

Stop Surprise Resignations in Your Multi-Academy Trust (MAT): Build a Termly Retention Risk Radar

Leadership Brief

From Resignation Shock to Early Action
Resignation emails signal a risk to workforce stability.

You gather anonymous staff feedback, compare it with similar schools, and assign action plans to create your termly staff retention risk radar.

You identify areas of concern early and tackle root causes before they spread.

Face today's reality
Many MATs keep staff wellbeing as a document they "have," rather than something they actively track and act on in real time.

You discover problems through staffroom whispers or exit interviews, long after problems have spread across teams.

Recent changes that increase staff turnover risk

Workload surges, behaviour battles, and squeezed budgets put pressure on teachers and support staff daily.

Central teams juggle more schools, reports, and scrutiny without more staff.

In this recruitment drought, even minor spikes in absence or frustration can trigger exits quickly.

Why this now harms your MAT

Each shock resignation does not just create a vacancy. It shatters timetables, drains supply budgets, and stalls pupil progress.

Without spotting at-risk schools, roles, or teams, you scatter efforts, react late, and guess fixes blindly.

That leaves you struggling to present a crisp story for the governing body: what shifted, what you tested, what stuck.

How this paper helps you reduce resignations

Imagine pinpointing warning signs a full term early.

This guide helps your MAT to build a risk radar that's reviewed each term.

It combines anonymous feedback, peer comparisons, and tracked fixes so you act early and then channel support where it's needed most.

What the Evidence Shows

Stress and workload drive exits

Picture a trust HR lead scanning yet another resignation email citing "exhaustion" and "no support".

They spot the same theme rippling across schools. The scale hits hard: the Education Support Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024 reports "78% of all staff are stressed".¹

¹ [Teacher Wellbeing Index 2024, Education Support \(2024\)](#).

Archived [here](#) (4 Feb 2026)

When stress spreads across most staff, a few leavers rarely count as "just personal".

It signals that day-to-day working conditions are deteriorating quickly.

Stress hides from performance data until absence, errors, or clashes erupt.

Leaders then scramble, guessing which teams struggle first and what fixes to try.

Without safe, anonymous early input, problems escalate until staff exits spike.

Workload fuels the fire

Workload lurks behind countless complaints. Track it consistently, or it stays invisible.

The National Audit Office boiled down a DfE leaver survey: "84% of teachers who had left in the preceding year described high workload as a reason for leaving".

That same report found that 75% cited "stress and/or wellbeing", directly linking these pressures to mental health and retention.²

² [Teacher workforce: secondary and further education \(Summary\), National Audit Office \(30 April 2025\)](#).

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MAT leaders must stop treating workload as background noise.

You can track this warning signal by school, role, and education stage.

If you only spot pressure spikes when staff hand in their notice, you lose the chance to reduce planning overload, improve behaviour systems, and cut admin before real damage happens.

This data demands your early-warning radar, not outdated annual surveys.

Option 1: Run a Wellbeing Week

What it looks like

A trust launches a “wellbeing week”, adds a few extras, and nudges staff toward support services.

Leaders share resilience tips, point employees to an employee assistance programme (EAP), and run a few optional sessions.

You roll it out quickly, and it may generate visible momentum, but it skips the daily pressures still driving staff away.

³ [Wellbeing at work \(Factsheet\)](#), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (9 Sept 2025).

Why it falls short

This campaign adds to the workload rather than reshaping work itself.

The CIPD puts it plainly: “employee wellbeing priorities must be integrated throughout an organisation, embedded in its culture, leadership and people management”.³

One-off initiatives lose impact quickly. Staff may welcome the gesture, but the same pressure points re-emerge the next day.

Option 2: Pay staff a retention bonus

What it looks like

A trust introduces one-off retention payments or modest salary uplifts for hard-to-fill posts.

Leaders often move quickly on this option when vacancies begin to disrupt day-to-day delivery.

But if daily pressure remains high, cash only masks the causes driving staff to leave.

Why it falls short

Pay aids retention, but it rarely solves the full problem on its own.

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Responding to the National Audit Office, NFER's School Workforce Lead, Jack Worth, puts it clearly:

“Properly funded pay rises are urgently needed alongside non-financial measures, such as workload reduction and flexible working, to improve both recruitment and retention”.⁴

For bonuses to improve retention in a lasting way, trusts also need to reduce workload and improve working conditions.

Without those changes, the extra money is temporary; the pressure remains.

Preferred Approach: Build Your Termly Retention Risk Radar

The approach that works

Build a termly retention risk radar that turns staff voice into early warning signals.

Collect anonymous feedback on the factors behind exits, compare results with peer data and your own trend data, then identify risk hotspots by

⁴ [NFER press release, “NFER responds to National Audit Office report on the teacher workforce” \(30 April 2025\).](#)

Archived [here](#) (4Feb 2026)

school, department, and year group.

You turn findings into focused action plans with named owners and scheduled reviews, so improvements become routine rather than rushed.

Why it beats quick fixes

Wellbeing weeks can feel positive, but they do not reduce the day-to-day pressures staff face.

Retention bonuses may buy short-term stability, but they do not cut workload or strengthen day-to-day leadership.

Your radar identifies causes early, keeps focus on the highest risks, and shows whether actions worked.

It equips trust boards with proof each term: lessons learned, changes implemented and gains locked in.

What the evidence says

Leaders must embed staff wellbeing through visible commitment across the school culture and people management.⁵

⁵ [Department for Education \(DfE\) \(2023\) *Education Workforce Wellbeing Charter progress report*](#).

