How to improve behaviour and wellbeing, and how you're using AI in schools

What's the header image today? Find out at the end of the post! First, natural-born teachers, dealing with poor behaviour, improving wellbeing, and the growing use of AI in schools.

Natural-born teachers

You know how some teachers are just absolute naturals? 84% of you do - that is, 84% of you agreed that 'Some individuals possess an inherent ability to effectively engage students and manage a classroom, making them naturally adept at teaching.' (Only 5% of you disagreed.)

Are you one of them? We asked you to think back to when you started: did you feel like you were 'naturally adept at teaching?' 58% of you agreed that when you started, you felt like you had an inherent ability to teach.

We were curious as to where we were most likely to find these born teachers, so we looked into this further...
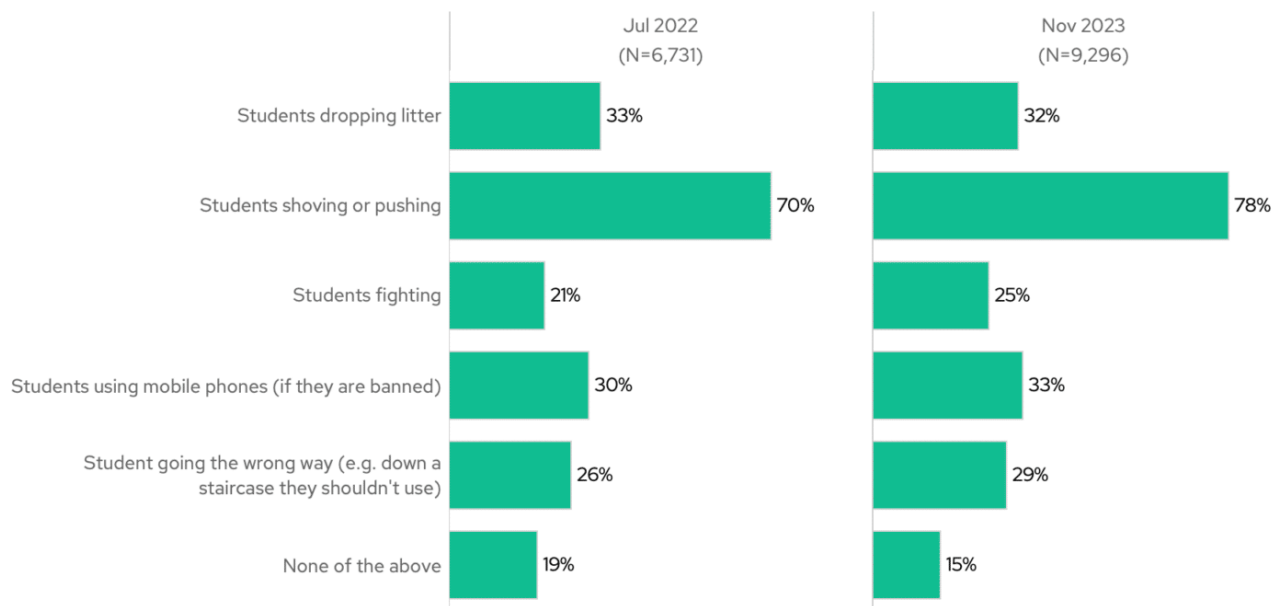
Primary teachers were more likely to say they had felt like natural teachers (61% agreed, compared to 54% of secondary teachers). (Secondary) maths and science teachers were least likely to say this.

More experienced teachers were more likely to say they had felt like natural teachers on day one (12% of teachers teaching 20+ years strongly agreed, as opposed to 7% of teachers teaching less than 5 years). Was teaching different then? Were kids different then? Is it a case of rose-tinted glasses?

Declining behaviour - and we should do about it

One thing that has changed - not just in the last twenty years, but in the last few months - is behaviour. This week, we repeated a question we last asked in July: which of these (undesirable) behaviours have you seen around your school this week? Disappointingly, teachers said they saw more of each of the behaviours (barring a negligible 1% point decrease in dropping litter). Shoving and pushing was up 8% points, fighting up 4% points, and 'None of the above' down 4% points.

