

What are the best gifts for teachers? (Plus coffee mugs, confessions, and the creep of the 3-year GCSE)

Tappsters, two bits of good news. One: there's only a few weeks left of term, and Two: We hit more than 4,000 users last week ? As ever this means we can start doing more interesting analysis on more sub-groups (eg including special/AP in our data on gifts for teachers) and we are working hard to start personalising content so that questions and tips are ever more relevant to you.

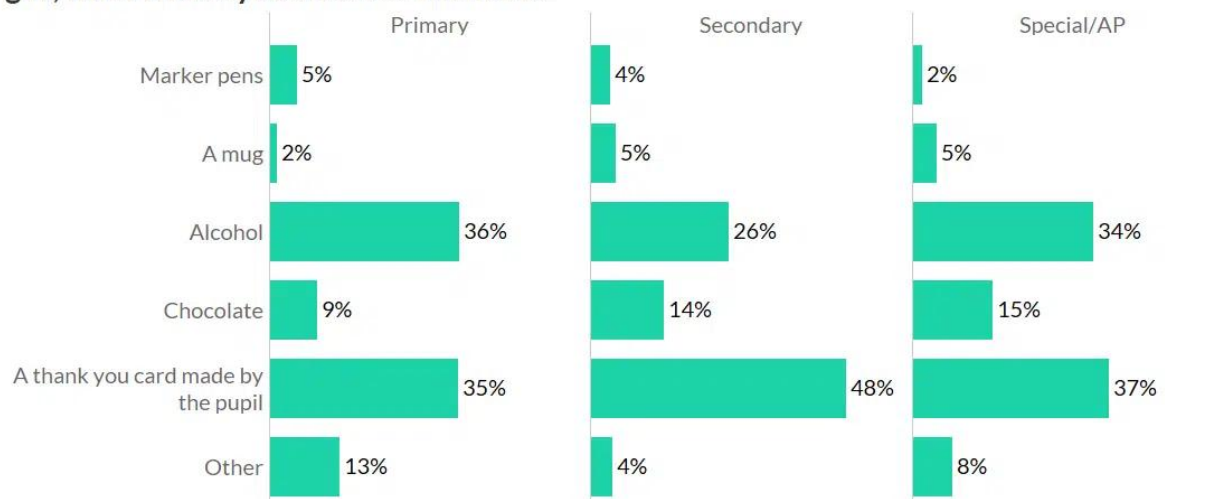
Also, if you haven't yet noticed your app has updated! There are some new features. More on that [here](#) if you're into the tech nerdery.

Right, onto the things we've learned this week!

1. Gifts for teachers: What's the best end-of-year present?

Parents are always asking what presents they should buy their child's teacher as an end-of-year gift. So we asked what you most want and found that alcohol is beloved of primary teachers, and thank you cards most wanted by secondary teachers and those in the special/AP sector.

If your friend was asking what they should buy their child's teacher as an end-of-year gift, what would you most recommend?



