

What Teachers Tapped This Week #6 – 22nd October 2017

This week we had more than 1,200 users on one day!

This growth is down to you sharing the app via word-of-mouth. So, thank you! To help you spread the word even more effectively we've created:

- A [colourful powerpoint](#) (with script)
- A [PDF version of the 5 slides](#)
- A 1-page [black-and-white easy-print](#) set of instructions

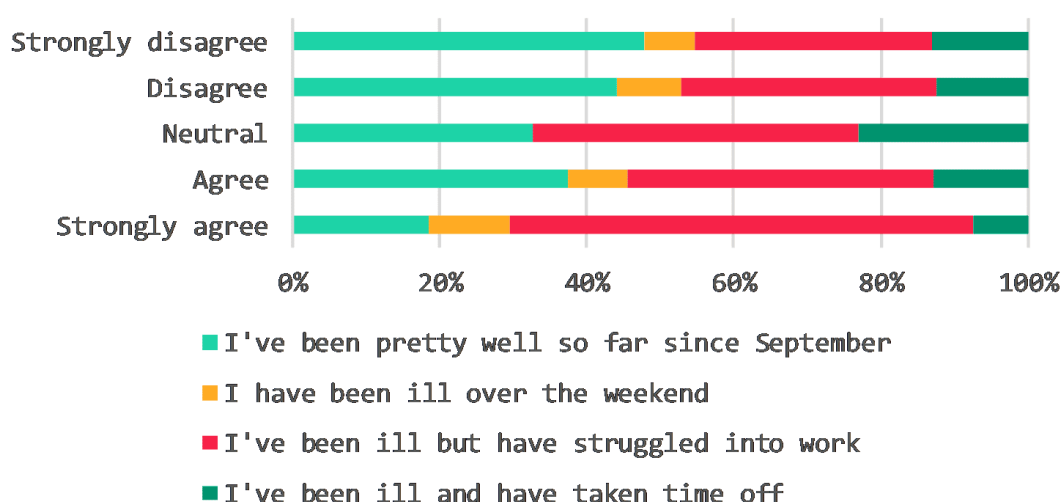
Feel free to download and use at staff briefings, CPD sessions, your children's birthday party, at bus shelters, etc... (Also, please keep sending us your feedback on what else would help you share the word, via [twitter](#) or [email](#)).

Right, what things did we learn this week? Read on...

1. Illness and the role of managers

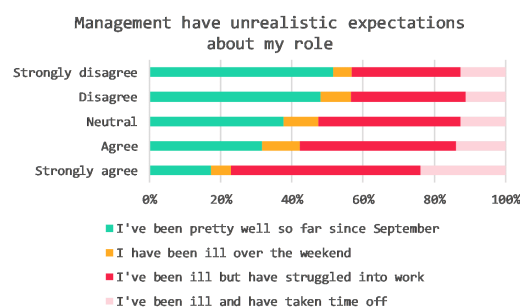
Teachers are often struck with mutant colds in the first weeks of term as children's germy hands are once again all over classrooms. So this week we asked our panellists if they had taken time off for illness over the past half-term. A lot of teachers said they were ill but struggled into work (37%). A smaller number were ill and stayed home (13%). But, we wondered, does anything else we know about panellists indicate who was most likely to be ill and what might influence why someone battles into school even when they are sick? Union leaders frequently point to stress as a reason for time off. Could people who feel the classroom is a stressful place become ill more frequently and severely? We looked, and the picture is fuzzy:

Being in the classroom is stressful for much of the time



People who strongly agree their classroom is stressful were the most likely to feel ill but also the least likely to take time off.

However, the pattern across the sample is fuzzy. Neutral people on stress appear to be sick more often than those who find the classroom stressful. It's not straightforward. But a pattern did emerge when looking at management expectations:



The more a person feels their manager has unrealistic expectations, the more likely they were to (a) be ill, & (b) take time off work.

The pattern held up, fairly uniformly, across the sample. This is not surprising. The Whitehall Studies, conducted between 1967 and 1977, looked at sickness and mortality rates among civil servants. At the time, psychologists believed that people in management positions suffered the most stress and would, therefore, die first. Actually, the study concluded that people in jobs with less autonomy had the most stress due to the pressures placed on them by managers. Lack of clarity in their job role particularly affected blood pressure which then influenced a range of other serious illnesses. So what? Ultimately, managers -- for the health of your staff -- you must be realistic and clear about your expectations. If you find sickness is high, it will be worth doing a survey on this matter to see if clarity is something you need to work on.

