

What Teachers Tapped This Week #11 – 27th November

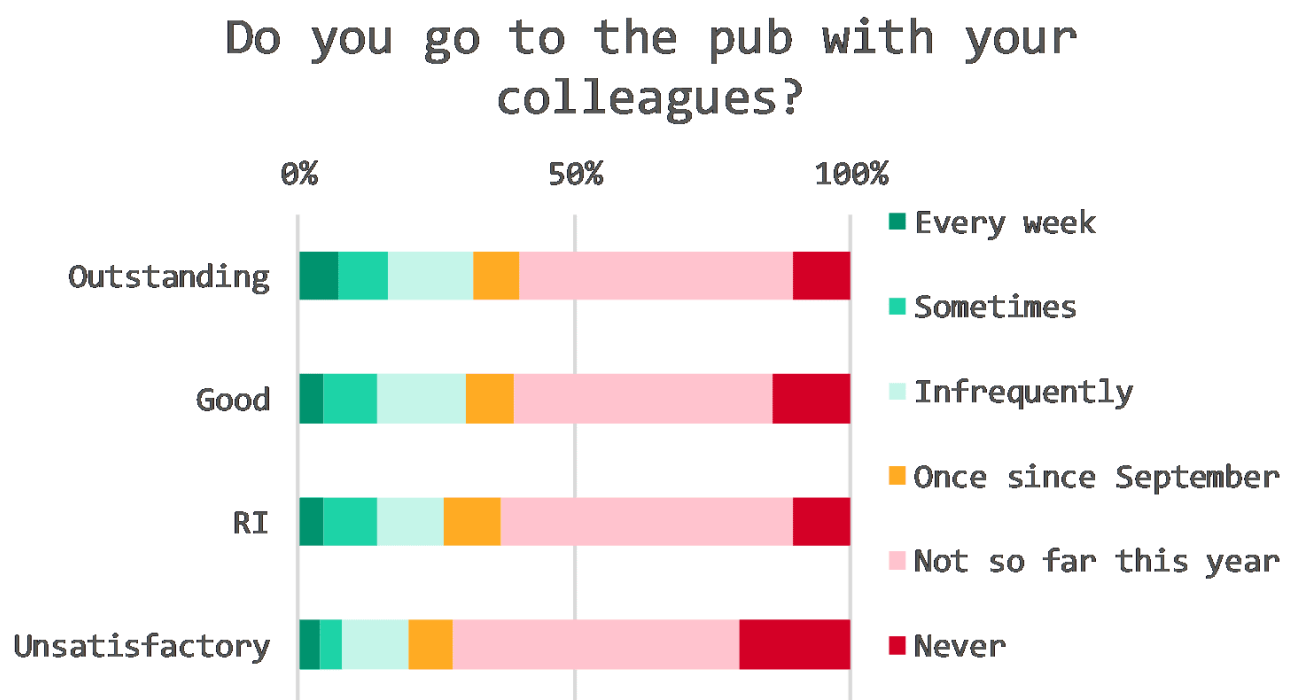
Tappsters! There are now more than 1,300 of you tapping each week. Big thanks to all of you who are spreading the message to colleagues. Please keep doing so. The data gets smarter the more people are using it. So what did we learn this week? First up and most important...

1. Teachers who drink together, achieve together ?

Teachers going to the pub on a Friday is a classic tradition often referenced in films and TV series about the profession. But does it still happen? We asked and found...

More than 50% of teachers said they had not visited a pub with colleagues at all so far this year.

However, look at this!



Colleagues in Outstanding schools were more likely to go for a drink than those in other schools, and inadequate school teachers are the least likely of all!

Causation or correlation? Best get a round in to check... ? [On a serious note: We're interested in how this might be affected by age, gender, and a few other characteristics that

