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# Secondary School Staffing Survey report 2023

This report summarises the 2023 findings of an annual survey on the teacher staffing situation in secondary and composite schools.



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# 1. Introduction

In Term 1 2023 principals of state secondary schools and state composite schools with secondary rolls were surveyed about their staffing situation. The questions focused on the broader aspects of the teacher supply equation, raising issues of both quantity and quality of supply. There have been similar surveys and reports annually since 1996.

The number of questions in this year's survey was reduced to accommodate the continuing pressures principals are dealing with. The data relates to the survey baseline date of 20 March 2022.

This report is based upon replies received from 127 principals. This represents 27% of those who received the survey link.

The data has been summarised in this report and individual school responses are not identified. Data for 2019 and 2013 have been used throughout the report to compare the supply situation immediately pre-COVID and a decade ago.

## **Acknowledgements**

The annual staffing surveys, and the reports from them, are a unique overview of key indicators of the health of teacher supply in New Zealand and are only possible by the participation of principals from across the motu.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Secondary Principals' Council and the many principals who gave their time and information to enable the production of this report.



Chris Abercrombie  
PPTA Te Wehengarua Acting President

## 2. Executive Summary

The survey findings generally reflect an environment of increasingly difficult secondary teacher supply. Most of the results are the worst we have on record since this series of surveys began in 1996 and show a decline from 2019 (immediately pre-COVID) and a significant decline since 2013.

Key indicators of the health of secondary teacher supply at 20 March 2023 were:

- The average number of New Zealand trained applicants per classroom position is 1.55, about half the previous lowest figure.
- The normal experience of principals was not having a choice in selecting applicants from New Zealand because there were either none (33% for classroom jobs) or only one (31%).
- One in seven advertised classroom positions had no applicants at all from within New Zealand or from overseas.
- Twenty-four percent of positions had no suitable applicants and 28% had only one.
- Forty-four percent of teaching positions had no suitable New Zealand trained applicants and 38% had only one.
- One third of advertised positions could not be filled at all and 5% were filled by Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) appointments.
- Appointments were being made where there were no suitable applicants.
- Forty-eight percent of principals had to employ untrained or unqualified teachers because they could not find trained and qualified staff.
- A similar proportion have teachers working in non-specialist areas for the same reason, also the highest on record.
- The main reasons reported by principals for staff leaving the secondary teaching service were retirement and non-teaching jobs.
- The number of available day relievers per school is the lowest recorded since these records began, with more than half of schools now having four or fewer day relievers available.
- There has been an increase in the proportion of schools cancelling or transferring classes because subject specialists could not be found.
- Expectations are that it will be harder to recruit teachers both from within New Zealand and from overseas this year and to retain teachers through the year.

## 3. Recruitment

### 3.1 Advertised jobs

- Seventy-six percent of principals had advertised actual vacancy secondary teaching positions between the start of term 4 2022 and 20 March 2023.
- The number of jobs advertised ranged from one to eight per advertising school.
- There were 253 actual vacancy positions advertised.
- Sixty-eight percent of positions advertised were permanent vacancies and 32% were fixed term.
- Full data was provided for 199 jobs for which the appointment period had closed.

### 3.2 Subject/positions advertised

Subject	Classroom	Middle leaders
Agriculture	1	
Art/visual art/photography	11	
Business/commerce/economics	7	1
Catering/Hospitality/Food Technology	5	
Chemistry	3	
Dance/drama/creative and performing arts	12	1
Design and Visual Communication/graphics	2	
Digital technology	4	
English	23	2
General/home room Y7&8, Kura Takawaenga/international	14	2
Guidance Counsellor/careers/gateway/pathways	3	8
Hard Materials/engineering	9	
Health	9	
Integrated studies	3	
Kapa haka/Te Ao Haka	2	
Languages/Japanese/Spanish	5	
Learning support	2	3
Literacy and Numeracy	2	
Mathematics	24	8
ORS	4	
PE/Sports/Hakinakina	15	5
Religious Studies	1	1
Science/STEM	19	4
Social science/social studies/history/geography/humanities	10	2
Te Reo Māori	5	2
Technology	9	4

There were eight senior leadership positions advertised.

