

Voting plans? Worries about your school? Plus 4 other intriguing findings...

When a working week is as busy as yours, Saturdays are sacred. So we were delighted so many of you gave up half a weekend last week to join us for the first ever Teacher Tapp Hackathon!

We left armed with a rich bounty of Tappers' questions, which we've been sending out to teachers this week. It'll take us a few weeks to issue them all, but rest assured they're all waiting in the wings ready to be sent out. Enjoy our first run of findings, and stay tuned for the rest!

1. You made the news! (A lot of it!)

One in 12 primary schools will have a 'fun' activity disrupted due to closures for polling day on December 12th, according to our question on this last week. The figure caught the eye of newspapers and led to a front page on [Schools Week](#), stories on the BBC and [ITV](#), and spawned more than 21 stories (and counting!) in other national and local newspapers.

Given that education stories are rarely punching through amid all the Brexit chat, this was a great way to get schools back on the agenda - with union leaders taking it as an opportunity to remind politicians of the burdens schools are always carrying for their community. Teacher voice for the win!

2. How will teachers vote in the coming election?

With an impending election and teachers representing a powerful voting bloc, we looked again at your voting intentions. We have been doing this periodically since 2017 and the announcement of the election was another good polling point.

The two main parties, Labour and Conservative, are suffering a strong ebb of support, while the Liberal Democrats are benefitting from a swell of support, with most recruits to the Lib Dems are being mopped up from Labour and the Conservatives.

Since 2017, all the primary parties have lost support from individuals who find themselves politically adrift and unsure where to cast their vote. Around 2% opine that they would sail past the ballot entirely.

Along with your voting intentions, you also responded to questions about what political issues were motivating your preferences. 'Britain's future relationship with the EU' (39%) came ahead of Education (32%).

With the Liberal Democrats openly running on a platform centered around Brexit, the defection of teachers into their ranks should come as little surprise, especially as more granular analysis indicates that Lib Dem-voting teachers overwhelmingly report (63%) that future relationships with the EU are the main determinant of how they're inclined to vote.

Equally, the peculiar influx of Conservative voters into the Labour cause could be attributed to Labour's agenda for schools (or university fees?), with Education ranking as the most reported motivation for Labour voters.

Those of you who reported being without any current political allegiance were also most concerned about education (38%). This suggests that a sizable section of the teaching community feel that none of the major parties are responding to their concerns.

Weirdly, the economy ranked relatively low on the list of concerns for all respondents, especially for Labour and Lib Dem supporters. This may reflect entanglement of economic concerns with more narrow concerns about the EU or Education, but equally may show that matters of which commonly dictated election outcomes like the economy, have been sidelined in contemporary politics.

3. What's the biggest issue in schools today?

Narrowing our scope from all of society to just education, we asked you to select what you thought were the biggest problems in education. We split the question battery here, so you initially selected all the problems you thought were of concern to your school and the educational sector respectively, before asking which problem you would most like to fix in your school (through the medium of a magic wand question) and then the sector, respectively.

Looking at the answers depending on the relative wealth of the schools that teachers work in (using free meals indicators) we found that certain issues affect some groups more than others.

Funding ranked as the primary concern for all teachers outside of the Independent sector (averaging 72%). It was therefore the main problem you wanted to zap away with a magic wand, whether for your own school or the sector as a whole.

In schools with poorer intakes, the behaviour of students is more of a concern, with 55% of teachers in the most deprived communities reporting that behaviour was a major concern. Teacher workload followed a similar pattern with the proportion of you citing this as a problem increasing relative to the concentration of FSM students.

As an alarming aside, we also discovered that 3% of you have opted out of the Teachers Pension Scheme on the basis of being unable to afford current contributions. While the figures may seem trivial, the findings translate as a large number of the teaching population refusing to let their employer contribute 23.68% of their present salary to a prospective pension package. Most of the opt-outs are early career teachers. This may be because early-career salaries are insufficient relative to living costs or simply that most young people are quite cynically anticipating an earlier demise than their immediate ancestors. Either way, it's a concerning trend.

4. Can sorcery save our teachers?

Improving teaching can be a tedious, incremental process requiring years of grind. But what if you could engage in CPD sorcery and immediately, dramatically improve your proficiency in one aspect of teaching?

Couched in a magic wand question, we asked what skill you'd use improve and then dissected the data based on number of years spent in the profession.

Overall, the most popular answers were managing classroom behaviour (18%) and subject knowledge (17%), with formative and summative assessment trailing just behind.

Early career teachers (less than 4 years) were most likely to report behaviour management as the area they most wanted to improve. At the other end of the career trajectory, teachers in the profession for 10 years or more, were most likely to report how they wanted to improve their subject knowledge.

Picking out just subject knowledge, you can see that this continues to be a reasonable thread across a teaching career.

While these findings are useful for structuring a career-spanning CPD programme, we were struck by the number of you who reported that you 'do not have a desire to improve' in any of the major strands of teaching practice we highlighted. This may reflect a hard-won confidence in the craft or a belief that teaching can't be optimised.

In a related question, we asked which areas of your practice you'd feel most comfortable running a masterclass on for trainee teachers. Teachers earlier in their career were more comfortable talking about relationships with pupils, whereas those later in their career opted for more lesson-related topics.

A modest 17% of teachers who'd been in the profession less than 1 year reported they wouldn't feel confident running CPD in any area.

5. Do you have 'verbal feedback' stamps and stickers?

Primary teachers were probed on whether they must report on having given verbal feedback to their students using stamps or written comments. The majority (56%) reported that this was indeed part of their teaching practice, with the largest proportion (63%) coming from teachers situated in schools rated RI/Inadequate by Ofsted.

6. Finally, we know you love the daily tips and here are the ones from last week...

- [What makes one task more challenging than another?](#)
- [One teacher lays out 14 'education myths'.](#)
- [The problem with lesson observations and how to implement alternative "leverage observations"](#)
- [Publication bias and why you need to be careful when you read and interpret educational research...](#)
- [The joys of repetition](#)
- [How cognitive load theory has changed my teaching](#)