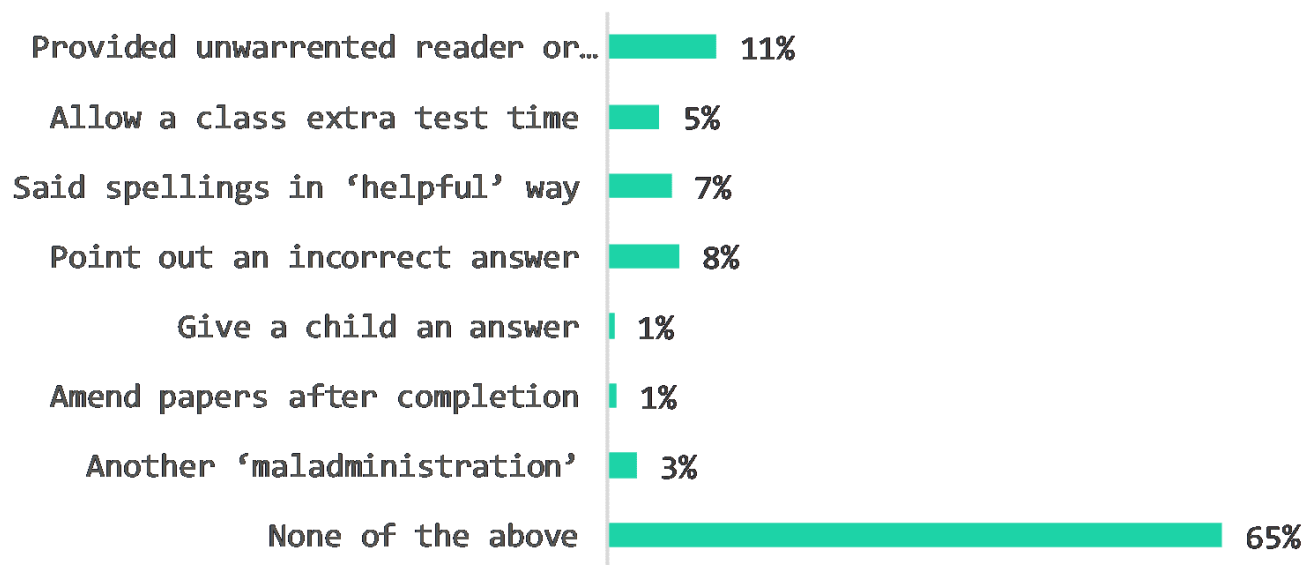
we are asking about in the coming week, but we don't have up-to-date information on these to give you the results.... yet. Keep an eye out].

2. Are SATs a collective delusion of cheating?

Teachers who talk publicly about cheating in public exams are sometimes treated as if they've broken an omerta. [If you've not seen the Godfather: an omerta is the mafia's secret code] One of the great things about Teacher Tapp is that people answer anonymously. And users seem comfortable telling us things normally considered private. For example, 95% of panellists told us who they voted for in the last general election. Last week, while panellists were split into primary and secondary groupings, we asked some questions about cheating in SATs. The results were alarming, if not surprising.

1 in 3 primary teachers had been asked to undertake a form of cheating during the SATs exams.

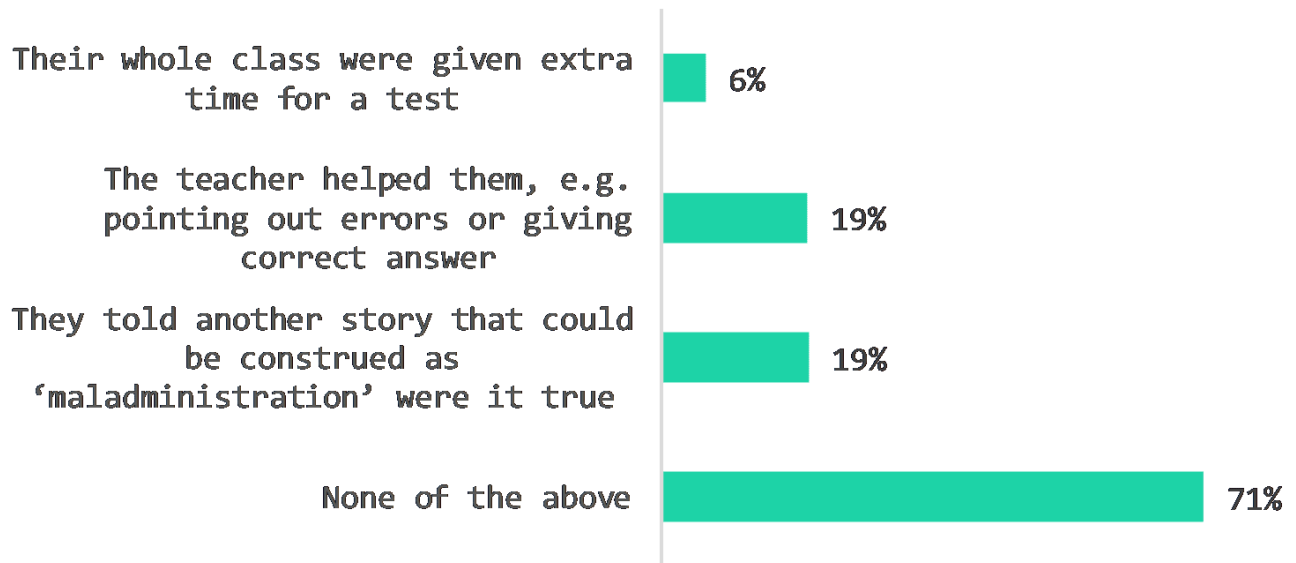
Which have you been asked to do whilst administering SATs?