### 3.3 Hard to staff subjects

In their comments principals referred to the following as hard to staff:

- Chemistry
- Dance
- Digital technology
- Economics
- Food Technology
- Māori medium
- Middle leadership
- Senior leadership
- STEM
- Te Reo
- Technology

Indications of hard to staff subjects, i.e. positions which could not be filled and classes/courses that have had to be cancelled or transferred, can also be found in paragraphs 3.6 and 6.2 below,

### 3.4 Applications for positions

The average number of applicants per position is the lowest on record since the surveys began in 1996. There has been an increase in the number of overseas applicants from the 2022 survey but the number of New Zealand trained applicants has continued to fall.

The average number of applicants per advertised actual vacancy which had closed at 20 March are shown below.

Nature of role	Positions	Average number of applicants per job	
		New Zealand	Overseas
Classroom	157	1.6	3.2
Middle leadership	36	1.3	2.0
Senior leadership	6	6.3	0.8

As a pre-COVID comparison the average number of applicants for classroom positions in 2019 was 3.4 New Zealand applicants per job and 3.6 overseas applicants per job. For further comparison the average number of applicants in 2013 was 9.9 and 6.8 respectively.

The table below shows the proportion of jobs with the indicated number of applicants, firstly just New Zealand applicants, then overseas applicants and lastly all applicants. In this case middle and senior leadership data is combined.

Applicants per job	Distribution of applicants per job (% jobs)					
	New Zealand		Overseas		All applicants	
	Teacher	Leadership	Teacher	Leadership	Teacher	Leadership
0	33	37	37	45	15	12
1	31	0	11	19	14	21
2	17	33	7	10	9	12
3	8	7	12	5	13	10
4	4	7	12	7	10	10
5	4	11	4	5	6	7
6	1	4	3	0	8	7
7	1	0	1	0	2	5
8	0	0	1	7	4	10
9	1	0	2	2	5	5
10+	2	0	10	0	13	2

The normal experience of principals was not having a choice in selecting applicants from New

Zealand because there were either none (33% for classroom jobs) or only one (31%).

For 29% of classroom jobs and 33% of leadership jobs there was no potential choice of applicants of any origin because there were no applicants or only one.

One in seven advertised classroom positions had no applicants at all.

### 3.5 Applicant suitability

The following are the measures of 'suitability' used in the survey, as suggested by principals when the survey started.

Base scale and unit holder positions

- Evidence of teaching competence
- Recognised secondary teacher training
- Relevant tertiary subject qualification(s)
- Appropriate communication skills
- Appropriate interpersonal skills
- Any 'special character' considerations

For unit holder positions – the above plus appropriate experience relevant to position.

On these measures principals assessed the number of suitable candidates per position this year as follows:

Nature of role	Positions	Average number of suitable applicants per job	
		NZ	Overseas
Classroom	157	0.97	0.29
Middle leadership	36	0.78	0.28
Senior leadership	6	3.17	0

Once again, these are the lowest figures recorded in these surveys. In 2019 there were 2.0 suitable New Zealand applicants per advertised classroom job and 0.3 suitable overseas applicants for these positions. In 2013 the equivalent figures were respectively 3.3 and 0.6 suitable applicants per job.

The table below shows the proportion of jobs with the indicated number of applicants who were considered potentially suitable for the advertised position, again, firstly New Zealand applicants, then overseas applicants and lastly all applicants. Middle and senior leadership data is combined.

Suitable applicant distribution (% of jobs)						
Suitable applicants for job (n)	New Zealand		Overseas		All applicants	
	Teacher	Leadership	Teacher	Leadership	Teacher	Leadership
0	44	36	80	83	32	29
1	38	43	16	12	43	38
2	9	12	2	2	12	21
3	3	2	1	2	3	2
4	3	5	0	0	4	7
5	3	0	0	0	4	0
8	0	2	1	0	0	2
9	0	0	0	0	1	0
10+	1	0	0	0	1	0

The normal experience of principals was not having a choice in selecting a suitable applicant from New Zealand because there were either none (44% for classroom jobs) or only one (38%).