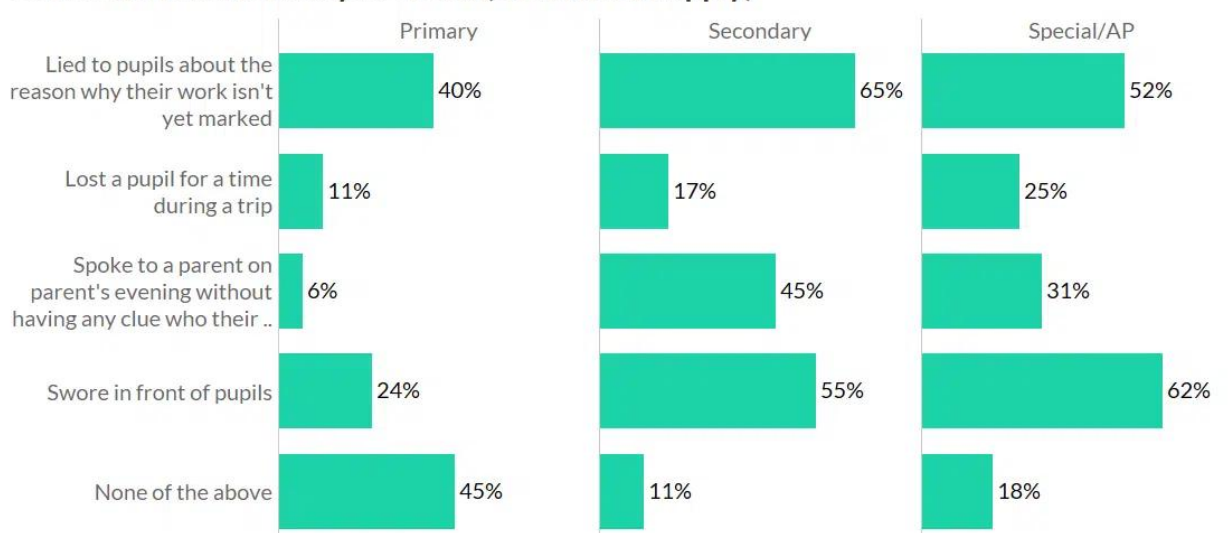
3,878 responders on 22/06/2019

Note also: despite being the most standard gifts for teachers, mugs are not wanted!

As you were all being so honest about gifts we wondered if teachers ever did anything that might be considered a slightly guilt sin. Turns out, you do!

65% of secondary teachers have lied to pupils about why their work isn't marked and 55% have sworn in front of a child!

Confession time! Have you ever... (click all that apply)

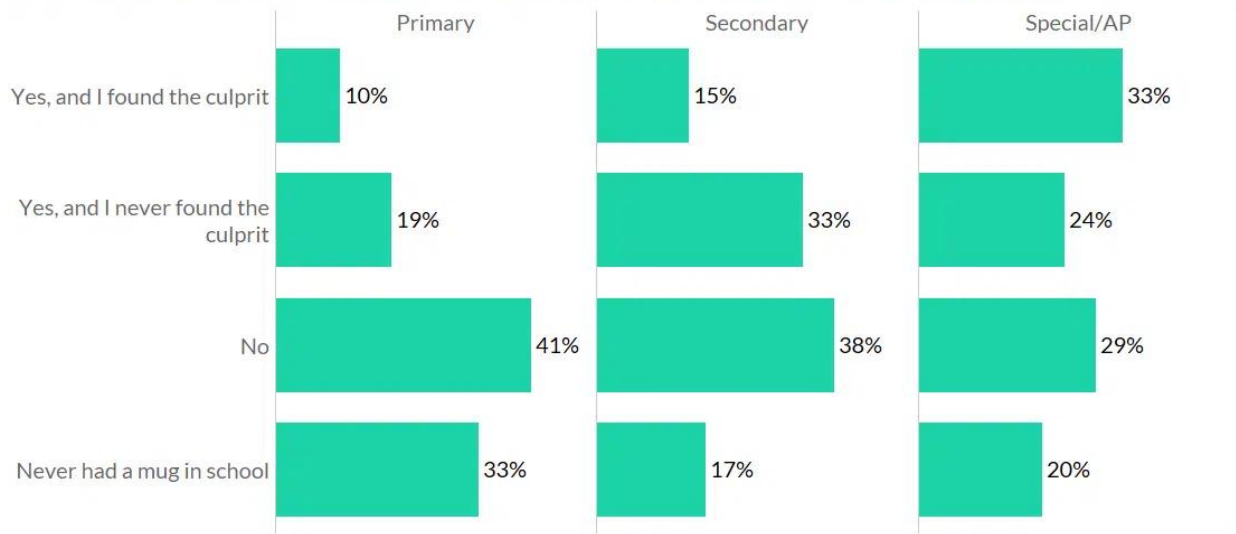


3,874 responders on 22/06/2019

Of all the crimes in school, however, we think we've found the reason why so many of you

have had a mug stolen.... Who is this suspicious glut of people who never took a mug to school? We think it must be them ?

