



# The Impact of the Early Career Framework (ECF) Programme on the Work Engagement, Wellbeing and Retention of Teachers: A Longitudinal Study, 2021–2026

## **Interim Research Report #2:**

Early Career Teachers' and Mentors' Reported Experiences with the ECF Programme

## **Full Report**

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**Authors:** Qing Gu, Sofia Eleftheriadou and Lisa Baines (UCL Centre for Educational Leadership)

**With Thanks to:** Kenneth Leithwood (University of Toronto), Peter Earley, Mark Quinn, Stephen Calladine-Evans, Joanne Calladine-Evans, Andy Hodgkinson, Alyson Colman and the UCL ECF Research Committee:

- Ruth Smith (East London Teaching School Hub)
- Jen Fiddaman (Oxfordshire Teaching School Hub)
- Natasha Evans (Harris City Academy Crystal Palace)
- Stephanie Bingham (Newcastle University)

## Executive Summary

Research is an integral part of the UCL's Early Career Framework (ECF) programme. This is the **second** report in a series of research publications from the UCL Centre for Educational Leadership-led project, *The Impact of the ECF Programme on the Work Engagement, Wellbeing and Retention of Teachers: A Longitudinal Study, 2021–2026*.

ECF reform lies at the heart of the Department for Education's [teacher recruitment and retention strategy](#). The purpose of this mixed methods research is to assess the extent to which (and the ways in which) early career teachers' (ECTs') and their mentors' learning experiences with the ECF programme influence their decisions to stay in teaching, move schools, or leave the profession.

All ECTs and mentors in the UCL-led ECF programme were invited to complete a survey about their learning experiences with the ECF programme between June and October 2022. Of the approximately 12,000 invited ECTs and mentors, over 1,700 responded (response rate of 14%). The acquired sample of respondents is representative of national ECT and mentor populations in terms of gender, ethnicity, school phase and contract type, giving us confidence about the relevance and representativeness of our ECTs' and mentors' reported learning and career experiences to those of their peers *nationally*.

## Key Messages

### Key Message 1:

The vast majority of ECTs remained enthusiastic about their teaching job towards the end of the first year of their teaching career and believed that the practices suggested in the ECF programme would make a difference in the learning of their pupils.

- Nearly all (96%) of the surveyed ECTs and mentors reported intending to continue teaching the following year (c.f., 87.2% nationally in 2021/2).
- Over 90% of ECTs reported being enthusiastic about and inspired by their teaching job with 63% and 58%, respectively, in 'strong' agreement.

### Key Message 2:

Most ECTs reported positive learning experiences with the ECF programme in terms of their satisfaction with the pedagogy of the programme, their mastery of the programme content, and the use of ECF learning in their work.

- More than 80% of ECTs agreed that the ECF programme was based on sound research about teaching and pupil learning (87%) and that the practices suggested in the ECF programme would make a difference in the learning of their pupils (83%).
- **Structured mentor meetings** were the learning strategy most valued by ECTs in the ECF programme, with 81% of ECTs agreeing that this strategy had contributed to their learning 'moderately', 'a lot' or 'significantly'. This view is endorsed by mentors' own perceptions. Almost all of the surveyed mentors (98%) reported being able to establish a strong mentor-mentee relationship and that their role as a mentor was meaningful to the development of their ECTs' teaching practice.

### Key Message 3:

The results of the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis show that the implementation of learning from the ECF programme improves ECTs' self-efficacy, resilience and engagement in teaching. However, the extent to which ECTs can *use their learning in context* is dependent on the quality of in-school professional development cultures, which is created by school leadership.

This evidence points to the significant role of the **school organisation** in enabling or constraining the impact of the ECF programme on the learning and development of ECTs, suggesting that the ECF programme can only make a difference with regard to ECTs' retention decisions insofar if it is *supported by and integrated as part of* a school's professional learning culture.

The evidence also suggests that any solution to teacher retention that is based *only* on the human capital approach to developing teachers (i.e., through externally provided professional development programmes aimed at increasing individual teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions) is less likely to bring about the desired retention outcomes.

### Key Message 4:

The results of the SEM analysis show that job satisfaction is not the primary cause of teachers' destination decisions. Although in-school job satisfaction may seem to have a direct influence on teachers' decisions, how satisfied ECTs feel with their job, how well they teach (i.e., teacher efficacy) and how they perceive the quality of their working lives at school (i.e., teacher wellbeing in school) are dependent on the quality of in-school professional learning cultures, which are shaped by school leadership.

Thus, our findings disagree with the latest Department for Education (DfE) report on the working lives of teachers and school leaders, which asserted that "*considerations of leaving the state sector are primarily driven by teachers' and leaders' attitudes towards their jobs and, more broadly, their lives*" (DfE, 2023, p. 171). The results of the SEM analysis demonstrate that teachers' job satisfaction and wellbeing are more than individualised attitudinal attributes; rather, they are the **organisational outcomes of leadership and culture**. Future case studies in our research will unpack this complex relationship in greater depth.

### Key Message 5:

The vast majority of mentors were motivated by their role as a mentor and felt that being a mentor had contributed to their own professional development. They felt highly positive about their schools' support for their mentoring role and felt that being a mentor had not had adverse consequences on their capacity to take on other responsibilities. However, their experiences with regard to mentoring workload varied significantly.

- Almost all of the surveyed mentors (94%) reported being motivated by their role as a mentor, with 84% in 'strong' or 'moderate' agreement, and a substantial majority (88%) reported that being a mentor had contributed to their own professional development, with 65% in 'strong' or 'moderate' agreement.
- Most mentors (81%) reported that they had received adequate support from their school, with more than 60% agreeing 'strongly' or 'moderately'.
- Although 29% of mentors *disagreed* 'strongly' or 'moderately' that they had adequate time to carry out their mentor role, around a third of mentors (34%) agreed to the same degree, with another 20% in 'slight' agreement.

## Key Message 6:

Workload tensions related to being a mentor are part of *in-school workload culture*. Results of a series of logistic regression analyses show that, in schools where the leadership is perceived to be effective in enabling internal and external collaboration for educational improvement and where the culture and conditions are conducive for teaching, learning and professional growth, mentors were more likely to report that they had adequate time to fulfil their mentoring role. The evidence suggests that the ECF programme cannot be held as solely responsible for the lack of mentoring time in certain schools.

## Conclusions

Despite the magnitude of challenges that ECTs face during their first year of teaching, the most encouraging finding from our survey has to be the observation that the vast majority of ECTs remain inspired by their teaching job and want to stay in the profession. This finding offers *hope and promise* with regard to the learning and achievement of the children and young people in our schools.

There is also encouraging news for ECF reform. For most ECTs, participation in the ECF programme in their first year of teaching increased their self-efficacy, resilience, job satisfaction and wellbeing in teaching. However, school leadership that prioritises and enables collaborative teacher development is a necessary condition for securing the positive impact of the ECF programme on teacher learning, development and retention.

By extension, the ECF programme offers an opportunity to improve the school system's collective capacity to lead learning in which school leaders, facilitators and mentors are *active partners* who work to create the right environment that enables ECTs to apply their learning in their classrooms, enjoy making a difference with other teachers at their school and feel fulfilled as professionals in teaching.

Taken together, our research evidence to date points to two tentative conclusions. First, the ECF programme can have and has had a positive impact on the learning and development of many ECTs. Second, the ECF programme alone is unable to 'transform' support for ECTs' professional development, as the DfE envisaged in its reform strategy (DfE, 2023<sup>1</sup>). The school organisation provides the necessary conditions that enable the desired learning transformation to happen.

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/782608/6.5092\\_DfE\\_Teacher\\_Retention\\_Strategy\\_1Pager\\_v10ii.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782608/6.5092_DfE_Teacher_Retention_Strategy_1Pager_v10ii.pdf)

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
1.0 Introduction .....	8
2.0 Survey Focus .....	8
3.0 Key Findings to Date .....	9
3.1 ECTs' and Mentors' Retention Decisions .....	9
3.2 ECTs' and Mentors' Learning Experiences with the ECF Programme.....	9
3.2.1 Learning Experience with the ECF Programme for <i>ECTs</i> .....	9
3.2.2 Learning Experiences with the ECF Programme for <i>Mentors</i> .....	12
3.2.3 Mentoring Experiences of Both ECTs and Mentors.....	13
3.3 Exploring Mentors' Workloads in the ECF Programme .....	14
3.3.1 Mentoring and Workload.....	14
3.3.2 Mentors' Workloads and School Culture.....	16
3.3.3 Predicting Mentors' Workloads: Schools Matter.....	17
3.4 Impact of the ECF Programme on ECTs' Retention Decisions .....	20
3.4.1 Variation in Retention Decisions.....	20
3.4.2 Structural Equation Modelling Analysis of the Impact of the ECF Programme on ECTs' Retention Decisions .....	21
4.0 Summary and Next Steps.....	24
References .....	25
Appendix A. Mentors' Workload Correlations with Programme Experience, Leadership Practices, School Culture and Dispositions .....	26
Appendix B. SEM Dimensions .....	27

## Figures and Tables

Figure 1. Reported destinations of ECTs and mentors for the next academic year .....	9
Figure 2. ECTs' views on their learning from the ECF programme .....	10
Figure 3. ECTs' programme satisfaction.....	11
Figure 4. ECTs' views on their mastery of the programme content .....	11
Figure 5. Mentors' views on their role as mentor .....	12
Figure 6. Mentors' views on their engagement with the ECF programme.....	12
Figure 7. Mentors' views on their learning from the ECF programme .....	13
Figure 8. Mentors' perceptions of and experiences with mentoring .....	13
Figure 9. Mentors' views on school support and their workload .....	14
Figure 10. Mentors' views on the effect of their role .....	14
Figure 11. Mentors' responses to workload by school phase .....	15
Figure 12. Mentors' responses to workload by degree of teaching experience .....	16
Figure 13. Mentors' responses to items 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor' and 'I am protected from administrative duties that interfere with my teaching' .....	17
Figure 14. Mentors' responses to items 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor' and 'I have adequate time to balance pastoral duties with teaching' .....	17
Figure 15. Impact of the ECF programme on early career teachers' retention decisions: Results from the SEM analysis .....	23
Table 1. Logistic regression results with the following dependent variable item: 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor.' (Disagree=0, Agree=1) .....	19
Table 2. Logistic regression results with the following dependent variable item: 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor.' (Disagree=0, Agree=1) .....	20

## 1.0 Introduction

This report is the second in a series of research publications from the UCL Centre for Educational Leadership-led project, *The Impact of the ECF Programme on the Work Engagement, Wellbeing and Retention of Teachers: A Longitudinal Study, 2021–2026*.