2. Want work-life balance? Consider your partner...

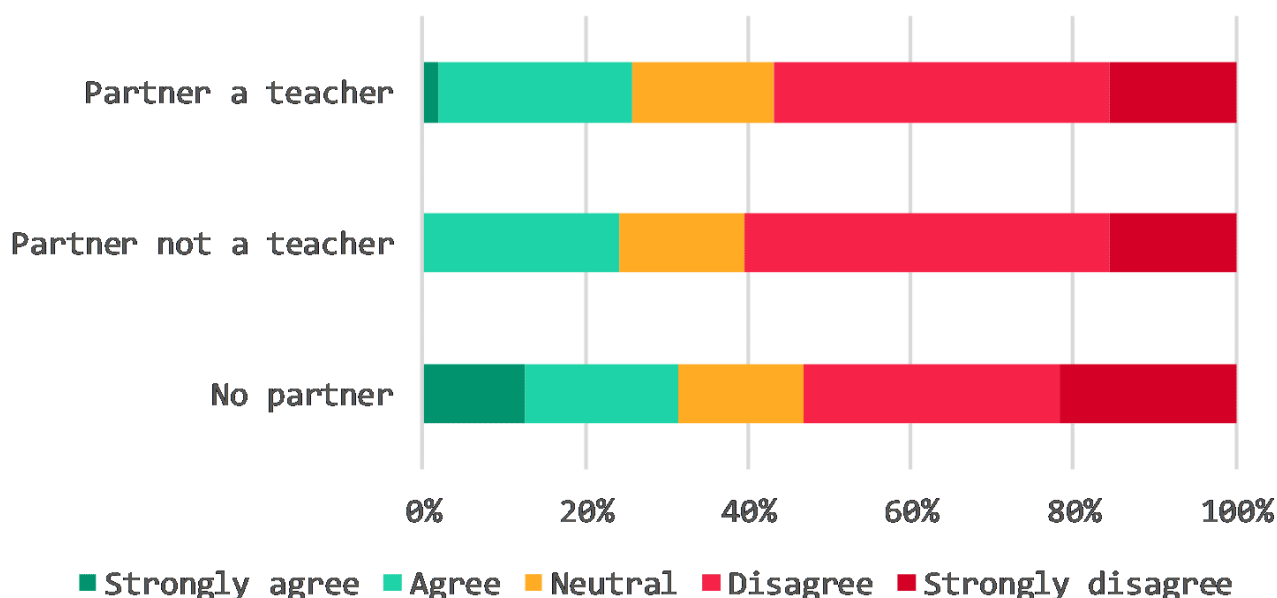
A Teacher Tapp panelist asked on Twitter if we could look into the number of teachers in relationships with other teachers. So we did! It turns out, a lot of you are giving furtive glances across the staffroom because:

A staggering 24% of Teacher Tapp panelists are coupled up with another teacher ?

Reasons for this could include: people meeting at work; the dove-tailing of holidays and [early mornings](#); similar interests; and straightforward numbers -- there are around half a million teachers in England and Wales.

But, we asked the data, does partnering up with a fellow teacher help your work-life balance?

Balance between personal and professional commitments is about right



Result: Yes, a tiny bit! ?

People partnered with a teacher were a touch more likely to agree (or strongly agree) that their personal and professional commitments were positively balanced compared to those whose partner was not a teacher. That said, single teachers beat both groups. They were much more likely to 'strongly agree' they had a good balance between personal and professional commitments. HOWEVER single teachers were also the group most likely to feel their personal-private priorities were way out of line.

Hence: being a single teacher is risky!

It seems likely the issue for single teachers is that they are most able to balance commitments (as fewer people are involved) but also most prone to becoming over-committed (possibly

because it's harder to say 'no' when colleagues have family commitments and the single teacher does not). Worst of all worlds, however, seems to be teachers partnered with non-teachers. Not one of them strongly agreed their work-life balance was good, and far more disagreed than the other groups. Sorry folks! ?

3. Give me that curriculum stuff!

CPD co-ordinators, listen up! If our Teacher Tapp panel is anything to go by then your next INSET day could do with a whack of subject-specific curriculum planning time. Given free rein to choose any 2-day INSET course, more than a third of tappers picked curriculum planning in a subject as the topic they would most want to learn -- far out-stripping any other topic.