Phrasing the question in this way ('have you been asked') is a safe way of doing things. It doesn't implicate the respondent in cheating because maybe they didn't carry out the instruction. But it shows the extent to which teachers are leaned out to push testing boundaries. Unwarranted use of readers or scribes was the most common form of cheating pressure (11%). However, 7% also said they were asked to say spellings in a "helpful" way and 8% were told to point out incorrect answers, which is a pretty blatant form of cheating.

We also asked secondary teachers if their pupils had told them any stories about their primary SATs exams.

What stories of SATs mal-administration have pupils told you?

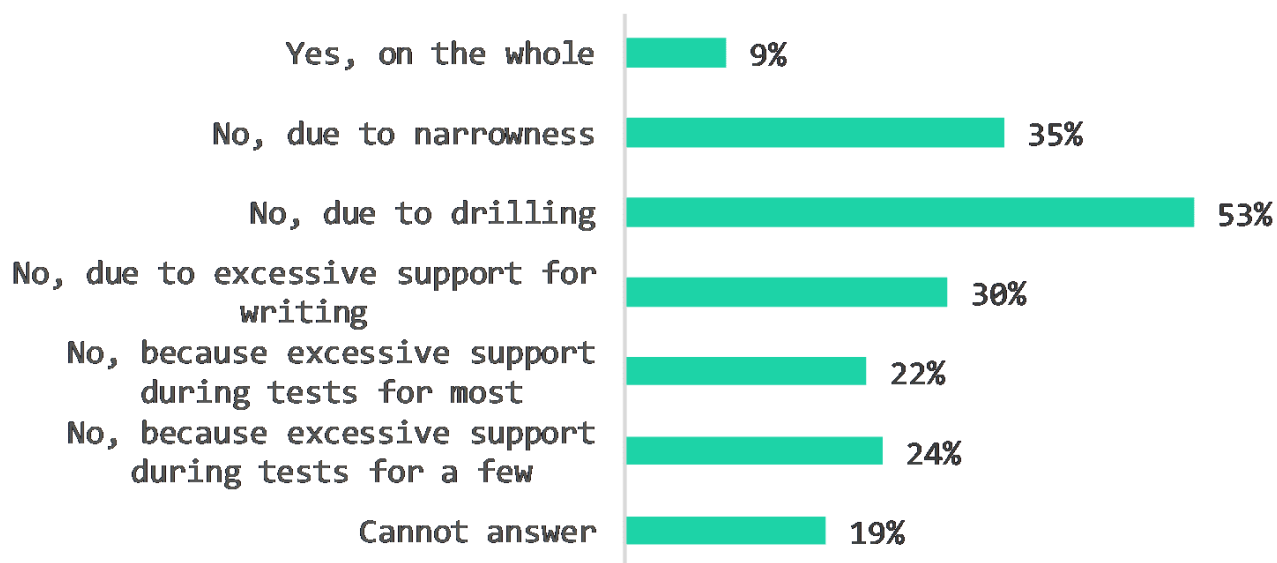


Now, here comes the caveat: THIS DOES NOT MEAN A THIRD OF SATs EXAMS INVOLVE CHEATING.

In both cases the real numbers are likely to be less. Primary teachers may not carry out their boss's orders. Children exaggerate when telling stories. However, it shows there is a lot of pressure and perception around cheating at the least.

