



Department  
for Education

# **NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus: questions for the Department for Education – March to May 2014 and May to June 2014**

**Research brief**

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## Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) buys a termly set of questions into the NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey. The DfE also buys a Senior Leader Booster to the survey in order to capture extra data. 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 Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey in March 2014 and the Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted in late March to mid May 2014 (wave 1) and the Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey in May 2014 and the Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted in June 2014 (wave 2)

The questions in wave 1 were asked of senior leaders and focussed on:

- their views of how schools were preparing for the new National Curriculum
- secondary school senior leaders' views on changes to accountability indicators
- primary school senior leaders' views on the provision of universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) from September 2014.

Senior leaders (defined here as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers) were asked to respond to these particular questions and 1,430 responded: 625 (44%) in primary schools and 805 (56%) in secondary schools.

The questions in wave 2 focussed on:

- senior leaders views on how their school was preparing for the new National Curriculum
- secondary school teachers' understanding of raising the participation age
- senior leaders views on the effectiveness of 'Need to Know' timelines
- senior leaders views on criteria for effective Initial Teacher Training (ITT)
- senior leaders and classroom teachers views on pupil behaviour, pupil disciplinary powers and cyber bullying
- primary school senior leaders views on the preparedness of provision of universal infant free school meals (UIFSM).

The majority of the questions in wave 2 focused on the views of senior leaders, however classroom teachers were asked to answer the questions relating to raising the participation age and pupil behaviour. In total 2,425 participants responded to the survey.

Of these, 1,219 were senior leaders (50 per cent); defined as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers.

Results are provided for the overall sample and, where appropriate, by school phase (primary and secondary). Academies are reported separately only where there was a notable difference between academy and non- academy school 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

## The new National Curriculum

The new National Curriculum has been taught in all maintained primary and secondary schools since September 2014 (except English, mathematics and science in years 2 and 6 and at Key Stage 4, which are being phased in at later dates).

Prior to implementation, senior leaders were asked how their school was preparing for the new National Curriculum.

## Preparation for the new National Curriculum (wave 1)

Respondents to wave 1 of the survey were asked whether their school had started to prepare to teach the new National Curriculum; what had been done so far; and if they had not started to prepare, when they were planning on doing so.

The survey found:

- Most (90 per cent) senior leaders reported that their school had started to prepare to teach the new National Curriculum, although a slightly higher proportion of senior leaders in primary schools than in secondary schools said that this was the case (96 per cent and 85 per cent). Ten per cent overall had not started to prepare to teach the new National Curriculum.
- Where preparations had begun, senior leaders frequently reported that discussions had taken place with staff (85 per cent), governors (64 per cent) and other schools (60 per cent). Schools were also likely to have tasked curriculum leads with auditing their subjects (79 per cent).
- Primary school leaders were more likely than secondary school leaders to report that staff were attending external courses (73 per cent compared to 48 per cent) or INSET days (62 per cent compared to 18 per cent) to prepare for the new National Curriculum.
- Leaders who said their school had not yet prepared for the new curriculum said they would start preparing either in the second half of the spring term 2014 (7 per cent) or in the summer term 2014 (45 per cent). Thirty nine per cent were an academy and were not planning to implement the new National Curriculum. Ten per cent didn't respond to the question.

## **Professional development and support prior to teaching the new National Curriculum (wave 1)**

Senior leaders were asked about their professional development for staff, and whether they had been in touch with their local teaching school to find out what support they could offer to help implement curriculum change.

The survey found:

- Most respondents reported that staff development in this area would include all levels of staff – from senior leaders (94 per cent) to teaching assistants (84 per cent). It was also common for leaders to report that their school included ‘understanding of effective pedagogy’ in staff development (82 per cent).
- More than half (55 per cent) reported that their school had not contacted their local teaching school to find out what support they could offer to help implement curriculum change, while a quarter (25 per cent) reported that it had. Eight per cent of schools were the local teaching school, and 12 per cent either didn’t know or didn’t respond.

## **The new National Curriculum for mathematics (waves 1 and 2)**

In wave 1 of the survey, senior leaders were asked how confident they were that their schools curriculum reflected the demands of the National Curriculum for mathematics.

The survey found:

- More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of the respondents reported being ‘very confident’ or ‘confident’ that their school’s curriculum reflects the new demands of the National Curriculum for mathematics.
- Proportionately more primary school leaders were ‘very confident’ or ‘confident’ (86 per cent) compared to secondary school leaders (70 per cent).
- Thirteen per cent overall (11 per cent in primary schools and 15 per cent in secondary schools) were ‘not confident’ or ‘not at all confident’ that their mathematics curriculum reflects the new demands, and 10 per cent either didn’t know or didn’t respond.

