

Leadership Regrets, Intentions and INSET Days

Lots of media talk of changes to GCSEs and A Levels this week. Some private schools have said they might drop all GCSE except English and maths, so we asked you how you would feel if your own school decided to do the same. This is one of those rare times when teachers on Teacher Tapp spoke in unison - a massive 80% of secondary teachers would be unhappy if this happened!

Regrets? Headteachers have a had a few

We asked those of you in the Senior Leadership Team about your regrets as a school leader. The responses were surprising and moving at times. In this blog we list some regrets from current headteachers - perhaps they will help those of you a little earlier on in your careers.

1. A third of regrets are related to recruitment and management of staff. The most frequent regrets by far relate to poor hiring decision, made out of desperation due to shortages or as a result of taking poor advice. One head's comment sums up the responses of so many:

"Taking on someone I wasn't sure was right. They taught a shortage subject and I genuinely believed that they were better than nothing. I was wrong, and I'll never do that again!"

2. Taking on headship too early, too late, in the wrong school or not at all! One-in-ten heads expressed regret in relation to their career decisions. More regretted taking up a leadership position too early than too late, but it seems choice of school is just as important as timing of first appointment.

3. Regrets about the treatment of a pupil weigh heavily on 1-in-10 heads. Many of these are very sad to read and reflect the difficulty in accommodating vulnerable pupils with complex needs with limited budgets for support. One primary head sums up the situation as follows:

"Having to make the decision to suspend a child - which wouldn't have happened if children with additional and/or undiagnosed needs were given the support by our LA sooner - it's a constant and unnecessary battle, which is failing many of our children at the start of their schooling experience."

4. Nine percent of heads regret succumbing to the external pressures of accountability, rather than doing what they felt was right for students. The majority of these comments relate to choices made to look good for Ofsted, but others also mention MAT and LA pressures. As

one head said:

"Doing things to fit in with what OFSTED want rather than in the best interests of pupils and staff"

5. Many heads felt they got communication wrong at the school. For some this just meant they wished they had explained their plans better, but many also expressed regret about not listening more closely to staff.

6. Speed matters in headship and many express regret about moving too fast. For example, one primary head says they regret: "Making decisions too quickly. Reacting based on minimal evidence. Being too emotive."

A secondary head says they regret: "Trying to rush change before staff were ready. Caused more harm than good, even though the intentions and idea was right."

What would teachers do differently as leaders?

We challenged those of you who are still classroom teachers to say what you would NEVER do as a leader and your comments were surprisingly consistent.

1. By far the most frequent comments was that you would never forget what it is like to teach a full-timetable. Many went as far as saying you would never stop teaching as a leader so that you wouldn't lose touch. One teacher said:

"I'll never forget the demands of teaching a full time classroom teacher timetable, and would use that to guide expectations of what is achievable in a working week for staff."

2. The next most frequent set of comments related to bureaucracy and workload. You said you would never: "have pointless meetings", "plan more than one meeting or event in a week", "use teacher's PPA for a meeting", "make staff do unnecessary admin box ticking tasks", "send an email and then repeat the information in a meeting", "make marking mandatory", "hold meetings on parents evening weeks", "hold meetings that could have been an email"...!!!

3. Treatment of staff also featured highly. You said you would never: "take staff for granted", "create a culture of distrust", "be condescending", "unappreciative", and would never "forget that staff are employees are not students"!

4. Finally, many of you said you would never "ask your colleagues to do something that you wouldn't do yourself"!

What should happen on an INSET?

What topics did your school cover at your last INSET day? A large proportion of you had training on safeguarding, but behaviour and curriculum were often also mentioned. But is this what you would most want?

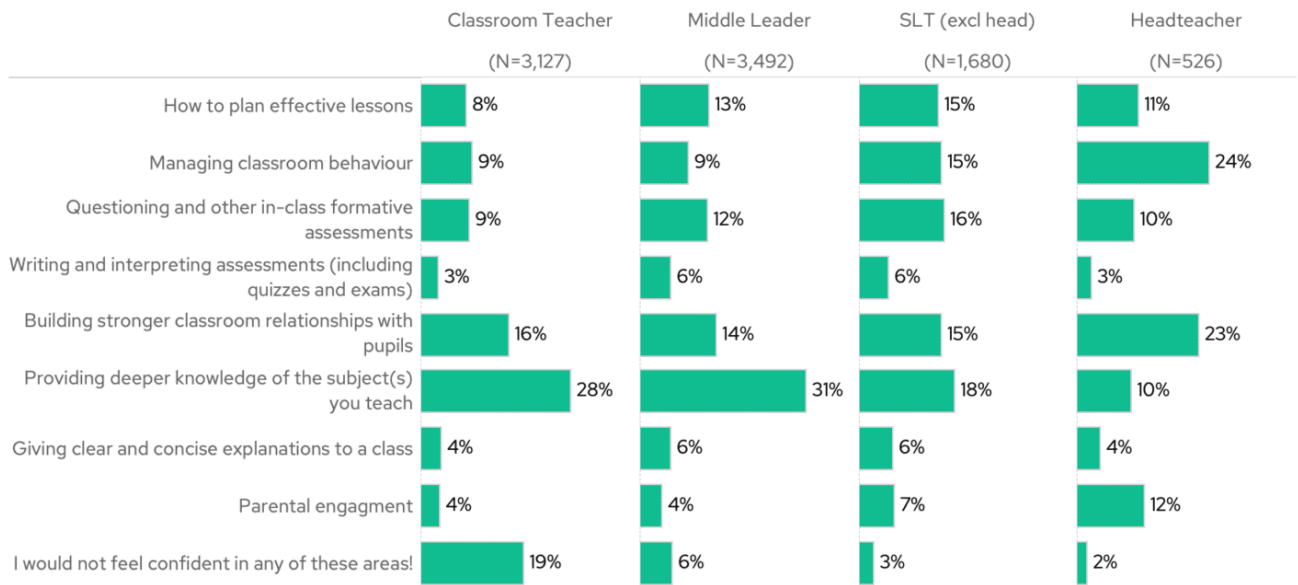
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In which ONE of the following areas do you feel your colleagues would most benefit from an expert speaker?

Finally, we asked you to pick a topic that you would feel confident in giving a two-hour masterclass to your colleagues! One-in-five classroom teachers said they wouldn't feel confident in anything. Those classroom teachers who did pick a topic were most likely to choose subject expertise or building classroom relationships. The headteachers were most

likely to pick managing behaviour and building relationships.

In which ONE of the following areas would you feel most confident in giving a two-hour masterclass for your school INSET?



And finally...

The most read tip of the last week has been: [Why We Need To Warm Up Cold Call](#)

And here are the rest for your reference:

- [Sprinting the Marathon](#)
- [Persistent Problems in Professional Development](#)
- [Impulse Buy-In](#)
- [In Defence of Discovery Learning](#)
- [Technological Disruptions to Teaching](#)