Only for less than one in five jobs did the principal have a potential choice between suitable New Zealand applicants for classroom or leadership positions.

For 75% of classroom jobs and 67% of leadership jobs there was no potential choice of suitable applicants of any origin because there were either no suitable applicants or only one.

### 3.6 Appointments

One hundred and ninety-nine positions (136 permanent and 63 fixed term) had sufficient information to identify how they had been filled. About one third of those advertised jobs could not be filled and a further 5% were filled by LATs. These are the highest figures in our records.

Comparatively, in 2019 13% of positions could not be filled and 2% were filled by LATs. In 2013 those figures were respectively 8% and 2%.

Position type	Appointment type (% jobs)			
	External	Internal	LATT	Could not fill
Permanent	58	4	5	33
Fixed term	63	2	5	30

The types of positions which could not be filled were assistant and leadership positions in:

- Business
- Chemistry
- Commerce
- Creative arts
- Digital technology
- Economics
- Engineering
- English
- Guidance
- Hard materials
- Health
- Learning support
- Literacy
- Maths
- Pāngarau
- PE
- Photography
- Science
- Social studies
- Spanish
- Sports
- Te Ao Haka
- Te Reo
- Technology
- Tumuaki

The types of positions that had to be filled by LATS were:

- Design and Visual Communication
- Food technology
- Hard Materials Technology
- Kaihautu o Te Reo Māori me ōna tikanga
- Kura teina/kapa haka
- Physical Education
- Te Reo Māori
- Trades
- Wharekura - hakinakina/hauora

### 3.7 Appointment of untrained/unqualified teachers

Forty-eight percent of principals had to employ untrained or unqualified teachers because they could not find trained and qualified teachers for the year. The employing schools had appointed 1.98 such teachers each on average.

Overall, 1.3 untrained/unqualified teachers were employed per school, almost double the previous high for permanent appointments and two thirds higher for fixed term. There was approximately one appointment to permanent positions per six schools and one appointment to fixed term per two schools.

Comparative figures are 17% of schools and an average of 0.26 appointments per school in 2019 and 16% of schools and 0.25 appointments in 2013.



### 3.8 Unadvertised vacancies at 20 March

Thirty-five percent of the schools had vacancies that had not yet been advertised. This represented 0.61 additional positions per school. These are the highest figures on record for this survey. Nationally that would reflect 290 unadvertised positions.

The equivalent figures in 2019 was 14% of schools and 0.19 jobs per school, and in 2013 they were 9% of schools and 0.15 jobs per school.

## 4. Attrition

The attrition data below refers to teachers who resigned from the secondary state teaching service in New Zealand other than for temporary reasons, such as maternity leave, and those moving between state and state integrated secondary and area schools.

### 4.1 Resignations

One hundred and twenty-two schools gave details of their leavers. Ninety-one percent reported that they had teachers who had left the secondary teaching workforce between the start of Term 4 2022 and 20 March 2023.

Collectively, 339 teachers over that time left the secondary teaching profession from those schools, an average of 2.8 teachers per school (2.5 in 2019 and 1.2 in 2013).

### 4.2 Resignations by reason

Retirement remains the most common reason given by principals for teachers leaving teaching. It is less common than previously and resignation to go to non-teaching jobs is more common this year. 2023 figures and comparative 2013 and 2019 figures are given below.

#### Reasons for resignation

Survey year	Reason for resignation (%)						
	Retirement	Non-teaching job	Overseas	Primary teaching	Private schools	Tertiary teaching	Other
2023	31	25	17	6	3	1	16
2019	40	17	15	3	7	1	17
2013	*	16	23	5	3	3	*50

*\*Until 2016 retirements were included with 'Other'. From 2016-2022 'Other' has averaged 19% of reasons for leaving secondary teaching in New Zealand and 'Retirement' has averaged 38% of reasons.*

## 5. Day-Relief Pool

One hundred and twenty-one principals supplied data on their relief pools. They show the lowest figures in our records.

The principals had an average of 5.9 day-relievers available to them, including 5.8 trained and qualified teachers. However, more than half of the principals could only access four or fewer. In 2019 there were an average of 9.7 relievers per school and in 2013 there were 11.5.

