

# Genies, GCSEs, and the 11% of Primary Schools Doing SATs Booster Classes

Hello Teacher Tappers! One more week until another bank holiday weekend. Keep going :)

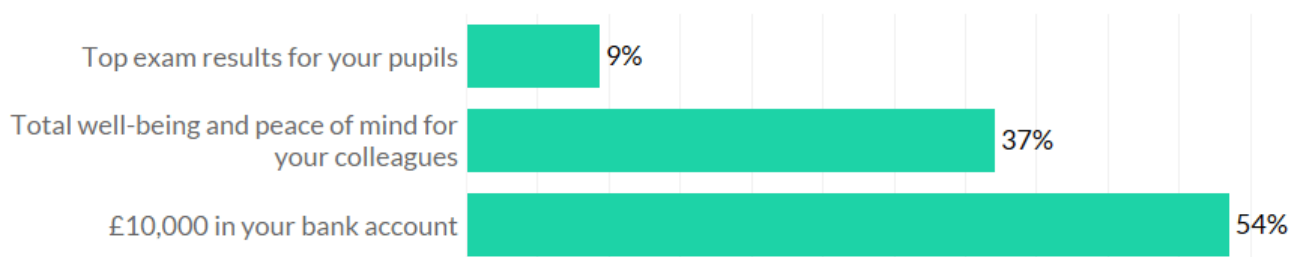
In the meantime, we've been repeating a beloved question from earlier in the year. Back in January we asked teachers to pick one of three trade offs: top exam results, well-being for colleagues, or £1 million in their bank account.

## 1. What if a Genie offered you....?

Most of you (unsurprisingly) picked the £1 million, however a teacher at the time suggested we should try and lower the price until we got a 50:50 split, which is apparently how the NHS works out the value of certain things.

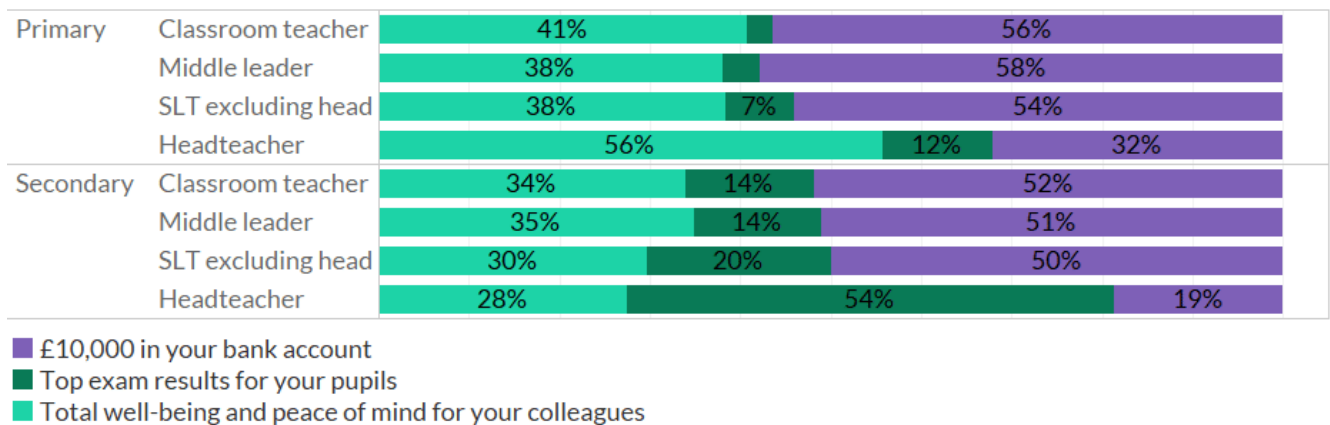
So we dropped the price to just £10k aaandd... 54% of you would still take the cash over the results or well-being.

**If a genie appeared and allowed you one of the following, which would you choose...**



As per the last time we asked, the only group who act very differently are headteachers. Primary ones are much more likely to select total well-being for their colleagues (awww), and secondary ones are more likely to select top results for pupils (which may sound like they want to game the performance tables but is most likely because they know the results impact heavily on pupils' lives).

