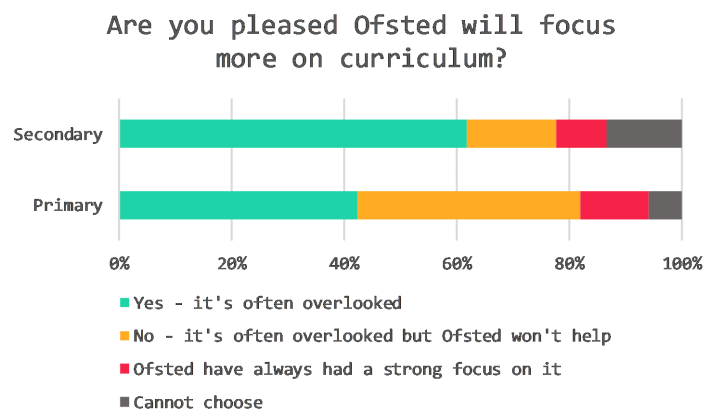


Ofsted and Curriculum: Is Their Focus A Good Idea?

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.