Wave 2 of the survey (May/June 2014) asked secondary school senior leaders what steps their school was planning to take to prepare for the new mathematics GCSE in 2015.

The survey found:

- Schools were planning to take a number of steps in order to prepare for the new mathematics GCSE in 2015. From a list of options, respondents were asked to tick all that applied. The most common responses were: introducing a programme of professional development for mathematics teachers (50 per cent), and recruiting additional staff (36 per cent).
- Over a quarter were planning to change their timetabling by increasing the teaching time for mathematics by up to one hour per week in Key Stage 4 (28 per cent) or Key Stage 3 (27 per cent).

## Assessing progress in new National Curriculum (waves 1 and 2)

In both waves of the survey, senior leaders were asked how their school was planning to assess progress in the new National Curriculum.

The surveys found:

- In half of schools, the current systems for assessing progress in the curriculum were to be retained for the time being (51 per cent in the wave 1 and 50 per cent in the wave 2 of the survey).
- In wave 1, 12 per cent of senior leaders were planning to use a new system that had been developed by their own school or with a group of schools. By wave 2, almost a quarter (23 per cent) were planning to take this route.
- Three per cent in wave 1 and five per cent in wave 2 were planning to use a new system that had been developed by a commercial organisation.
- A quarter of senior leaders (26 per cent) were undecided, didn't know or didn't respond in wave 1. This changed to less than a quarter (19 per cent) by wave 2.
- Four per cent in wave 1 and three per cent in wave 2 had other plans.

## Secondary school accountability measures (wave 1)

From 2016, the secondary school accountability measure will no longer be the percentage of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE (or equivalents) including English and mathematics. Instead, schools will publish the following indicators which are felt to be fairer to a wider ability range of pupils (rather than focusing on the C/D borderline):

- pupils' progress across eight subjects ('progress 8')
- the average grade a pupil achieves in these 8 subjects ('attainment 8')
- the percentage of pupils achieving a C grade in English and mathematics

- the proportion of pupils gaining the English Baccalaureate

Schools will have the option of opting-in early to these new measures

Secondary school senior leaders were asked, based on the new move to progress-based measures, where their school will be focusing resources; whether the new reforms would encourage their school to enter some year 9 pupils for a different number of qualifications than previously (particularly EBacc qualifications), and whether their school was likely to opt in to the new accountability framework one year early.

The survey found:

- Three-quarters (75 per cent) of senior leaders said that their school planned to focus resources 'in the same way as before'. Nine per cent of school leaders reported that they would focus resources more on high attainers; three per cent on middle attainers; and four per cent reported that they would focus resources more on low attainers than previously. Nine per cent either didn't know or did not respond.
- Just under half (45 per cent) of senior leaders in secondary schools said that the accountability reforms had not encouraged their school to enter some Year 9 pupils for a different number of EBacc qualifications than previously. However, two-fifths (41 per cent) of senior leaders said their schools had been encouraged to enter some Year 9 pupils for more EBacc qualifications, while five per cent reported that some Year 9 pupils were entered for fewer qualifications overall. Eight per cent either didn't know or didn't respond.
- Just over half (54 per cent) of senior leaders said that the accountability reforms had not encouraged their school to enter some Year 9 pupils for a different number of qualifications than previously. Just over a fifth (22 per cent) reported that pupils were entered for fewer qualifications overall (which could be due to a focus on EBacc subjects reported above), and 14 per cent reported that pupils were entered for more. Ten per cent either didn't know or didn't respond.
- Fifteen per cent of senior leaders said their school would opt-in to the new accountability framework early (based on 2015 examination results), while more reported that their school would not (47 per cent) or that they were not sure (37 per cent). One per cent didn't respond.

## **Raising the participation age (RPA) (wave 2)**

Raising the participation age (RPA) refers to a change in the law relating to the age to which young people in England are required to continue in education or training. RPA came into effect from the start of the 2013/14 academic year. Young people who left year 11 in the summer of 2013 had to remain in education or training for at least a further year. Those who entered year 11 from September 2013 are required to stay in education



or training until their 18th Birthday. Young people are able to choose how they continue in education or training post-16. This could be through full-time education, full-time work or volunteering combined with part-time education or training or through an Apprenticeship or traineeship.

All secondary school respondents were asked about the extent to which they would agree that they had a good understanding of what RPA means for pupils in terms of how long they must continue to participate in education or training for a) pupils who completed year 11 in 2013 and b) pupils who will complete year 11 in 2014 (or later). They were also asked about the extent to which they would agree that they had a good understanding of the different kinds of education and training a young person can undertake to meet their duty.

