



Department
for Education

NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus: questions for the Department for Education – June 2015

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 from the Department 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 summer Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey in June 2015 and the Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted between June 2015 and July 2015. Alongside the research brief, a complete set of data tables for the survey has been published.

The questions submitted in the summer 2015 survey, explored:

- implementing the new National Curriculum
- mental health support and provision
- pupil behaviour and bullying
- school leadership
- post-16 participation and choices
- vocational courses and qualifications
- work experience
- new school accountability measures.

In total, 2,088 responses were received to the survey. Of these, 1,077 were senior leaders (defined as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers) and 1,011 were classroom teachers. 52 per cent (853) of the schools represented in the sample were primary schools and 48 per cent (790) were secondary schools.

This research brief provides an analysis of the responses to each question alongside supporting information about the survey in the methodology section. Results are provided by the overall sample and by school phase (where relevant). In addition, a small number of questions compare the responses of senior leaders and classroom teachers. 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. Where respondents identified that they were not confident in their school being able to implement the new National Curriculum in a particular subject they were asked about their reasons for this.

The survey found:

- Senior leaders in secondary schools were confident about implementing the new GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics from September 2015, with the majority (88%, 88% and 85% respectively) reporting that they were 'very' or 'fairly' confident. Senior leaders' confidence in their schools to teach the new GCSEs had increased slightly from autumn 2014, when they were asked the same question.
- Most senior leaders in secondary and primary schools were confident about implementing the new National Curriculum in English, mathematics and science, with around three-quarters (80%, 78% and 71% respectively) reporting that they were confident. Confidence levels were lower about implementing the new National Curriculum in languages and computing, with half of respondents or fewer (51% and 40% respectively) saying they were confident. Across all subject areas, there were modest increases in senior leaders' confidence to implement new curricula in these areas, compared to responses to the same question in autumn 2014.¹
- Across all subject areas, where respondents were not confident in implementing the new National Curriculum subjects in their schools, this tended to be primarily because more staff training was needed.
- Senior leaders in primary schools typically indicated being more confident than secondary senior leaders to implement the new National Curriculum in English,

¹ Autumn 2014 findings available here: [Autumn 2014 findings from the schools omnibus survey](#)

mathematics, science and computing, but less confident than secondary senior leaders in terms of languages.

Mental Health Support

Both teachers and senior leaders in primary and secondary schools were asked a series of questions about the provision of mental health services and support for their pupils. All respondents were asked about their ability to support pupils with mental health issues, the availability of different forms of mental health support in their schools and their views on the most useful strategies for supporting pupils' mental health in school. Senior leaders were asked about the commissioning of mental health services.

The survey found:

- Six in ten respondents (62%) strongly agreed/agreed that they felt equipped to identify pupil behaviour that may be linked to a mental health issue. Only three in ten respondents (32%) strongly agreed/agreed that there was appropriate training for teachers in school to identify mental health problems in pupils. These differences suggest that knowledge on how to identify potential mental health issues may be derived from means other than formal in-school training. Five in ten respondents (54%) strongly agreed/agreed that they knew how to help pupils with mental health issues to access appropriate support. Senior leaders were more likely than classroom teachers to agree to these statements.
- The three most useful strategies in supporting pupils' mental health in schools, identified by respondents were: counselling services for pupils (60%); training for staff on mental health and wellbeing (52%); and strong engagement with families and young people (46%).
- The three main strategies provided by schools to support pupils' mental health, identified by respondents were: counselling services for pupils (62%); strong engagement of families and young people (42%); and teaching age-appropriate lessons about mental health (29%).
- Responses indicated that secondary schools had more provision for supporting pupils' mental health than primaries and senior leaders were more likely than classroom teachers to report that their school provided strategies to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing.
- Where schools directly commission mental health services for pupils this tended to be through: Local Authority services (52%); in-school counselling services (47%); and voluntary and charitable organisations (31%).

Behaviour and Bullying

Senior leaders and teachers were asked a series of questions about pupil behaviour and bullying in their schools. In particular, they were asked for their views on pupil behaviour in their school, the prevalence of low-level disruption in the classroom and on the most common forms of bullying in their school.