Research is an integral component of the UCL’s Early Career Framework (ECF) programme. The purpose of this research is to fill an important evidence gap with regard to the impact of **programme-level**, **school-level** and **system-level** factors on the professional capabilities, wellbeing, and retention decisions of early career teachers (ECTs) and their mentors over time. This four-year mixed methods research provides robust evidence of:

- **Who** the intended leavers, movers and stayers are over time.
- **The extent to which** and **how** their experiences with the ECF programme have influenced their professional dispositions and qualities, **how effective** they perceive themselves to be as teachers, and **why** they intend to leave, move (schools), or stay (in teaching).

Between June and October 2022, all ECTs and mentors in the UCL-led ECF programme were asked to complete a survey about their experiences with the programme in its first year, their school culture and leadership and their personal dispositions, such as self-efficacy, engagement, job satisfaction, and wellbeing. Of the approximately 12,000 requested ECTs and mentors, a little over 1,700 responded (response rate of 14%).

This interim report serves to provide an overview of the personal dispositions, professional behaviours and programme learning experiences that ECTs and mentors reported in the 2022 survey. The report also details the extent to which and the ways in which the quality of school leadership and culture was perceived by ECTs and mentors to be associated with their learning experiences with the ECF programme. The results provide a blueprint for the development of a more nuanced understanding of how ECF impacts teachers’ work engagement and retention.

## 2.0 Survey Focus

Our survey comprised a series of research-informed questions employing a six-point Likert scale to assess ECTs’ and mentors’ three key areas of experience:

- **Learning experiences with the ECF programme**, measured by programme satisfaction, mastery of programme content, and implementation of programme content in their context of work.
- **School leadership and culture**, measured by leadership practices, senior leadership behaviours, school culture, and professional growth opportunities.
- **Personal and professional dispositions**, measured by collective efficacy in school, resilience, job satisfaction, and wellbeing in teaching.



## 3.0 Key Findings to Date

### 3.1 ECTs' and Mentors' Retention Decisions

Nearly all (96%) of ECTs and mentors intended to remain in teaching the following academic year. This figure exceeds the most recent national retention statistics,<sup>2</sup> which indicate that 87.2% of the teachers who qualified in 2021 (under the previous statutory guidelines) were still teaching one year later. As we presented in the first interim report, the vast majority of ECTs in our survey—more than 90%—expressed **enthusiasm** for their teaching job and indicated that their jobs inspired them, with 63% and 58% 'strongly' agreeing with these two points, respectively.

Most ECTs in our survey intended to stay at the same school the following year (84%). Notably, however, a greater proportion of ECTs (12%) than mentors (4%) intended to move to a different school the following academic year (Figure 1).

Almost all mentors (92%) reported that they intended to stay at the same school, with 12% reporting that they had already been promoted to a higher level of responsibility.

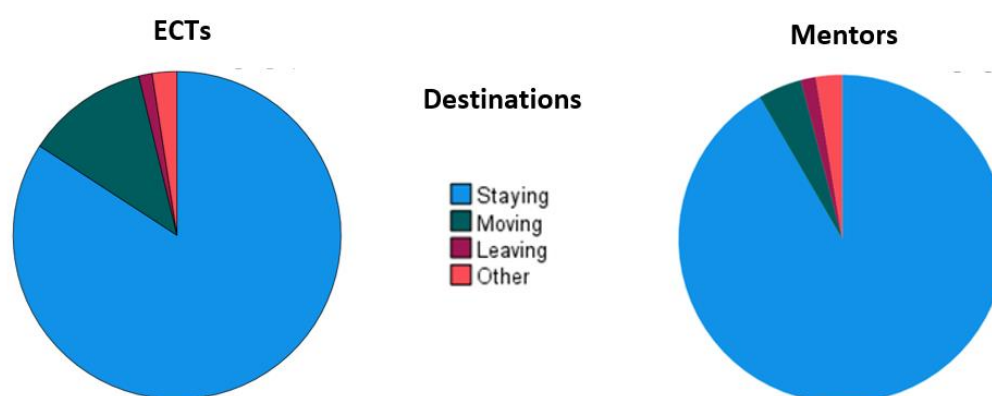


Figure 1. Reported destinations of ECTs and mentors for the next academic year

### 3.2 ECTs' and Mentors' Learning Experiences with the ECF Programme

#### 3.2.1 Learning Experiences with the ECF Programme for ECTs

The vast majority of ECTs reported positive learning experiences from the ECF programme in terms of their satisfaction with the pedagogy of the programme, their mastery of the programme content, and the use of ECF learning in their work.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education, School Workforce in England: Reporting Year 2022  
<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

## Programme pedagogies

As shown in Figure 2, **structured mentor meetings** were highly valued by ECTs as the most valued strategy, with 67% of ECTs agreeing ‘a lot’ or ‘significantly’ that they contributed to their learning. This aligns with the findings of earlier research on outstanding school leadership in England, which found mentoring to be an essential ingredient in schools’ positive professional development culture (Matthews, 2009; Matthews, Rea, Hill & Gu, 2014).

In addition, almost a third of ECTs reported *cluster-based training with a facilitator* to have contributed to their learning ‘a lot’ or ‘significantly’, with an additional 23% of ECTs reporting that this strategy contributed ‘moderately’. For nearly half of ECTs (48%), the facilitated *online learning community* and *self-directed study* contributed to their ECF learning ‘moderately’ or ‘significantly’. In contrast, the strategy in our sample that was reported by the fewest ECTs to have contributed to their learning was the *induction/conference*; still, 35% found it to have contributed to their learning ‘moderately’ or ‘significantly’ (Figure 2).

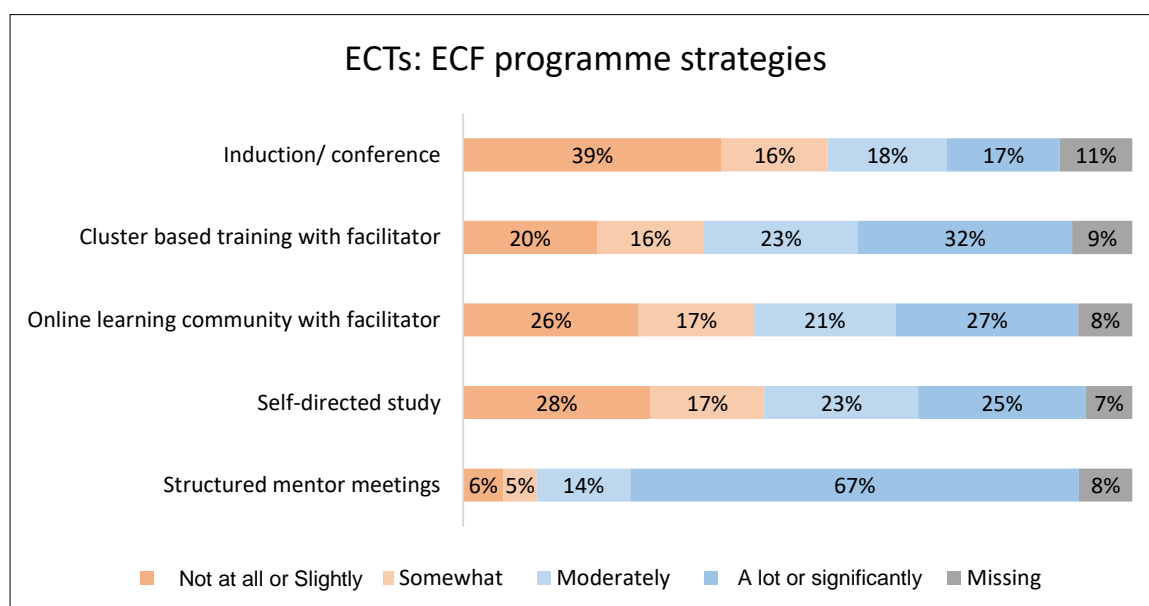


Figure 2. ECTs’ views on their learning from the ECF programme

Almost all (90%) of the surveyed ECTs agreed that they *have had opportunities to discuss their views on how they teach* in the ECF programme (Figure 3). The vast majority of ECTs agreed that the ECF programme was *based on sound research about teaching and pupil learning* (87%) and that *the practices suggested in the ECF programme would make a difference in the learning of their pupils* (83%). Importantly, around half of the surveyed ECTs agreed ‘strongly’ or ‘moderately’ that they had *used ECF learning in their context of work*, with another 27% agreeing ‘slightly’ with this notion.