The distribution of day-relievers this year are shown below:

	Number of day-relievers												
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10-14	15-19	20+
% schools 2023	3	6	13	17	13	17	6	4	4	2	7	2	6

In 2013 there were 33% of schools reporting fewer than six day-relievers available, 39% in 2019 and 69% in 2023.

While about one in ten schools currently have access to 15 or more day-relievers, about the same number have access to one or no relievers.

*Note - in areas where several schools are close together they may share a number of day-relievers.*

## 6. Curriculum Delivery Issues

### 6.1 Use of non-specialists

Forty-eight percent of the principals had teachers working in non-specialist areas because they could not find a specialist teacher.

That is the highest recorded level in this series of surveys. By comparison, in 2019 the proportion was 39% and in 2013 it was 15% of schools.

### 6.2 Classes cancelled or transferred

Classes were cancelled or transferred to Te Kura (Correspondence School), polytechnics or electronic delivery because schools have been unable to find subject specialists this year.

Thirty percent of the principals had had to cancel or transfer classes because specialists could not be found. This is the highest proportion on record. On average one in every four schools cancelled classes and one in every two schools had to transfer courses/classes.

In 2019 the comparative figure was 18% of schools and in 2013 it was 15%.

Courses/classes affected this year were in:

- Accounting
- Automotive
- Biology
- Business studies
- Calculus
- Chemistry
- Classics
- Clothing & Fabrics
- Commerce
- Dance
- Design and Visual Communication
- Digital Media
- Digital Technologies
- Drama
- Economics
- English
- Health Science
- Home Economics
- legal studies
- Māori Performing Arts
- Maths
- Metalwork
- Music
- Pasifika Studies
- Physical education/health
- Physics
- Samoan
- Science
- Spanish
- Te Reo
- Technology
- Trades

## 7. Staffing expectations

### 7.1 Expectations of recruitment and retention

Principals indicated their recruitment and retention experience and expectations for this year relative to the previous year. The table below indicates their expectations (*excluding those who said they did not know*).

Expectation 2023	Response (%)		
	Easier/much easier	No different	Harder/much harder
Recruitment - NZ	3	23	75
Recruitment -overseas	5	44	52
Retention	4	45	51

Four in every five principals with an opinion on what they expect for the year anticipate it to be harder or much harder to recruit from within New Zealand for the rest of this year and two in five thought the same for overseas recruitment.

More than half expect it to be harder to retain staff this year than last year, with slightly less than half thinking it will be like last year.

