

## What Teachers Tapped This Week #2 – 24th September 2017

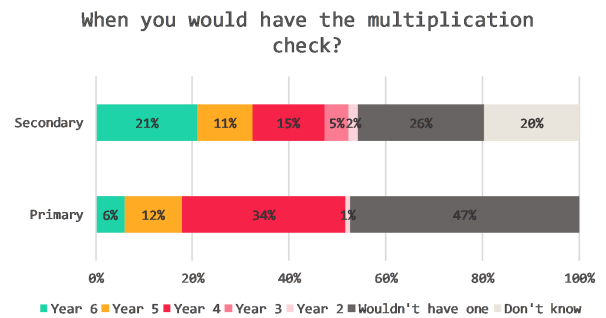
Another week, another set of questions – thank you to the 800 of you taking part. We hope you are learning lots!

First, a couple of questions raised by beta-testers this week about which we want to set the record straight. You asked: Why are you asking personal questions about housing and relationships?? ? Our reply: Although things like housing and relationship status may seem irrelevant to teaching, it is widely believed they matter a lot for recruitment and retention. For example, teachers often act as a "trailing spouse", following their higher-paid partners around the country. Is this worse for women? What about teachers with children? Is it what causes the gender gap in teachers' pay? We don't know! But we will, if we ask these questions. Likewise, the government wants teachers to move to social opportunity areas. How realistic this is depends on how mobile teachers are. But, do they tend to rent property or are they mortgaged? If lots are the latter then there may not be a high enough proportion of teachers able to move at will (meaning the government will need to think about housing incentives). You said: I really want to share Teacher Tapp at my next INSET/staff briefing/TeachMeet, etc... ? Our answer: Hurray! We'd love that. [Here's an image for handouts/slides to help you.](#)

Right, onto what we learned this week...

### 1. Primary and secondary teachers think differently about the multiplication check

Last week the education secretary announced a series of policy changes. One of Teacher Tapp's purposes is to get quick feedback on government decisions. So we decided to put one to the test. Since 2015 the government has planned to make Year 6 pupils take an online "multiplication check" to test their times-table knowledge. But last week that switched to Year 4. No reason was given but, in the past, primary teachers have pointed out multiplication is taught in Year 4 so it might be better to do then. We asked our Teacher Tapp panel which year they thought was best. Here's what we found:



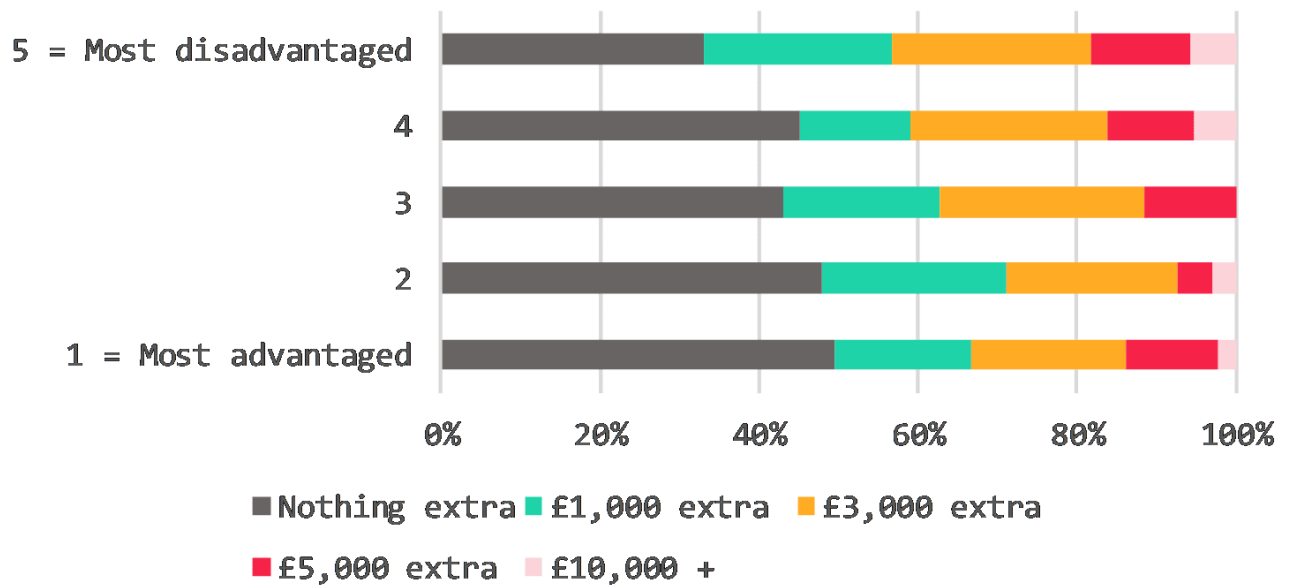
First, the bad news. Around half of primary teachers don't want a check at all. (And around half of secondary teachers either don't want or don't know enough about it). Then, the interesting news. Primary teachers are overwhelmingly in favour of Year 4 checks. Secondary teachers are more divided, but their biggest preference is for Year 6 checks. So What? It seems the government are moving in the direction of primary teachers' preferences. This is a shift. In the past, policies tended to go with the opinions of secondary teachers. But it also shows that around half of the people involved in these checks are against them. If the government wants the times-tables checks to have meaning, and not been seen as another imposition, they need to work on explaining the purpose to sceptical primary teachers.