Have you ever had your mug stolen in school? Tick any responses that apply.



3,680 responders on 18/06/2019

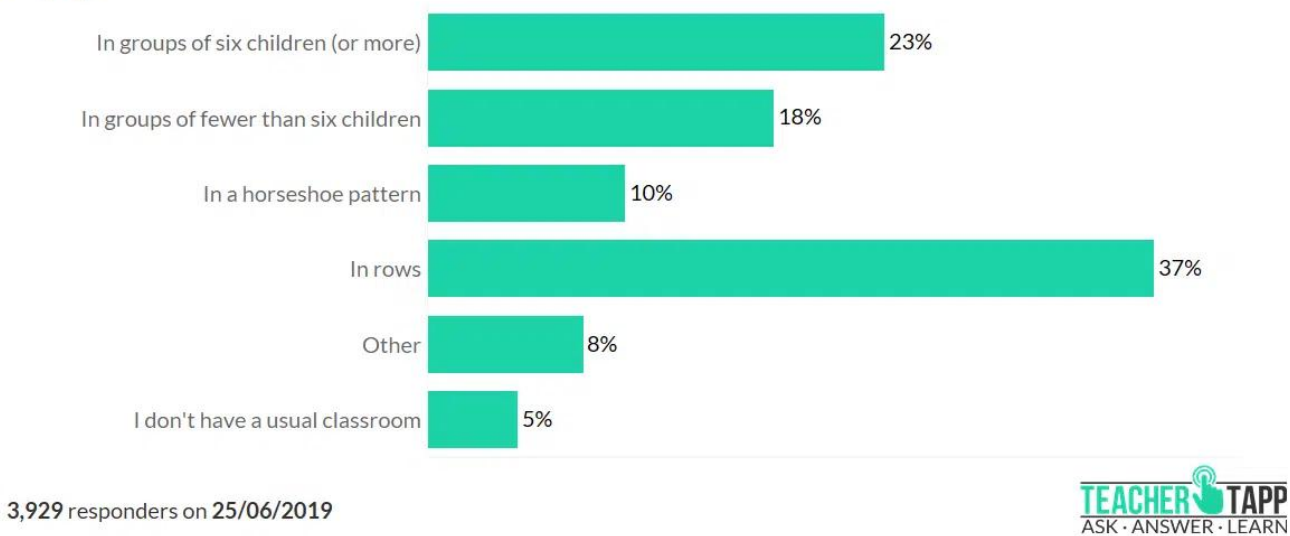
2. What's the best way to arrange tables in a classroom?

Why do teachers spend so much time arguing about how to best arrange their tables?

Well, the choices may reveal a lot about your preferred teaching style. Both sides make evermore sophisticated arguments as to why they are right, with advocates for desks-in-rows citing evidence about attentiveness, and sitting-in-group advocates bring up the value of elaboration through peer conversation.