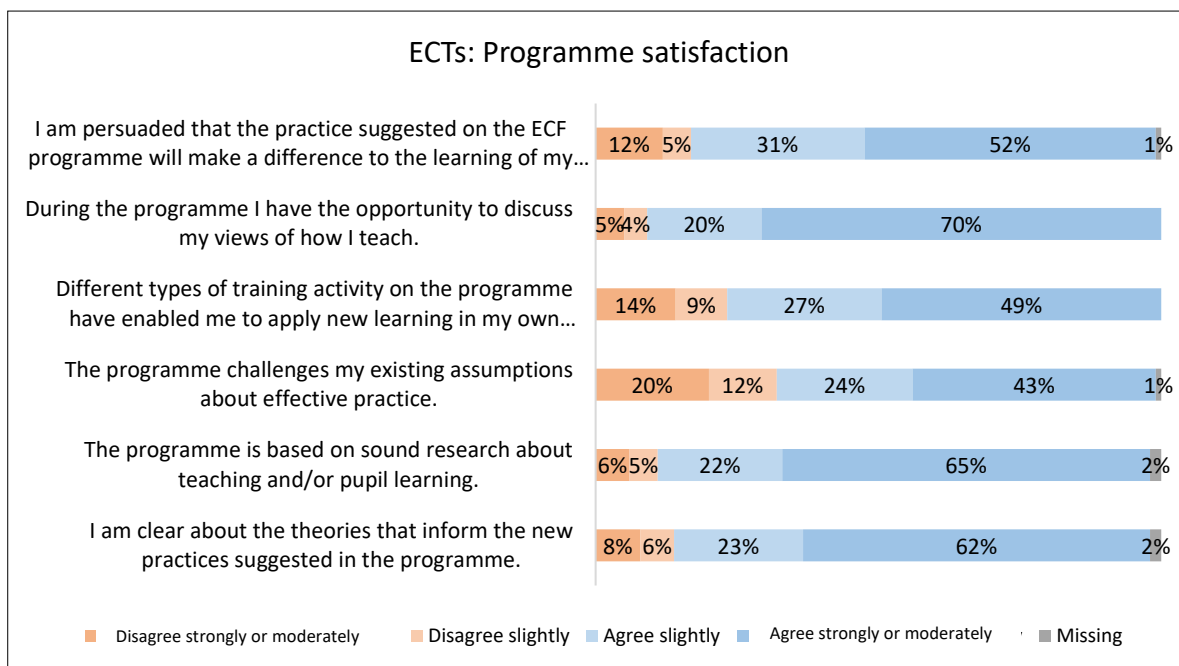


Figure 3. ECTs' programme satisfaction

### Mastery of programme content

More than 70% of the surveyed ECTs felt confident (ranging from 'confident' to 'completely confident') about what they had learned in the ECF programme when considering the eight Teachers' Standards, with close to 80% reporting that they were confident when it was about *setting high expectations* and *planning and teaching well-structured lessons* (Figure 4). The standard about which the fewest surveyed ECTs were confident in demonstrating—albeit still above 70%—was *good curriculum knowledge*. However, as some ECTs indicated in the survey, the reported confidence levels cannot be solely attributed to the ECF programme.

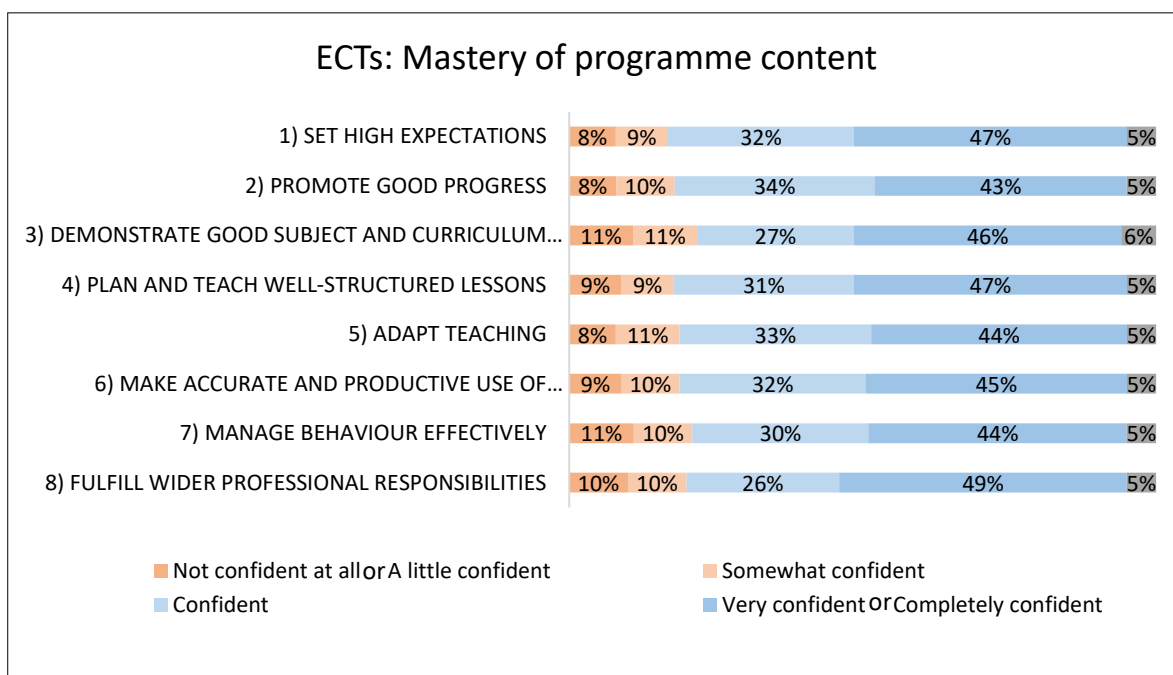


Figure 4. ECTs' views on their mastery of the programme content

### 3.2.2 Learning Experiences with the ECF Programme for Mentors

The vast majority of mentors were motivated by their role as a mentor, and most reported that their engagement with the ECF programme had contributed to their confidence as mentors.

#### Programme engagement

An overwhelming majority of mentors (94%) reported that they were *motivated by their role as a mentor*, with 84% agreeing ‘strongly’ or ‘moderately’ with this notion. Additionally, 88% of the surveyed ECTs reported that *being a mentor has contributed to their own professional development*, with nearly two-thirds (65%) being in ‘strong’ and ‘moderate’ agreement (Figure 5).

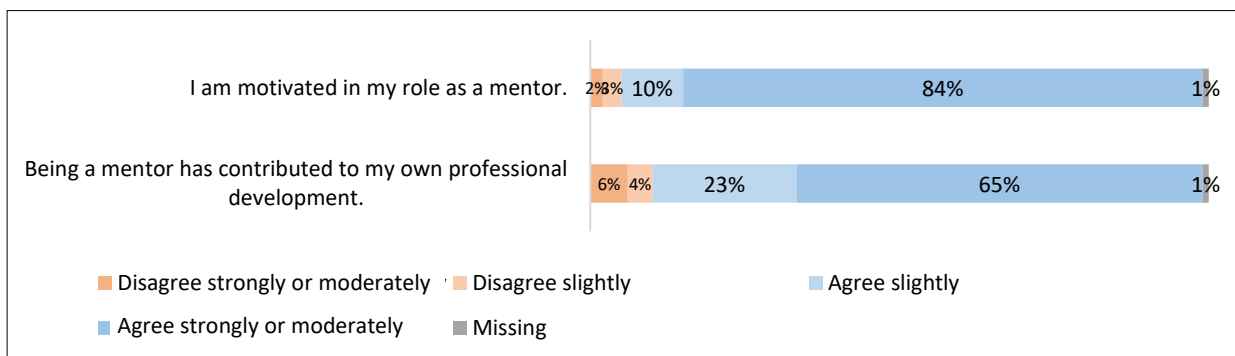


Figure 5. Mentors' views on their role as mentor

The large majority of mentors were highly positive about their engagement with the ECF programme and valued the contribution of the programme to their confidence as mentors. More than 60% of mentors reported having engaged with mentor training and accessed self-directed study materials ‘a lot’ or ‘significantly’, with an additional 20% reporting ‘moderate’ engagement (Figure 6).

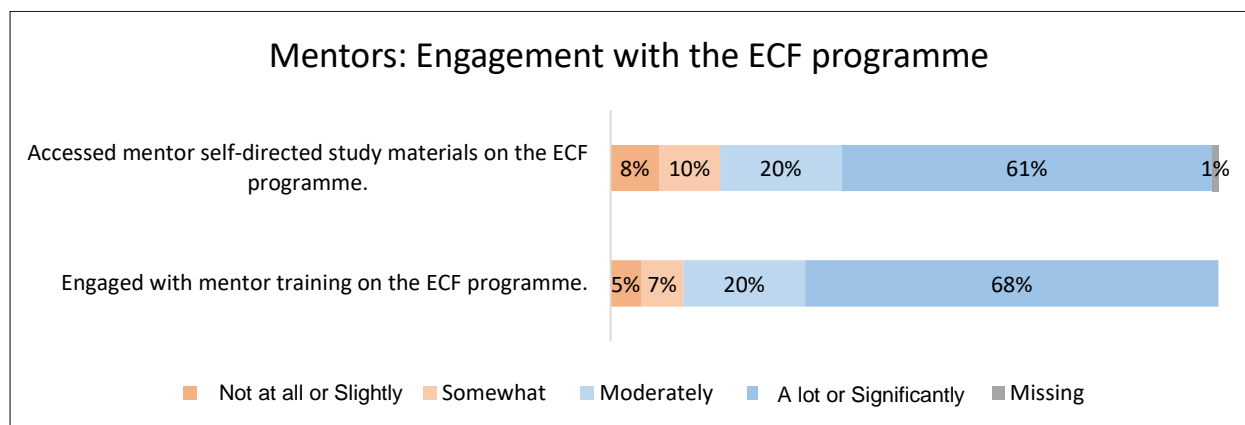


Figure 6. Mentors' views on their engagement with the ECF programme

Nearly half of the surveyed mentors reported that the ECF mentoring programme had contributed ‘a lot’ or ‘significantly’ to their confidence as a mentor in a way that helped them to *support and challenge their ECTs or establish a constructive mentoring relationship with their ECTs* (Figure 7). In addition, 40% of the surveyed mentors felt that the mentoring programme had contributed ‘a lot’ or

‘significantly’ to their confidence in a way that helped them to *provide effective developmental teaching observations and feedback*.

