

PPA, smiling teachers and classroom disruptions

Hey Tappsters!

September has almost finished and soon the count down to half term will begin. Have you lost your staff pass yet? Forgotten your lunch? The term is feeling less "new" by the day.

However, the upside is that we have some great statistics for you all about what is going on in classrooms across the country...

Classroom disruptions

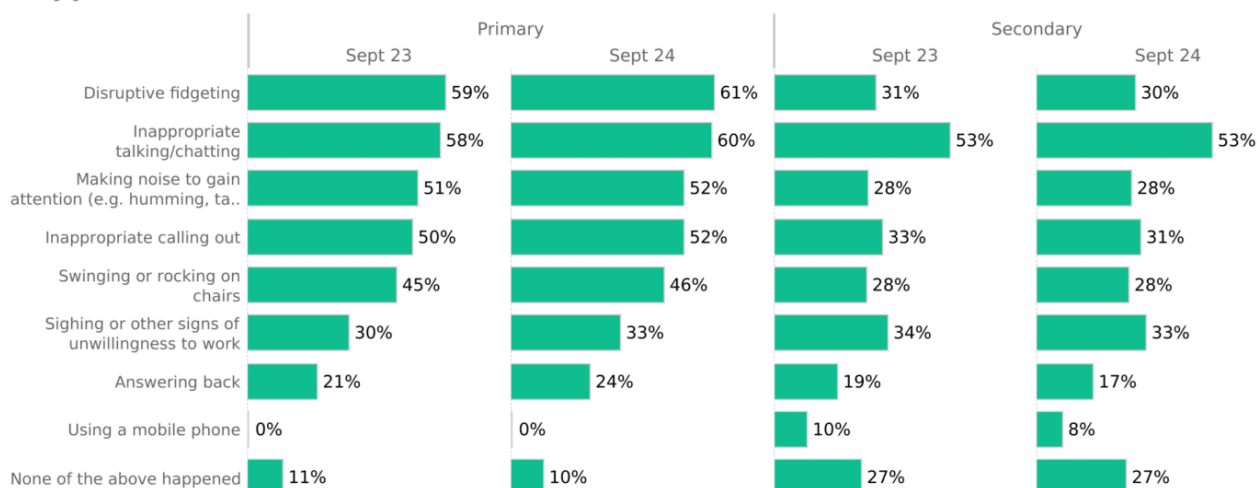
Often described as 'low-level disruption' certain pupil behaviours such as calling out or taking out phones can make it very difficult to maintain a positive learning environment.

Between the phases, that low-level disruption looks very different. In primary classrooms, disruptive fidgeting was the number one disruptive behaviour (61%), whereas in secondary classrooms, inappropriate talking or chatting happened the most frequently (53%).

Secondary teachers more likely to say 'none of the above happened' compared to primary teachers (27% vs 10%). The socioeconomic context of the school makes a difference too: the most affluent secondaries are more likely to report 'none of the above' compared to the most disadvantaged (31% vs 21%). Likewise, in primary, the same pattern appears (12% vs 9%).

There has been a small change in reporting compared to last year: primary classrooms have all seen a small rise in disruptive behaviour (one to three percentage points), whereas secondaries have all seen a small drop (one to two percentage points).

Think about the last lesson you taught. Did any of the following types of disruption happen?



Teacher responses vary from 2,324 to 6,477, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

How do things compare between the key stages in primary schools? There isn't too much to pick between them. In primary, KS1/EYFS and KS2 teachers reported disruptions at broadly similar rates, with the exception of swinging on chairs – this was far more common in KS2 classrooms (53% vs 34%).

In secondary, the subjects experiencing the least disruption were Arts including Design and Technology with 30% reporting 'none of the above happened' and only 26% 'sighing or other signs of unwillingness to work'.

Down the corridor in English, things are a bit more challenging and noisy, with only 21% reporting 'none of the above happened' and 36% reporting 'sighing or other unwillingness to work'.

When asked to pick the MOST irritating of all these behaviours, both primary and secondary teachers picked answering back (58% and 60% primary and secondary respectively).

Tolerating disruption

Are all these behaviours just part and parcel of teaching life? More primary teachers agree that staff inevitably must tolerate some low-level disruptions compared to secondary school teachers (54% vs 40%).

This is a big jump compared to when we asked in September 2022. Primary teachers have gone up 14 percentage points from 40%, and secondary teachers up 12 percentage points from 28%.

Have the teachers in the classrooms changed, or are teachers viewing low-level disruption differently now? And are there behaviours happening in secondaries that haven't been captured here? Let us know if there are specific behaviour questions you would like to know the answer to by sending them in via the app or emailing england@teachertapp.co.uk.

PPA home or away?