Has this undermined faith in the exams system? Very possibly. Because when we asked if secondary teachers felt KS2 scores accurately reflected their children's academic standards only 9% agreed. 9%!

Are KS2 scores accurate reflection of student academic standards?



The lack of faith is partly due to over-preparation, which secondary teachers have complained about for ages. But quite a lot of the score is due to the belief in "excessive support" given during the tests.

When you consider that last week [64% of secondary teachers said their school creates ability sets by using KS2 data](#), there is a strange disconnect going on here.

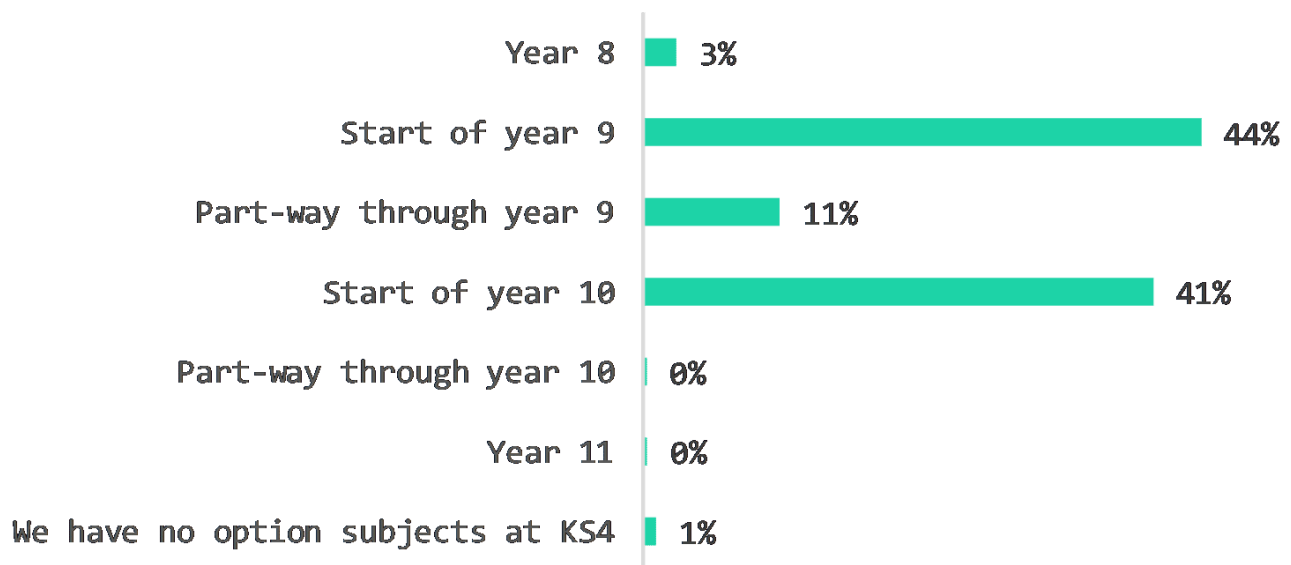
If nothing else, these findings should encourage secondary leaders to rethink the use of SATs data for setting (or at least triangulate it).

3. The loooooong GCSE stage

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector, is worried that pupils are increasingly beginning their GCSE courses at the start of year 9. This means the teaching of, say, the Key Stage 3 history curriculum happens in as little as [38 hours](#).

So how prevalent is this trend of a three-year GCSE course? VERY, it seems.

