Teacher Tapp Insights #6:
Lunchtimes and break times

Teacher tapp

Juggling non-lesson time is one of the toughest tests for school leaders. From supervision rotas to club timetables, how you structure the day can make the difference between a calm afternoon —or a chaos-fuelled headache.

Key Statistics from Teacher Tapp

Enthusiasm for lunchtime was **higher in primary** schools compared to secondary schools with more reporting they enjoyed it 'a lot' (**42%** vs **32%**).

"Chatting with friends" was the most preferred lunchtime activity with **81%** picking it as a favourite thing to do.

Over a quarter of pupils say they don't have enough time to eat.

14% of secondary schools have lunchtimes shorter than 30 minutes.

Pupils in less affluent secondary schools are **twice as likely** to have short lunchtimes.

1 out of 10 secondary schools allow students to use their phones at lunch time

Only **3%** of primary and **5%** of secondary pupils reported attending a lunchtime club that day.

87% of primary school teachers believe that the number of children playing playground games like hopscotch or skipping has decreased.

Behaviour at lunchtime

- **Students:** 79% of pupils report feeling safe all or most of the time.
- **Teachers:** More than half of teachers report that behaviour is at its worst during lunchtimes.

Exercise at school

Nearly a quarter of primary pupils **(24%)** and **17.5%** of secondary pupils report that their only physical playing or exercise for the week happens at school, either on the playground or during PE.

TALKING POINT: Consider all the possible activities students can do over lunch and break - how much is utilised?
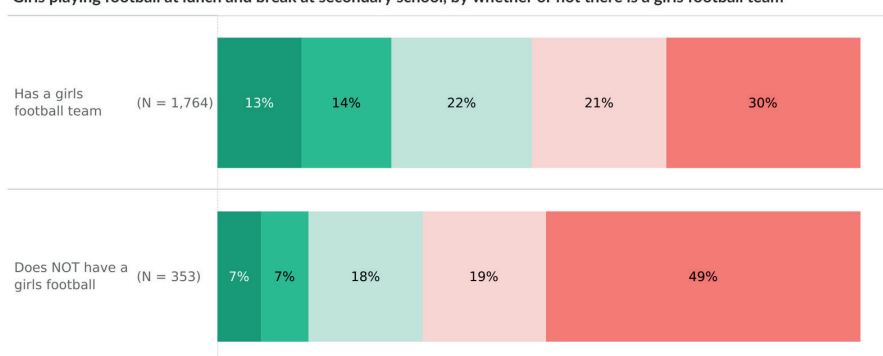
Lunchtime football

Girls' football in schools is on the rise. **Lunchtime play is up—from 46% to 56% in primaries and 16% to 23% in secondaries**—and more schools now have girls' teams. In primary, team numbers have jumped from 37% to 51%, nearly matching boys' teams (53%). In secondary, 78% of schools have a girls' team, compared to 91% for boys.

Girls are twice as likely to play football at lunch if their school has a girls' team. Yet while girls' participation grows, boys remain consistently active: 83% of primary and 91% of secondary teachers say boys play football every or most days.

Girls playing football at lunch and break at secondary school, by whether or not there is a girls football team

Has a girls football team	(N = 1,764)	13%	14%	22%	21%	30%
Does NOT have a girls football	(N = 353)	7%	7%	18%	19%	49%

Question answered by 2,117 teachers on 21/07/2025 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

- ■ Yes, every day
- ■ Yes, most days
- ■ Yes, sometimes
- ■ Yes but rarely
- ■ No

27% of schools with girls' teams say girls play football regularly at lunchtime

That number **drops to just 14%** in schools without a girls' team

In other words: **girls are twice as likely** to play lunchtime football if their school has a girls' team

Playground games

Traditional playground games are **on the decline.** While many primary schools still provide balls, teachers report a noticeable drop in equipment like hopscotch markings and skipping ropes.

In fact, 87% of primary teachers say **fewer children** are playing classic playground games, such as hopscotch or skipping—with over a third (37%) saying it has 'decreased significantly'.

Social isolation

Around **7% of pupils**—potentially close to half a million nationally—report feeling socially isolated, saying they have friends to be with only some of the time, not really, or not at all.

Feelings of isolation are **more common in primary** schools, where 83% of pupils say they have friends most or all of the time, compared to 92% in secondary schools.

TALKING POINT: How is socialisation supported at your school? How effective are efforts to help children who struggle with friendships?

Toilets

A **quarter of secondary schools** now lock toilets during lesson time, making them accessible only at break and lunch. In contrast, this practice is rare in primary schools, where just 1% report doing the same.

Pupil satisfaction with toilets is also low—only **39% of primary and 25% of secondary pupils** say their school toilets are satisfactory all or most of the time. This reflects a longer-term decline in toilet standards, as reported by teachers since 2019.