## If a genie appeared and allowed you one of the following, which would you choose...



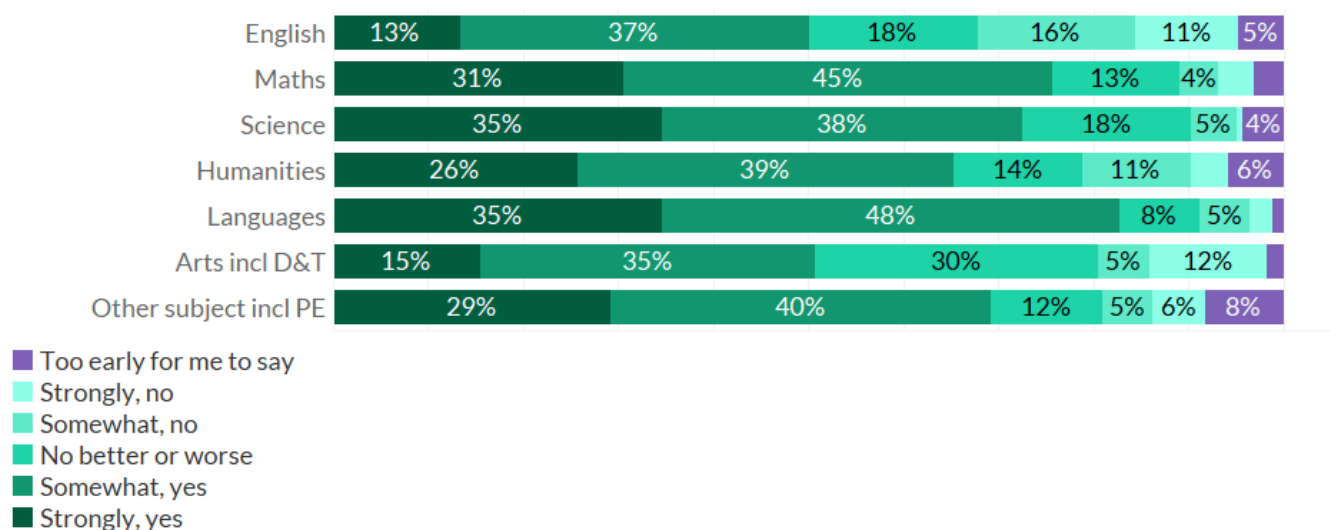
## 2. New GCSEs: Are they any good?

It is now a few years since the new GCSE specifications started. Views have been mixed as to whether or not they are better or worse than the old specifications. But in what way are they better or worse and how much does it vary by subject? A lot, it turns out!

Are they better preparation for A-levels?

When it comes to preparation for higher level study, maths, science, and MFL teachers are the happiest about the new GCSE specifications. English teachers are the least happy (though, on balance, are more happy than not).