The survey found:

- The majority of respondents (81%) rated pupil behaviour in their school as 'very good' or 'good'. Respondents from primary schools and senior leaders were slightly more positive about pupil behaviour than respondents from secondary schools and classroom teachers, respectively. The pattern of responses for this question from the Teacher Voice Omnibus survey results in June 2015 (excluding the Senior leader booster summer survey 2015²), were similar to in previous surveys. 76 per cent of teachers and leaders rated their pupils' behaviour as 'very good' or 'good' in 2015, compared to 74 per cent in 2014, 77 per cent in 2013 and 76 per cent in 2012.³ This suggests that pupil behaviour has remained fairly consistent over the last few years.
- Persistent low-level disruption in the classroom is an issue 'frequently' or 'sometimes' for three-fifths of all respondents (61%). Disruption is more likely to be an issue in secondary school classrooms, than in primary, (67% and 53% of respondents respectively identified this as an issue 'frequently' or 'sometimes') and, more likely to be identified by class teachers, than senior leaders (73% of non-senior leaders identified this issue 'frequently' or 'sometimes', compared to 49% of senior leaders).
- By far the most common form of bullying in schools is general verbal abuse, identified by 74 per cent of all respondents. This was followed by cyber bullying (45%) and physical abuse (26%). Racial and religious bullying was far less common. Cyber bullying was reported by far higher numbers of secondary than primary respondents (65% compared to 23% respectively).

² The surveys prior to 2014 did not include a senior leader booster sample and therefore for comparability only the June Teacher Voice Survey data is referenced here.

³ When the question was previously asked on the 2008 teacher voice survey 70 per cent of teachers and leaders rated their pupils' behaviour as 'very good' or 'good'.

School Leadership

The Department for Education was interested in understanding the influences on teachers' aspiration to headship. Both classroom teachers and senior leaders were asked about the factors they felt positively or negatively influenced teachers' aspiration to headship.

The survey found:

- Teachers' aspirations to headship were adversely influenced by: the pressure and pace of a headteacher's job (87%); workload (83%); the level of accountability to those outside the school (83%); the level of responsibility which a headteacher has within the school (67%); and the level of support available to new headteachers (37%).
- Seldom were any of the factors identified as having a positive influence on teachers' aspiration to headship. However, for two-fifths of respondents (41%) 'the move from teaching to providing strategic direction and vision' was a positive influence. Similarly, 'the pay differential between senior leadership and headteacher roles' was deemed a positive influence for one-third of respondents (33%).
- More secondary than primary respondents, saw the pay differential (39% of secondary compared to 26% of primary respondents) and 'the move from teaching to providing strategic direction and vision' (47% compared to 34%) as positive influences on aspirations to headship.

Post-16 Participation and Choices

Young people do not specifically have to stay in full-time education to meet their duty to continue participating beyond the age of 16 years. The Department for Education was interested in exploring teachers' awareness of the various types of education and training young people can undertake as part of the raising of the compulsory education and training participation age and whether schools helped Year 11 pupils to use portals/third party websites to find out about the post-16 options available to them in their area.

The survey found:

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (72%) strongly agreed/agreed that they had a good understanding of the education and training a young person can undertake to meet their duty to participate beyond the age of 16.

- Senior leaders were substantially more likely than classroom teachers to agree that they understood these post-16 options.
- Since 2014, there has been an increase in respondents who 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that that they did have a good understanding of the education and training a young person can undertake to meet their duty to participate (66 per cent in 2014 compared to 72 per cent in 2015).
- Most respondents (81%) said that 'yes' their school helped Year 11 pupils to use portals/third party websites to find out about post-16 options to help them make informed choices. A higher proportion of senior leaders, than classroom teachers gave this response.

Vocational Qualifications

Secondary school senior leaders were asked whether their school provided vocational qualifications, reasons for providing vocational courses, whether they had made changes to their vocational qualification offer, the involvement of employers in the delivery of vocational courses and whether they tailored the vocational qualification offer to the local economy.

The survey found:

- Most secondary senior leaders (76%) said that their school offered vocational qualifications; yet just under a quarter (22%) said that the school did not.⁴ The most commonly cited reason for offering vocational qualifications in school was demand from pupils (78%).
- Only a minority of senior leaders said their schools were providing new types of vocational qualifications, such as Applied General, technical certificates and tech levels. Where they were, this was most often the Applied General qualification (14%), followed by Technical Certificates (7%) and Tech Levels (6%).
- Just over a quarter (28%) of senior leaders said that employers were involved in the delivery of more than a small minority of vocational courses.
- Only a third (33%) of senior leaders reported that the vocational courses provided in their school were tailored to the local economy. This was informed primarily by: pupil destinations data; labour market intelligence; and input from the business community.