The survey found:

- Overall secondary school respondents had a good understanding of RPA; 72 per cent agreed to some extent that they had a good understanding of what RPA means for pupils leaving year 11 in 2013, in terms of how long they must continue to participate in education or training. Fourteen per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 11 per cent disagreed to some extent. Two per cent either didn't respond or didn't feel it was relevant to their job.
- 74 per cent agreed to some extent that they had a good understanding of RPA for those leaving year 11 in 2014 or later. Thirteen per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 12 per cent disagreed to some extent. Two per cent either didn't respond or didn't feel it was relevant to their job
- Sixty-six per cent of secondary school respondents agreed to some extent that they had a good understanding of the types of education or training young people could go into in order to fulfil their RPA duty. Fifteen per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and 17 per cent disagreed to some extent. One per cent didn't feel it was relevant to their job.
- In all cases, senior leaders were more likely to report that they understood these requirements compared to classroom teachers.

## **Communications (wave 2)**

The DfE provides schools with 'Need to Know' timelines, which sets out important mandatory information to help headteachers, principals and governors plan ahead, prepare for and implement mandatory legal requirements. Schools can sign up to receive the timelines or they are available on GOV.UK.

Senior leaders in both primary and secondary schools were asked about the extent of which they agreed that the Need to Know timelines (delivered through the termly schools' e-mail) helped them prepare for key reforms of DfE policies.

The survey found:

- Almost half (46 per cent) of senior leaders agreed to some extent that the 'Need to Know' timelines help them to prepare for key reforms of DfE policies. Just over a fifth (21 per cent) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 10 per cent disagreed to some extent.
- Almost a quarter (23 per cent) stated that they were not aware of the Need to Know timelines and/or monthly schools' e-mail.

## **Initial Teacher Training (ITT) (wave 2)**

In order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status and be eligible to teach in maintained and public schools in England, prospective teachers must first complete an accredited ITT course. There are now a number of different ITT paths to choose from. These generally fall into two categories; university-led routes (undergraduate courses and postgraduate certificate in education) or school-led approaches (School Centred ITT, Teach First and Schools Direct).

All senior leaders were asked what they considered to be the three most important criteria for effective Initial Teacher Training.

The survey found:

- Mentoring from an experienced teacher was deemed the most important criteria for effective ITT (60 per cent).
- Half of senior leaders (50 per cent) felt that a focus on classroom management (including behaviour management) was an important criteria, and 44 per cent felt that understanding and assessing pupil progress was important.

## **Pupil behaviour and discipline (wave 2)**

In July 2011 the DfE issued streamlined advice to headteachers and school staff on behaviour and discipline which is regularly reviewed and updated. This advice was most

recently updated in February 2014 to make clear the range of sanctions that it is permissible for schools to deploy for poor behaviour<sup>1</sup>.

All respondents were asked to rate the pupil behaviour in their school, and were asked about their awareness of the Department's updated advice on the powers teachers have to discipline pupils (and their confidence in using these powers). All respondents were also asked about the extent that they agreed that they felt equipped to manage cyber bullying in their school.

The survey found:

- Pupil behaviour was seen to be generally good; 84 per cent of teachers rated their pupils' behaviour as good or very good<sup>2</sup>, while just four per cent rated their behaviour as poor or very poor. Twelve per cent rated pupil behaviour as acceptable.
- Senior leaders were more positive about pupil behaviour compared to classroom teachers.
- Over half of the teachers were aware of the DfE's updated advice on the powers teachers have to discipline pupils (54 per cent), 41 per cent were not aware, and five per cent didn't know. Senior leaders had a higher awareness of these plans. There was also a notable difference in awareness between academies (59 per cent) and non-academy schools (51 per cent).
- Almost three quarters of all respondents felt confident using these disciplinary powers (73 per cent). However, this was lower for secondary school classroom teachers, where only 55 per cent felt confident using these powers. Sixteen per cent didn't feel confident using these powers and 12 per cent either didn't know or didn't respond.
- Sixty per cent of all respondents agreed to some extent that they feel equipped to manage cyber bullying in their school. Just over a fifth of respondents (21 per cent) neither agreed nor disagreed, and just under a fifth (19 per cent) did not feel equipped to deal with cyber bullying.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/277894/Behaviour\\_and Discipline\\_in\\_Schools\\_-\\_a\\_guide\\_for\\_headteachers\\_and\\_school\\_staff.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277894/Behaviour_and_Discipline_in_Schools_-_a_guide_for_headteachers_and_school_staff.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Note this figure is not comparable with figures published in previous teacher voice surveys for DfE, as this survey contains a booster sample of senior leaders. Excluding the booster sample, the figure is 74 per cent

## Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) (waves 1 and 2)

From September 2014 all state-funded infant and primary schools in England are required to offer all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 a free school meal (FSM).

