

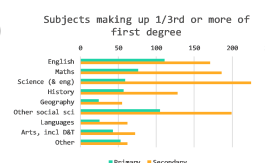
What Teachers Tapped This Week #10 – 20th November

This week was the big split! For the first time ever we asked primary and secondary teachers different questions. This will carry on for a few more days, before panellists are back together again for the run-up to Christmas.

But what have we learned so far?

1. A difference of degrees...

It's sometimes assumed that primary schools miss out on maths specialists because so few primary teachers did a degree in the subject. Is that a correct assumption? Looking at the data it seems that maths is the third most common degree subject in primary schools AND the third most common in secondary schools. The biggest difference is that science dominates in secondary schools, followed by 'other social science'; whereas English is the most dominant degree subject in primary schools (also followed by 'other social sciences')



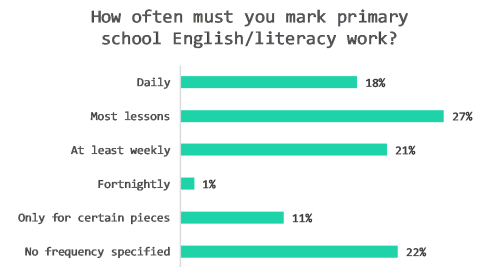
Noticeably, both primary and secondary schools have a shortage of people who did geography as their first subject. Where are they? (Did they go abroad?!) Also, as Ofsted starts focusing on the broader curriculum, the lower number of language, history and geography specialists in primary school may become ever more important.

2. Marking: Who Has The Biggest Load?

We have been gradually learning a lot about marking in schools. For example, last week we found the majority of teachers are spending [at least 3 hours marking per week](#). Some mark up to 15 hours! But Teacher Tappers rightly pointed out that the amount of marking might differ by subject or age range. So, does it?

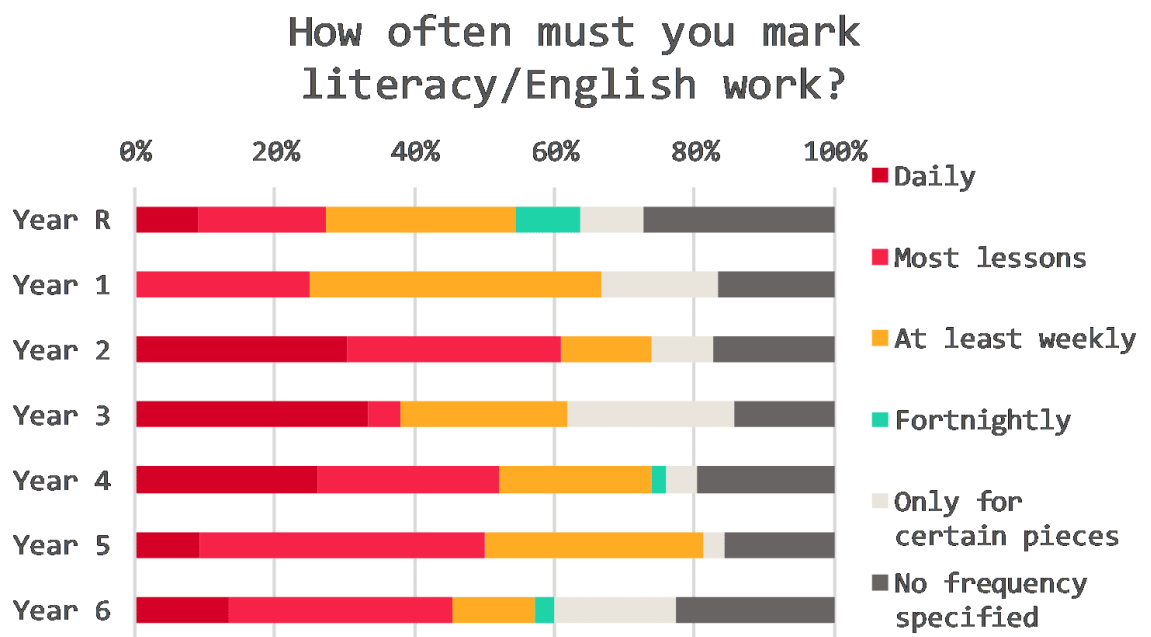
We decided to get specific and asked primary school teachers about their English/literacy marking.

A sizeable 18% are expected to mark English work every single day, while 66% of primary teachers are expected to mark English work at least weekly.