Teacher tapp

Which of these behaviours have you seen around your school in the last week?

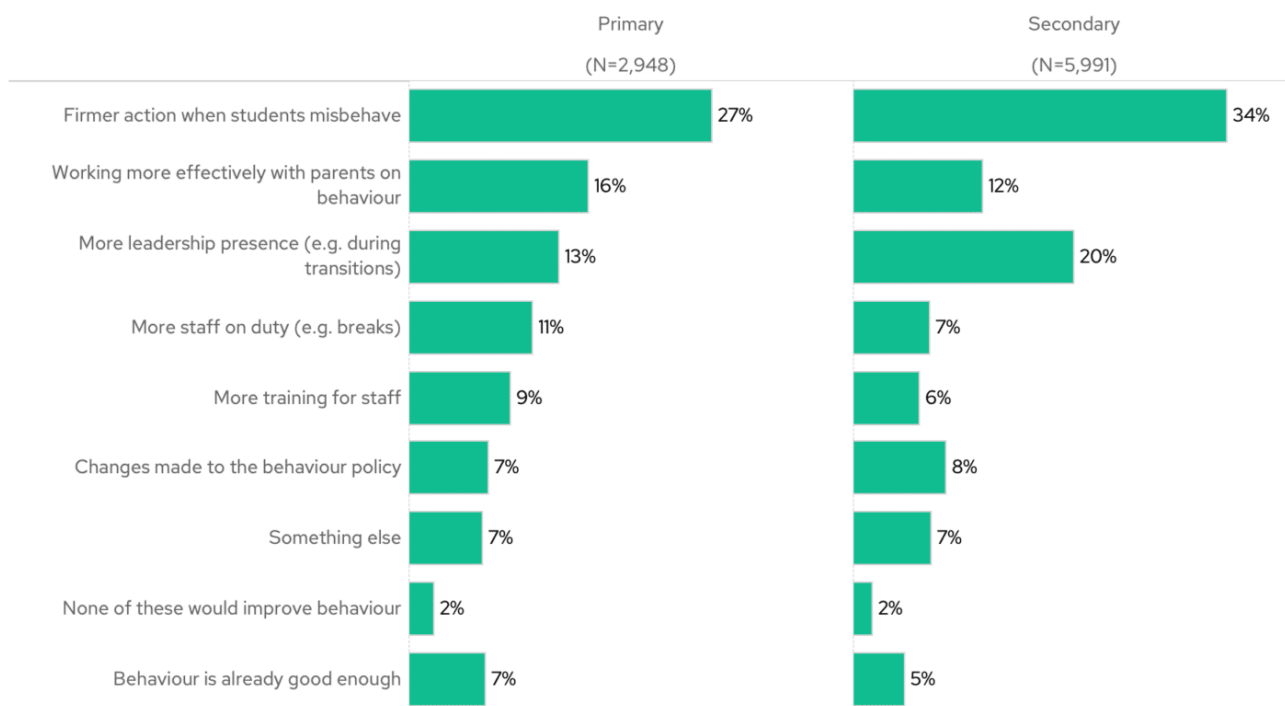|	Jul 2022 (N=6,731)	Nov 2023 (N=9,296)
Students dropping litter	33%	32%
Students shoving or pushing	70%	78%
Students fighting	21%	25%
Students using mobile phones (if they are banned)	30%	33%
Student going the wrong way (e.g. down a staircase they shouldn't use)	26%	29%
None of the above	19%	15%

Teacher responses vary from 6,731 to 9,296, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

Both primaries and secondaries had seen fairly similar levels of decline.

So what should we do about it? One of the academy trusts which is using our School Surveys to find out what their staff are thinking, suggested the following question: "What action do you think would do the *most* to improve behaviour in your school?" This week, we got the national results (these create a benchmark for schools/trusts that use the questions on School Surveys).

Top of the agenda for staff was firmer action when students misbehave, followed by more leadership presence and more effective work with parents. Fewer than one in ten teachers think behaviour is already good enough and no further action is needed – although 2% of teachers don't think things can be improved by any of the measures on our list.

