NSW Department of Education

Fact sheet

2024 Alternative Supervision Arrangements Survey

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Background

When teaching staff are absent, schools typically engage casual teachers to cover scheduled classes so students can continue the curriculum. However, teacher shortages, particularly in areas with limited casual teacher availability, high vacancy and/or sick leave rates, make it increasingly difficult to ensure all classes are supervised. When insufficient casual teachers are available, schools use alternative supervision arrangements (ASA) to meet duty of care. These strategies can involve merging classes or placing multiple classes under group supervision, known as minimal supervision. While these measures ensure student supervision, they may disrupt learning continuity.

In 2023, the department conducted the ASA Survey to collect information on the gap between casual teacher supply and local school demand. Where there were casual teacher shortfalls, schools reported using ASA to meet duty of care requirements. The results of the survey showed that NSW public schools had an average casual teacher shortfall of 42% per day across the survey window – equating to an average gap of 3,184 casual teachers each day. Merged classes were the most common ASA in primary schools (40%) and teacher reallocation was the most common method in secondary schools (28%).[1]

After the findings of the 2023 survey, a range of changes to policy and practice were made. To indicate the impact of these changes, the ASA Survey was conducted again in 2024 during Term 3. As in 2023, schools reported on the number of casual teachers they required, and the number of casual teachers engaged each day. Where there was a shortfall of casual teachers, schools were asked to record the alternative supervision strategies used to ensure duty of care requirements were met. The following section presents the results of the 2024 survey and compares these to those from 2023.

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1   The 2023 Alternative Supervision Arrangements Survey fact sheet can be found at: https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/statistics/alternative-supervision-arrangements-survey-factsheet

Key findings

29%
(↓13pp compared to 2023)

NSW public schools had an average casual teacher shortfall of **29%** per day across the survey window. This was a decrease of 13 percentage points from 42% in 2023.

1,973
(↓38% compared to 2023)

NSW public schools were estimated to be short **1,973** casual teachers across all types of schooling per day of the survey window. The shortfall decreased by approximately 38% from 2023 where it was estimated the average gap was 3,184 casual teachers each day.

78%
(↓9pp compared to 2023)

Casual teacher shortfalls happen across NSW with **78%** of schools reporting at least one day with a casual teacher shortfall. This is a decrease of 9 percentage points from 87% in 2023.

Similar to 2023, some geographical areas and individual schools were more greatly affected by casual teacher shortfalls, and experienced greater lesson disruption.

Shortfalls by level of schooling

Similar to the previous year, the findings from the 2024 survey showed that casual teacher shortfalls were reported across all levels of schooling. Schools reported an average daily shortfall of 29% across all NSW public schools in 2024 compared to 42% in 2023. This means that the rate of shortfall between the number of casual teachers required and the number engaged fell by 13 percentage points. This casual shortfall means 29% of the total number of casual teachers required could not be engaged, or that 71% (4,804) of the required casual teachers were engaged by schools in the 2024 survey period. In addition to the drop in the shortfall of casual teachers, the number of casual teachers required fell from 7,539 to 6,777 from 2023-2024 (or around 10% fewer casual teachers required).

