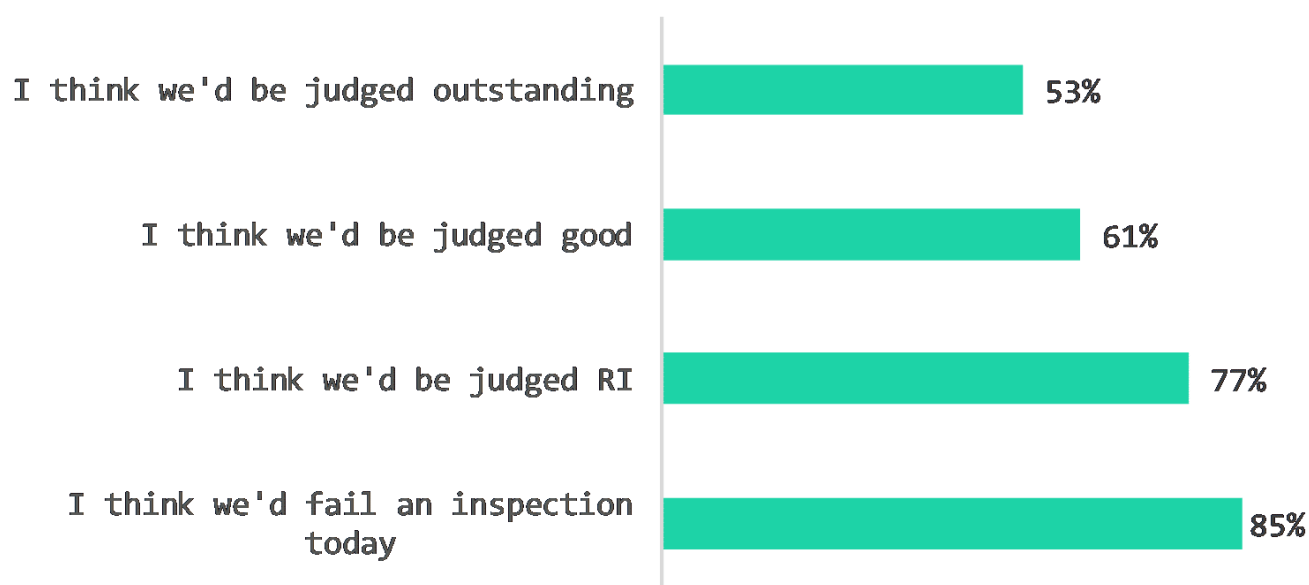


Should School Leaders Worry If Teachers Are Complaining?

In 2012, Sir Michael Wilshaw, former chief inspector of Ofsted, said that if morale was low in a school, and teachers were complaining, 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. *** 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 *

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