## 2. Teachers are deeply divided about pay differing by subject

The country has a shortage of physics teachers. It's long-standing, it appears to be endemic, it isn't getting better. So, what to do? One mooted solution is to pay every physics teacher a "bonus" amount in order to gain and retain them in the profession. When asked, around half of teachers said they were happy with physics teachers getting at least some extra cash. In particular, people liked the £3,000 bonus amount. This was picked at twice the rate of a £1,000 or £10,000 bonus. (Is this because top-up 'TLR' payments have long been around this level?)

Next, we wondered does this change if you are in a struggling school? We found...

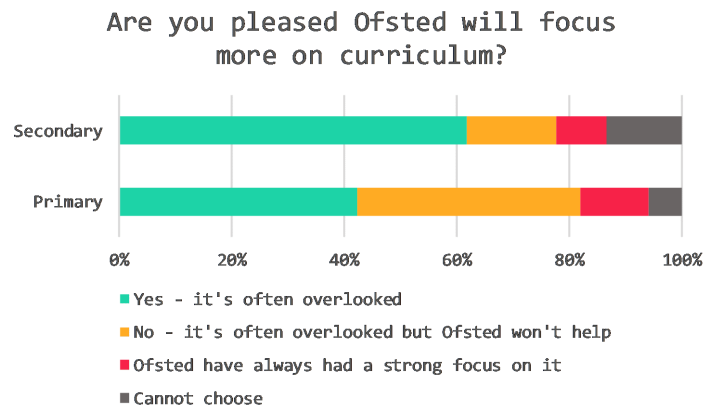
## How much extra would you be OK with a physics teacher getting?



...Apparently, not so much. Schools with very disadvantaged intakes were slightly more willing to pay top dollar but the profile of the most advantaged schools was very similar to the most disadvantaged school on this one. So what? Given the closeness of results and seeing as we're working with small samples at this point (around 550 teachers), there's not really anything to read into the results on this one as yet. But it suggests there may be some wiggle room to pay very shortage teachers a little bit more.