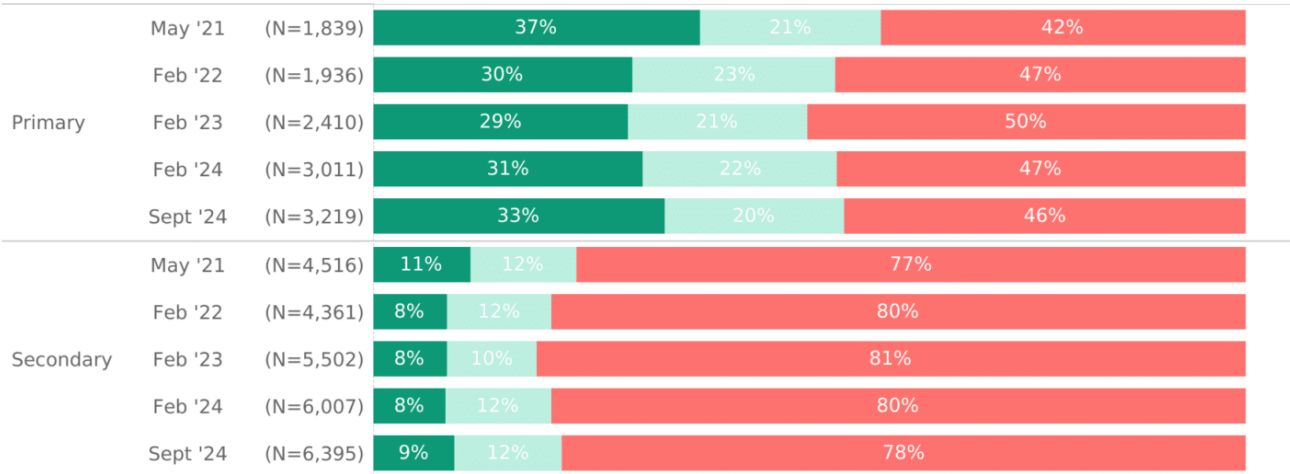
Despite lots of noise about PPA flexibility, the reality seems to be that there has been no big jump in the number of teachers allowed to work from home during their PPA hours.

In late July, the new education secretary, Briget Phillipson announced that [PPA would be allowed to be taken at home](#), saying: "The government will also clarify that teachers can carry out their planning time at home, improving flexible working for staff".

33% of primary teachers are allowed to do their PPA from home, up 2 percentage points from when we asked last academic year.

Just 9% of secondary school teachers are allowed to do PPA from home, up one percentage point compared to last academic year.

Are you allowed to do your timetabled PPA at home?



Teacher responses vary from 6,297 to 9,614, depending on date asked (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



When it comes to other flexibility in working more from home or spending less time in the classroom, it seems to be taking off in a minority of schools. Just 2% of schools have reduced working hours without a reduction in pay, and 15% use 'wellbeing days'. 47% of schools offer no flexible working options at all.

It might not be a surprise to learn that even where working from home during a PPA is an option, not everyone is able to take it up. Just 36% of teachers who have permission to WFH during their PPA actually worked from home this week.

Is flexible PPA the solution to teacher workload? Or is it just one lever of many that must be pulled to try and improve working conditions for teachers?

For more information on teacher retention, we have the [Teacher Tapp Recruitment and](#)

Directed time budgets

Of course, a key point in the discussion about teacher workload is the number of hours a teacher works. Much of the job is done 'unseen' often at home – marking and planning into the evening. However, there are also fixed hours in school – and for these hours there is some protection.

In the [School Teachers Pay and Conditions](#) document on page 48, it says: “A teacher employed full-time must be available to perform such duties at such times and such places as may be specified by the headteacher...for 1265 hours allocated reasonably throughout those days in the school year on which the teacher is required to be available for work”.

A breakdown of what those hours are made up of is often called a 'directed time budget' or 'quota'. However, many teachers have either not seen their breakdown, or don't know what it is.

■ More secondary school teachers are shown their directed time budget compared to primary school teachers (35% vs 14%).

■ One in five secondary school teachers (20%) don't know what a directed time budget is, and more than a quarter of primary school teachers are also in the dark (27%).

To learn more about directed time and how it works for different types of teachers, you can read our guide [here](#).