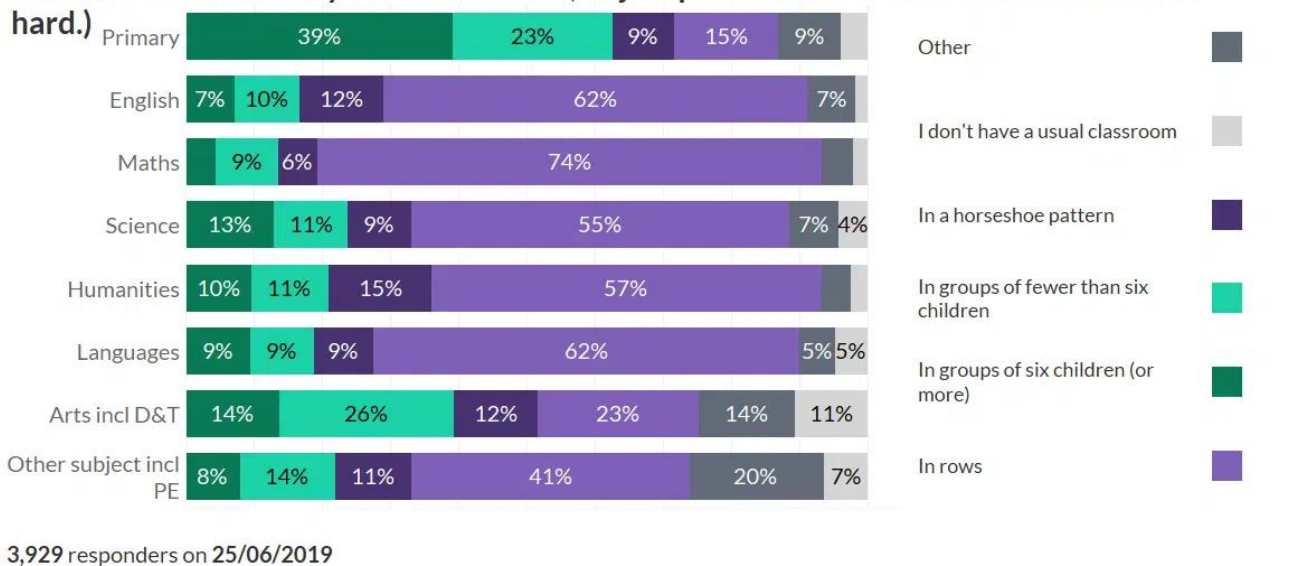
Which group is bigger overall? Well if we take horseshoe to be an alternative form of rows, then rows output the grouped tables by 47% to 41%.

How are your classroom desks set up in your usual classroom? (Secondary teachers - think of the classroom you teach in most, or just pick one classroom at random if this is hard.)



However, in primary schools, rows and horseshoe arrangements are pretty uncommon – 62% have grouped tables. And in secondary schools it's likely no surprise that maths teachers dislike grouped tables more than anyone else!

How are your classroom desks set up in your usual classroom? (Secondary teachers - think of the classroom you teach in most, or just pick one classroom at random if this is hard.)



Last time we asked this question, the scientists complained that their 'tables' were screwed to the floor giving them no choice about arrangements. This time we therefore asked if the choice of table arrangements was yours. Three-quarters of you said you had a free choice. Just 1/20 schools require teachers to adhere to a particular arrangement and another 1/20 schools encourage a set format. For 3/20 there are physical limitations or another teacher

chooses the set up in the room.

3. Ability Seating: Who sits where in the primary classroom?

Our primary teachers were asked questions about how their pupils are grouped for different subjects.

Having pupils move between year groups for certain subjects is pretty rare – 81% told us it didn't happen to anyone in their class. For those pupils that do, most of the shuffling is amongst pupils being taught phonics in Key Stage 1, presumably to allow them to access a very structured programme that is most appropriate for them.

We wanted to learn whether table arrangements in primary schools was fully mixed ability, or whether pupils were rearranged according to their current standard of work.

For reading/English lessons, grouping according to current attainment is most common in Reception and KS1. Indeed, for those of you in 2+-form entry schools, pupils often move classrooms. However, by the time pupils have learnt the basics of reading, tables are predominantly arranged to be mixed-ability.