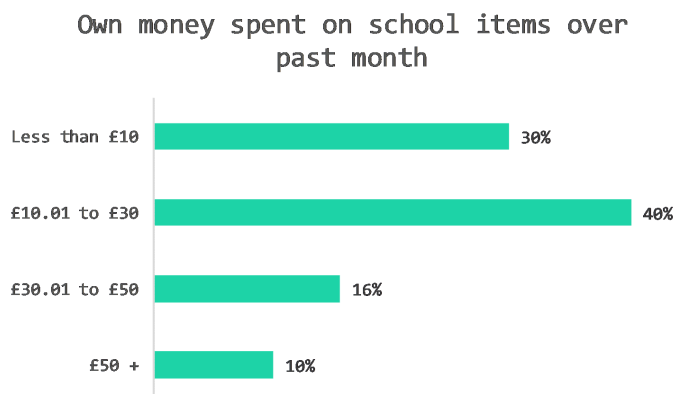
Why? Well, Ofsted's [recent focus on the curriculum](#) likely prompted some of the interest, but planning is also a perennial interest to teachers. Assessment was the second most popular topic for CPD (16%). Unsurprising, given we learned this week that a whopping 60% of teachers have never received training on how to design summative assessments.



If you're wondering if the lack of teacher training on summative assessment is a recent thing (i.e. did PGCEs drop this topic at a certain point) then you are not alone. We are thinking about this too and are hoping to answer that question in time.

4. Most teachers spend £10+ per month on supplies using their own cash

[Recent surveys](#) suggest teachers are spending a great deal of their own money on school supplies. But how much are they spending?



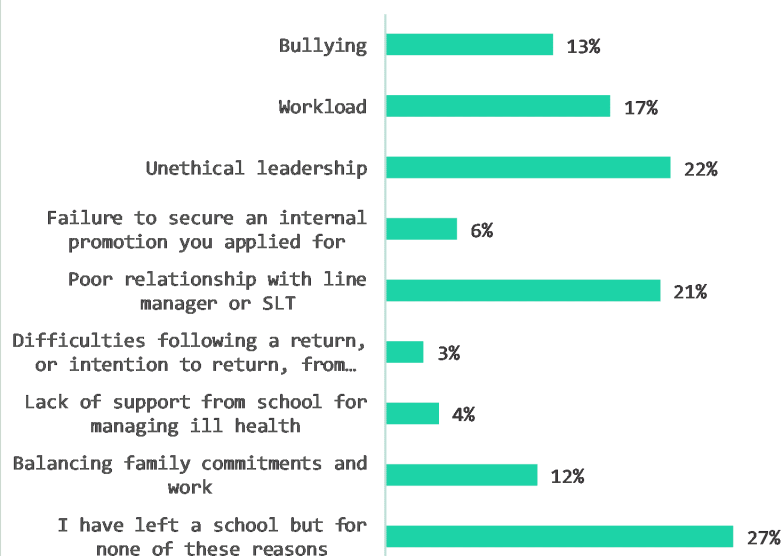
In figures that are slightly less alarming than the recent NEU/TES survey, we found a third spent less than £10. But the most common amount was £10 to £30. And 10% said they had spent over £50. This is useful information, but there is a slight catch. A problem for self-report surveys is that people are not always great at remembering things over a long period. The TES/NEU survey asked people to think back over a year -- which is a very long time. Even over a month, it's possible people's estimates may be a little wonky. The start of term may also be different to the rest of the year. A teacher buying storage boxes for a classroom only needs to do that once, and the item will last for the rest of the year. Hence, what we could see here are 'establishing' costs rather than 'ongoing' ones. Hence, this is the sort of question that we can usefully ask on a number of occasions to see how the answer differs if, say, we: (a) ask over a different time period (say, 'in the past week'), or (b) ask at a different time in the year. In doing so we'll be able to get a more accurate picture of teachers' out-of-pocket expenses

(which do appear to be substantial if this pattern keeps up all year).

5. Teachers quit principals, not schools

Many teachers leave their job for a promotion elsewhere, or because they are moving location, or want to try a new form of role. Those are pull factors -- positive reasons that attract people to another post. Other teachers leave because of push factors -- i.e. things that make their job no longer enjoyable or, sometimes, even unbearable. We asked Teacher Tapp panelists to tick all the reasons why they had left a past school and found a significant chunk had experienced push factors.

Reasons for leaving a past school



Unethical leadership was the most common factor in people leaving a school (22%). Poor relationships with managers was a close second (21%).

This echoes decades of work on teacher retention, all across the world, which continually finds that relationships with managers make the difference. As one recent American blog succinctly put it: '[Teachers quit principals, not schools](#).' Workload, bullying and family commitments came in as the next. Bullying is talked about far less than the other two. If this data is anything to go by, we should be talking about it much more.