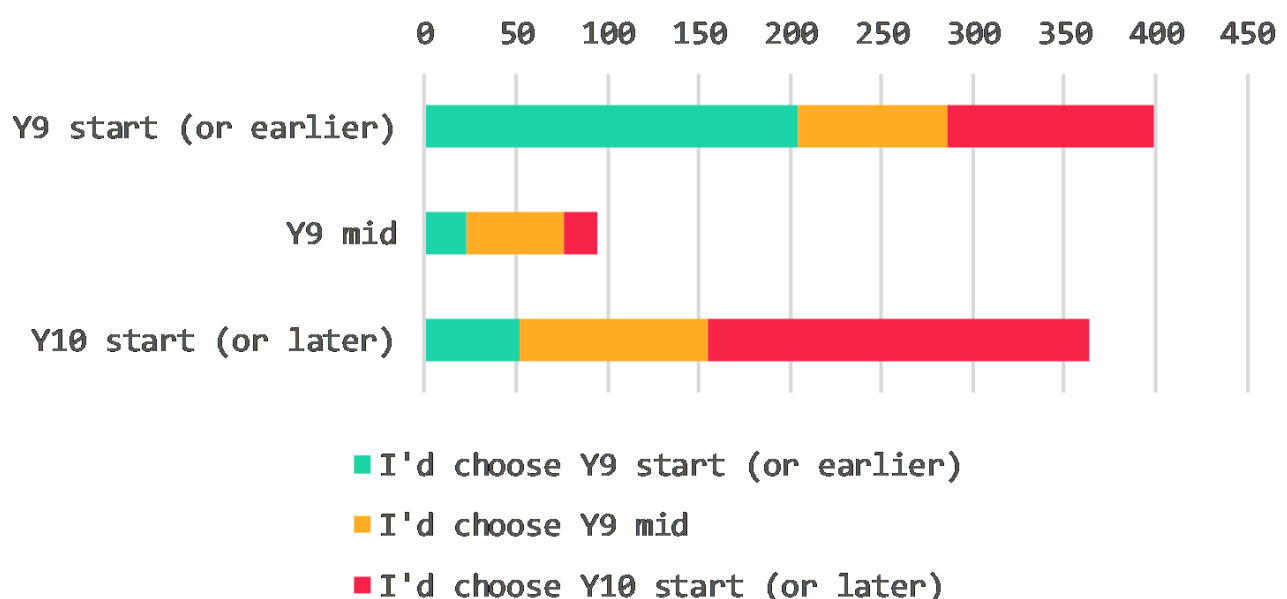
When do your students start studying GCSE options?



Year 9 was the most common time to start GCSE courses among our panellists. With only 41% of teachers saying they started in Year 10. Why? Most school leaders will tell you it's down to the bigger content in the new GCSEs. Headteacher Liam Collins explains the situation beautifully [here](#).

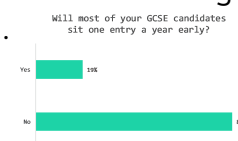
Are headteachers who make the decision to have a long GCSE course making a terrible mistake? We asked panellists what decision they would make...

When do you start GCSE options? When would **you** start them?



Half of teachers working in schools where GCSEs started in year 9 said they would stick with

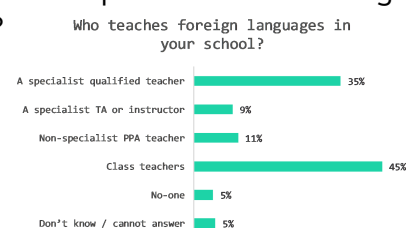
it. The other half would change to later in year 9 or year 10. Teachers working in schools where GCSEs started in Year 10 typically wanted to keep it that way, although around 40% wanted to change. We have seen this sort of 'grass is greener' effect before on [homework contracts](#). In that case, we found teachers in schools without contracts often wanted them, but those who had them wanted to get rid of them! Out of interest, we also asked if schools were still sitting their GCSE candidates a year early in any subject. And some of you still are...



This could explain some of the students starting their courses in year 9 but, overall, it's not driving the bulk of the shift.

4. How are primary schools teaching modern languages?

Since 2013, the national curriculum requires primary schools to teach modern languages. Not every school is covered by the rules as academies are exempt but most primaries are making some attempt. So, who is teaching languages in primary schools?

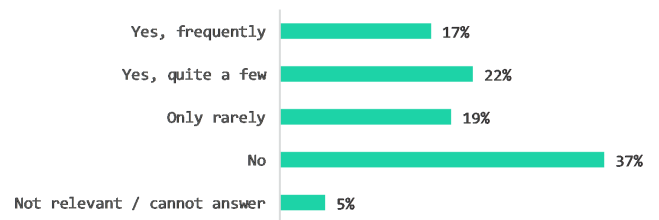


In around half of our panellists schools languages are taught by specialist teachers or teaching assistants work. In the other half, classroom teachers are expected to lead it themselves. Last week we looked at degree subjects of panellists and only around 10% of primary teachers studied languages. This doesn't mean teachers are unable to lead MFL classes. Primary teachers constantly teach subjects they didn't study for a degree. But languages do require practice to do them well, and it may be trickier to teach this subject when you are only a few steps ahead than some others. There is more for us to uncover on this one.