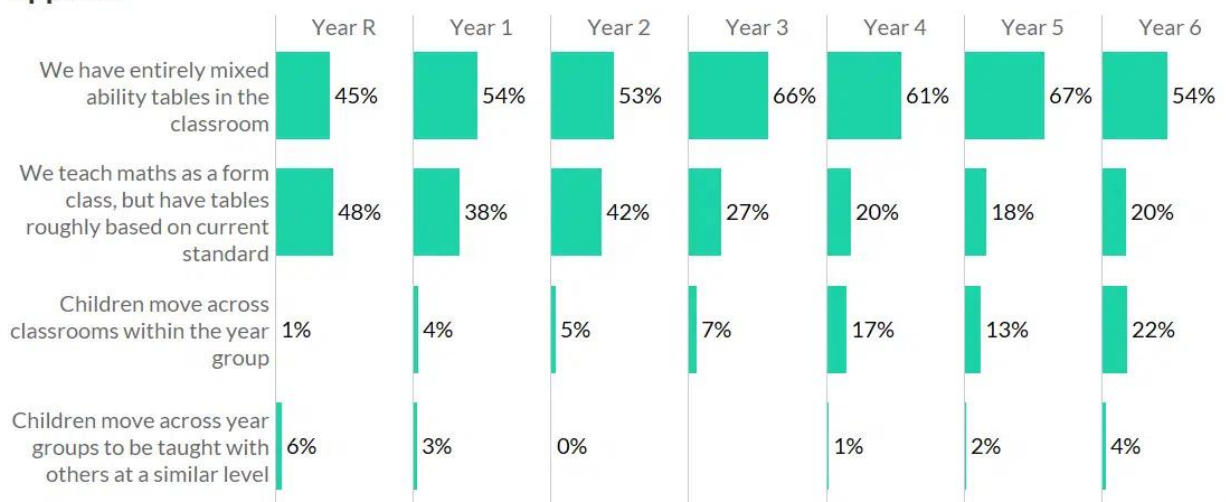
How does reading (or English if you do not have dedicated reading lessons) ability grouping work in your class? Tick the response that most closely applies.



1,081 responders on 24/06/2019

Maths teaching follows a reasonably similar pattern. Grouping of students is never quite as common as it is for reading, even in Reception class. In KS2, although most pupils are learning on mixed ability tables, a minority are moving between classrooms to be taught.

How does maths ability grouping work in your class? Tick the response that most closely applies.



1,078 responders on 24/06/2019

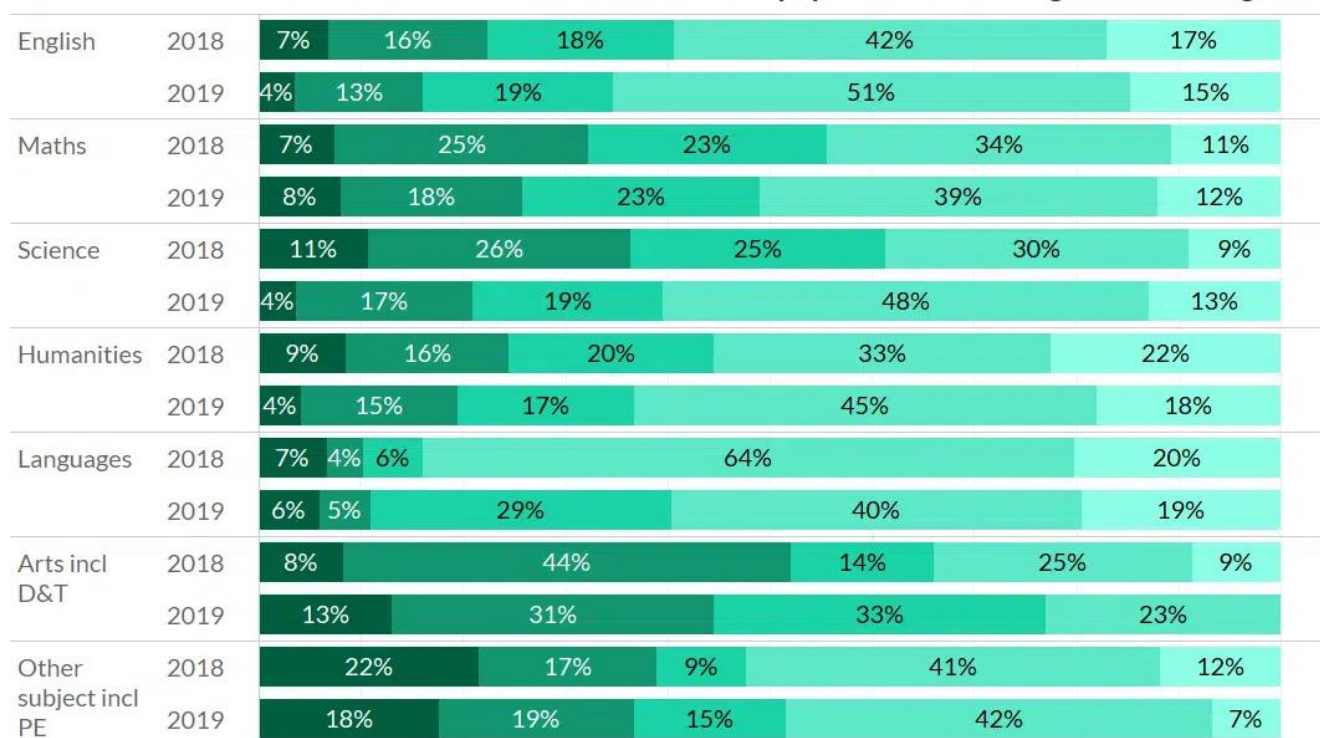
4. Positive feelings about the new GCSEs and A levels

