



Department
for Education

NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus: questions for the Department for Education – November 2014

Research brief

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) buys a termly set of questions on the NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey. The DfE also buys a Senior Leader Booster to the survey in order to capture additional responses from senior leaders. The findings are used to more efficiently address a steady flow of requests for general intelligence from teachers and schools, and give the Department a means of getting answers to simple questions about how policies are working and what teachers think of them.

This Research Brief provides an overview of the responses to the set of questions submitted to the autumn Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey in November 2014 and the Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted between November 2014 and January 2015. Previous questions and responses, submitted in the spring and summer term surveys in 2014, were published in October 2014.

The questions submitted in the autumn survey, explored:

- schools' confidence in implementing the new National Curriculum subjects and teaching the new GCSEs; and systems planned to assess progress
- views on which Initial Teacher Training (ITT) route is most likely to produce an outstanding new teacher
- awareness about changes to teachers' pensions
- views on accountability for the Pupil Premium; Pupil Premium awards and reviews
- changes introduced in schools in response to the revised statutory guidance to schools for careers guidance.

In total, 2,154 senior leaders and teachers responded to the survey. Of these, 1,023 were senior leaders (defined here as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers) who responded to all the questions and 1,131 were classroom teachers who just answered questions on pensions and the Pupil Premium. A similar number of senior leaders were based in secondary schools (516) and primary schools (507). In addition, 1,028 of all respondents were from primary schools and 1,126 were based in secondary schools.

Results are provided for the overall sample. Results by school phase (primary and secondary) or by school type (academy and non-academy) are reported separately only where there was a notable difference in responses. Some reported percentages do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding, or were questions where more than one answer could be given. The key findings are presented below.

Key Findings

Confidence in teaching the new GCSEs and National Curriculum

Senior leaders in secondary schools were asked how confident their school was to teach, from September 2015, the new GCSEs in English literature, English language and mathematics. Senior leaders in both secondary and primary schools were asked how confident they were that their school could implement the new National Curriculum in mathematics, English, science, languages and computing.

The survey found:

- The majority of senior leaders in secondary schools were confident about implementing the new GCSEs. Eighty per cent were ‘very confident’ or ‘fairly confident’ in implementing English language, and 78% in English literature and mathematics. Twelve per cent were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all confident’ in implementing English language, and 13% in English literature and mathematics. For 6% of respondents this question wasn’t applicable; 1% didn’t know, and 1% didn’t respond.
- There was slightly more confidence (on average 6 percentage points) in teaching the new GCSEs in academies compared to non-academies.
- The confidence of secondary and primary senior leaders in implementing the new National Curriculum varied by subject, with respondents being most confident in terms of implementing mathematics (71%) and English (71%) and least confident in terms of implementing languages (47%) and computing (35%). Sixty-three per cent reported that they were confident in implementing science.
- The most common reason for lack of confidence in implementing the new National Curriculum was that more staff training was needed. Other reasons were: more time being needed, and staff needing to gain familiarity with the new subject matter.

Assessment of progress in the National Curriculum

With the current system of ‘levels’ used to report children’s attainment and progress being removed from September 2014, senior leaders in both primary and secondary schools were asked how they were planning to assess progress in the new National Curriculum.

- The survey found that the largest proportion (45%) reported that they were developing a new system; 34% were developing this system internally and 11%

were using a system developed by a commercial organisation. Over a third (37%) reported that they were retaining the current system for the time being. Fifteen per cent were undecided; 2% were using another system; and 2% either didn't know or didn't respond.

- Primary schools were more likely to be developing a new system than secondary schools (50% compared to 41%), and secondary schools were more likely to be retaining the old system than primary schools (42% compared to 32%).
- This question was also asked in the spring and summer term surveys in 2014. The surveys found that fewer schools were undecided over time (21% were undecided in March 2014, compared to 15% by November 2014), as may be expected. Between March and November 2014, more schools were planning on using a new system (from 15% in March, to 45% in November) and fewer schools were planning to retain the current system (37% in November; 51% in March).