Primary and secondary schools had similar rates of average casual teacher shortfalls. Central and Community schools had a larger gap than either primary or secondary schools, which is linked to challenges experienced in regional areas of NSW. Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) had the largest casual shortfall decrease from 68% in 2023 to 40% in 2024.
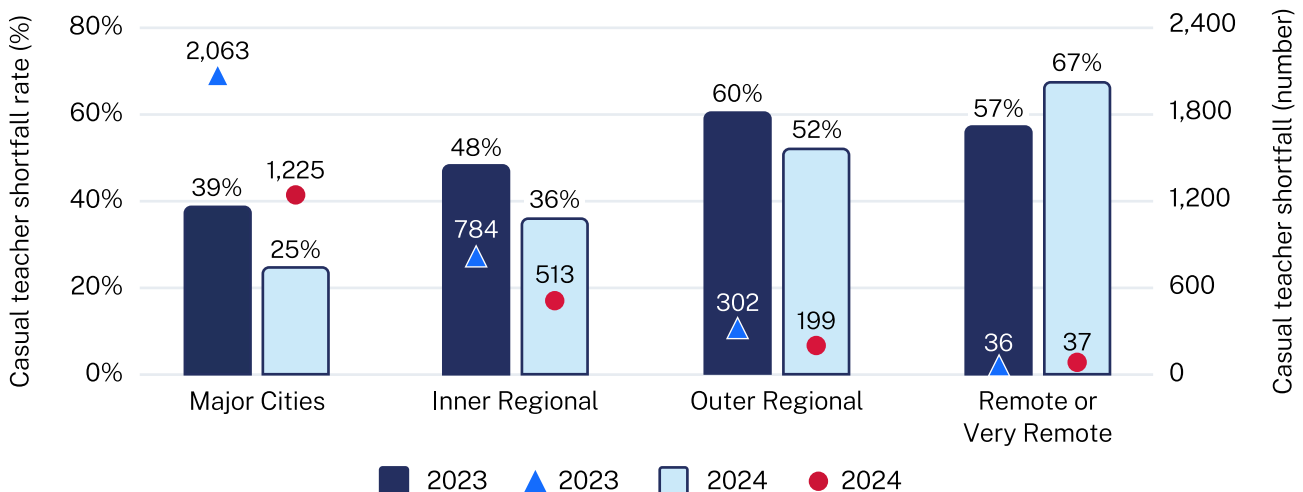
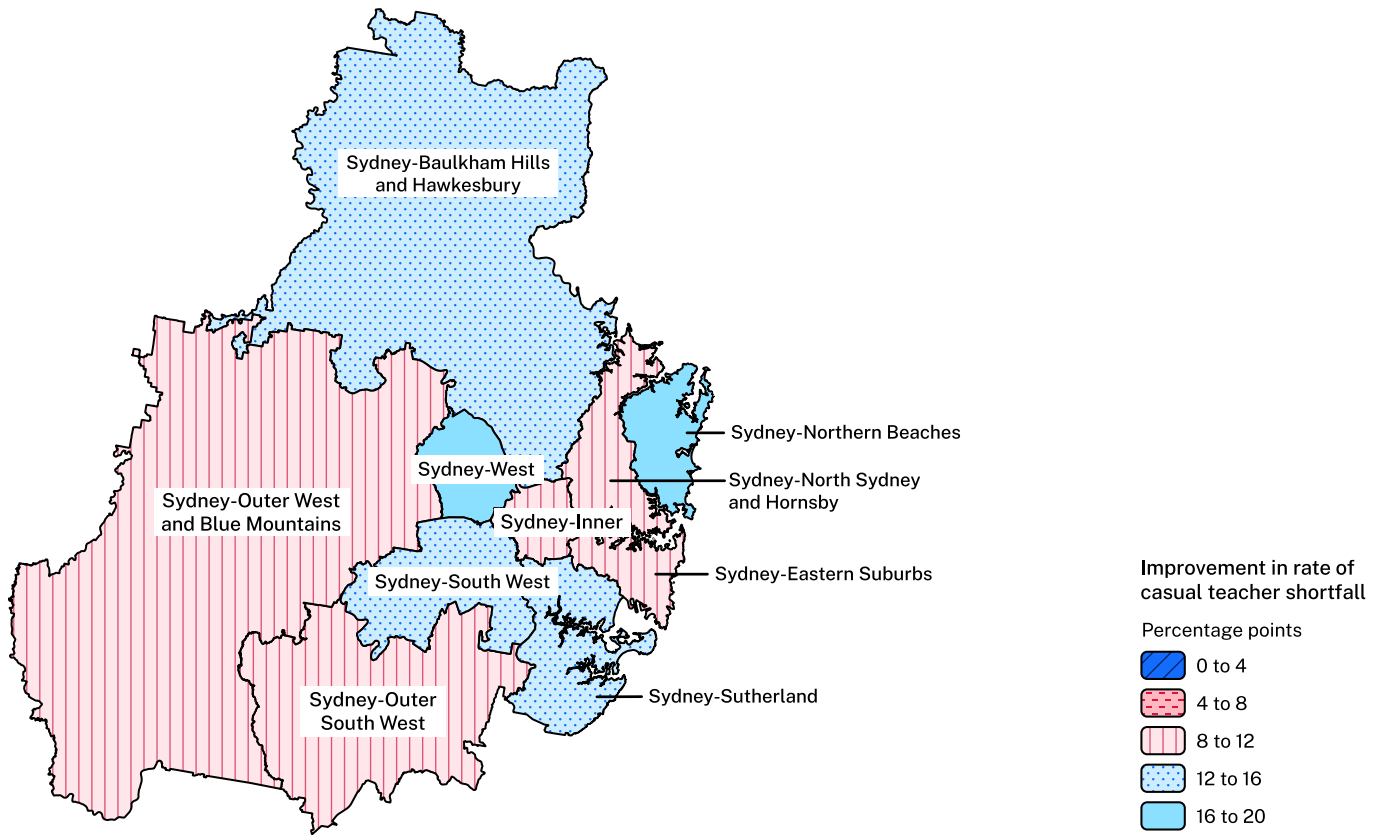## Relative casual teacher shortfall by level of schooling
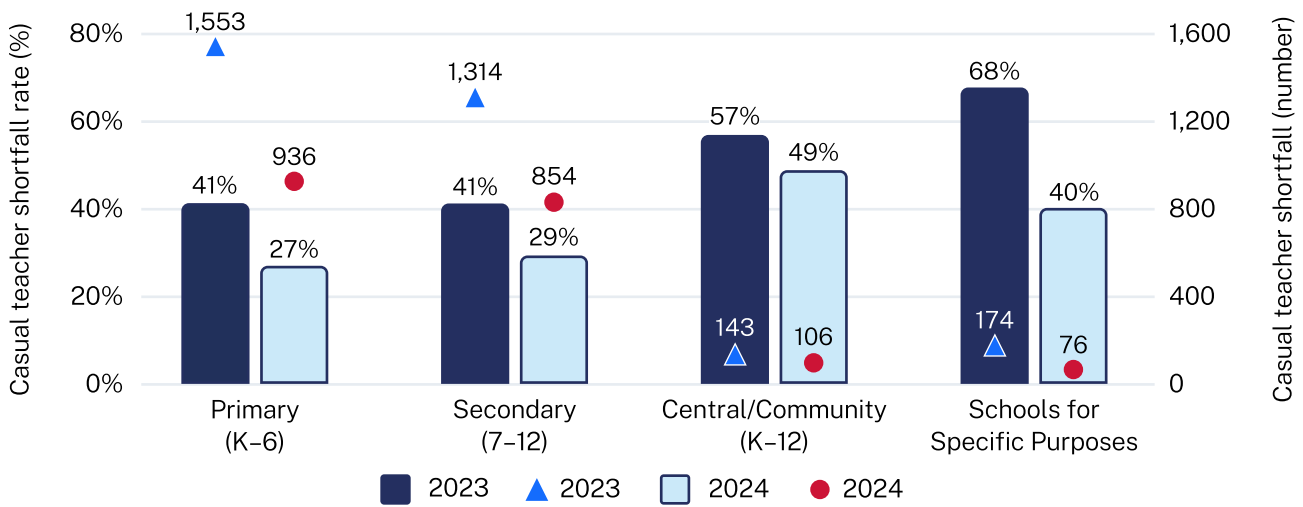
Shortfalls by school location