But is the situation worse for teachers in primary exam years versus other year groups?

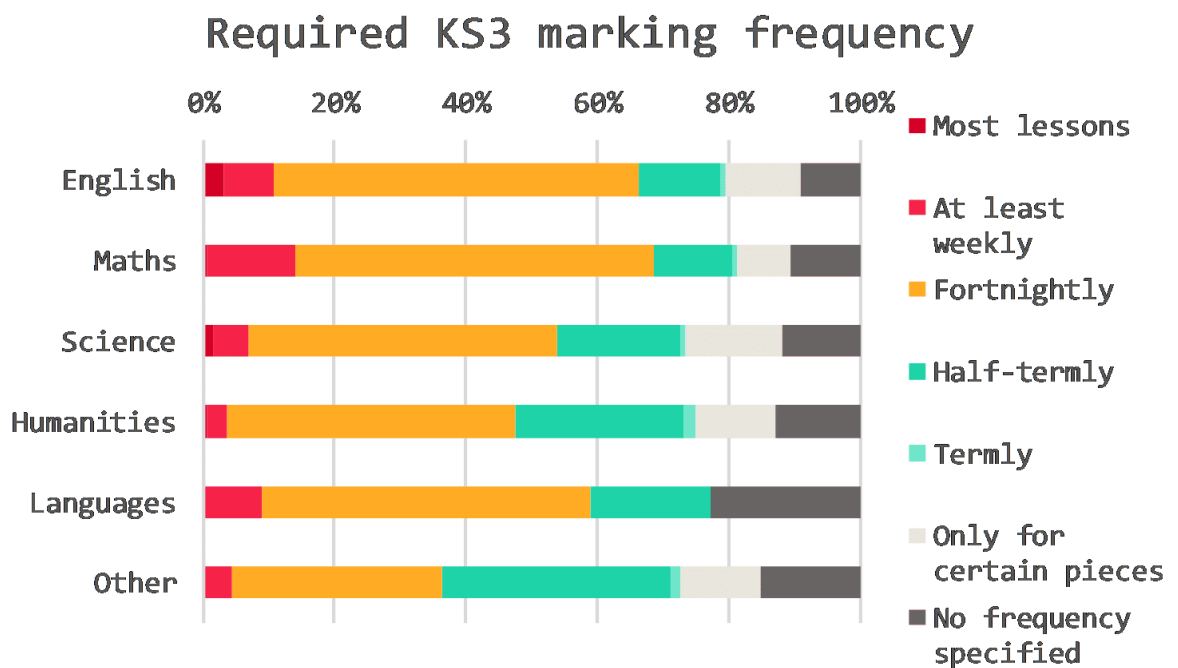
Using information gleaned from asking about the year groups that people teach we checked....



There's no obvious pattern overall, but look at that shift in year 2! Suddenly, when pupils hit the year where they will sit their first SATs, the expectation to mark daily, or in most lessons, leaps upwards. If the government are looking for evidence that key stage 1 tests are driving workload - this is a good place to start. Oddly, we don't see the same behaviour in year 6. In fact, year 6 teachers appear to have more autonomy to set their own marking policies than teachers of any other year group bar reception.

At secondary we decided to look at differences in subjects.

One of Teacher Tapps most vocal panellists - the rather brilliant Mark Enser - wrote [a blog](#) about the fact that 43% of secondary teachers said they were required to mark books at least fortnightly. In Mark's view, this shows "abysmal leadership" and [his blog](#) explains several reasons why. (It's a good read!) However, other Tappers rightly pointed out that some subjects see their children way more than others so maybe it was justified. Did marking vary by subject?



Um, not as much as you'd think! (or hope!)

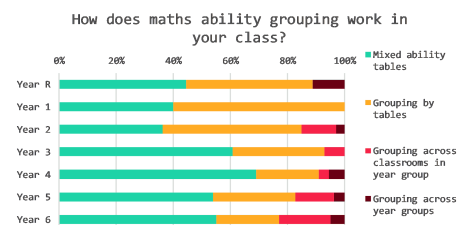
We have to mop up lots of subjects into an 'other' box so the numbers don't get ludicrously low but we found a remarkable number of people across all subjects are expected to mark at least fortnightly. The 'other' category was admittedly lower - but almost 40% of teachers were still expected to mark key stage 3 work fortnightly, even in subjects which children are only likely to have once or twice a week. Even in languages and humanities - which tend to be given fewer lessons than maths, English and science - around half of teachers were expected to mark fortnightly.