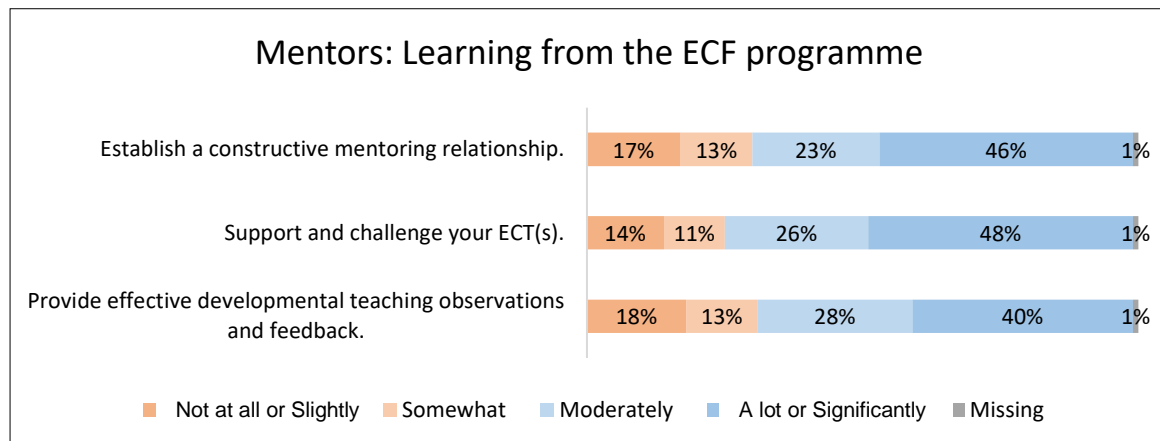


Figure 7. Mentors’ views on their learning from the ECF programme

### 3.2.3 Mentoring Experiences of Both ECTs and Mentors

Evidence from the survey points to a highly positive image regarding ECTs’ learning experiences with their mentors in the ECF programme. **Structured mentor meetings** were reported by ECTs as the most valued strategy in terms of contributions to their learning (see Figure 2 in Section 3.2.1). These reported positive experiences were endorsed by mentors as well. As shown in Figure 8 below, almost all of the surveyed mentors reported being *able to establish a strong mentor-mentee relationship* (99%) and that their *role as a mentor is meaningful to the development of their ECTs’ teaching practices* (98%). In addition, 97% of mentors reported being able to meet the individual needs of ECTs and effectively address their learning demands.

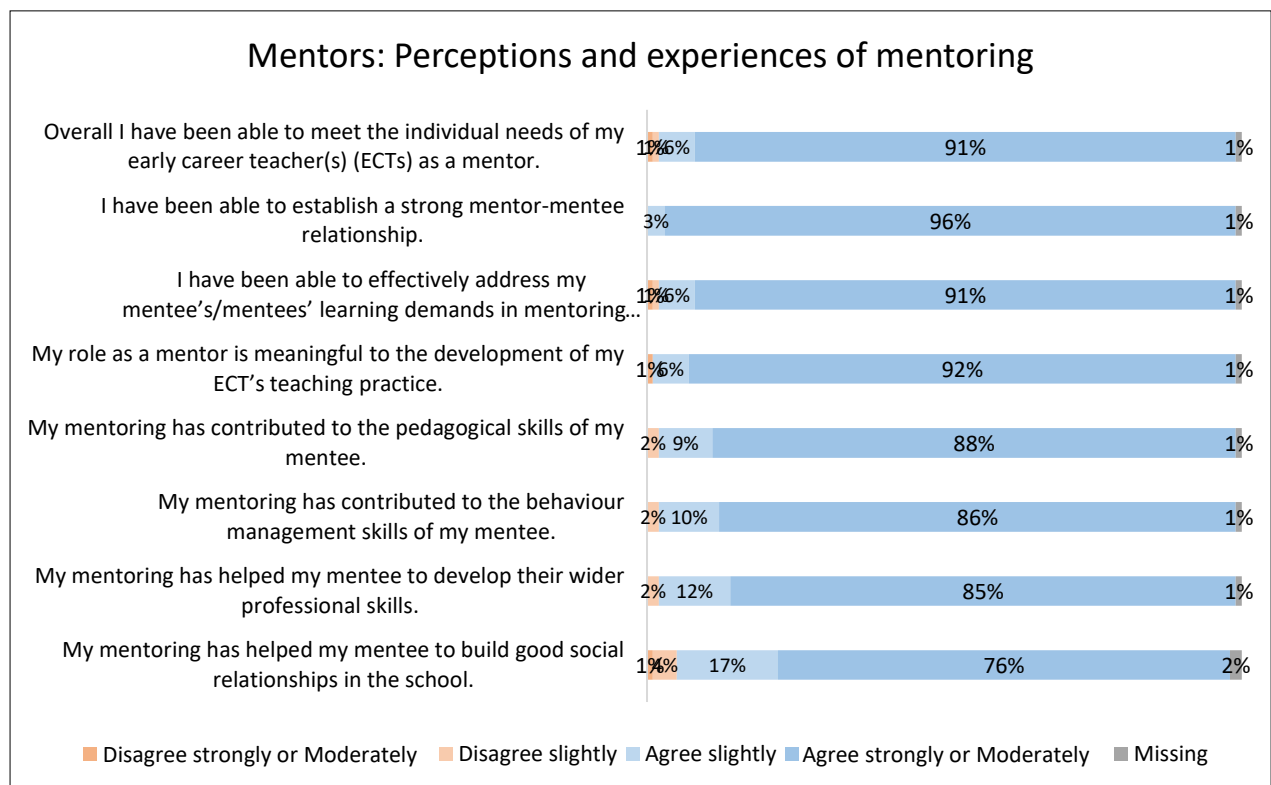


Figure 8. Mentors’ perceptions of and experiences with mentoring

### 3.3 Exploring Mentors' Workloads in the ECF Programme

#### 3.3.1 Mentoring and Workload

Most mentors were highly positive about their school's support for their mentoring role and felt that being a mentor had *not* had adverse consequences for their capacity to undertake other responsibilities. However, their workload stemming from their mentoring role varied significantly.

The majority of mentors (81%) reported having had *adequate support from their school*, with more than 60% agreeing 'strongly' or 'moderately' (Figure 9). However, their reported experiences with workload varied. Although 29% of mentors *disagreed* 'strongly' or 'moderately' that they *have adequate time to carry out their mentor role*, around a third of mentors (34%) *agreed* 'strongly' or 'moderately', with another 20% of mentors agreeing 'slightly'.

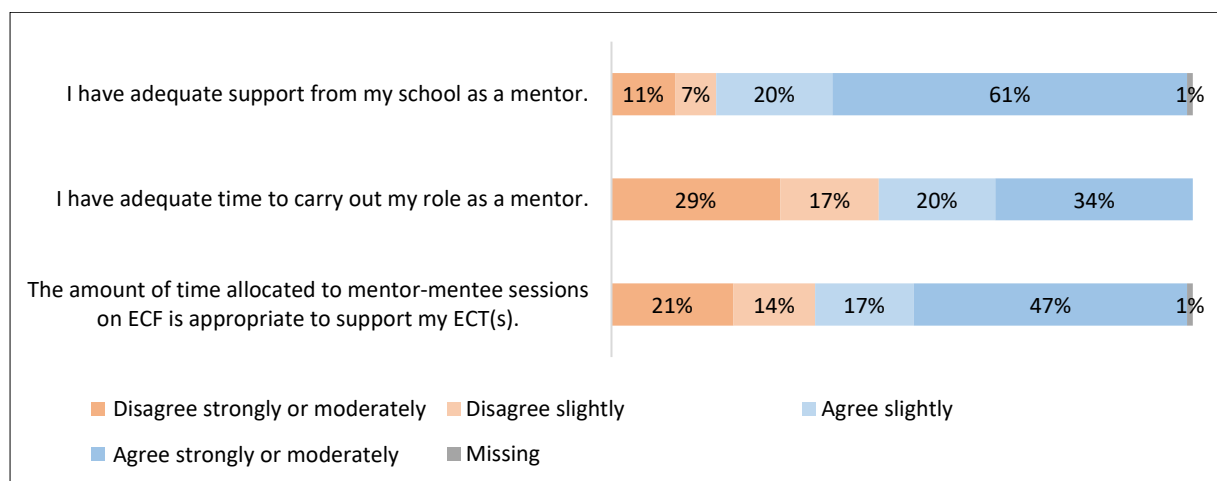


Figure 9. Mentors' views on school support and their workload

In addition, more than half of the mentors (54%) reported that *their mentoring role had not negatively affected their own capacity to fulfil their other responsibilities*, with 40% supporting this view 'strongly' or 'moderately' (Figure 10).

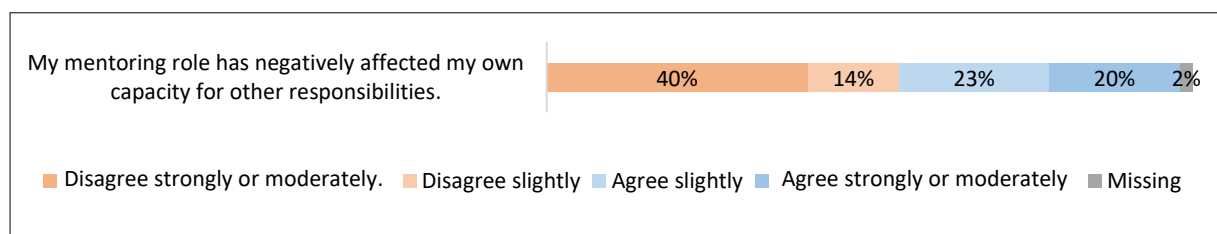


Figure 10. Mentors' views on the effect of their role

The difference in mentors' reported experiences was found to be associated with their years of experience and their schools' education phase. Mentors in primary schools and those with more experience in teaching tended to report more positive workload experiences.

More than 60% of mentors reported that the *time allocated to mentor-mentee sessions in the ECF programme was appropriate to support their ECT(s)*, with around half agreeing to this statement 'strongly' or 'moderately' (Figure 9). However, this agreement varied by school phase, as Figure 11 shows: 50% of the surveyed mentors in primary schools, compared to 44% in secondary schools, agreed 'strongly' or 'moderately' with this statement. This observation aligns with the recent report from the DfE suggesting that teachers and school leaders working in primary settings had spent more time on formal continuing professional development (CPD) activities in the previous 12 months than others (DfE, 2023, p. 124).