A year ago we asked you how you felt about the new GCSEs and A-levels.

For some of you, with first cohorts just going through their examinations, you were nervous. One year on, and we picked out those of you who answered the question on both occasions, exactly one year apart.

For many of you, your responses are exactly the same both times, but we can see a number of science and humanities teachers who are now more positive that the new GCSEs and A-levels have made a difference to what pupils know and can do in their subject.

'The new GCSEs and A-Levels have made no difference to pupils' understanding and knowledge'



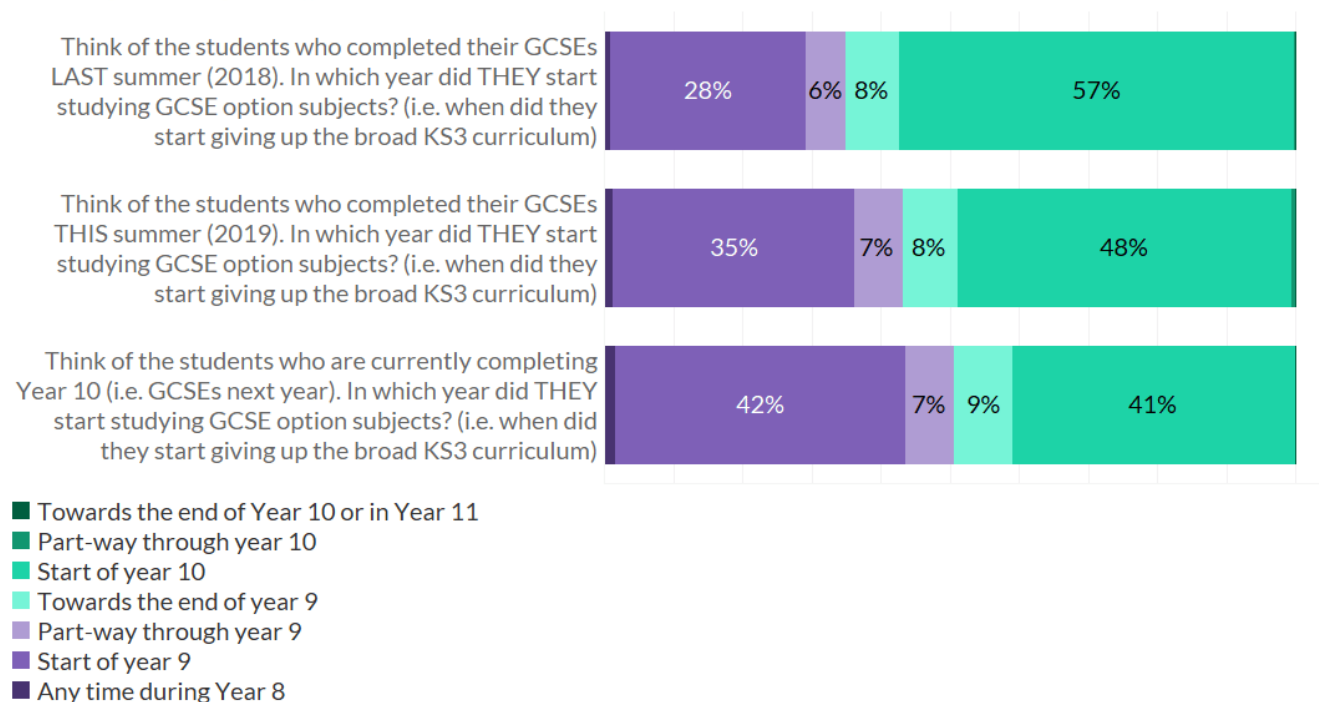
Answer Text

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5. The Increasing Creep of 3-Year GCSE Courses

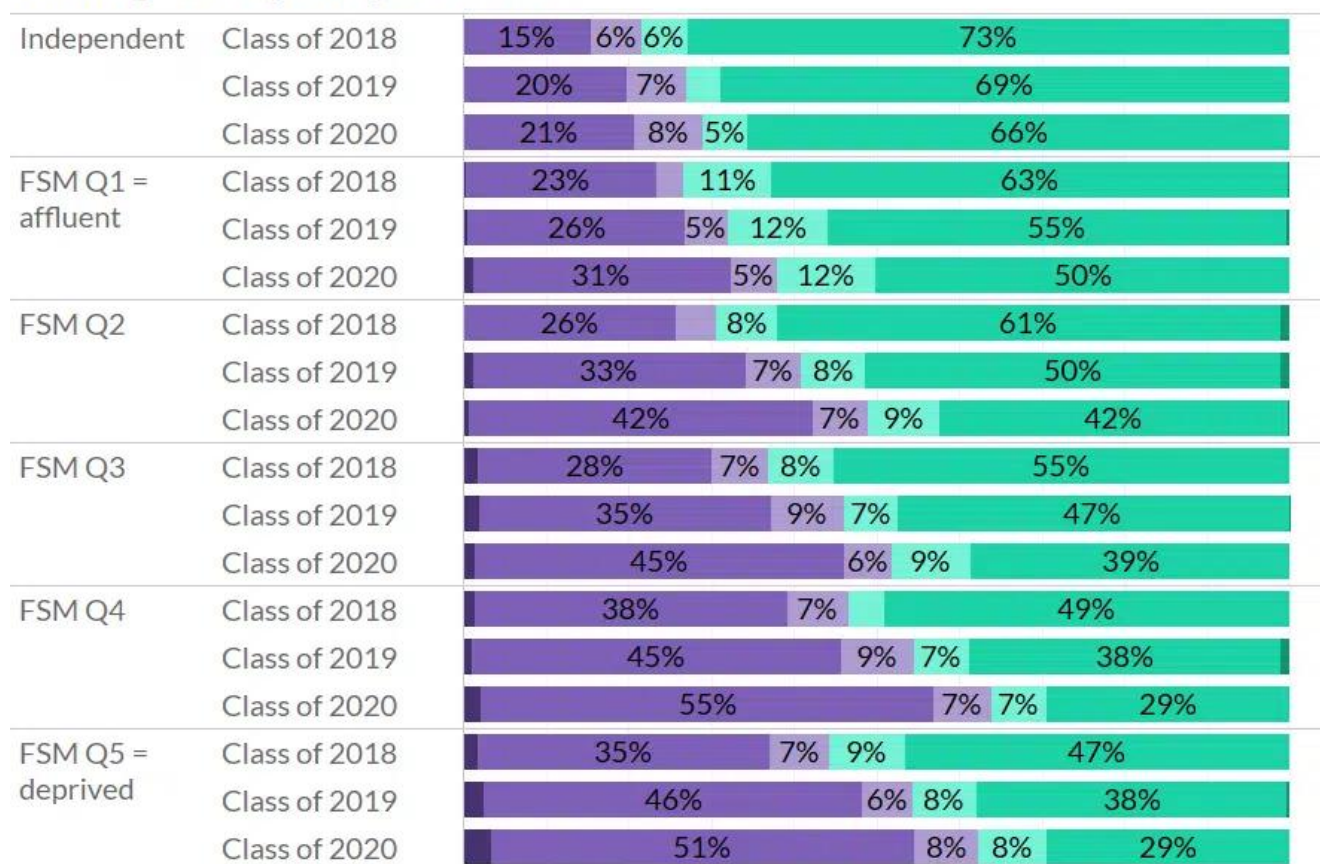
Politicians asked for the new GCSEs to be stuffed full of content in their quest for showing 'more rigour' in the school exams system. A consequence of this is that schools are increasingly starting their GCSE course in Year 9 – meaning the broad, balanced KS3 curriculum is getting even more squeezed.