Also - who wants the workload of a maths teacher?

English teachers are commonly thought to spend the most time on marking. Probably because the work is more subjective and can take longer to do. (Although comparative judgement can help - head [here](#) to read more on that). But maths teachers came out with the highest expectation for marking at least weekly (or fortnightly). Tick and flick may look quick: but it's a time suck too. In sum: a lot of people are expected to mark a lot.

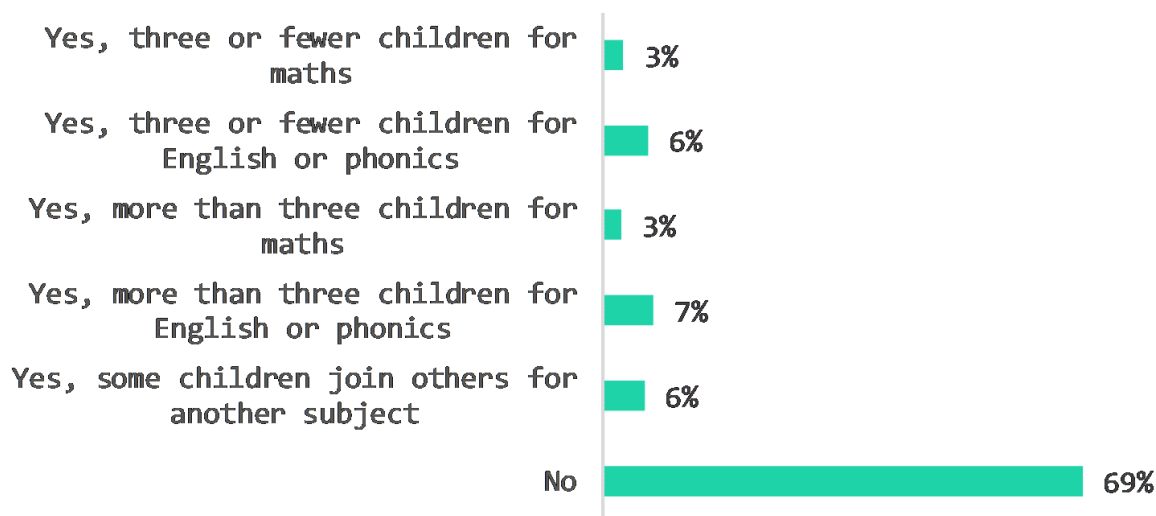
3. The Strange Habits of Ability Settings

One of the things we have been patiently waiting to ask about it is ability grouping. Last year, when the grammar schools policy was touted, a lot of people kicked up a fuss over the segregation of children by ability. (And yes, this includes most of our team members!) But how many schools sit pupils by ability from being very young? We asked specifically about maths and found a divide. At Key Stage 1, around 60% of schools tend to group pupils by ability on their tables (and 40% don't). By Key Stage 2 this changes slightly and around half of teachers have mixed ability groupings, and around half sit them with people who are alike (either on their tables, or by mixing with other classes/years).



We were also interested in the flexibility for children to move across year groups. In general, teachers said their children never move to another year group for any of their teaching (69%). A small percentage of teachers had children move year groups for maths, English, or another subject.

Do any children in your class ever move to another year group?