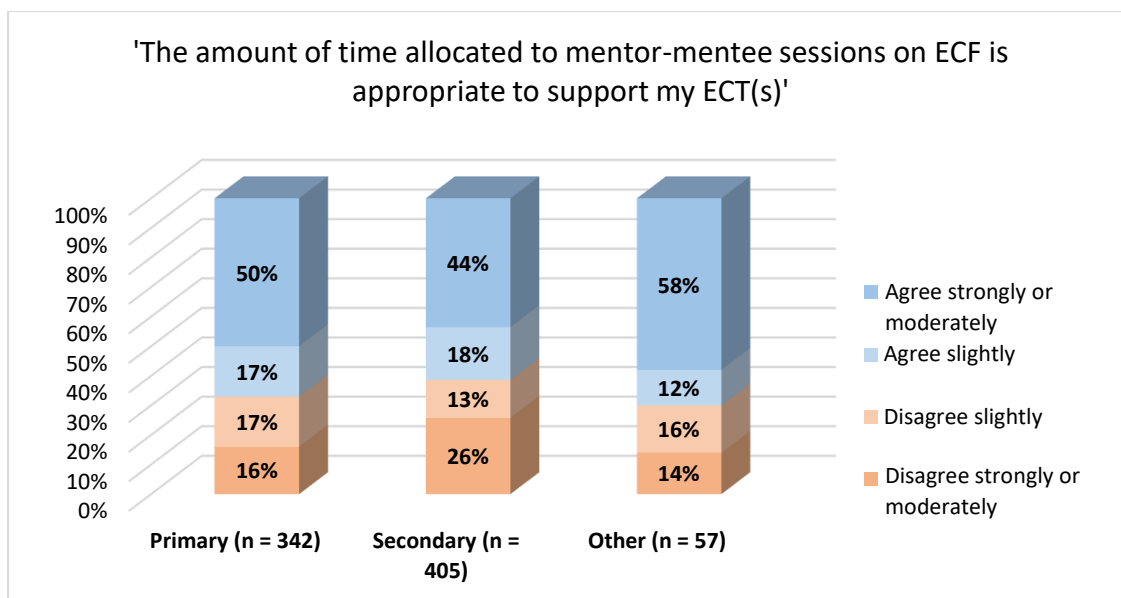


Figure 11. Mentors' responses to workload by school phase

Figure 12 shows that slightly over half of the mentors with 16 years or more of teaching experience agreed 'strongly' or 'moderately' that the *time allocated to mentor-mentee sessions was appropriate to support their ECT(s)*. In contrast, among mentors with less than eight years of teaching experience, 41% agreed to the same degree.

Research on teachers' work, lives and effectiveness in England (e.g., Day & Gu, 2010, 2014) offers some plausible explanations for this difference. Evidence from more than 300 primary and secondary teachers across 100 schools points to the significance of teachers' professional life phases (measured by their years of teaching experience) in their ability to understand the complex and dynamic nature of learning, development and identity shifts over time. Early in their career (i.e., with up to seven years of experience), teachers are still establishing their professional and organisational identities and expertise in the classroom and at school. In contrast, those with more than 16 or more years of experience tend to have senior leadership responsibilities in school, and many enjoy relatively high levels of motivation and commitment and positive professional trajectories in teaching. It is plausible that mentors in their later professional life phases capitalise on their

professional insight, experience and expertise to more effectively manage their mentoring support for ECTs than their less-experienced peers.

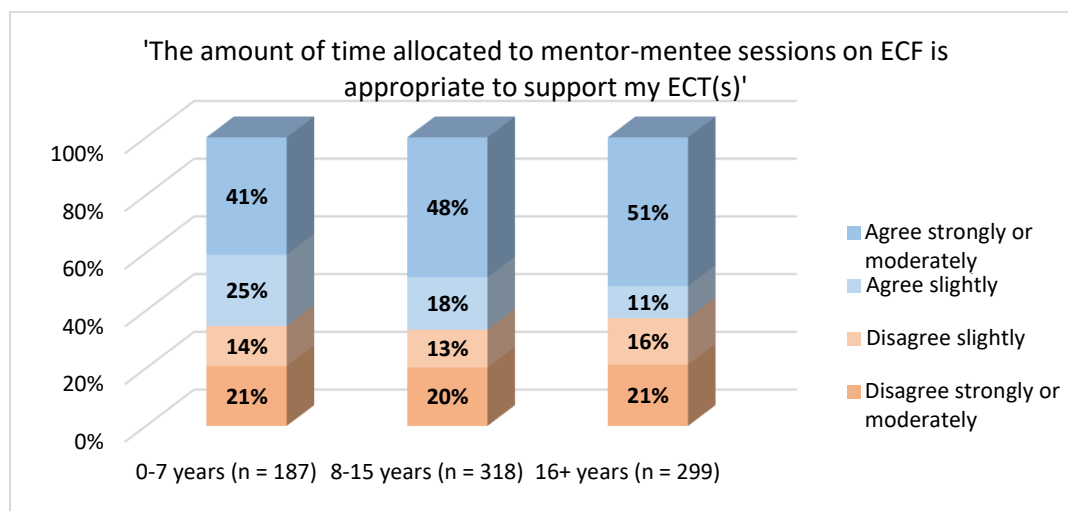


Figure 12. Mentors' responses to workload by years of teaching experience

### 3.3.2 Mentors' Workload and School Culture

Evidence clearly shows between-school variation in mentors' workloads, indicating that mentors' workloads reflect schools' workload cultures and that the ECF programme is not solely responsible for the lack of mentoring time in certain schools.

Figure 13 illustrates that nearly half of the mentors (47%) who 'strongly' or 'moderately' agreed that they were *protected from administrative duties that interfere with their teaching* also 'strongly' or 'moderately' agreed that they *have adequate time to carry out their role as mentors*. In contrast, 50% of those who felt 'strongly' or 'moderately' that they were *not* protected from administrative duties struggled considerably with having adequate mentoring time.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Figure 14 shows that almost half of the mentors (47%) who 'strongly' or 'moderately' agreed that they *have adequate time to balance pastoral duties with teaching* also 'strongly' or 'moderately' agreed that they *have adequate time to carry out their role as mentors*. In contrast, more than 60% of those who felt 'strongly' or 'moderately' that they do *not* have adequate time to balance pastoral duties with teaching struggled considerably with having adequate mentoring time.<sup>4</sup>

These results point to significant between-school variation and suggest that the ECF programme alone should not be blamed for the lack of mentoring time in certain schools.

<sup>3</sup> Chi-square test results:  $X^2(9, N=782)=91.3, p<.001$ .

<sup>4</sup> Chi-square test results:  $X^2(9, N=782)=124, p<.001$ .



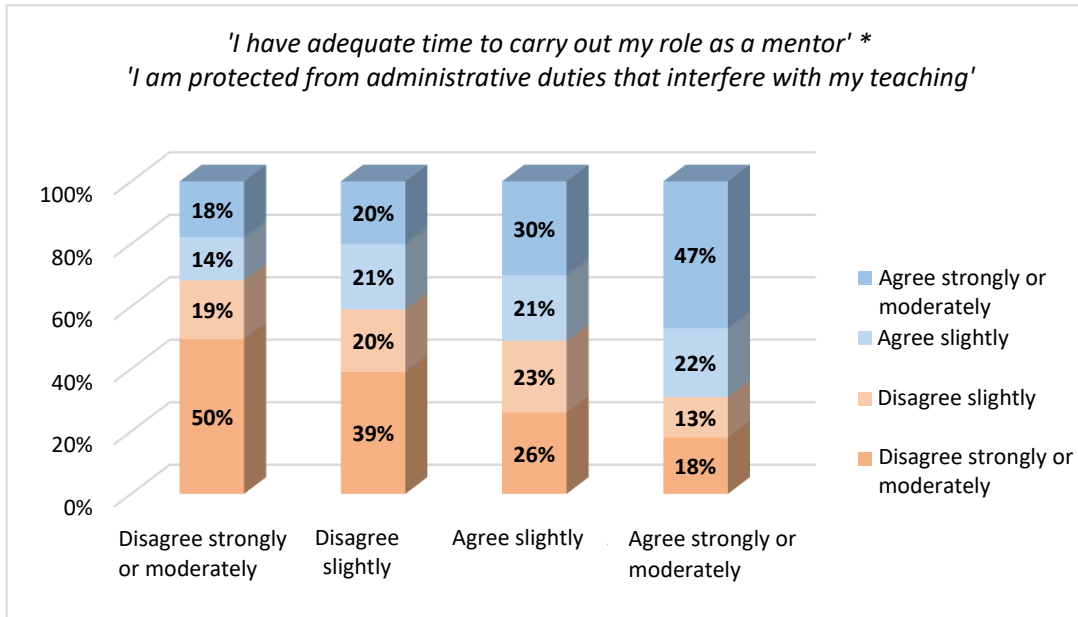


Figure 13. Mentors' responses to items 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor' and 'I am protected from administrative duties that interfere with my teaching'.