## 8. Principals' Comments on Teacher Supply

### 8.1 Comments on recruitment and retention

- A major concern I have is the ageing staff population and the associated lack of bright young teachers looking to move into management positions. We need to continue staff for part-time work well beyond retirement age. They also benefit as the pension is insufficient, but there seems to be a concentration of inertia with this group of employees.
- Advertisements for jobs are having to be re-advertised multiple times before we get a worthwhile candidate. We have hired 3 times from overseas in the last year and each time had problems, one did 2 weeks and then resigned calling in sick for all of their notice period, one declined the job two days before they were due to start, and the other one we are still awaiting the visa to be approved. Not having staff puts extra strain on everyone else, it's not just the disruption to learning, it is increased admin hours, added stresses on behaviour with classes that have rolling relievers, increased pressure on relief, it also has an effect on moral when you do interview after interview with poor candidates. When you hire someone who is not good simply because you need some in the class, this also has an effect on learning and behaviour which then puts stress on everyone else who has to step in and sort it out or provide extra support. People who are good can be picky about the jobs they take, they often ask for extra incentive to come and if you are a small school you don't have the allowances and units to do this, neither is it fair on the staff already employed.
- Even when we offer a position to an NZ teacher they are thinking about the position for a couple of days and then decide to stay where they are. They do not seem to want to move or are being enticed to stay at their current school. We normally receive lots of applicants for positions at our school.
- Finding suitable staff is getting more difficult. We advertised 3 times for a Maths teacher and had to use an agency in the end. Factors such as the pay dispute, NZQA & the Ministry's ridiculous demands and comments made by teachers about poor working conditions and the long hours are not attracting people into the profession. If we want to improve the quality and number of applicants there has to be good news stories about what a rewarding profession it is.
- For some positions we started advertising at the end of Term 4, we have still been unable to secure appropriate people.
- I am really concerned about the future of the teaching profession - the workload is becoming increasingly unsustainable. There are a huge number of experienced teachers and Principals looking to leave or retire in the next 5 years - or more likely this year, if this pace of change keeps up! There seems to be a lack of suitable staff coming through to Middle or Senior Leadership positions. Work/life balance seems to deter staff from stepping up into these roles. We have very few suitable NZ trained and qualified applicants for any teaching or support staff position these days - and we are not usually a hard to staff school! The staffing formula is way too tight. How can we make the profession more attractive in terms of recruiting and retaining suitable teachers and valuing them - including attracting a balance of gender (pay and conditions!).
- I have had 5 maternity leave positions and 3 have been chemists! I had to fill a maths teacher with a trained primary teacher who was relieving. It was junior maths only. Younger staff, i.e in their 20s are interested in completing 2-3 years then head off overseas
- I do not want to spend time doing the hours required to employ an overseas teacher and get their visa. I would like to just employ one from an approved agency like we did before.
- I have no idea how we can fill positions when we get no NZ applicants and of the many overseas applicants only 1 maybe 2 are worth further investigation. We know that teacher training institutions enrolments are much less than what is required, something needs to change to solve this situation.
- I'm worried. I have an aging staff. There are a significant number of staff at or over retirement/pension age. The stress and imminent changes to NCEA are genuine factors these elderly staff have. I can see many deciding to leave secondary teaching with the changes. Lack of a decent % pay increase is a factor (10% for those on a benefit) and look at the minimum wage. I'm [one to five] years as principal ([ten to fifteen] as SLT) I'm in a fantastic school... but

can't attract applicants. Those I've employed are from other kiwi schools (one is a HOF who's been appointed to regular role). What's happening for those schools where it's hard to staff. Honestly it's not been that bad before.

- Interviewees had many job opportunities available for them, so we were less successful in selecting the staff member we wanted. One turned us down after verbally accepting the job but before accepting in writing, another approached their school once we made an offer to them & their school offered them more to stay, the next had already accepted a job. We hired our 4th choice. More applicants have mental health issues that make it difficult in our workspace with students with many difficult behaviours.
- It is common to get no applicants for Māori Medium teaching positions, including Tumuaki. We have no relievers, and do rely on internal relief to cover absences.
- It is definitely harder to find qualified staff this year, and the number of applicants for each position has reduced.
- It is so stressful, much more stress than Covid as I cannot see a way I can staff my school. I have three teachers going on Maternity Leave and do not have much hope of finding a replacement. It keeps me awake at night. I am going to have to teach myself.
- Last year we employed a whanau member who had a masters in matauranga taiao as a LATT, to which she resigned end of 2022 to continue her postgraduate studies. This year she is employed as a kura teina day reliever as a LATT.
- Our context is not typical. We have in the past found it challenging to recruit qualified teaching staff in certain areas of the school. We have engaged unqualified 'experts' in one our teaching programmes in which students are experiencing high levels of achievement and attainment.
- Our kura is a very desirable kura to teach at and teachers tend to want to stay when they do get employment here. In saying that I have found it very difficult to recruit for a number of maternity leave positions having to advertise 3 position last year more than once. I have seen a decline in the number of applicants received in the last 2-3 years.
- Over the years we have found it much more difficult to fill maternity leave positions.
- Recruiting overall is the biggest stressor of the moment - attracting quality NZ trained middle leadership candidates is even more challenging than quality classroom teachers. The worry of where you might find a teacher you could feel confident in putting in front of students if one of your current staff leave is pretty much constant. The shortage of quality potential middle leaders is in some ways the most worrying as we need these people to mentor and grow beginning teachers as well as work with students directly.
- Since 20 March a further two teachers have resigned - one to go overseas, one to a position outside teaching.
- Staffing is at crisis point - the urgent need to train/recruit new high quality teachers must be the highest priority for the profession. Recruiting high quality teachers, especially in STEM is extremely difficult.
- The quantity of applications has dropped off. Te Reo teachers as rare as hens teeth.
- The situation is dire. As a principal I am picking up 5 hours a week teaching because cannot find a teacher. Two vacancies I cannot fill currently.
- The supply of suitably trained staff entering the profession is not at all at the level required to meet the need. When a staff member moves on for personal or career development reasons (which in a healthy profession should be supported) the application rates of NZ trained or experienced teachers in non-existent from a regional perspective.
- The teaching recruitment is very dynamic and much harder. More teachers are changing part way through the year now. Many are jumping into schools and then out again-this is a burden on the staff in the school because there is a huge investment in getting the new staff into the school culture and forming the positive relationships with the students. They do this and then go and the students are left high and dry. Our staff induction programme is overloaded with the continual number of new staff we are appointing. We are very lucky to be able to get competent replacements but the added stress, and workload for some staff is great. I feel for schools where these teachers that apply come from and I feel guilty when I employ someone because I know they now have to recruit and sometimes in certain areas in Auckland that is even harder. I think we are in a crisis. The processes we have for recruitment is good but the