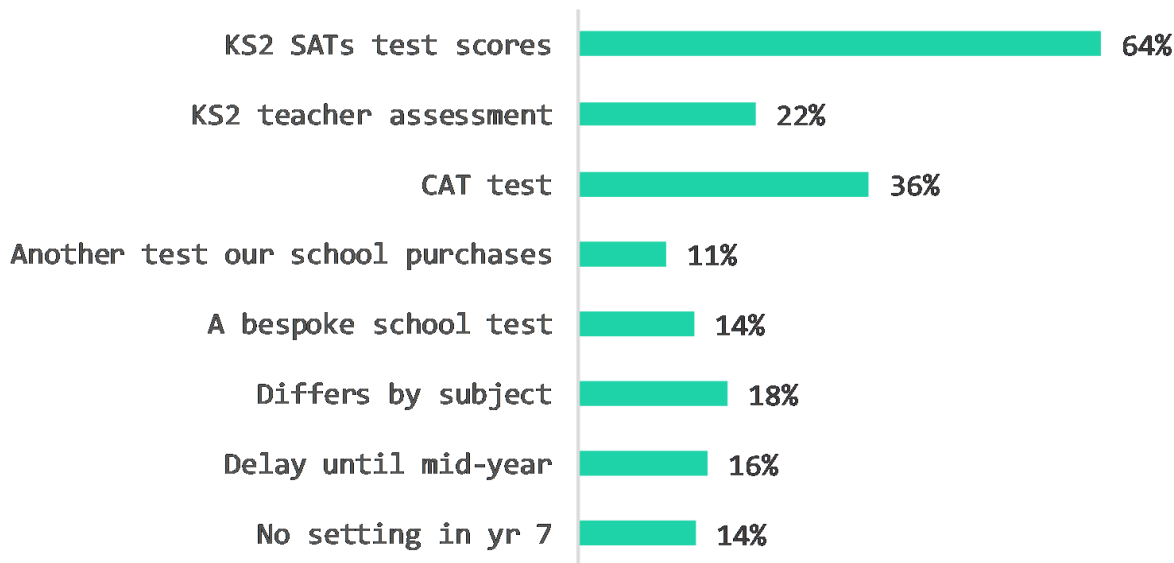


Moving children across year groups is controversial. Recently, a school was criticised for having a set-up in which it grouped children by ability all across the primary school. But we also know there are some serious implications for young children of their birth month. Those born in autumn are often far ahead of those born in the summer, with implications for both. Moving children across sets can sometimes be a way of dealing with this. But the data suggests it is uncommon.

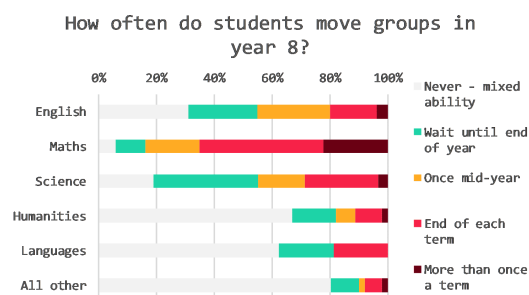
So, what about secondary schools? Do they set & how often do they use primary data to help?

A whopping 64% of secondary teachers told us that Key Stage 2 tests scores affect the sets their year 7 students are placed into. A further 22% said key stage 2 teacher assessments are also included. Given the high level of error for individual SATs scores this is a little disconcerting. The exams are pretty good at giving an indication of how schools are doing for their pupils, but at the individual level they are very noisy. It is therefore unsurprising to see a third of teachers (36%) saying their school buys in CAT tests, and around 10 to 15% saying they either buy another test or make their own. Only 14% of teachers said they had no setting in year 7.

How do you set students in year 7?

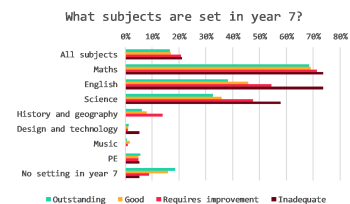


There are differences by subject, however. Interested in knowing how often students were able to move between classes, we asked about year 8s this time, and found that over 60% of humanities teachers did not have any setting for their year 8s. In maths, however, over 90% of teachers said their pupils were set, and over 80% said children moved around at least once a the year. And, 20% of maths teachers said children in their subject move ability sets more than once per term. That is a lot of administration to sort out!



But is setting having a positive effect?

There are many ways to look at a positive effect and a lot of variables we would have to control before saying anything definite on causation. For now, however, we decided to look at Ofsted judgements as an indicator and see if there are any differences in the judgments of schools who set a lot versus those who do not. Here's what we found:

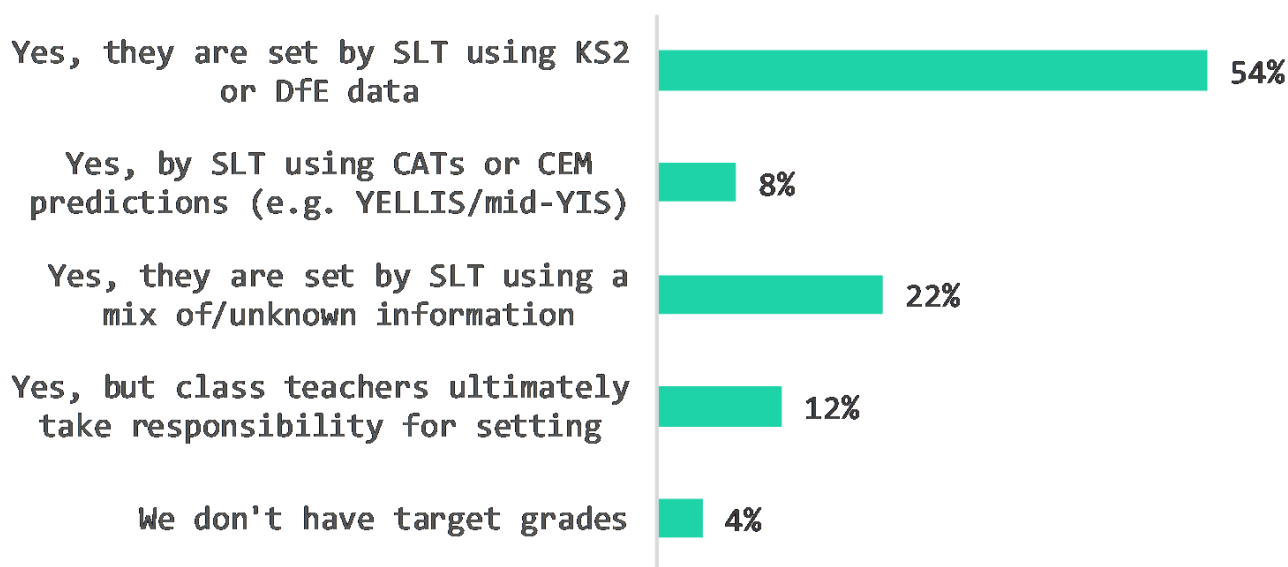


Teachers in inadequate schools reported they set by ability at much higher rates than those who taught in outstanding schools.

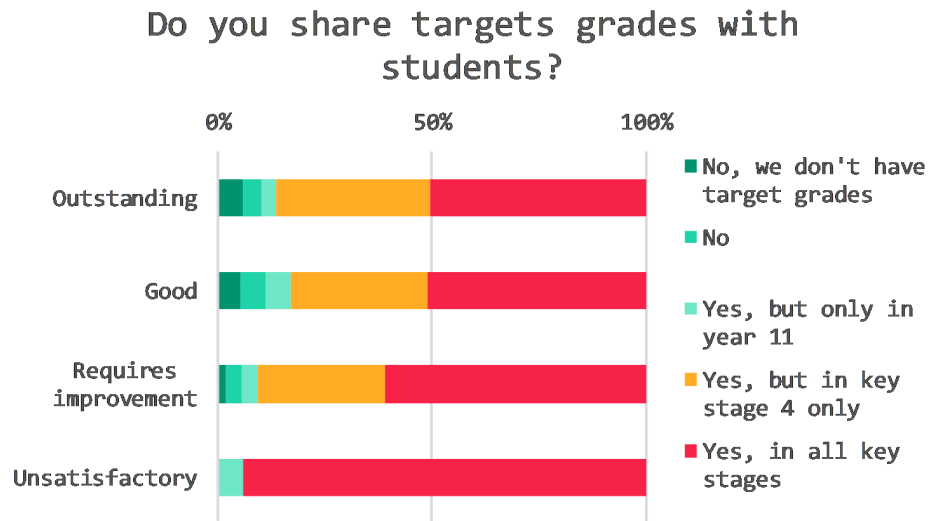
This holds across almost every subject (PE is a bit strange) and always follows the same path – outstanding set the least, then good set a bit more, then requires improvement a bit more, up to inadequate setting the most. Is this because setting is seen as an improvement strategy in those schools? Could it be that it's because schools with broader ability ranges are more likely to be rated inadequate? There are a number of options. But what it does clearly show is that Ofsted are not giving out any brownie points for setting by ability.

4. Everyone needs a target (apparently)

Are subject specific target grades set in your subject?



Almost every child in a secondary school has a target grade, many set based on prior data. BUT check out this graph:



Only half of outstanding schools share with all year groups. Almost every inadequate one does. As with the target grades, the reasons for this may be varied. But what it shows, again, is that Ofsted are not looking for you to give everyone target grades all across secondary school!

5. As ever, we learned you really really love the tips, so here are last week's:

- [Reading logs](#)
- [Evaluating departmental progress](#)
- [Frequency of assessment](#)
- [Lesson plan formats](#)
- [Re-drafting work](#)
- [Learning from China](#)
- [Moving slowly](#)

Aaaaaan, that's it folks. See you next week! <https://giphy.com/gifs/reaction-jeff-bridges-nadine-QM5IHSyFjz1XW> *** 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