

The Social Lives Of Teachers: Pubs, best friends, and who knows the most effective teachers?

Hello Tappers! This week we had a record, 5,903 users on one day. Can we get to 6,000 this week? Promo packs are winging their way to those of you who requested posters and coasters - so fingers crossed we'll get there!

1. Are teachers friends with their colleagues?

Right, before we talk about you this week, let's talk about your colleagues.

We've asked this question about going to the pub that we've asked a few times now. Why? Because it gives us a clue as to how much teachers spend time together socialising and chatting about work.

Just 4% of you go to the pub every week or almost every week with colleagues, whereas 12% of you say you never do this. Well over half of teachers haven't been for a social drink with colleagues yet this year, including 6-in-10 Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) haven't yet been for a drink with their colleagues.

Does this matter? Well, it might. Not because Teacher Tapp is trying to push a drinking culture (actually, we are quite impartial to soft drinks) but because we've found in our data that teachers in outstanding schools are more likely to go for drinks together. Of course, correlation isn't causation. So we've had a little dig around and noticed that one reason for this relationship is that there are more outstanding schools in London and more pub visits in London - possibly because more people use public transport and are also younger and childless. This doesn't completely explain the relationship though.

2. R-E-S-P-E-C-T....

While we're on the subject of Ofsted ratings, teachers are a little more likely to report that they feel respected by the people they work with when they work in Outstanding schools (particularly in the secondary sector). It's good to see that 95% of you are treated with respect at work (most of the time, at least).

3. Do you have a best friend?

Want to know who is most at risk of leaving their job? Try asking your colleagues whether they feel they have a best friend at work – this is a question that [Gallup showed was a strong predictor of attachment to work](#). 51% of you are lucky enough to say that you do.

The figure is actually a little higher in primary schools, which surprised us because you have much less choice of friends to seek out! Just goes to show that most of us can be pretty flexible about the kind of people we make friends with.

Obviously, those of you who have just started at a new school are much less likely to say that you do, though even a quarter of you have already found a work pal who you can confide in and rely on.

And you guys are overwhelmingly positive about the teachers who you spend the most time with at school! With 80% of teachers saying that they have a laugh with the people they spend time with. Another finding for our recruitment and retention findings: lookout for people with a good sense of humour!

4. Who are the best teachers?

Do you know who the 'best' teachers in your school are? 81% of teachers said 'yes', they do! Moreover, it doesn't take you long to develop views of your colleagues. 1-in-5 of you who have only just started at a new school already feel you know who the best teachers are!

Note that headteachers are the most confident that they know who are the best teachers - possibly because they are more likely to do learning walks around the schools.

5. How can you tell if a teacher is effective?

Given that teachers are confident they can pick out the 'best' teachers, what sort of things are they looking for as markers of brilliance? We gave a range of options from which panellists could pick as many as they wanted.

Note that conversations most commonly convince people that their colleagues are a good teacher. Next most important were observations of their teaching and the achievement of the pupils. Does this mean teachers are more convinced by good storytelling than by actual evidence?!

6. Eternally optimistic teachers

Teachers are human, and most humans suffer from something called 'illusory superiority'. We like to think we are better than average as it helps make our daily lives manageable. It was therefore no surprise to learn that 83% of you think you are better than the average teacher.

Given what we know about how much teachers struggle in their first year on the job, relative to every other year in their career, it's amazing to find that the majority of NQTs already think they are more effective than the average teacher! However, there is a reason for this. In 2014, Dunning and Helzer described how the Dunning–Kruger effect "suggests that poor performers are not in a position to recognize the shortcomings in their performance". Hence, people who are lower in ability tend not to have the experience or knowledge to know that they are lower in competence than a wider cohort.

Such optimism is probably a good thing! If new teachers were battling bad behaviour and workload and felt they were constantly behind it might put them off. Happily, this optimistic view also persists over a teacher's career too.

We asked if you feel you are getting better at teaching. It's nice to see that the majority of you feel that you are. But research shows that becoming more effective as a classroom practitioner becomes really difficult to achieve 5 years or so.

Could it be that teachers are instead finding the job more manageable year-on-year and so feel they are getting better even if pupil learning is no longer substantially improving?

7. Are schools getting worse?

Despite a lot of doom and gloom in news, the majority of teachers feel the quality of education is improving. This is somewhat strange since panellists also overwhelmingly felt that education reforms over the past decade have negatively affected the school system.

If you think there was a golden age of education back in the 1970s and 80s, the data is also not on your side. Teachers in their 40s and 50s are the most likely to strongly agree that students today tend to have a higher quality schooling experience.

However there is a strange effect at the other end, whereby those in their 50s and 20s are the most likely to disagree and believe that things have got worse.

8. Finally, as ever, we know that you love the daily tips, so here are the ones from last week...

- [A 20-year perspective on teacher working hours](#)
- [Classroom routines matter](#)
- [What can a school do to create a positive workplace culture?](#)
- [Should you focus on metacognition rather than mindset?](#)
- [Banishing email anxiety](#)
- [Noise has a negative impact on learning performance](#)