workload for me is huge. The biggest losers are our students having to change teachers like this. Now and then not so bad but at the moment it seems consistent. It worries me that teachers are being 'sucked out' of present schools with 'pay and conditions' over and above what they are getting and I believe this is an inequity in the system. Higher decile, large international student-based schools can afford to do this-we cannot. I have no evidence of this but it is a hunch. Kia ora!

- We are fortunate, for the most part. However, the lack of NZ trained, culturally competent kaiako is of concern.
- We are not experts in recruiting overseas teachers and there is a growing concern of teachers who are not actually qualified appropriately or who haven't started the Visa and Teachers council registration requirements. This is time wasting and gives you no choice but to go through a recruitment agency at a greater cost. Having to wait 6-9 months for an overseas teacher is very difficult too.
- We are now losing classroom teachers to positions at Te Kura and as advisors in the Ministry as teachers perceive these to be a better deal in terms of managing work and life. This is particularly for those teachers who have considerable experience in the classroom, but are needing to look elsewhere to avoid burnout.
- We did have a number of vacancies in specialist fields last year - namely Dance, Food Technology and Economics - and Digital Technology the previous year. While we have filled all of these positions, it was not without having to be exceptionally proactive to secure teachers in these specialist fields and three out of the four positions were filled by first year teachers.
- We have a new high school opening within our area and we have lost 2 staff members already and will see more leave. Technology teachers we are unable to attract advertised for 2 years now. Have two maternity leave positions with no applicants
- We have appointed staff to positions we would usually not have, due to fear of not having staff for some positions. We are constantly concerned about potential staff burnout, and the possibility of walkout and as a result others are taking on huge workloads to make it manageable for struggling staff.
- We have become a very hard school to staff. We are very reliant on part time teachers to enable the timetable to work.
- We have had roll growth and then had to suddenly advertise. We don't usually advertise jobs at this time of the year because recruitment is difficult. We have had to register as an accredited workplace for overseas teachers
- We have really struggled to find high calibre Mathematics and Science positions. We are a large urban school and we have not typically faced these issues before.
- What this survey does not identify is how many teachers are talking about the possibility of moving out of teaching. We have an HOD who has indicated last week that she may move on due to the fact that she is having to oversee more than her share of the load in her department, due to us not being able to appoint a Design Teacher (we have other teachers teaching it, but they need guidance as it is not their chosen subject area). This is a passionate, very good teacher. Her comment was that she could make more money in another employment sector, with a lot less stress. We are going into Term 2, looking like not having a Maths teacher. This causes huge disruption for the students, plus grumpy parents with the "Maths is important" mindset. The ripple effect of the staffing crisis is: - extra stress on Principals - stressed staff who are asked to teach outside their area - stressed vibe amongst the staff in general - students disadvantaged which leads to undesirable behaviour in the classroom because they do not have a teacher in front of them who knows their stuff - parent complaints
- When employing new staff, I always take into consideration the make-up of our school community. It is always good to find someone that is of our community or has worked with or understands our community. This is where I struggle to employ overseas trained teachers. Nothing against them, but they will not relate to my community, or my community will not relate to them.