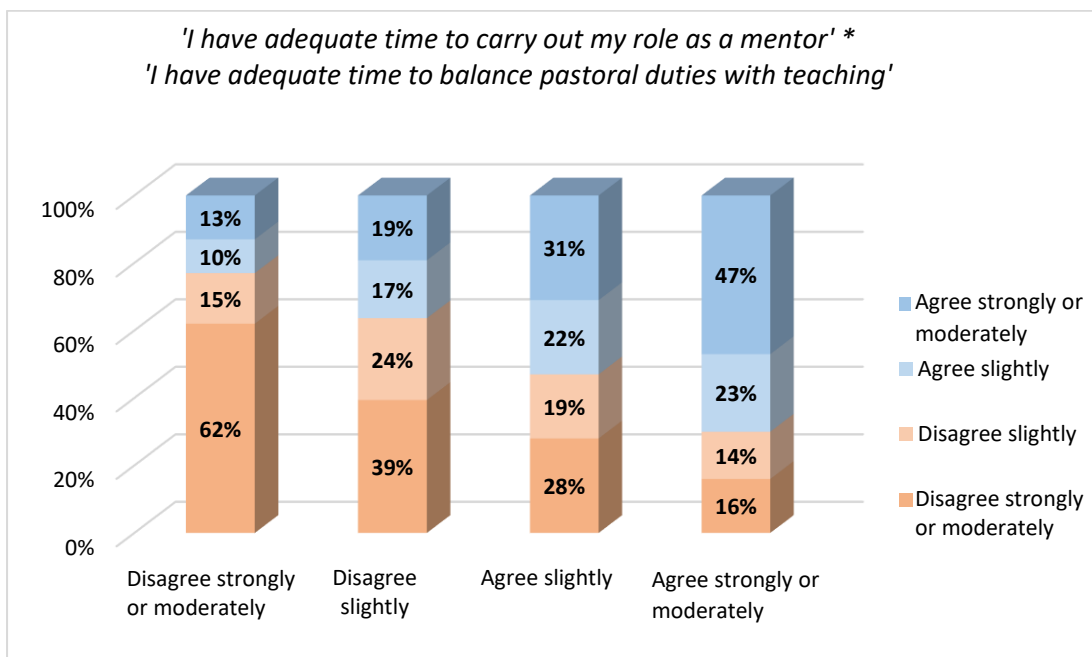


Figure 14. Mentors' responses to items 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor' and 'I have adequate time to balance pastoral duties with teaching'.

### 3.3.3 Predicting Mentors' Workloads: Schools Matter

In schools where leadership is effective in enabling internal and external collaboration for educational improvement and where the culture and conditions are conducive to teaching, learning and professional growth, mentors are more likely to report that they have adequate time to fulfil their mentoring role.

## Analysis process

Four logistic regression models were constructed to explore the personal and contextual factors that are most likely to predict mentors' workload perceptions, as indicated by the survey item '*I have adequate time to carry out my role [as a mentor].*'

We began the analysis with the group of personal and contextual factors outlined in Model 1 (Table 1) and then gradually **added** more factors into later models (Models 2–4 in Tables 1 and 2) to identify the factors among all those considered that are significantly associated with the likelihood of mentors reporting that they have adequate time for their mentoring role. See Appendix A for the detailed correlations between mentors' workload and various factors included in the analysis.

Some statistically significant factors in earlier models (e.g., *school phase* in Model 1) ceased having a significant association with mentors' perceptions of their workload after new factors (e.g., *leadership practice* in Model 2) were added to the analysis. The results of the first two models, for example, suggest that *leadership practices* are more likely than *school phase* to predict how mentors perceive their workload volume.

Model 4 included all personal and context-related factors in the analysis. Among them, *teaching conditions in school* constituted the only significant predictor of mentors' perceived workload.

Further analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) will help to explain how the significant factors identified in the four models impact one another to predict—directly and/or indirectly—mentors' workload perceptions. The results of the SEM will be presented in the forthcoming report later in 2023.

## Results

*Model 1.* Table 1 shows that mentors in secondary schools are less likely than those in **primary schools** to report having adequate time to carry out their mentoring role (Model 1 in Table 1). However, when *leadership practices* were added to the analysis, school phase was no longer significantly associated with mentors' perceived workload (Model 2 in Table 1).

*Model 2.* Among all of the personal demographic and school-related factors in Model 2, **leadership practices** constituted the only statistically significant predictor of mentors' perceived workload. Mentors in schools in which senior leaders set clear expectations, enable collaboration within and between schools and know how to harness community support for schools' improvement efforts were more likely to report that they have adequate time to carry out their mentoring role.

Independent variables	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
<b>Years of teaching</b> (ref: 0–7 years)								
8–15 years	0.26	0.25	0.30	1.30	0.23	0.26	0.36	1.26
16+ years	0.48	0.30	0.11	1.61	0.46	0.31	0.13	1.59
<b>Age</b> (ref: 21–29 years old)								
30–39	-0.30	0.29	0.29	0.74	-0.18	0.30	0.55	0.84
40–49	-0.39	0.34	0.26	0.68	-0.31	0.35	0.39	0.74
50+	-0.29	0.36	0.42	0.75	-0.24	0.37	0.52	0.79
<b>FSM band</b> (ref: FSM1)								
FSM2	-0.07	0.26	0.78	0.93	-0.16	0.27	0.55	0.85
FSM3	-0.02	0.27	0.95	0.98	-0.11	0.28	0.68	0.89
FSM4	0.05	0.29	0.86	1.05	-0.12	0.30	0.70	0.89
<b>Ofsted rating</b> (ref: Outstanding)								
Good	-0.32	0.18	0.07	0.73	0.18	0.10	0.74	0.18
Requires improvement	-0.13	0.37	0.72	0.88	0.38	0.87	0.94	0.38
<b>Location</b> (ref: Rural)								
Urban	0.02	0.27	0.93	1.02	-0.03	0.27	0.93	0.98
<b>School phase</b> (ref: Primary)								
Secondary	-0.37	0.16	0.02	0.69	-0.19	0.17	0.27	0.83
Other	0.44	0.37	0.23	1.55	0.40	0.37	0.28	1.50
<b>Leadership practices</b>					0.51	0.09	0.00	1.67
Model	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> =0.03, N=708				Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> =0.09, N=706			

Table 1. Logistic regression results with the following dependent variable item: 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor.' (Disagree=0, Agree=1)

**Model 3.** Upon incorporating *professional growth opportunities* as a key measure of school culture into the regression analysis (Model 3 in Table 2), leadership practices no longer constituted a significant predictor of mentors' perceived workload. Rather, a **school culture that promotes and enables teachers' professional growth** was most likely to be associated with mentors' perceived time for their mentoring role.

**Model 4.** Finally, the variable **in-school teaching conditions**—which measures teachers' perceived access to appropriate teaching and learning materials, resources and facilities as well as whether their time for teaching is protected in school—was added to the analysis (Model 4 in Table 2). This factor measures teachers' perceived access to appropriate teaching and learning materials, resources, and facilities as well as whether their time for teaching is protected in school. Among all of the considered factors of interest, teaching conditions in school were found to be the only significant predictor of mentors' perceived workload.

Taken together, the results highlight the importance of in-school leadership, professional growth culture, and conditions conducive to teaching and learning in influencing how mentors feel about their mentoring workload. In schools where leadership is effective in enabling both internal and external collaboration in pursuit of educational improvement and where relational culture and teaching conditions are conducive to teaching, learning and professional growth, mentors were more likely to report that they have adequate time to fulfil their mentoring role. The key message here is that, **among all of the school-organisation-related factors, in-school conditions for teaching were found to be the strongest predictor of mentors' perceived workload.**

Independent variables	Model 3				Model 4			
	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
<b>Years of teaching</b> (ref: 0–7 years)								
8–15 years	0.24	0.26	0.37	1.27	0.09	0.28	0.73	1.10
16+ years	0.38	0.32	0.23	1.47	0.31	0.33	0.35	1.36
<b>Age</b> (ref: 21–29 years old)								
30–39	-0.16	0.30	0.59	0.85	-0.05	0.32	0.88	0.96
40–49	-0.23	0.36	0.53	0.80	-0.35	0.38	0.36	0.71
50+	-0.22	0.38	0.56	0.80	-0.23	0.40	0.56	0.79
<b>FSM band</b> (ref: FSM1)								
FSM2	-0.11	0.28	0.68	0.89	-0.14	0.29	0.62	0.87
FSM3	-0.17	0.28	0.55	0.84	-0.36	0.30	0.22	0.69
FSM4	-0.19	0.31	0.53	0.82	-0.23	0.32	0.47	0.79
<b>Ofsted rating</b> (ref: Outstanding)								
Good	0.19	0.33	0.83	0.19	0.20	0.32	0.82	0.20
Requires improvement	0.38	0.74	1.14	0.38	0.41	0.55	1.28	0.41
<b>Location</b> (ref: Rural)								
Urban	0.01	0.28	0.99	1.01	-0.03	0.29	0.91	0.97
<b>School phase</b> (ref: Primary)								
Secondary	-0.09	0.17	0.59	0.91	0.18	0.19	0.35	1.19
Other	0.55	0.39	0.16	1.73	0.61	0.41	0.13	1.84
<b>Leadership practices</b>	0.22	0.13	0.08	1.25	0.01	0.14	0.93	1.01
<b>Professional growth opportunities</b>	0.41	0.12	0.00	1.50	0.02	0.14	0.88	1.02
<b>Teaching conditions in school</b>					0.74	0.13	0.00	2.10
Model	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> =0.11, N=677				Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> =0.17, N=651			

Table 2. Logistic regression results with the following dependent variable item: 'I have adequate time to carry out my role as a mentor.' (Disagree=0, Agree=1)

### 3.4 Impact of the ECF Programme on ECTs' Retention Decisions

#### 3.4.1 Variation in Retention Decisions

Most of the surveyed ECTs reported intending to stay at the same school for their second year of teaching (n=761, 84%), but a greater proportion of ECTs (n=109, 12%) than mentors (n=35, 4%) reported intending to move to a different school for the following academic year. This difference between ECTs and mentors, however, may be attributable to contract type. The majority of ECTs and mentors were on permanent contracts (n=726, 80% and n=799, 99%, respectively). Of the 109 ECTs intending to move schools, 63 (58%) were on a temporary or fixed-term contract, compared to only 2 of the 35 (6%) mentors who were moving.

Almost all of the surveyed mentors reported that they intended to stay at the same school (n=742, 92%), with 94 (12%) having been promoted to a higher level of responsibility. The longitudinal nature of this research will enable us to follow this up in future reports and, therefore, provide a robust narrative about retention among early career teachers and mentors.