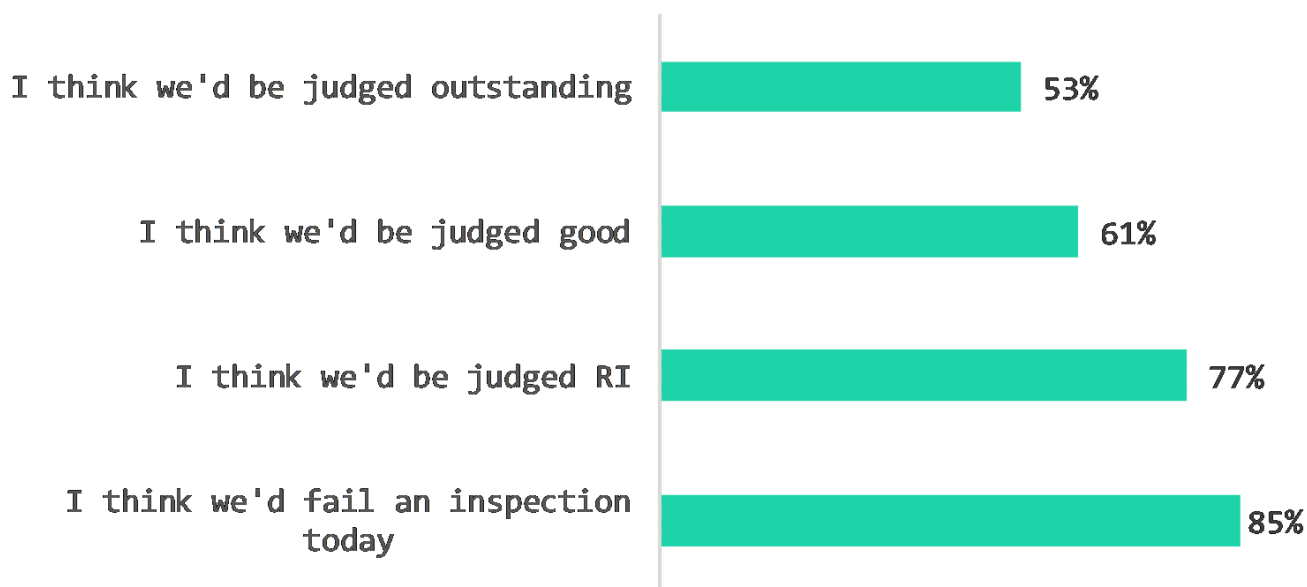
6. Should you worry if you hear people complaining about senior leaders?

In 2012, Sir Michael Wilshaw, former chief inspector of Ofsted, said that if morale was low in a school then a headteacher could be assured they were doing something right. Over a hundred years earlier, in 1906, Francis Galton observed that the more people you got to guess the weight of a bullock, the more accurate the average result became. Galton had discovered the wisdom of crowds. But can both of these things work in tandem? If everyone in a school is complaining, is it because they are all wrong and the leader is doing something right? Or do

they have a collective wisdom? This week we asked the Teacher Tapp panel how they thought their school would be rated if Ofsted suddenly appeared. On a separate day, we asked if they had heard a colleague complain about the senior leadership team in the past 24 hours. The two questions were not directly linked. There was no reason for one to affect the other in people's minds. And yet...

We found that people who heard a colleague complain were much more likely to believe the school would fail an inspection

Did you hear a colleague complain about leadership team today?



At first, this seems obvious. A triumph for the wisdom of crowds!

But, even among people who thought their school was outstanding more than half heard someone complain about senior management that day.

Hence, complaining in school seems to be rife, no matter how good you believe your school to be. The psychology of complaining is complex and not all researchers agree. A recent study, [published this year](#), shows that negative venting can cement the feeling that everything is going wrong. People become pessimistic (hence the belief Ofsted grades will be low). On the other hand, workplace psychologists argue that where complaining leads to people getting clarification on their role (see point 1 in today's list) or to the brainstorming of solutions, then complaints can be a good thing. Hence, Wilshaw probably wasn't right to say that if morale is low everything is going in the right direction. But complaints also aren't necessarily a bad thing. Even in the best places, they appear to be common.

7. Finally, as ever, we know you really really liked the Teacher Tapp tips - so here are the links for last week:

- [Martin Robinson on voice training](#)
- [Angela Duckworth's Grit](#)
- [5 techniques for improving recall](#)
- [Writing quick tests to support learning](#)
- [Psychological interventions to improve achievement](#)
- [Greg Ashman on the importance of teacher voice](#)

Enjoy half-term! *** Enjoyed this post and want to join our Teacher Tapp panel? Sign up via the [iPhone App Store](#) or the [Android App Store](#). You can also check out more at www.teachertapp.com