5. The cheapness of youth

A tweeter asked if we could find out whether schools employ inexperienced teachers specifically to reduce cost. We can't find out if this is really the intention behind decisions. But we did ask about perception. Our question was:

Do you think that your school employs inexperienced teachers specifically in order to reduce salary costs?



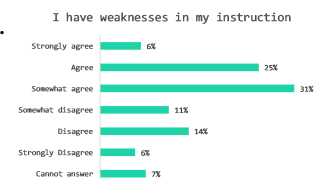
The most popular answer was that 'no', leaders did not hire inexperienced teachers because they were cheaper.

But add up all the versions of yes (frequently, a few, rarely) and it adds to 58% of panellists. ?

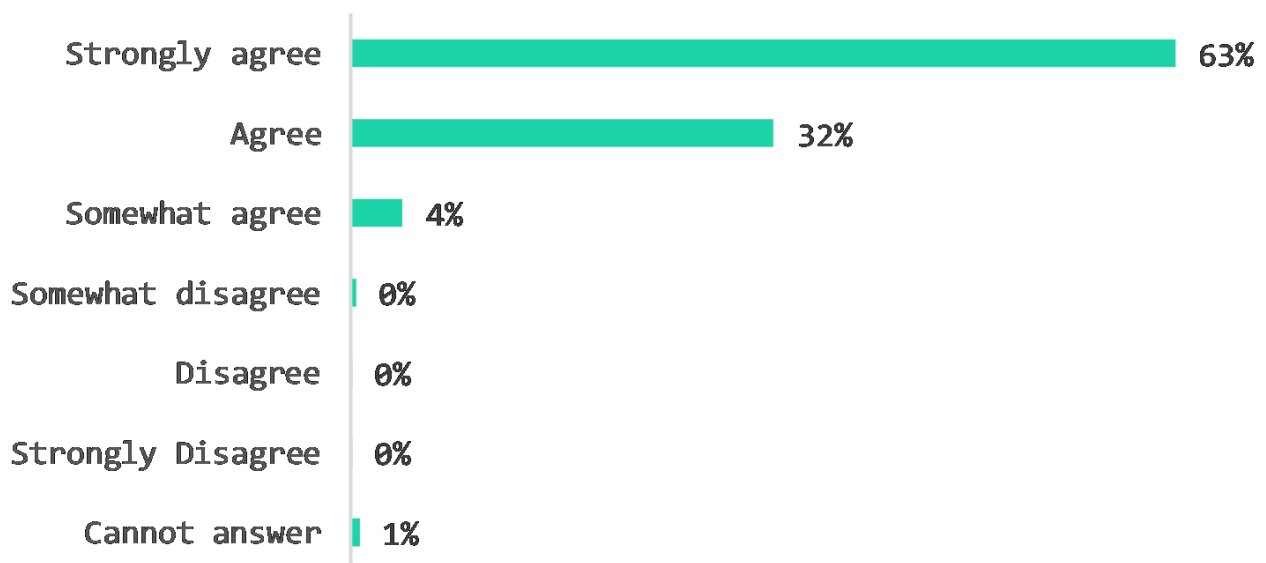
As with the long GCSE courses, it may be that leaders are making a pragmatic choice given their constraints. It's an awkward finding though. And unhelpful if you're an expensive, experienced teacher looking to move schools.

6. The power of question framing

How we phrase questions on Teacher Tapp really matters and is something we are doing little experiments on so we can figure out when quirks happen and are honest about them. For example, this week we asked two questions focused on the same issue.



I believe I have more to learn as a teacher



A whopping 96% of you either agreed or strongly agreed that you had 'more to learn as a teacher'. But only a third agreed or strongly agreed that you had weaknesses in your instruction.

And 89 of the panellists who strongly agreed you had more to learn as a teacher also disagreed you had any weakness in your instruction!

So what do you have left to learn?! We look forward to finding out!

7. And finally... We know you really, really love the Teacher Tapp tips. Thank you for sharing on twitter and facebook. Keep going!

As ever, here's your last chance to tapp last week's tips:

- [Colour-coded retrieval practice](#)
- [Workload reduction](#)
- [Instilling a love of learning](#)
- [Beyond decoding reading](#)
- [Deliberate practice for kids](#)
- [Behaviour policy and parents](#)