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Preferred Approach: Addressing Concern 1

Make staff feel safe to speak up

In small schools, staff may hold back because colleagues can trace comments back to them.

How this framework tackles the issue directly

This termly process prioritises confidentiality.

It gathers anonymous feedback and only shares results when response numbers are high enough to protect identities, encouraging honest input.

You control access tightly and avoid overly detailed breakdowns that could identify individuals.

Each term, you close the loop by sharing what you heard and what you changed.

Staff engage more when they see visible action, not another survey with no follow-through.

Evidence from CIPD

The CIPD explains why fear kills honesty:

⁶ [Employee voice \(Factsheet\), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development \(CIPD\) \(24 Jan 2025\).](#)

“Employees are unlikely to speak up if they believe the costs of doing so outweigh the benefits”, for example, if they feel their position “would be threatened”.⁶

Preferred Approach: Addressing Concern 2

Capacity is stretched across the trust

Your trust is running at full capacity; your teams are stretched to run surveys, analyse results, and manage follow-up across multiple schools.

How this system makes delivery manageable

Your radar, reviewed each term, streamlines work with repeatable cycles.

You skip starting from zero each time. It zeroes in on key early warnings and flags rising risks, so you hit the right schools and roles first.

You turn decisions into focused action plans with assigned owners and dates.

Next term, you review progress and prevent actions from losing momentum.

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Staff are less likely to experience survey fatigue when they see feedback spark real changes, not just more charts thrown at them!

What best practice shows

The Education Endowment Foundation stresses the need to “Reflect, monitor, and adapt to improve implementation”.⁷

A retention radar builds this in: you track actions, refine them, and keep them moving, instead of launching them once and forgetting.

Preferred Approach: Addressing Concern 3

You need board-ready proof

You dread another survey that creates noise but moves nothing.

You need board-ready proof that ties staff input to decisions, actions, and gains each term.

How this process addresses the issue

⁷ [A School's Guide to Implementation, Education Endowment Foundation \(24 Apr 2024\)](#)

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Each term, you focus on a small set of measures that show whether retention pressure is rising.

You track patterns over time instead of reacting to every comment made.

Peer comparisons and your own past results show what is normal, what is slipping, and where to act first.

You link each issue to one action, one responsible lead, and one deadline.

Next term, you review what you delivered, what changed, and what still needs fixing.

This is how wellbeing moves from a policy on paper to a process that improves staff stability in practice.

What the guidance says

The CIPD advises that people analytics should “Connect people data with business data to inform business leaders and help them make better decisions”.⁸

A retention radar applies that approach to workforce stability.

⁸ [People analytics \(Factsheet\), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development \(CIPD\) \(07 Feb 2025\)](#).

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A MAT turns staff feedback into retention wins

A UK case study spotlights a growing secondary trust battling a “retention and recruitment crisis”.

Early career teachers showed “resigned disinterest” in professional development.

Leaders asked staff where the gaps were and then redesigned CPD: “less generic”, subject-specific, and in-person across the trust.

They launched subject professional learning communities, meeting four times yearly.

Post-session, they gathered feedback and made adjustments quickly.

Teachers said the new CPD “felt purposeful, shared good practice and was genuinely helpful”.

Seasoned staff confirmed: stronger professional learning kept me in this job”.

This proves a repeatable listen-act-review radar turns

staff frustrations into real retention wins.⁹

Additional Benefits of the Preferred Approach

Immediate impact: Target support where it matters most

Your termly retention risk radar sharpens support where it counts.

You move away from one-size-fits-all approaches and identify schools, roles, or phases with elevated retention risk.

You execute fewer, smarter actions instead of scattering small gestures that fail to deliver.

You also scout high-performing schools and spread their wins trust-wide.

Retention shifts to targeted action, not blanket interventions.

Operational impact: Turn feedback into visible action

Staff shrug off past surveys that led to no action taken.

⁹ [Teaching Commission, *How to transform your approach to CPD to boost retention: case study* \(July 2025\).](#)

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Your radar locks in “listen, act, report back” as routine.

They see real changes, so they engage more fully in the next survey with clearer, more useful feedback.

You get calmer conversations, fewer rumours, and fewer unexpected resignations.

Over time, that visible follow-through builds trust and reduces survey fatigue.

Strategic impact: Prove termly progress to trustees

Your radar hands you termly evidence for governance. Each term, you can show what changed, where risk increased, what you prioritised, and what actions you started.

Named leads and clear deadlines show teams delivered the work, not just discussed it.

When budgets are tight, you can back funding decisions with clear reasons:

Keep what works, stop what does not, and focus support where risk is highest.

This also protects team time by removing low-value tasks

and focusing on actions that reduce staff turnover.

Over time, retention becomes a steady improvement cycle, not a last-minute panic.

The Education Endowment Foundation stresses that effective implementation requires schools to "reflect, monitor, and adapt" their approaches continuously.¹⁰

Your action plan starts now

Shock resignations rarely start with a letter. They build quietly through workload build-ups, behaviour pressure, weak communication, and teams feeling unheard.

A termly retention risk radar turns staff voice into early warning signals, so you act before problems spread.

Pull together anonymous feedback, trends and peer comparisons, plus assigned actions, then review termly.

This gives trustees a clear story: what changed, what you tested, and what improved.

¹⁰ [A School's Guide to Implementation, Education Endowment Foundation \(24 Apr 2024\)](#).

Start your first termly radar cycle for your MAT within the next four weeks.

[Request an Edurio demo.](#)