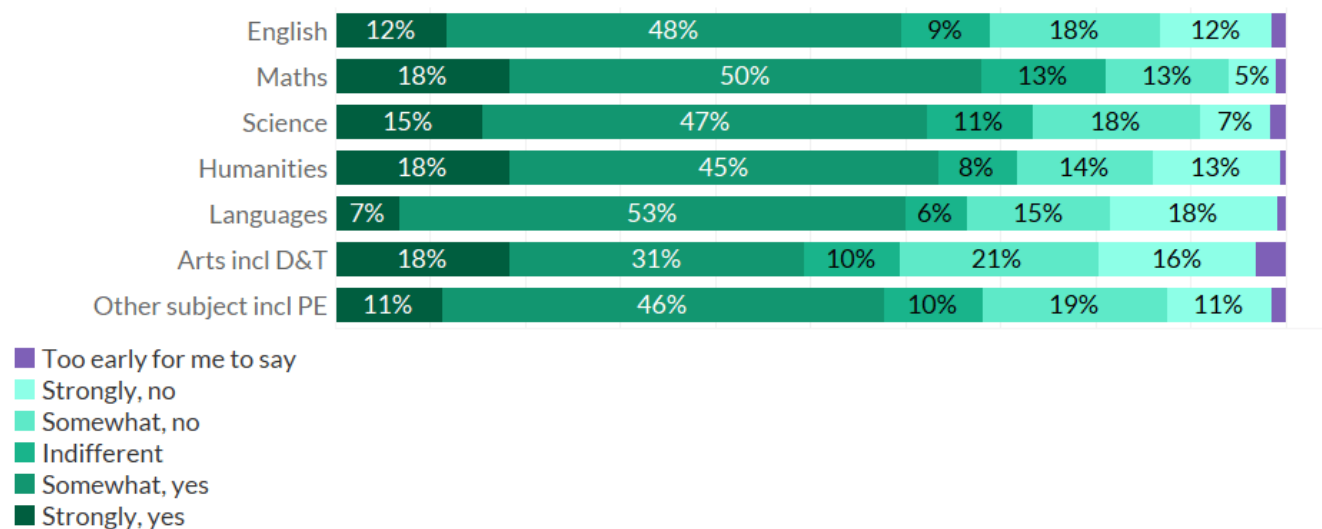
Do you think the new GCSE specification in your subject better prepares students for A level? If you teach multiple subjects to GCSE then think of your main subject. Science teachers - if you deliver multiple specifications then try to answer holistically about all of them!



Oddly, however, for all the maths and science teachers are more likely to think the new GCSEs are better preparation for A-levels, the level at which they like the new specs is much closer to the English teachers.

English teachers are less effusive than others, though it's worth noting that given all the concerns the most common answers is that teachers somewhat like the new specs. So at least there's that!

Do you like the new GCSE specification in your subject? If you teach multiple subjects to GCSE then think of your main subject. Science teachers - if you deliver multiple specifications then try to answer holistically about all of them!

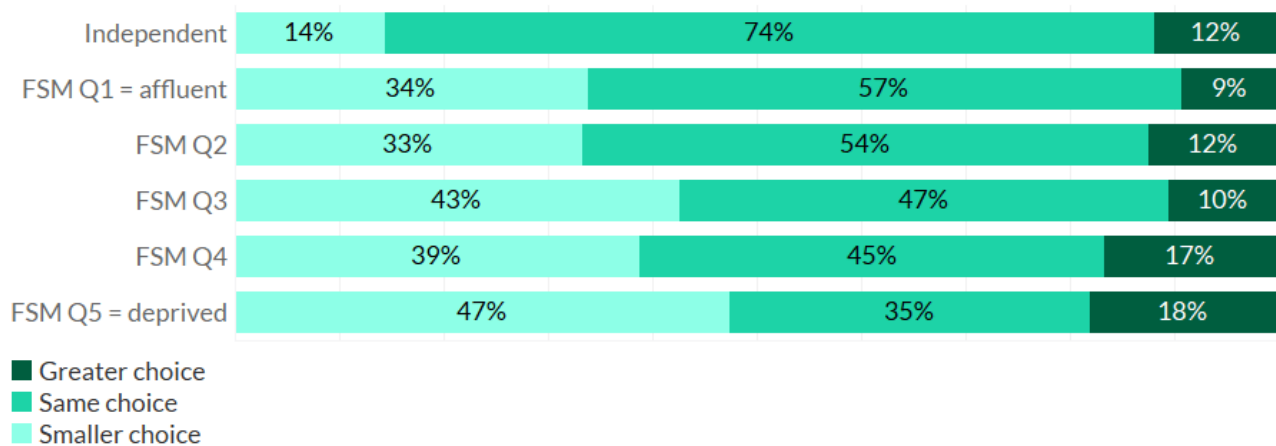


## What about GCSE choice?

Another set of murmurs is that students now have less choice in their GCSEs than they did a few years ago because Progress 8 and the budget cuts have combined to reduce options. Ministers have mostly insisted that option choices are not dropping. Those ministers appear to be wrong.