Casual teacher shortfalls were experienced across all areas of the state. Across the survey window, 78% of schools were unable to engage enough casual teachers to cover all absent colleagues. However, compared to 2023, most areas of NSW showed improvements in the casual shortfall rate. The only exception was remote and very remote areas, which remain the hardest to staff with casual teachers.
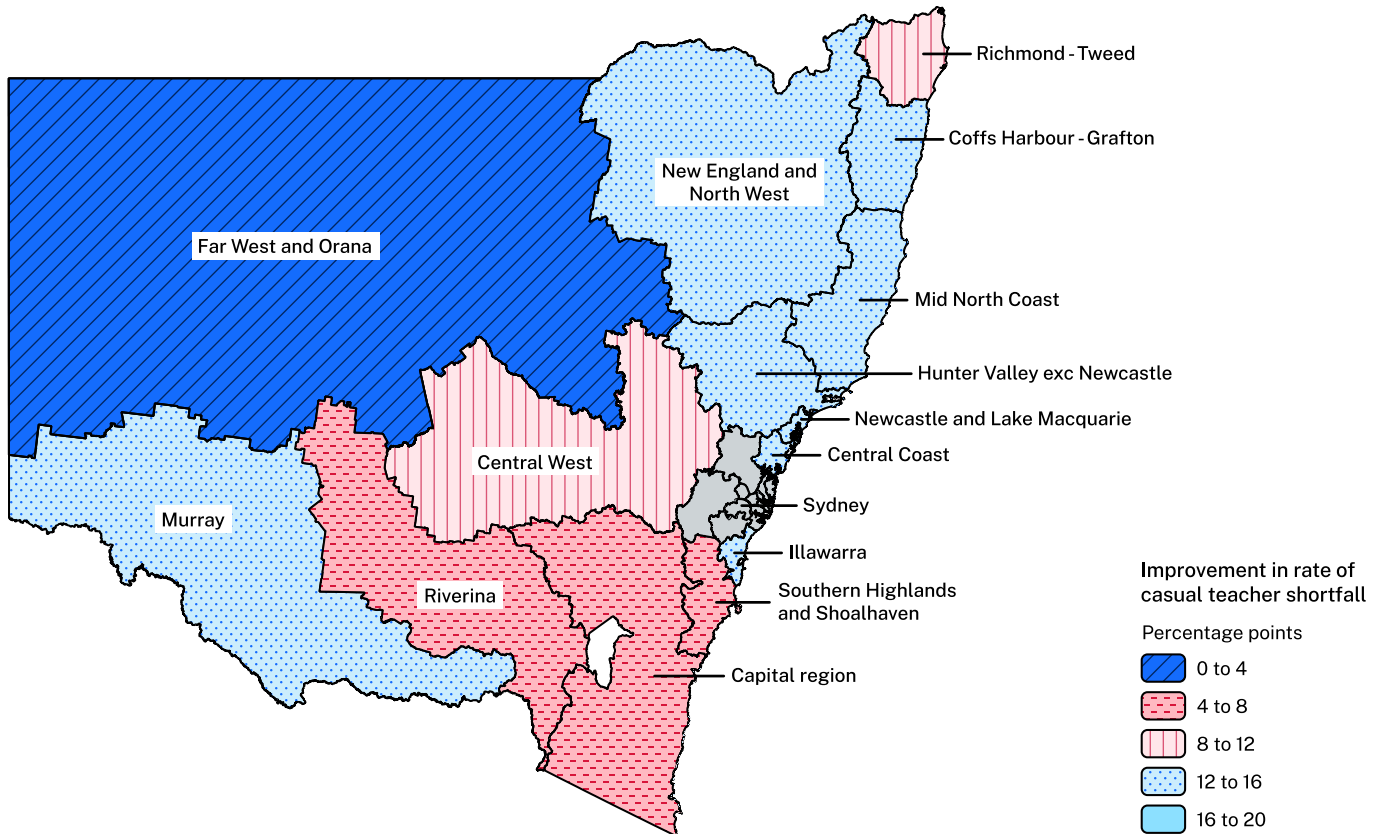
Casual teacher shortfall in schools by remoteness classification