Teacher tapp

What action do you think would do the *most* to improve behaviour in your school?

	Primary (N=2,948)	Secondary (N=5,991)
Firmer action when students misbehave	27%	34%
Working more effectively with parents on behaviour	16%	12%
More leadership presence (e.g. during transitions)	13%	20%
More staff on duty (e.g. breaks)	11%	7%
More training for staff	9%	6%
Changes made to the behaviour policy	7%	8%
Something else	7%	7%
None of these would improve behaviour	2%	2%
Behaviour is already good enough	7%	5%

Question answered by 8,939 teachers on 23/11/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)
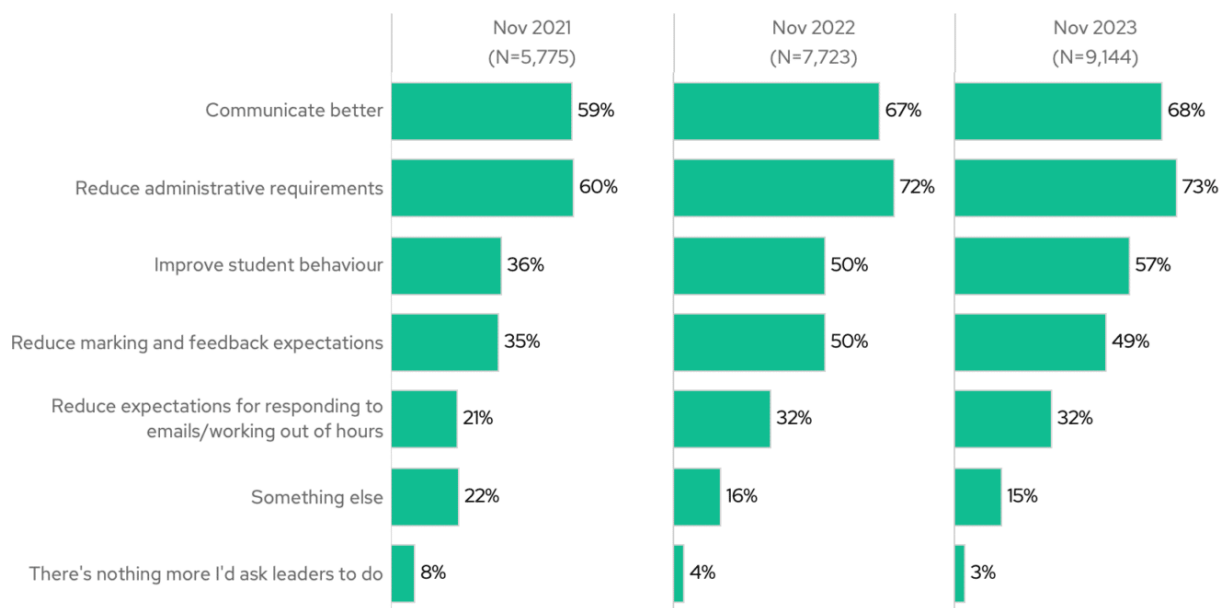
What else do you want from leaders?

Demands on leaders are going up and up elsewhere, it seems. We wanted to know what you thought leaders should do to improve wellbeing. Since we last asked, your expectations have gone up – more than ever of you wanted to see:

- Better communication
- Less admin
- Improved behaviour (up 21% points in two years!)
- Less marking
- Less work out of hours

Luckily at least, fewer of you wanted to see 'Something else' as well: leaders are going to be busy enough just working through your existing to do lists.

Teacher tapp

What should leaders do to improve wellbeing in school?