Primary school senior leaders were asked about the extent their school was on track to deliver this commitment. This question was asked in both waves - between March and May 2014 (wave 1) and between May and June 2014 (wave 2). In wave 1, primary schools leaders were also asked about the challenges they faced in delivering this commitment.

The surveys found:

- Most (91 per cent in wave 1 and 92 per cent in wave 2) primary school senior leaders said they were on track to deliver the UIFSM commitment by September 2014, of which a little under half felt they faced significant challenges, but that these could be overcome (45 per cent in wave 1, and 42 per cent in wave 2).
- Two per cent in wave 1 and three per cent in wave 2 said they were not on course to meet the requirement and eight per cent in wave 1 and five per cent in wave 2 did not know/did not respond.
- The most common challenge in delivering UIFSM (reported by 73 per cent of senior leaders who knew if their school was on track to deliver the commitment by September in wave 1), was ensuring that parents who are currently entitled to FSM still register for FSM.

Sizeable proportions also reported the challenges of 'maintaining the speed of the lunch service' (68 per cent), 'dining hall space' (50 per cent), 'staff numbers to cover lunch times' (46 per cent), 'estimating take-up of school lunches' (45 per cent), 'timetabling' (44 per cent) and 'dining furniture and service equipment' (42 per cent).

## Methodology

This report is based on the combined data from a Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey and a Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted between early March and mid May 2014 and a further round of these surveys between mid May and the end of June 2014. One thousand, four hundred and thirty senior leaders (1,430) from 1,180 schools in the maintained sector in England completed wave 1 of the survey and two thousand, four hundred and twenty five (2,425) senior leaders and teachers from 1,836 schools in the maintained sector in England completed wave 2.

Respondents of the wave 1 survey completed the Teacher Voice Survey online between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014, and the Senior Leader Booster Survey either online or on paper between 25<sup>th</sup> March and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Respondents of the wave 2 survey completed the Teacher Voice Survey online between 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014, and the Senior Leader Booster Survey either online or on paper between 4<sup>th</sup> June and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

## The sample of respondents

Wave 1 questions were directed at senior leaders only. Senior leaders were defined as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. Forty nine per cent (576) of the schools represented in the sample were primary schools and 51 per cent (604) were secondary schools. There were sixty-one academy primary schools within the sample, and three hundred and four academy secondary schools

Wave 2 data includes responses from senior leaders and teachers in primary and secondary schools. Fifty five per cent (1,012) of the schools represented in the sample were primary schools and 45 per cent (824) were secondary schools. There were ninety-five academy primary schools within the sample, and four hundred and ninety-one academy secondary schools.

In terms of FSM eligibility there was an over-representation in the second lowest and middle quintiles in the primary sample and an over-representation in the lowest quintile in the secondary sample compared to the national population in wave 1. In wave 2, there was an over-representation in the second highest quintiles in the primary sample and under-representation in the highest quintile in the primary and secondary samples compared to the national population. The combined sample of primary and secondary schools reflected these differences as well as a notable under-representation in the highest quintile in terms of eligibility for free school meals. To address this, weights were calculated using free school meals data and then applied to the primary, secondary and whole school samples to create more representative samples in total. The weightings

have been applied to the primary schools, secondary schools and overall sample analyses referred to in this commentary<sup>3</sup>.

Aside from FSM eligibility, the schools that responded to the survey were largely representative of schools nationally in terms of school type (including academies), region and LA type. In the case of overall performance, there was a slight under-representation of the highest achieving schools at primary level and an over-representation at secondary level in wave 1. In wave 2, there was an over-representation in Southern regions and under-representation of schools in Northern regions. In addition, for overall performance, there was a slight over-representation of the highest achieving schools at secondary level.

## 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 wave 1 of this survey, there is a 95 per cent certainty that the percentages quoted are within 4.1 percentage points of the true population value for primary schools and within 4.0 percentage points for secondary schools. For wave 2 there is a 95 per cent certainty that the percentages quoted are within 3.1 percentage points of the population value for primary schools and 3.4 percentage points for secondary schools.

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<sup>3</sup>Weighting was not applied to schools for which free school meals data was unavailable in the Register of Schools.



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