⁴ 1% of respondents answered 'do not know' and 1% did not respond to this question.

Work Experience

Secondary school senior leaders were asked about the ease of finding work experience placements for students, the most popular sectors for work experience and whether the introduction of the 16-19 study programmes had led to improvements to work experience.

- Just over two-fifths of senior leaders (42%) said that their school found it difficult to find work experience placements for their pupils. Two in ten senior leaders (21%) said their school found it 'quite' or 'very' easy. Around a sixth (14%) of senior leaders said that their school did not provide work experience placements for pupils.
- The three sectors most in demand for work experience placements were: education, health and public administration (53%); professional, scientific and technical (38%); and business administration and support services (33%). The areas least in demand for work experience placements were: mining, quarrying and utilities; transport; and property.
- Small proportions of senior leaders identified modest improvements to work experience following the introduction of 16-19 study programmes. Just over two-fifths (44%) of senior leaders reported a little or more improvement in terms of the *amount* of work related activity to develop employability skills. Just over a third (35%) identified a little or more improvement in the *tailoring* of work experience placements to suit the career aspirations of learners.

Accountability

From 2016, progress 8: a measure of progress across 8 subjects from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school will replace accountability measures will be based on progress across eight subjects rather than the percentage of pupils achieving five A*-C grades including English and maths as a headline measure of school performance. Senior leaders were asked whether these accountability reforms had encouraged their schools to enter some Year 9 pupils for a different number of EBacc qualifications, a different total number of qualifications or a different number of non-GCSEs.⁵

The survey found:

⁵ EBacc GCSE subjects are English, Maths, Science, Foreign Languages and History or Geography

- Half of responding senior leaders (51%) said that the accountability reforms have encouraged their school to enter some Year 9 pupils for 'more' EBacc qualifications.
- Two-fifths of senior leaders reported that the reforms had encouraged their school to enter pupils for a different number of qualifications in total: 25% were entering for 'fewer' and 15% for 'more' qualifications in total.
- These patterns are comparable to those found in 2014 when a similar question was asked
- One-third (36%) of senior leaders reported that the reforms had encouraged their school to enter some Year 9 pupils for 'fewer' non-GCSEs. While half of senior leaders (50%) reported that the reforms had made no difference to the number of pupils entered for non-GCSE qualifications, only a small minority (7%) thought the reforms encouraged their school to enter some Year 9 pupils for 'more' non-GCSE qualifications.⁶ Respondents were not asked about non-GCSEs in 2014.

⁶ The remaining respondents either did not respond to this question or responded 'don't know' to the question.'

Methodology

This report is based on the combined data from the Teacher Voice June 2015 Survey and a Senior Leader Booster Survey conducted in June- July 2015. 2,088 senior leaders and teachers from 1,643 schools in the maintained sector in England completed the surveys. 1,430 respondents completed the Teacher Voice Survey online between 5th and 10th June 2015. The Senior Leader Booster Survey was completed online (50 respondents) and on paper (608 respondents) between 15th June 2015 and 3rd July 2015.

The sample of respondents

The data includes responses from 1,077 senior leaders and 1,011 teachers in primary and secondary schools. Senior leaders were defined as headteachers, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers. 52 per cent (853) of the schools represented in the sample were primary schools and 48 per cent (790) were secondary schools.

In terms of free school meals (FSM) eligibility, both the sample of primary schools and the combined sample of primary and secondary schools drawn were found to be representative of the national population of primary schools and all schools respectively. The sample of secondary schools drawn was found to over-represent the lowest quintile and under-represent the highest quintile of FSM eligibility compared to the national population of secondary schools. In order to make the secondary schools sample representative of its national population by FSM, weights were calculated for the sample using the FSM data, and applied to the secondary schools data. The analysis of secondary schools in this commentary is based on this weighted data⁷.

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 school type, region, achievement and LA type. The unweighted combined sample of primary and secondary schools was also found to be representative of all 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, region and LA type.

⁷We did not apply a weighting to primary schools or schools for which free school meals data was unavailable in the Register of Schools.



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