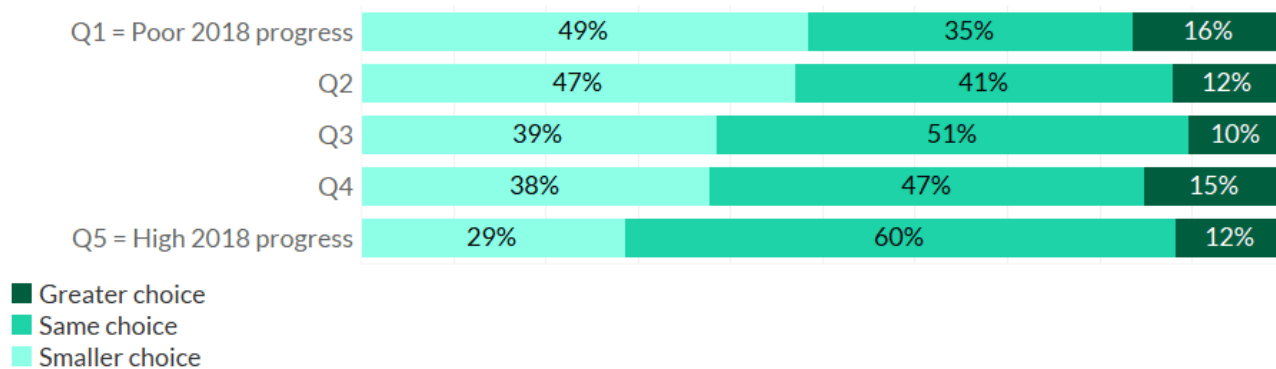
While most pupils in independent schools appear to have the same GCSE choices as they did two years ago, for state schools located in the poorest areas around half have cut back on the number of courses.

## Will your students who are choosing their GCSEs this year have a greater or smaller choice of courses than those who chose two years ago?



Fewer choices correlates even more heavily with poor progress in schools. That is, schools with the lowest Progress 8 scores are the ones cutting back most heavily on their subjects. In many ways, this makes sense. If you can cram pupils to get higher grades in a smaller number of subjects then it positively impacts on Progress 8. Does it do any good for the subjects that tend to get abandoned, such as music? More on that here.

## Will your students who are choosing their GCSEs this year have a greater or smaller choice of courses than those who chose two years ago?