### 3. Teachers are pretty pleased that Ofsted will focus on curriculum

Since chief inspector Amanda Spielman took over at Ofsted, she has repeatedly said that inspectors will look more carefully at curriculum during their visits. We asked teachers how they felt about this. Here's what we found:

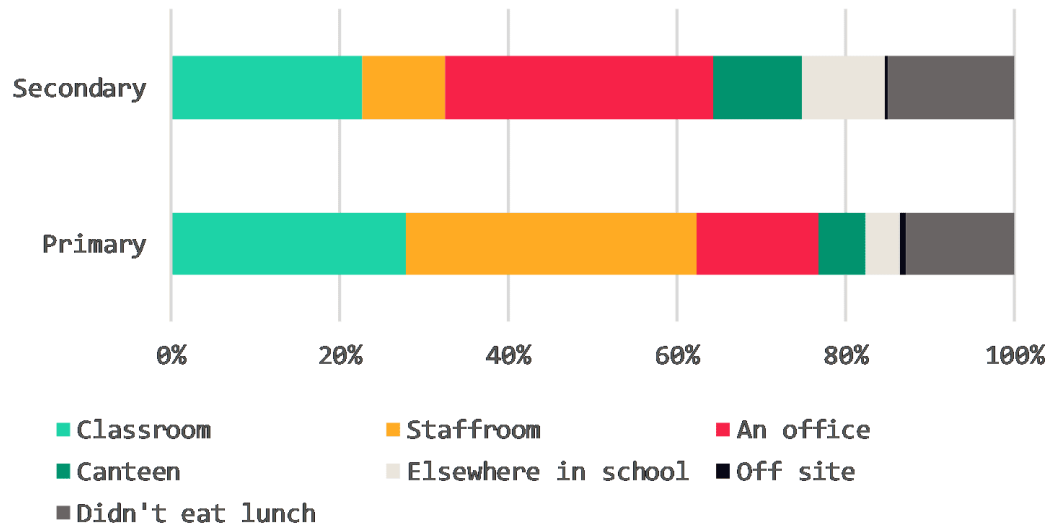


Secondary teachers are happier than primary teachers about the curriculum focus. Although even more than 40% of primary teachers are in favour – which is high for anything related to Ofsted! Among primary teachers, many said they felt the curriculum was overlooked but a focus from Ofsted wouldn't help. Primary teachers have a very different curriculum experience to secondary ones. Teaching across the full gamut of subjects means the changes to all national curriculum criteria in the past few years were a HUGE workload. Primary teachers also face a squeezed broader curriculum because of the intense demands of English and maths due to the more rigorous SATs. Faced with this focus on English and maths, it makes sense that primary teachers feel Ofsted should focus on the curriculum, but also that test scores will still take precedence and therefore Ofsted's approach won't necessarily help. So what? First, it's worth Ofsted bearing this primary-secondary difference in mind as they investigate the curriculum. Messages will need to be tailored quite differently for the two audiences. Second, Ofsted should question primary teachers more about the reasons why they think the focus won't help. Something is holding back their enthusiasm for this topic. Unless Ofsted figure out what it is, any improvements are likely only to be surface-level.

## 4. Teachers eat alone!

Over at Teacher Tapp, one of our slight obsessions is the minutiae of the teaching day. It may seem glib to ask questions about lunch but well-validated employment questionnaires like the Gallup12 show that silly things like "having a best friend at work" are enormously important to staff retention. Chatting with people over lunch is one of the ways people develop such friendships. Hence, small things can be important to bigger policy issues, like retention. We've also heard reports that schools increasingly require staff to eat in canteens – but, really, how common is that?

