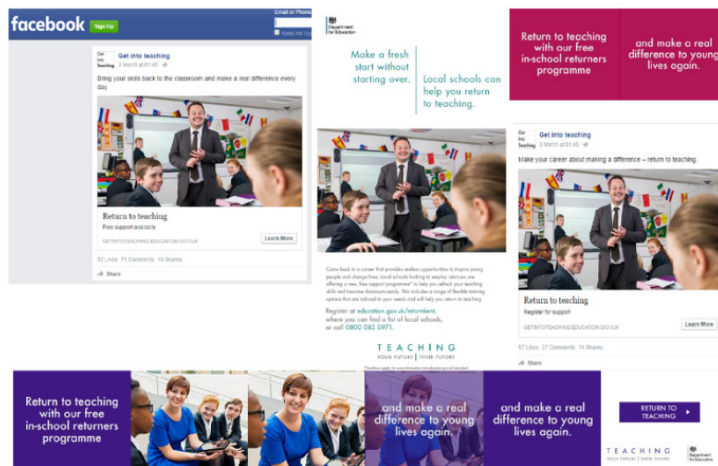
Yes	
No	

(If 'no' to Q24, please route to Q25, otherwise route to Q26)

25. If you have not taken up a teaching post, is this because: *Please select all that apply*

There are no vacancies in the school I am receiving support from	
There are no part-time posts available	
There are no local vacancies	
I have not yet applied, but intend to	
I have applied but not yet been successful	
I have decided not to return to teaching	
Other reason (please specify)	

How you heard about the Return to Teaching programme



26. Have you seen any advertising similar to the images above? *Please select all that apply*

No	
Yes, on Facebook	
Yes, on a website	
Yes, in local press/ newspapers	
Yes, in national press/ newspapers	
Yes, at an event	

27. How important was the national advertising campaign for the Return to Teaching pilot programme, in encouraging you to **register** on the Return to Teaching website? *Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important			Very important	I am not aware of the national advertising campaign

28. How important was the national advertising campaign for the Return to Teaching pilot programme, in encouraging you to **apply for support** from the Return to Teaching programme? *Please rate your response on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important.*

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important			Very important	I am not aware of the national advertising campaign

29. How did you hear about the Return to Teaching programme? *Please select all that apply*

The national advertising campaign for Return to Teaching	
Through a local school	
A friend/contact told me	
At a Train to Teach event	
At a local event delivered by a school	
Through online browsing	
Through a phone call from a Get into Teaching agent	
Through a phone call from a Return to Teaching programme school	
Through an email from Get into Teaching	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Other (please specify)	

[If Q29 option G was selected]

30. How helpful did you find any support or advice you received from the Get into Teaching agent? (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful				Very helpful

[If Q29 option I was selected]

31. How helpful did you find any advice you received in the emails from Get into Teaching? (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful				Very helpful

[If Q29 option H was selected]

32. How helpful did you find any support or advice you received from the Return to Teaching programme school in deciding whether to apply for the programme? (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful)

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all helpful				Very helpful
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thank you very much for helping with our research.



Department
for Education

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