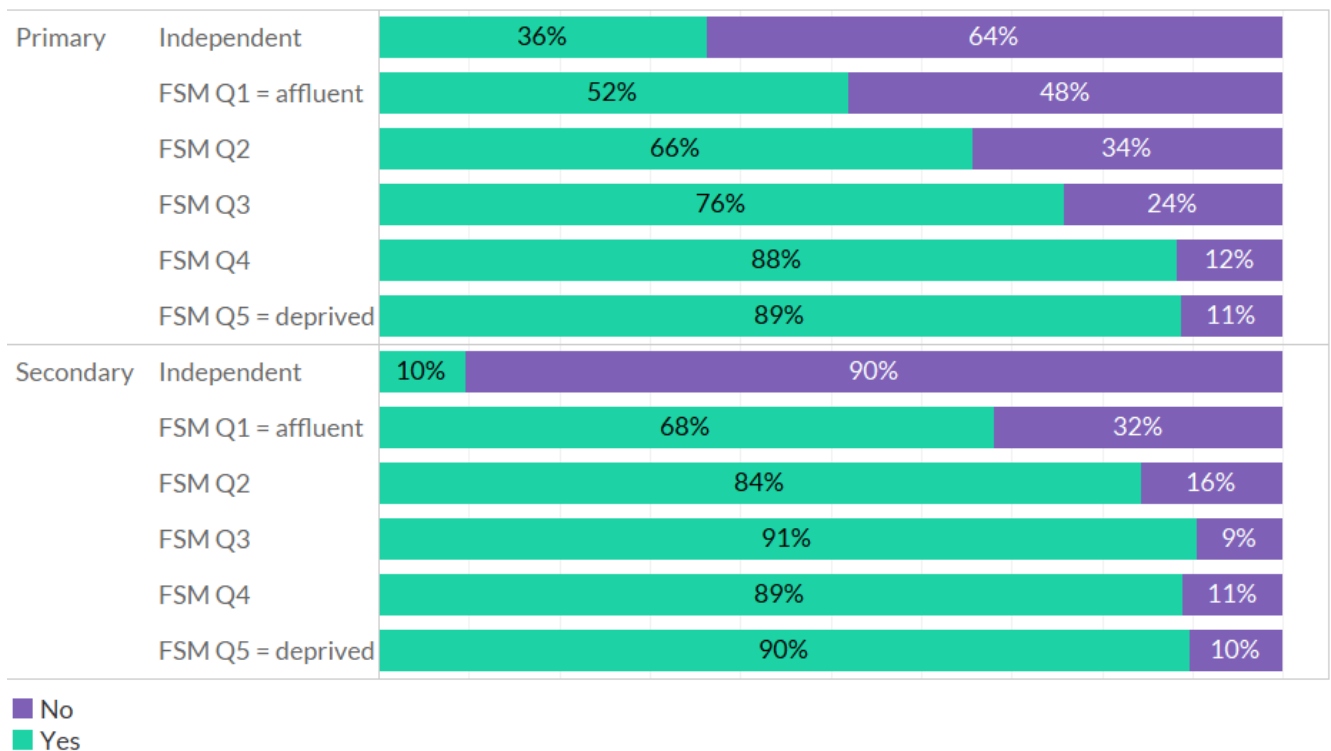


### 3. Who gets an attendance award?

Attendance awards are controversial things. Schools are under pressure to meet a national 95% rate for pupil attendance. It therefore makes instinctive sense to incentivise turning up at school. But rewards for attendance can negatively impact pupils who, through no fault of their own, have to miss schools for, say, regular hospital appointments.

Many of you said your school does reward attendance. In schools located in the poorest areas around 90% give out attendance awards.

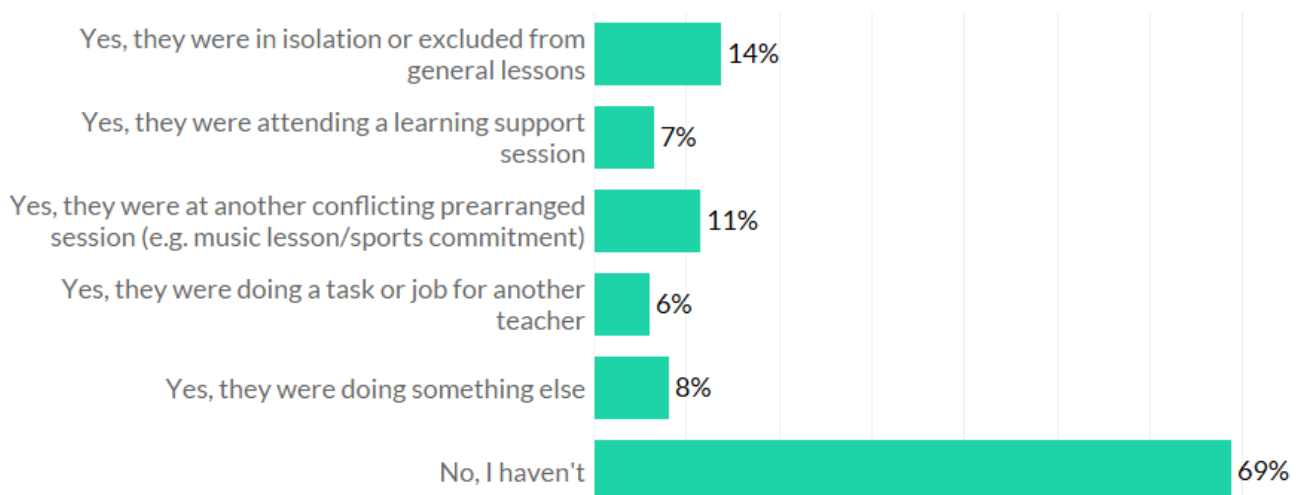
## Does your school give attendance awards for good (or 100%) attendance?