Improvements to the casual teacher shortfall rate – Greater Sydney region

Sydney-Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury

Sydney-West

Sydney-Outer West and Blue Mountains

Sydney-Inner

Sydney-Northern Beaches

Sydney-North Sydney and Hornsby

Sydney-Eastern Suburbs

Sydney-South West

Sydney-Sutherland

Sydney-Outer South West

Improvement in rate of casual teacher shortfall

Percentage points

- 0 to 4
- 4 to 8
- 8 to 12
- 12 to 16
- 16 to 20

Improvements to the casual teacher shortfall rate – Regional NSW

Richmond - Tweed

Coffs Harbour - Grafton

New England and North West

Far West and Orana

Mid North Coast

Hunter Valley exc Newcastle

Newcastle and Lake Macquarie

Central West

Central Coast

Sydney

Murray

Illawarra

Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven

Riverina

Capital region

Improvement in rate of casual teacher shortfall

Percentage points

- 0 to 4
- 4 to 8
- 8 to 12
- 12 to 16
- 16 to 20

Impact on lessons

As a result of the casual shortfall, the results from 2024 saw an average of 5,669 out of an estimated total of 155,753 scheduled lessons in NSW public schools requiring ASA each day. This is approximately **4%** of all lessons scheduled, meaning **1** in **25** lessons did not go ahead as timetabled and required alternative arrangements.

Compared with the results from 2023, the estimated number of lessons requiring ASA decreased by an average of 4,153 per day over the survey period. In 2023 an average of 9,822 out of an estimated total of 164,017 scheduled lessons required alternative supervision arrangements each day. This is approximately **6%** of all lessons scheduled, meaning **1** in **17** lessons did not go ahead as timetabled and required alternative arrangements.

Estimated number of lessons per day requiring alternative supervision

Bar chart: Scheduled lessons and Lessons requiring alternative supervision, 2023 and 2024.

2023: Scheduled lessons 164,017; Lessons requiring alternative supervision 9,822 (6%).
2024: Scheduled lessons 155,753; Lessons requiring alternative supervision 5,669 (4%).

Legend: Scheduled lessons; Lessons requiring alternative supervision
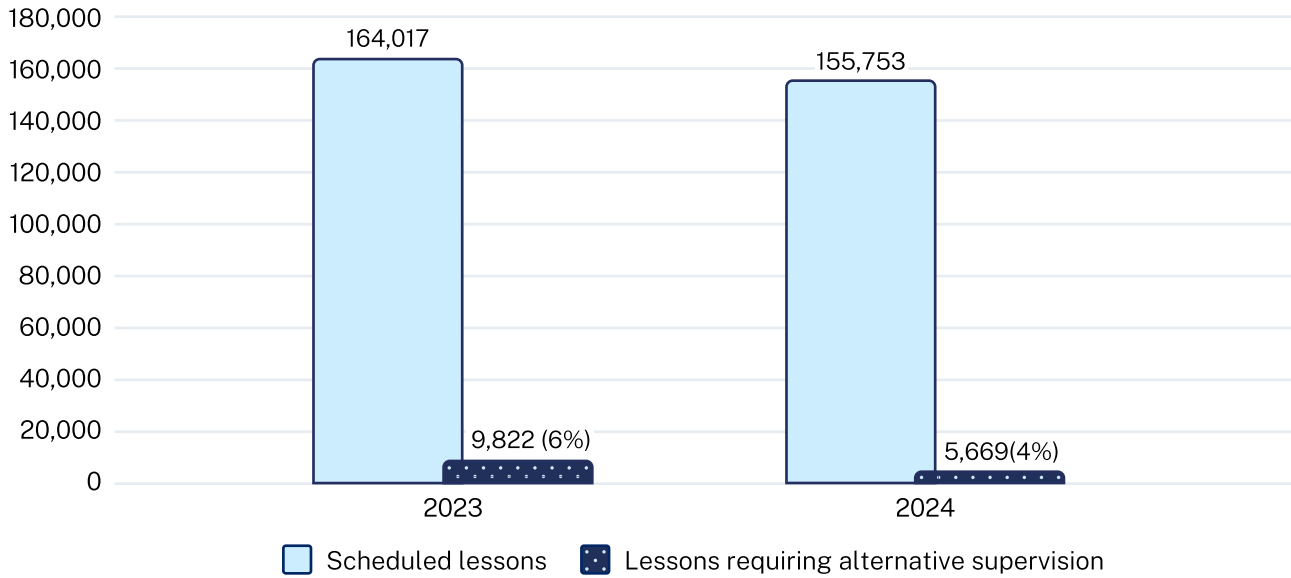
# Use of alternative supervision arrangements