The Pupil Premium – accountability, awards and reviews

All respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement: "I am held accountable for the achievement of pupils who attract Pupil Premium funding", and whether their school was taking any additional action to win a Pupil Premium award. Senior leaders in both primary and secondary schools were also asked whether they had commissioned a Pupil Premium review from anyone external to the school.

The survey found:

- Schools were taking their responsibilities for pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium seriously. Nearly half (49%) of senior leaders and teachers, 'strongly agreed' and 38% 'agreed' that they were 'held accountable for the achievement of pupils who attract Pupil Premium funding'. Eight per cent neither agreed nor disagreed; and 6% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'.
- There were differences between senior leaders and classroom teachers with 94% of senior leaders feeling accountable, compared to 79% classroom teachers.
- Eight per cent of respondents reported that they were taking additional action to try to win a Pupil Premium award in 2016; 20% were not taking any action, and more than a third (36%) did not know if action was being taken. More than a third of respondents (35%) reported that they were not aware of the awards.
- There were differences between seniority - with over half (56%) of classroom teachers not knowing whether the school was taking action to win an award, compared to 14% of senior leaders. However, a similar proportion of classroom teachers and senior leaders knew that their school was taking additional action

(8% and 9% respectively). Thirty seven percent of senior leaders knew that their school was not taking additional action compared to 4% of classroom teachers

- The results indicate that there was less awareness of the awards amongst primary staff with two-fifths (40%) reporting that they were not aware of the awards as opposed to 31 per cent of secondary respondents.
- A small proportion (9%) of senior leaders had commissioned a Pupil Premium external review, with an additional 5% reporting that a review was planned to take place. The majority of schools had not commissioned a review (66%), and a fifth of respondents (20%) were not aware of Pupil Premium reviews¹.
- Of the respondents who said their school had completed a review (9% of the sample), most respondents had found it ‘very helpful’ or ‘somewhat helpful’ (89%). However, 11% did not find it helpful.

Changes in careers guidance provision

Secondary senior leaders were asked if their school had changed the way they delivered careers guidance as a result of the revised statutory guidance on careers, published in April 2014, requiring schools to build links with employers to give pupils real-life exposure to the world of work.

The survey found:

- Just over a half of senior leaders (51%) reported that they had changed their delivery of careers guidance and a further 18% planned to change delivery in the next six months, as a result of the revised statutory guidance. However, just over a fifth (21%) reported that their school had not made any changes and had no current plans to do so; 8% didn’t know; 1% were unable to; and 1% did not respond.
- Academies were less likely to have made or be planning to make changes - 26% of academies had not made any changes and had no plans to do so compared to 14% of non-academies.
- More than half of senior leader (55%) reported that they had increased links with employers to inspire pupils about different careers, with a further fifth (20%) reporting that they planned to do this in the next six months. Fifteen per cent had not made any changes and had no plans to do so; 7% didn’t know; 2% were unable to; and 2% did not respond.

¹ Pupil Premium reviews are voluntary and/or recommended to a small proportion of appropriate schools, which is likely to explain the lack of awareness/take up of review.

Perceptions of most effective Initial Teacher Training (ITT) routes

Senior leaders in both primary and secondary schools were asked, from their experience, which ITT route was the most likely to produce an outstanding new ITT teacher for their school.

The survey found:

- The largest proportion of senior leaders - nearly two-fifths (39%) - reported that the one-year post-graduate teacher training course in which trainees were based in a school was the most effective ITT route. This was closely followed by a three- or four-year undergraduate teacher course, with a third of senior leaders (33%) favouring this route. Less than a fifth (19%) considered a one-year post-graduate university-led route to be the most effective route. Six per cent felt that another route was the most effective; 4% didn't know, and 1% didn't respond.
- There were some notable differences by school phase, with a much higher proportion of secondary than primary senior leaders considering the one-year post-graduate teacher training course based in a school to be the most effective route (48% compared to 29%). In addition, a higher proportion of secondary than primary senior leaders considered a one-year post-graduate university-led course to be the most effective route (30% compared to 7%). Primary senior leaders considered the three- or four-year undergraduate route to be the most effective route into teaching, with more than half (54%) favouring this course (compared to 12% of secondary school senior leaders).
- There were also differences between academies and non-academies – with academies favouring the one year post graduate school-based teacher training more than non-academies (49% compared to 33%), and were less favourable towards the 3 or 4 year undergraduate course (16% compared to 42%). [The route that academies favoured is more in line with all secondary schools responses but that's likely to be because there are far more secondary schools in the academy sample, than primary schools.]

Awareness of changes to Teacher Pension Scheme

All respondents were asked if they were aware that the way their pension was calculated would change from 1 April 2015, and whether they had received communication from Teachers' Pension signposting them to the Teachers Pension Scheme to inform them about the changes.

The survey found:

- Most respondents (71%) were aware that the way their pension was calculated would change from 1 April 2015. A quarter (25%) were not aware, and 3% were undecided.
- Awareness of the changes were higher amongst senior leaders (77%) compared to classroom teachers (66%), and awareness was also higher in academies (75%) compared to non-academies (69%).
- Just under three-fifths (58%) of respondents had received communication from Teachers' Pension signposting them to the website which provided information about the changes being introduced. A quarter (25%) had not received any communication; 15% did not know; and 2% didn't respond.

Methodology

This report is based on the combined data from the Teacher Voice November 2014 Survey and a Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted between November 2014 and January 2015. Two thousand, one hundred and fifty-four senior leaders and teachers from 1,650 schools in the maintained sector in England completed the survey. One thousand, four hundred and seventy-seven respondents completed the Teacher Voice Survey online between 7th and 12th November 2014. The Senior Leader Booster Survey was completed online (51 respondents) and on paper (626 respondents) between 20th November 2014 and 5th January 2015.

The sample of respondents

The data includes responses from 1,023 senior leaders and 1,131 teachers in primary and secondary schools. Senior leaders were defined as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. Fifty-four per cent (886) of the schools represented in the sample were primary schools and 46 per cent (764) were secondary schools.

In terms of free school meals (FSM) eligibility the sample of primary schools drawn was found to be representative of the national population of primary schools. The sample of secondary schools drawn was found to over-represent the lowest quintile and under-represent the highest quintile of free school meals eligibility compared to the national population of secondary schools. The combined sample of primary and secondary schools also over-represented the lowest quintile and under-represented the highest quintile of free schools meals eligibility compared to the national population of schools. In order to make the secondary school and combined schools samples representative of their respective national populations weights were calculated for both samples, separately, using the free school meals data, and applied to each sample. The weightings have been applied to the secondary schools and overall sample analyses referred to in this commentary².

In addition to being representative of schools in terms of free school meals eligibility, the unweighted primary school sample was also found to be representative of primary schools nationally in terms of achievement and LA type. After weighting the data, the secondary school sample was also representative of secondary schools nationally in terms of school type (including academies), achievement and LA type, whilst the combined schools sample was representative of schools nationally in terms of achievement.

²We did not apply a weighting to primary schools or schools for which free school meals data was unavailable in the Register of Schools.

Confidence intervals

Confidence intervals are a measure of precision, they are intervals placed around survey estimates which give an indication of where the true population is likely to fall. A 95 per cent confidence interval is calculated in such a way that 95 times out of 100 it captures the true population value. Therefore, they provide an idea of how large the true population value might be (i.e. the upper limit) and how small it might be (i.e. the lower limit).

For this survey, we are 95 per cent certain that any percentage quoted is within 3.1 percentage points of the population value for primary schools and 2.9 percentage points for secondary schools.

However, certain questions within the survey were filtered and in these cases the number of respondents to questions may be much smaller than the whole primary or secondary sample. In these cases more caution about the precision of the percentages presented within the report is required.



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