Schools therefore believe attendance is very important. Yet, we also have a tendency to get pupils doing all kinds of random things rather than being in their lessons. For example, children are sometimes used to do 'tasks' for teachers rather than being in lessons (putting up displays or working on reception).

When we asked, you told us that pupils were sometimes missing from your lessons for sports commitments or because they had been generally excluded from lessons.

**Last term, did you ever request that a student attend your lesson (because you thought it necessary) who was in school but not due to attend. Tick any that apply.**



And we can see that it is the schools in the poorest area (FSM Q5), and so are particularly likely to say they value attendance, where pupils are most likely to be sent for because they are doing other things – including being in music/sports commitments or running errands.

**Last term, did you ever request that a student attend your lesson (because you thought it necessary) who was in school but not due to attend. Tick any that apply.**

		Yes, they were in isolation or excluded from general lessons	Yes, they were attending a learning support session	Yes, they were at another conflicting prearranged session (e.g. music lesson/sports commitment)	Yes, they were doing a task or job for another teacher	Yes, they were doing something else	No, I haven't
Primary	Independent		11%	4%	4%	7%	89%
	FSM Q1 = affluent	2%	6%	6%	2%	2%	89%
	FSM Q2	2%	7%	2%	5%	4%	85%
	FSM Q3	5%	3%	3%	4%	5%	88%
	FSM Q4	7%	5%	9%	7%	4%	79%
	FSM Q5 = deprived	3%	6%	8%	6%	5%	82%
Secondary	Independent	3%	1%	15%	3%	8%	76%
	FSM Q1 = affluent	11%	3%	14%	4%	10%	70%
	FSM Q2	23%	10%	13%	6%	9%	57%
	FSM Q3	24%	8%	14%	7%	10%	55%
	FSM Q4	25%	10%	13%	8%	11%	58%
	FSM Q5 = deprived	30%	10%	16%	10%	12%	52%

Ultimately, schools do need pupils to attend, but we should be careful not to presume that simply because children are in school that they are also in lessons. This may not be the case!

## 4. SATs Easter Revision Classes?

Easter revision lessons for GCSEs have been a thing for well over a decade. But what about for SATs?

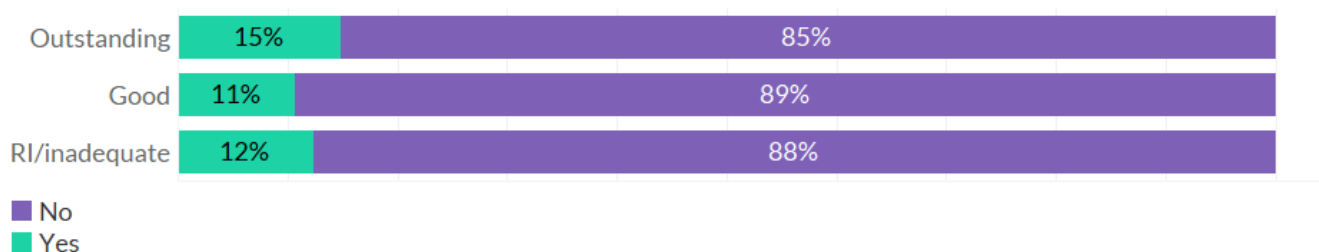
This year, 11% of primary teachers said their school hosted a SATs booster/revision session during the holidays!