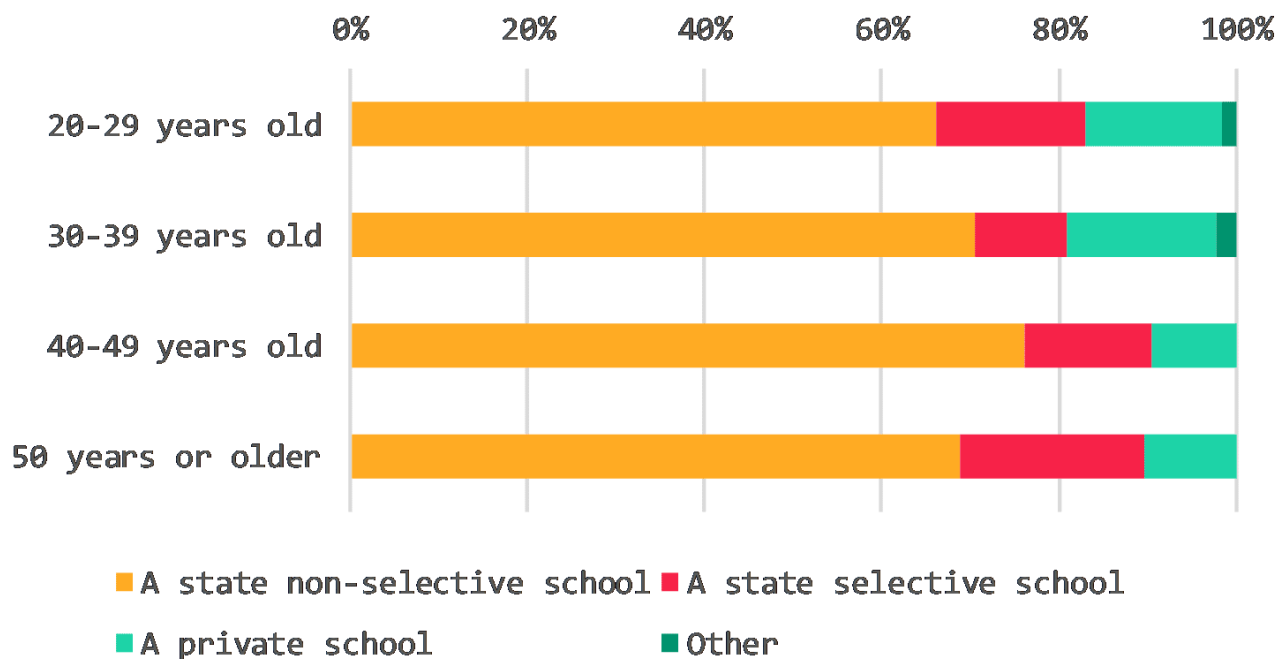
## Where did you eat lunch today?



Looking at what we found, only a small proportion of teachers eat in canteens: around 10%, (though more so in secondary schools). Around 13% of teachers don't eat lunch at all, which is a little worrying given the physical demands of the day. And around a quarter eat in their classrooms; possibly while sitting with pupils, while running a club, or doing some marking. Primary teachers were much more likely to eat their lunch in a staffroom than secondary teachers. The sprawling nature of secondary schools can mean staffrooms are far away and renders a lunchtime trip more difficult. But this raises questions about the ease with which secondary teachers are able to socialise with their colleagues. Are offices a place where people can chat and become friends? If not, this could be affecting retention. So what? We need to find out more about the ways lunch affects other aspects of work. For now, however, it may be worth asking if your schools' set up is helping people build adequate relationships? (And make sure you get meals sent to the classrooms of that hungry 13% who aren't eating at all!)

5. Around 30% of Teacher Tappers went to a private or selective school... but this isn't as strange as you'd think

## What secondary school did you go to?



There was some concern earlier this week when we revealed that around 30% of Teacher Tappers went to either a selective or private school. "This isn't representative!" came the cry. But, we wouldn't expect teachers to be representative of the whole population because teaching is a graduate profession. We therefore expect it to reflect who goes to university. We also thought there might be an age impact as selective schools were more common before the 1970s than after. Was this hunch correct? Seemingly not. Among our (still limited) sample, there is a surprising consistency across the age ranges. Around 30%, give or take, in each age group are from either private or selective schools, while the remaining 70% are from state non-selectives. So what? Well, nothing really. On its own this was a test to see if age was a factor, and it wasn't. What will be interesting as we go forward is seeing if attending a private versus selective versus comprehensive school makes a significant difference to other outcomes. Keep coming back to find out more on that one! \*\* Here are the links to last week's tips:

- [Noise in the classroom](#)
- [Pupil attendance letters](#)
- [Don't take work home](#)
- [Changes to the SATs](#)
- [EdTech micro-schools](#)
- [EdTech and the teaching machine](#)

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