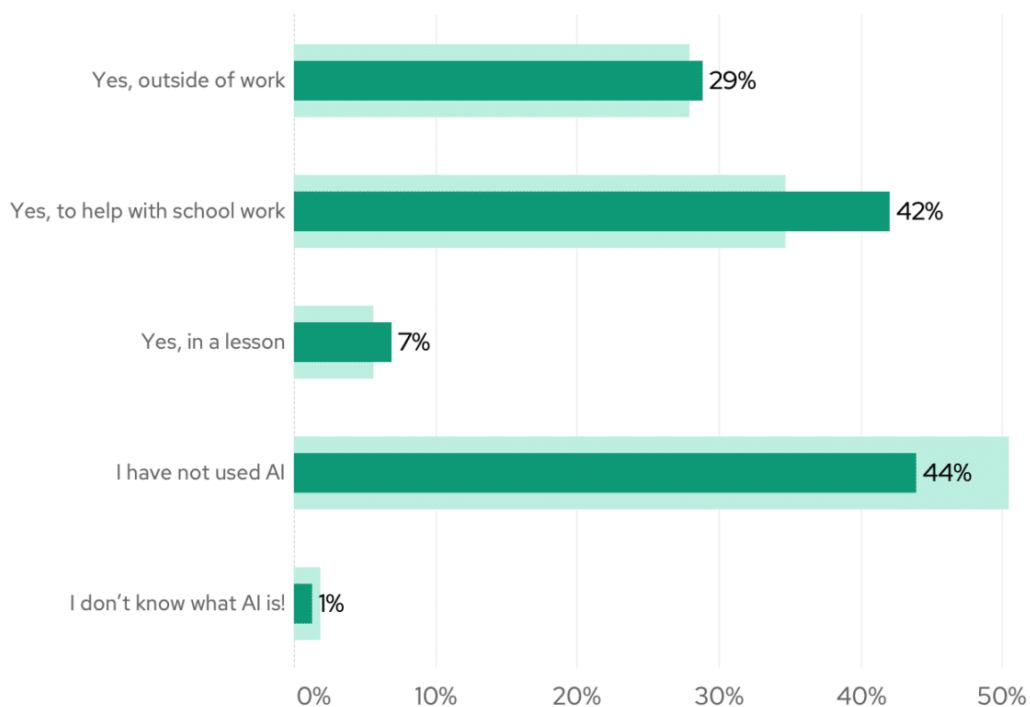|	Nov 2021 (N=5,775)	Nov 2022 (N=7,723)	Nov 2023 (N=9,144)
Communicate better	59%	67%	68%
Reduce administrative requirements	60%	72%	73%
Improve student behaviour	36%	50%	57%
Reduce marking and feedback expectations	35%	50%	49%
Reduce expectations for responding to emails/working out of hours	21%	32%	32%
Something else	22%	16%	15%
There's nothing more I'd ask leaders to do	8%	4%	3%

Teacher responses vary from 5,775 to 9,144, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

The inexorable rise of AI

Another thing that's changed in the last few months is how much you use AI. We first asked about this in August. We repeated the question – have you ever used any AI tools? – last week. Two findings stood out.

- 1) Use of AI is up: last time, half of teachers had never used AI, that's now fallen to 44%.
- 2) Use of AI to help with school work is up: in August, 35% of teachers had used AI to help with school work. That's now reached 42%.

Teacher tapp

Have you ever used any AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Bard, DALL-E or Midjourney)?

Yes, outside of work — 29%
Yes, to help with school work — 42%
Yes, in a lesson — 7%
I have not used AI — 44%
I don't know what AI is! — 1%

Teacher responses vary from 9,138 to 9,275, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ August 2023 ■ November 2023

We can imagine ways to get AI to reduce admin and marking. If school leaders can just come up with a way to make AI improve behaviour too, we'll be sorted. We let our enthusiasm run away with us by asking an AI to create today's post image – showing us an AI improving student behaviour.

We're not sure what the AI is doing exactly, but we're going to maintain our optimism about the brave new world that awaits.

Ups and downs

On the rise

▮▮ 81% of secondary teachers saw students shoving or pushing in their school last week, up from 73% in July 2022

Heading down

▮▮ 29% of classroom teachers said that students lacked equipment during their most recent lesson, down from 35% in 2022

Daily reads...

Teacher tapp

The most read article of the last week has been: [Combatting anxiety](#)

And here are the rest for your reference:

- [10 things from being in a disruption-free school](#)
- [Using AI in schoolwork](#)
- [Misunderstanding educational research in schools](#)
- [Give them time to think](#)
- [What happens in your brain when reading?](#)