## Did you school host any SATs booster/revision sessions over the Easter holidays?



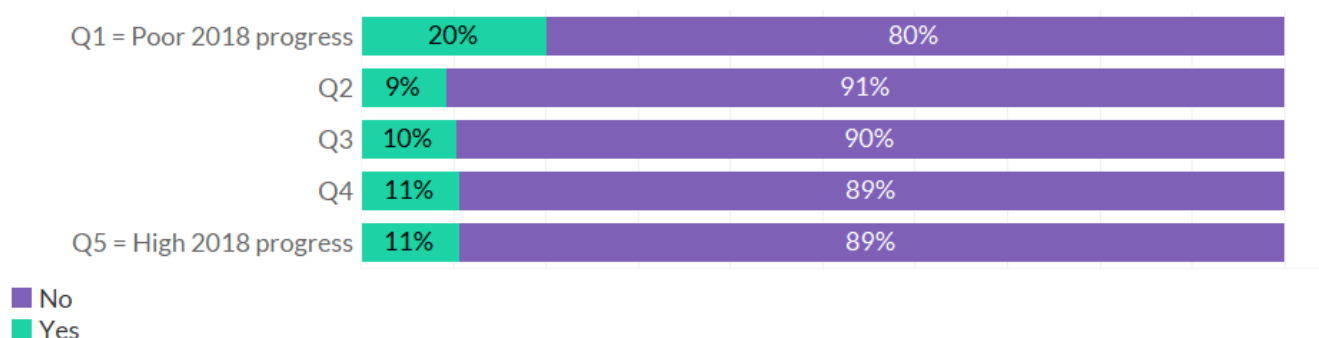
And it was the outstanding schools who were most zealous of all. This is somewhat surprising, as outstanding schools tend to worry slightly less about their performance as they are exempt from future Ofsted inspections. However, they may be concerned that if the results dip, then an inspector will turn up.

## Did you school host any SATs booster/revision sessions over the Easter holidays?



Indeed, we found that a poor 2018 progress score made a school twice as likely to have SATs booster/revision classes, so it could be that leaders who already have an outstanding grade, but saw their results dip last year, are now looking to ensure good grades are achieved this year.

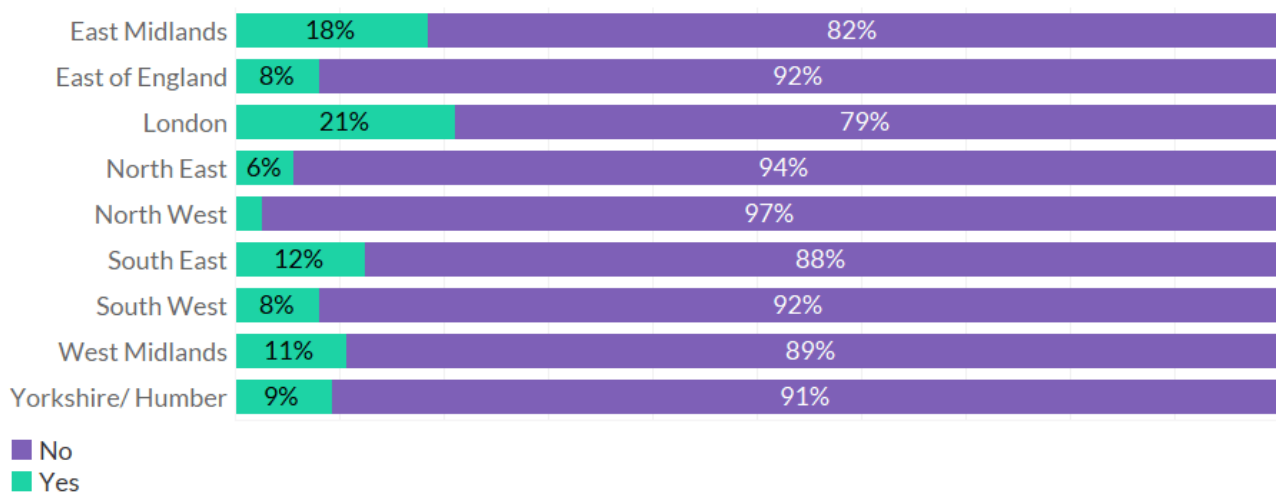
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There is also a substantial regional effect, with London and the East Midlands coming out much higher than other groups. Any theories for this one? We are out.



## Did your school host any SATs booster/revision sessions over the Easter holidays?



## 5. The Life Of A Primary Pupil

Education secretary Damian Hinds is very concerned that pupils get to have lots of diverse experiences. He's in luck! Our primary teachers this week showed the vast range of trips, cultural experiences, and tasks that kids do in their classes.

For example, 88% of Year 6 teachers said their pupils will go on a residential trip this year. And 67% of Year 2 teachers said their pupils will watch a play, concert or musical.