Schools were asked to record how many lessons required ASA, including the types of arrangements used to ensure duty of care requirements were met. Although ASA were used less in 2024, the general approach to covering shortfalls was similar to those used in 2023, with no large changes across ASA types from 2023 to 2024.

When comparing the instances and types of ASA used, conclusions include:

- Primary schools and SSPs were most likely to use merged or collapsed classes (for primary schools this was 40% in 2023 and 41% in 2024, with SSPs around the same order of magnitude).
- Secondary schools were most likely to reallocate teachers to supervise classes in their non-teaching periods (28% in 2023 and 29% in 2024).
- Primary schools used minimal supervision less than 1% in both 2023 and 2024. Secondary schools' use of minimal supervision decreased by 8 percentage points from 28% in 2023 to 20% in 2024.

Proportion of instances of alternative supervision, primary and infants schools
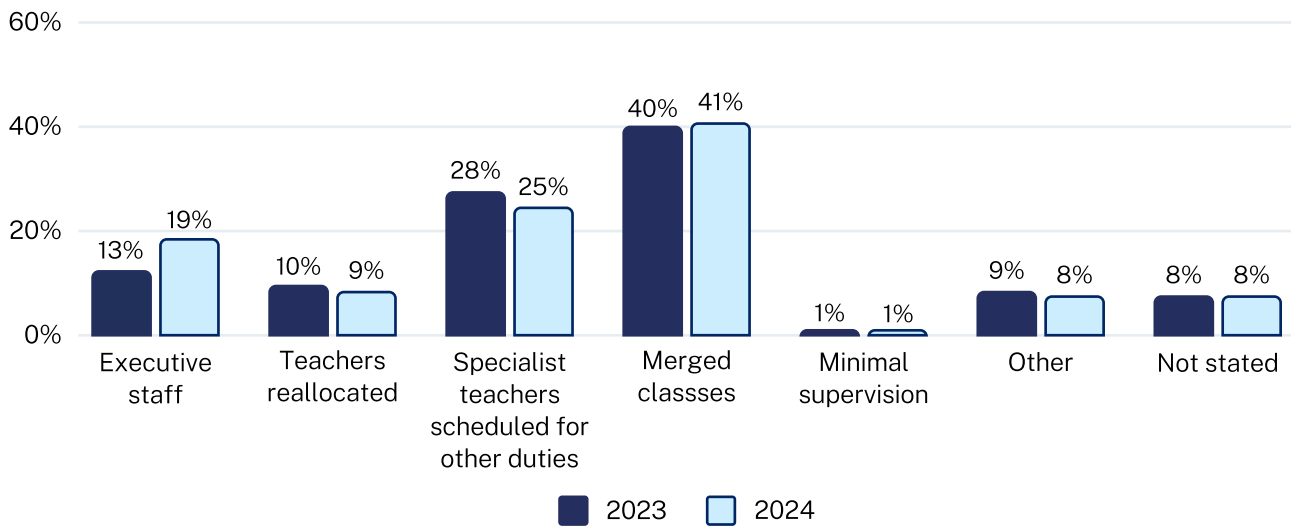
Proportion of instances of alternative supervision, secondary schools
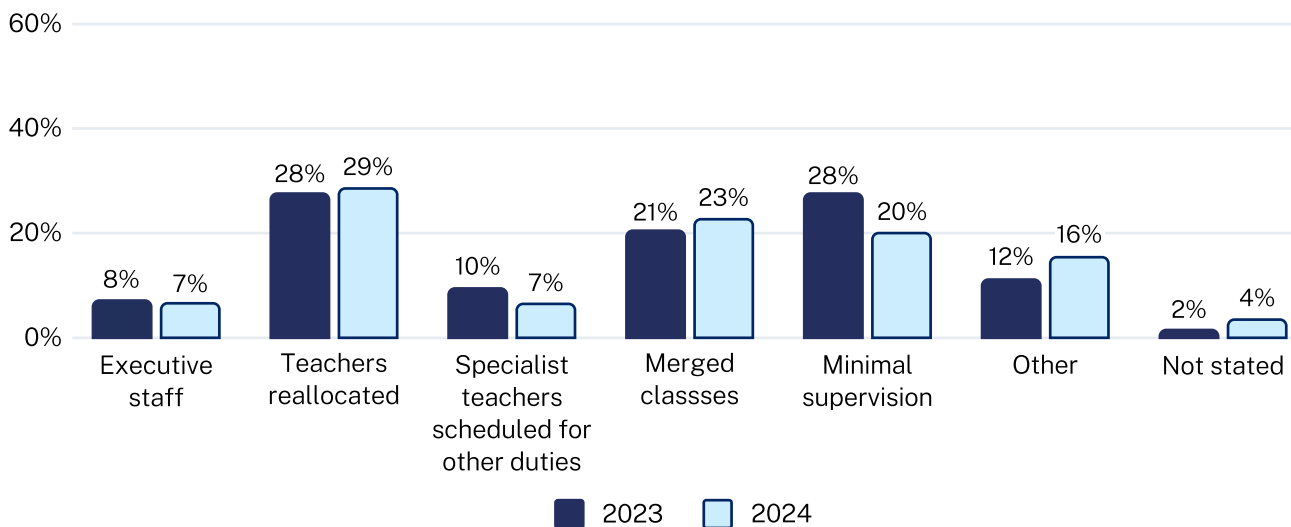
Further information

Survey method

- **2,174** public schools were in scope for the 2024 survey (compared with 2,173 in 2023). This scope included schools with a regular student enrolment.

- The survey was conducted over 15 days, with schools being asked to provide information each school day. The survey was conducted over a similar time frame 12 to 30 August in 2024 compared with 14 August to 1 September in 2023.

- The survey was opt-in, with schools encouraged to participate every day.

- In both years, schools advised of variations to routine throughout the survey period that impacted their casual teacher needs. Secondary schools were more likely to be impacted by changes to routine with HSC trials.

- **97%** of schools attempted the survey on at least one day during the survey window (compared with **88%** in 2023). Due to operational issues and workload, not all schools could submit every day.

- **85%** of all schools that had submitted complete data for 5 days or more, were included in the estimation process (compared with **76%** in 2023). This provided a **representative sample** of school staffing numbers and lessons across the survey window.

- To address schools who could not respond, survey results were weighted to provide a representative measure across all levels of schooling, school size and geographical areas. **The resulting measures represent the average daily activity of all 2,174 in-scope schools.**

- Data processing of survey results included a confrontation with existing data sources to ensure survey validity.

- Because not all schools could participate, the responding schools represent those that did not respond. This introduces some error into the estimates. However, the assumptions applied in the weighting process help quantify this error, providing a measure of precision. For 2024, the precision of these estimates is high enough to present the results with a strong degree of confidence.

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