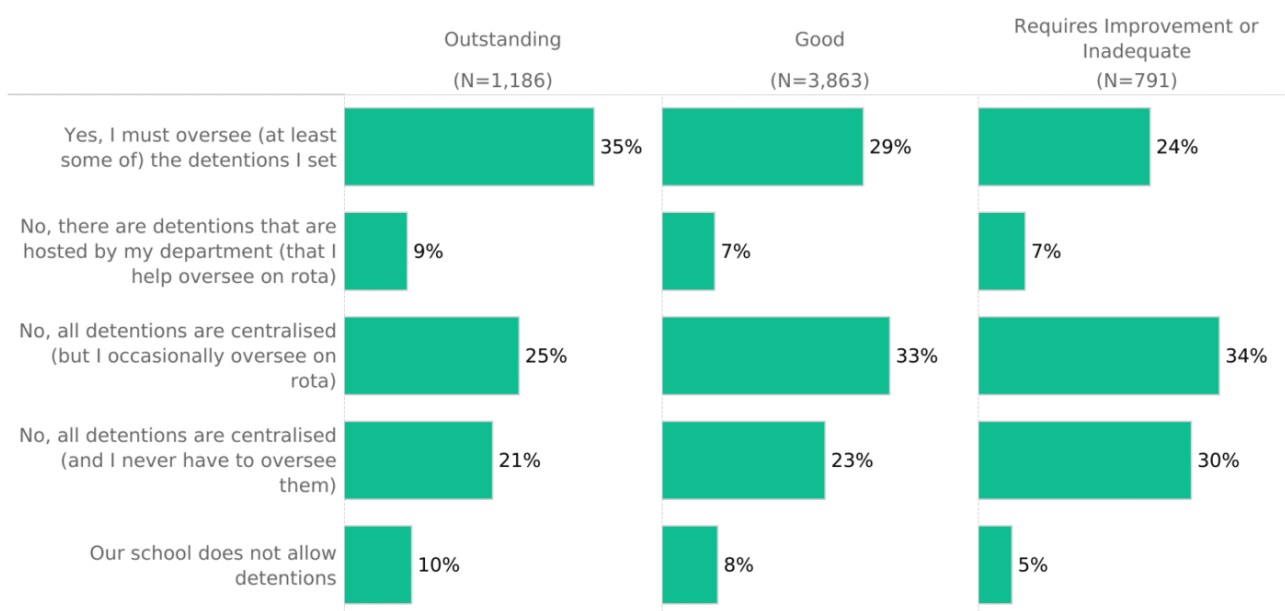
Detention setting

Another way schools have lightened teacher workloads have been centralised detentions. But how common are these systems in schools?

The answer is that it depends on the type of school: schools graded 'Ofsted Outstanding' (under the previous system) are much less likely to use a centralised detention system when compared to 'Good' or 'Requires Improvement' schools.

71% of teachers in Requires Improvement or Inadequate schools don't oversee their detentions, compared to 55% of teachers in Outstanding schools.

Do you have to run your own detentions?



Question answered by 5,840 teachers on 19/09/2024 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

The number of schools using centralised or department detentions has increased (overall in all schools they have risen 16 percentage points from 45% to 61% since 2018).

A teacher got in touch to ask if teachers who had to hold their own detentions were less likely to set them – but we have checked and there is no statistical difference between detention setting among teachers with centralised systems and those who without.

Do you prefer centralised detentions or running your own? Let us know what you think either by messaging through the app, over socials, or sending an email england@teachertapp.co.uk **■**.

Smiling teachers

One of the very best things about teaching must be the children and the relationship you have with them as a teacher.

The good news is that almost all of you (97%) said that a child had made you smile that day – and the even better news is that this figure doesn't shift more than one percentage point whether you are a headteacher or a classroom teacher, or whether you're in primary or secondary, or if you teach in an Ofsted 'Outstanding' school or 'Requires Improvement'. Smiles are almost everywhere! **■**

And even better – when looking at teachers who have been teaching for five years or 20+ years – it also stays the same. **■**

How often do you smile in reaction to your pupils' antics? And do you notice the days when you don't? Give us your thoughts on the importance of smiles either via the app or on our socials **■**

■ ■ Top events

■ ■ Our top event of the week is still reigning champion from last week! ■ ■ It's an online webinar from School Surveys by Teacher Tapp: '[Empowering Educators to Support Student Mental Health](#)'. Don't miss out—join us!

Our app is crammed with more events to meet your CPD needs so be sure to [hop into the app](#) and start browsing!

Ups and Downs

On the rise ■ ■

Mini whiteboard use – More secondary teachers used mini whiteboards, 58% UP from 47% compared to September 2022.

Heading down ■ ■

50+ hour working weeks – There has been a drop in the number of teachers who feel it is reasonable for teachers to work more than 50 hours a week during term time compared to September 2021, 7% DOWN from 9%.

Daily Reads

This week our most-read blog was an EYFS/KS1 special on [handwriting and how to teach it](#).

If you would like to read the rest you can find them here ■ ■

- [Goal setting](#)
- [Onboarding new teachers](#)
- [The fadeout effect](#)
- [PPA: what are your rights?](#)
- [Appraisals: how to run them](#)