## Will your class experience any of the following this academic year? Tick all the apply.

	A residential trip, spending at least one night away from home and school	An overnight stay on the school grounds, without their parents	A day trip involving a coach, cars or public transport	An outing outside the school grounds within walking distance (excluding church services)	A church service at the local church (or similar religious experience)	Watching a play, concert or musical off the school grounds	Watching a play, concert or musical put on by an outside provider at school	None of the above
Pre-school EYFS	13%		63%	63%		25%	38%	13%
Year R	3%		92%	71%	39%	24%	53%	3%
Year 1	12%	5%	90%	74%	52%	24%	45%	
Year 2	8%	3%	99%	76%	52%	36%	67%	
Year 3	24%	8%	90%	68%	53%	30%	54%	
Year 4	43%	5%	94%	66%	59%	36%	51%	
Year 5	41%	6%	92%	78%	51%	49%	58%	
Year 6	88%	6%	93%	71%	63%	51%	57%	



Schools minister Nick Gibb will also be pleased to find out that in any given week during the spring term, pupils are getting spellings to learn, reading books sent home, and some kind of maths homework, with a particular focus on times tables in Year 3 as expected). Though he might be slightly grumpy that around a third of children also get 'project-based' homework. (Nick Gibb is not a man who likes projects.)

## Which of these would your class typically have for homework in any given week during Spring term? Tick all that apply.

	A reading book sent home (whether their choice or not)	Some spellings to learn (on paper or on an app)	Times tables or number bonds practice (on paper or on an app)	Maths homework (not times tables/number bonds) (on paper or on a..)	A structured writing, reading comprehension, grammar or similar ex..	Open-ended writing activity	A research or project-based homework (whether given choice from a list or not)	Another homework activity not listed above	My class would not typically have any activities to complete at home
Year R	95%	18%	8%	34%	8%	11%	11%	34%	5%
Year 1	98%	75%	23%	48%	18%	11%	20%	18%	2%
Year 2	97%	81%	50%	58%	28%	7%	27%	22%	1%
Year 3	89%	86%	81%	56%	26%	8%	41%	15%	4%
Year 4	76%	81%	75%	61%	31%	9%	36%	19%	2%
Year 5	79%	81%	56%	61%	33%	10%	37%	12%	1%
Year 6	69%	82%	54%	75%	54%	7%	32%	16%	2%

Pupils at independent schools are less likely to get given homework projects and reading, but instead get maths and structured writing. Pupils from the schools in particularly poor areas are the least likely to get these activities. Does this matter? Again, thoughts appreciated on this one. (Do [email](#) or [tweet](#)).

Which of these would your class typically have for homework in any given week during Spring term? Tick all that apply.

	A reading book sent home (whether their choice or not)	Some spellings to learn (on paper or on an app)	Times tables or number bonds practice (on paper or on an app)	Maths homework (not times tables/number bonds) (on paper or on a..)	A structured writing, reading comprehension, grammar or similar ex..	Open-ended writing activity	A research or project-based homework (whether given choice from a list or not)	Another homework activity not listed above	My class would not typically have any activities to complete at home
Independent	72%	79%	59%	93%	76%	10%	21%	28%	
FSM Q1 = affluent	79%	82%	64%	71%	42%	11%	35%	17%	
FSM Q2	81%	79%	53%	59%	38%	13%	36%	22%	3%
FSM Q3	84%	81%	67%	59%	32%	5%	33%	18%	2%
FSM Q4	81%	72%	49%	58%	29%	6%	38%	17%	2%
FSM Q5 = deprived	87%	77%	57%	56%	30%	8%	36%	18%	2%

6. Finally, we know you love the tips, so here they are for last week...

- [DNA-based predictions of how well children will do at school](#)
- [Cognitive bias in decision-making](#)
- [Do you speak to adults like they are your students?](#)
- [Green space and mental health](#)
- [Pen licences and similar rewards](#)

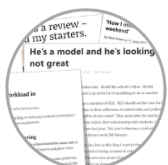


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