ECTs' reported destination decisions are correlated with programme learning: **those staying in the same school** rated their mastery and implementation of their learning more highly than those moving schools and those leaving teaching (r=0.165 and r=0.173, respectively, p<0.01). This relationship is *weak but highly statistically significantly*

Among all of the factors that have influenced ECTs' destination decisions, their perceived **in-school job satisfaction and wellbeing** appeared to be most strongly associated with their decision regarding whether to stay at the same school or move to a different one ( $r=0.375$  and  $r=0.345$ , respectively,  $p<0.01$ ). ECTs intending to move had lower mean scores for in-school job satisfaction (mean=3.59, SD=1.73) and in-school wellbeing (mean=4.09, SD=1.50) than those staying (mean=5.06, SD=1.11 and mean=5.16, SD=0.96, respectively), and this difference is statistically significant.

Neither personal demographics nor school-level factors (i.e., education phase and FSM level) appear to be associated with ECTs' destination decisions. Moreover, a note of caution: the number of teachers leaving is very small compared to the number of teachers staying. Further analysis entailing the tracking of teacher retention over a longer period of time is required to make more robust observations regarding the factors underlying their decisions to leave.

### 3.4.2 Structural Equation Modelling Analysis on the Impact of the ECF Programme on ECTs' Retention Decisions

Further SEM analysis was used to explore how various *ECF programme-related factors* and *school-related factors* interact with one another to impact—directly and/or indirectly—ECTs' intentions to leave teaching, move to a different school, or stay at the same school. The SEM analysis, which is commonly used in the social and behavioural sciences, was guided by existing theories in education and grounded in empirical survey data to explore causal connections between different factors.

The application of learning from the ECF programme improves ECTs' self-efficacy, resilience and engagement in teaching. However, the extent to which ECTs are able to apply their learning in context is dependent on the quality of in-school professional development cultures, which are created and shaped by school leadership.

ECF learning can only make a difference in ECTs' retention decisions if it is *supported by and integrated as part of schools' professional learning cultures*.

There are four key takeaways from the SEM model (Figure 15<sup>5</sup>):

**Takeaway 1:** ECTs' satisfaction with the ECF programme is closely associated with leadership practices at their school.

- *ECF programme satisfaction* measures the extent to which ECTs feel 1) that their learning experiences with the ECF programme have challenged their existing assumptions about effective practices; 2) that this learning experience has persuaded them that the programme is based on sound research about teaching and learning; and 3) that it will make a difference to the learning of their pupils.
- The statistically significant iterative association between *programme satisfaction* and *leadership practices* indicates **a close link between ECTs' learning experiences with the ECF programme and in-school leadership practices**, especially in terms of how their senior leaders set schools' expectations for educational improvement, develop teachers, manage

<sup>5</sup> Maximum  $\chi^2=9775.667$  (3135), Maximum RMSEA=0.049, SRMR=0.072, minimum CFI=0.97, TLI=0.97

teaching and learning programmes, and restructure school organisations to enable improvement (i.e., the four dimensions of ‘leadership practices’ measured in the survey).

**Takeaway 2:** ECTs’ satisfaction with their learning experiences with the ECF programme directly influences their *mastery* of the programme content and their *use* of what they learned in their teaching practices (i.e., their implementation of the material). It is this use of learning in context that improves ECTs’ *self-efficacy* and, in turn, their *resilience, satisfaction and engagement* and *wellbeing in teaching*.

**Takeaway 3:** *Professional growth opportunities*—created by leadership practices—are a necessary in-school condition for ECTs to use what they learned in the ECF programme to improve their *self-efficacy, resilience, engagement* and *wellbeing in teaching*. The implementation of their learning takes place in the context of their school environment and is influenced indirectly by their school’s leadership practices through the professional growth opportunities made available to them.

Importantly, ECTs’ experiences of *professional growth opportunities* at their schools have a significant and direct impact on their retention decisions. ECTs are more likely to stay if there are positive professional growth opportunities available at their schools.

**Takeaway 4:** A school’s *collaborative culture*, which is directly created and shaped by leadership practices and enhanced by ECTs’ improved *self-efficacy*, improves ECTs’ *job satisfaction* and, in turn, their *wellbeing in school*.

Moreover, ECTs’ job satisfaction at school impacts their perceived capabilities as effective and accomplished teachers (i.e., key measures of *wellbeing in teaching*), which, in turn, improve their *wellbeing at school*. The extent to which ECTs feel that they are treated with respect and that they belong at school (i.e., key measures of *wellbeing in school*) positively and directly influences their retention decisions.

Put simply, ECTs who are engaged with their teaching practices at a school with a collaborative culture tend to possess greater job satisfaction. Such job satisfaction contributes to greater wellbeing in their school, in part through the enhancement of wellbeing stemming from the feeling of being an accomplished professional teacher. ECTs who have reported a strong sense of wellbeing as well as good opportunities for professional development at their school are more likely to plan to stay there.

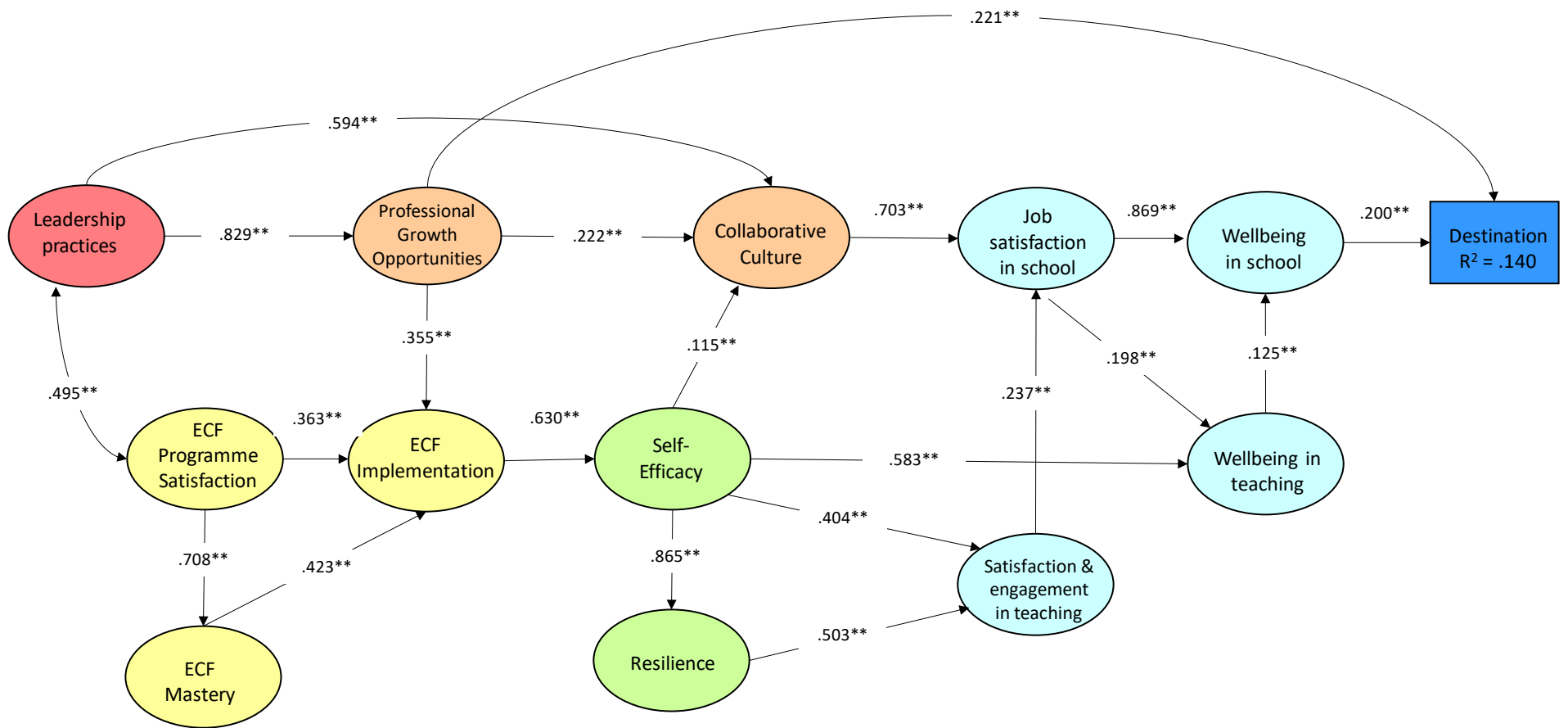


Figure 15. Impact of the ECF programme on early career teachers' retention decisions: Results from the SEM analysis

**In summary**, the evidence to date suggests that the vast majority of ECTs view their learning experiences positively, especially in terms of their mastery of the ECF programme's content (see Section 3.2.1). The SEM analysis revealed that *the extent to which ECTs are able to master the content of the ECF programme and apply their learning in their work is dependent on the quality of the in-school professional development culture created by school leadership*.

This again points to the significant role of school organisation in enabling or constraining the impact of the ECF programme on the learning and development of ECTs. This evidence also lends support to the ECF delivery models focused on working in partnership with schools to build and embed leadership and professional development capacities within the school system. The qualitative interviews in this research will allow for a more in-depth exploration of the associations identified in the survey.

## 4.0 Summary and Next Steps

The professional development of teachers does not take place in isolation. ECTs in a well-supported, collaborative school environment featuring high expectations, innovation and growth are more likely to feel fulfilled in their work, committed to their professional selves even in the face of challenges, be content and inspired in their role and, in turn, to stay at their school. Investment in teachers' professional development pays dividends if new teachers are able to *use* their ECF learning in their place of work to grow and develop as a professional, consistently building relationships and contributing to the betterment of their own and the collective practices of the school over time.

The pathways of influence from school leadership, professional learning and development to teacher destination decisions are manifold. This report identified potential areas of influence, enabling us to construct ideas about the ways in which individual-, school-, and programme-related factors influence one another to affect teachers' learning and dispositions as professionals and, ultimately, their retention decisions.