Timing of Key Stage 4 start



This is particularly happening in schools with the poorest intakes...

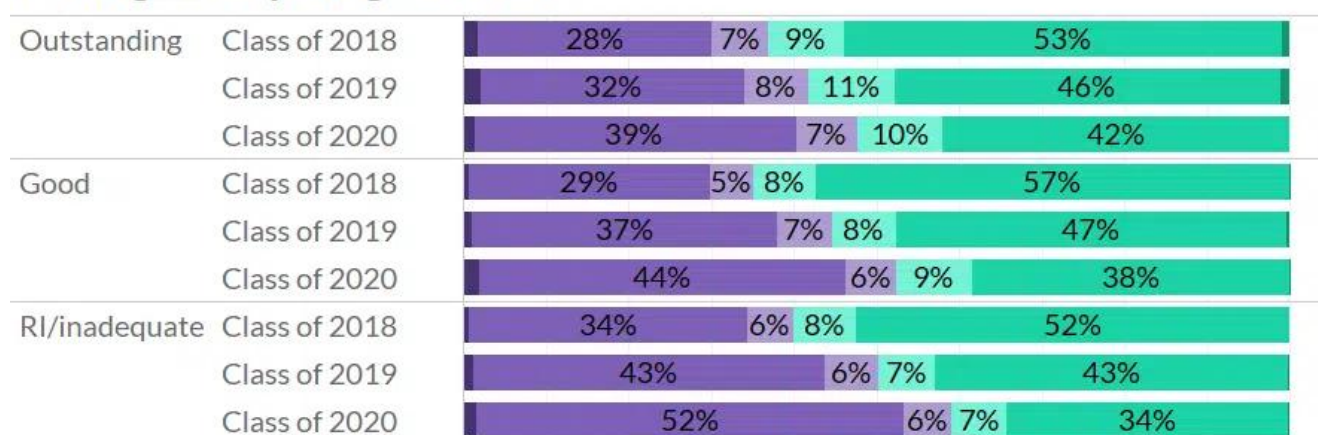
Timing of Key Stage 4 start



- Part-way through year 10
- Start of year 10
- Towards the end of year 9
- Part-way through year 9
- Start of year 9
- Any time during Year 8

And, despite the fact that Ofsted have said they don't love this approach, it's happening most in schools labelled as Requires Improvement and Inadequate.

Timing of Key Stage 4 start



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Note also the small percentage of schools who start in Year 8!

Finally, it's worth noting there are also some regional variations. The most rapid movers to a 3-year GCSE course are West Midlands, North West and Yorkshire/Humber. Hanging on to the status quo is the East of England.

6. Finally, finally, we know you love the daily tips, so here are all the ones for last week:

- [Summary of the strategies we can employ to improve our memory](#)
- [Cultural mobility](#)
- [Retrieval work is better than extension work for those finishing early](#)
- [Does your school make its systems and processes clear?](#)
- [Task completion is not the same as learning](#)
- [How To Get The Best Out Of Knowledge Organisers In Your Classroom](#)