The next stage of our research project will entail the exploration of a more complex model of relevant patterns of influence alongside a more detailed qualitative investigation into *how* teachers have experienced the ECF programme, *how* they enact their learning in the context of their school environment, and *how* and *why* they make decisions regarding their future career pathways.



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## Appendix A. Mentors' Workload Correlations with Programme Experience, Leadership Practices, School Culture and Dispositions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Mentoring workload	-														
2. Engagement in the mentoring programme	.313**	--													
3. Learning from the mentoring programme	.348**	.456**	--												
4. Mentoring experience	.314**	.182**	.235**	--											
5. Leadership practice: Setting direction	.321**	.107**	.087*	.230**	--										
6. Leadership practice: Developing teachers	.336**	.103**	.134**	.249**	.754**	--									
7. Leadership practice: Redesigning the organisation	.325**	.103**	.106**	.210**	.735**	.794**	--								
8. Leadership practice: Managing teaching and learning	.320**	.093**	.139**	.253**	.696**	.825**	.781**	--							
9. Senior leadership in school	.367**	.057	.119**	.179**	.714**	.716**	.710**	.668**	--						
10. School culture (collaborative)	.303**	.054	.137**	.204**	.620**	.659**	.698**	.636**	.791**	--					
11. School culture (teaching conditions)	.457**	.104**	.175**	.189**	.512**	.604**	.598**	.598**	.692**	.672**	--				
12. Professional growth opportunities	.398**	.095**	.148**	.232**	.582**	.711**	.645**	.624**	.723**	.680**	.691**	--			
13. Job satisfaction (teaching)	.290**	.095**	.159**	.166**	.263**	.270**	.276**	.236**	.337**	.337**	.397**	.373**	--		
14. Job satisfaction (school)	.316**	.090*	.065	.169**	.572**	.572**	.532**	.452**	.681**	.603**	.493**	.587**	.437**	--	
15. Wellbeing (school)	.323**	.070*	.110**	.183**	.544**	.540**	.535**	.449**	.703**	.652**	.555**	.667**	.429**	.741**	--
16. Wellbeing (teach)	.197**	.064	.102**	.331**	.352**	.373**	.366**	.336**	.371**	.378**	.350**	.402**	.358**	.352**	.524**

## Appendix B. SEM Dimensions

Final question items, unstandardised (SE) and standardised item loadings for CFA

Factor	Item	Unstandardised factor loading (SE)	Standardised factor loading
<i>Programme satisfaction</i>	1) I am persuaded that the practice suggested in the ECF programme will make a difference to the learning of my pupils	1	0.829
	2) During the programme, I have the opportunity to discuss my views on how I teach	.702 (.041)	0.669
	3) Different types of training activities in the programme have enabled me to apply new learning in my own workplace	1.142 (.035)	0.884
	4) The programme challenges my existing assumptions about effective practice	1.135 (.038)	0.799
	5) The programme is based on sound research about teaching and/or pupil learning	.879 (.040)	0.779
	6) I am clear about the theories that inform the new practices suggested in the programme	.860 (.037)	0.746
<i>Mastery of programme learning</i>	To what extent has your learning of the programme content contributed to your confidence to:	1	.898
	1) Set high expectations		
	2) Promote good progress	1 (.023)	.921
	3) Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	1.071 (.026)	.899
	4) Plan and teach well-structured lessons	1.062 (.024)	.936
	5) Adapt teaching	.991 (.026)	.900
	6) Make accurate and productive use of assessments	.995 (.026)	.903
	7) Manage behaviour effectively	1.082 (.024)	.897
8) Fulfil wider professional responsibilities	1.069 (.027)	.886	
<i>Implementation of programme learning</i>	To what extent have you used your learning in your teaching practice to:	1	.942
	1) Set high expectations		
	2) Promote good progress	.970 (.012)	.949
	3) Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	1.026 (.021)	.911
	4) Plan and teach well-structured lessons	1.009 (.017)	.947
	5) Adapt teaching	.952 (.017)	.921
	6) Make accurate and productive use of assessment s	.941 (.018)	.912
	7) Manage behaviour effectively	.997 (.016)	.922
8) Fulfil wider professional responsibilities	1.022 (.017)	.910	

<i>Successful leadership practices<sup>1</sup></i> <i>a) Setting direction</i>	Think about the person (or people) who provide(s) the MOST SENIOR leadership in your school (e.g., headteacher). To what extent do you agree that they do the following regarding setting direction? 1) Gives staff a sense of overall purpose	1	.933
	2) Demonstrates high expectations for staff's work with learners	.885 (.037)	.879
	3) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' behaviour.	.899 (.037)	.879
	4) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' academic achievement.	.822 (.043)	.870
	5) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' development of good health and wellbeing.	.919 (.049)	.874
<i>Successful leadership practices<sup>1</sup></i> <i>b) Developing teachers</i>	Think about the person (or people) who provide(s) the MOST SENIOR leadership in your school (e.g., headteacher). To what extent do you agree that they do the following regarding developing teachers? 1) Gives staff a sense of overall purpose.	1	.871
	2) Demonstrates high expectations for staff's work with learners	.933 (.036)	.848
	3) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' behaviour.	.989 (.035)	.879
	4) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' academic achievement.	.902 (.037)	.858
	5) Demonstrates high expectations for learners' development of good health and wellbeing.	.937 (.040)	.863
<i>Successful leadership practices<sup>1</sup></i> <i>c) Redesigning the organisation</i>	Think about the person (or people) who provide(s) the MOST SENIOR leadership in your school (e.g., headteacher). To what extent do you agree that they do the following regarding redesigning the organisation? 1) Encourages collaborative work among staff.	1	.850
	2) Engages parents/carers in the school's improvement efforts.	.991 (.043)	.857
	3) Builds community support for the school's improvement efforts.	1.004 (.045)	.870
	4) Allocates resources strategically based on learners' needs	1.144 (.044)	.890
	5) Works in collaboration with other schools.	.851 (.050)	.727
<i>Successful leadership practices<sup>1</sup></i> <i>d) Managing the teaching programme</i>	Think about the person (or people) who provide(s) the MOST SENIOR leadership in your school (e.g., headteacher). To what extent do you agree that they do the following regarding managing the teaching programme? 1) Provides or locates resources to help us improve teaching	1	.904
	2) Regularly observes classroom activities	.889 (.045)	.772

	3) After observing classroom activities, works with teachers to improve teaching	1.020 (.035)	.862
	4) Uses coaching and mentoring to improve quality of teaching	.966 (.037)	.872
	5) Encourages all staff to use learners' progress data in planning for individual learners' needs	.830 (.034)	.873
<i>Successful leadership practices<sup>1</sup></i>	a) Setting direction	1	.85
	b) Developing teachers	1.187 (.057)	.943
	c) Redesigning the organisation	1.076 (.049)	.964
	d) Managing the teaching programme	1.176 (.059)	.896
<i>Collaborative school culture</i>	1) Teachers in our school mostly work together to improve their practice	1	.829
	2) I have good relationships with my colleagues	.501 (.039)	.613
	3) My school has a culture of shared responsibility for school issues	1.125 (.040)	.899
	4) There is a collaborative school culture which is characterised by mutual support	1.151 (.041)	.937
<i>Professional growth opportunities</i>	1) I have many opportunities to take on new challenges	1	.806
	2) I have adequate opportunities to develop my classroom teaching skills	.943 (.040)	.830
	3) I have adequate opportunities for learning and development as a professional	.991 (.036)	.872
	4) Opportunities for promotion within my school are adequately available to me	1.207 (.049)	.802
	5) Expectations of my performance are realistic given my role and experience	1.036 (.056)	.775
	6) Training and development opportunities rarely conflict with my work schedule	.902 (.063)	.576
<i>Teacher self-efficacy</i>	To what extent do you feel you are able to do the following?	1	.747
	1) Teach in a way that makes the curriculum content accessible to pupils		
	2) Implement alternative instructional strategies in my classroom	1.135 (.060)	.753
	3) Address the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills that may have come about as a result of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic	1.271 (.090)	.736
	4) Control disruptive behaviour in the classroom	1.208 (.092)	.724
	5) Enable my pupils to follow classroom rules	1.187 (.071)	.794
	6) Enable pupils to believe they can do well in their learning	.984 (.067)	.806
	7) Help my pupils value learning	1.161 (.072)	.809
<i>Teacher resilience</i>	1) I enjoy learning new things when I am at work	1	.492
	2) I usually get on well with my pupils	.771 (.104)	.479
	3) I am always optimistic about my future as a teacher	2.766 (.495)	.671
	4) When I make mistakes at school, I see them as learning opportunities	1.296 (.352)	.752

	5) At school, I focus on building my strengths more than on my limitations	2.457 (.402)	.671
<i>Teacher job satisfaction and engagement</i>	1) The advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages	1	.760
	2) If I could decide again, I would still choose to work as a teacher	1.030 (.062)	.778
	3) I regret that I decided to become a teacher*	.839 (.073)	.577
	4) I am enthusiastic about my teaching job	.931 (.066)	.869
	5) My job inspires me	.955 (.068)	.823
	6) I am content with my role as a teacher and all it involves	1.054 (.064)	.847
<i>Job satisfaction in school</i>	1) I would like to change to another school if that were possible*	1	.689
	2) I enjoy working at this school	1.005 (.067)	.966
	3) I would recommend my school as a good place to work	1.116 (.070)	.949
<i>Wellbeing in teaching</i>	1) I am good at helping pupils learn new things	1	.700
	2) I have accomplished a lot as a teacher	1.659 (.161)	.857
	3) I feel like my teaching is effective and helpful	1.131 (.075)	.747
<i>Wellbeing in school</i>	1) I feel like I belong at this school	1	.881
	2) I can really be myself at this school	1.012 (.032)	.875
	3) I feel like people at this school care about me	.882 (.052)	.845
	4) I am treated with respect at this school	.890 (.043)	.866