

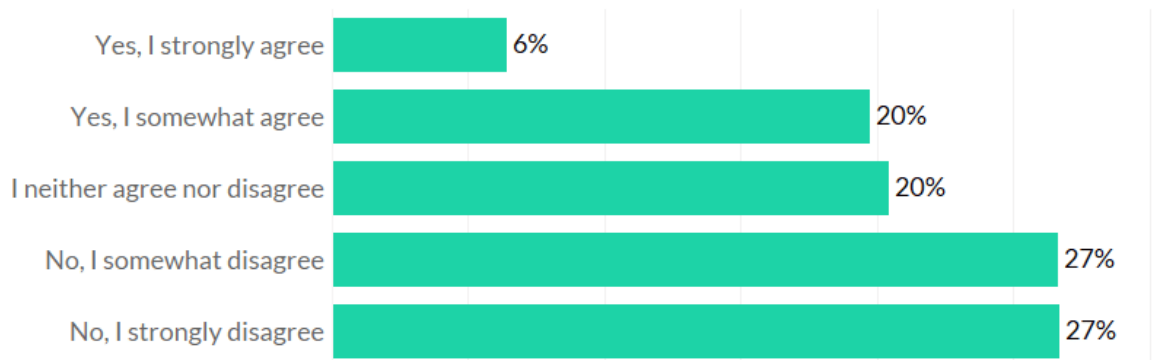
## Exam and Curriculum Change: What's the latest?

In recent weeks, schools have faced two challenges to their curriculum and assessments. First, the new Ofsted framework mentions curriculum directly, in an attempt to ensure children (particularly at primary schools) get quality education in all subjects across the curriculum. Second, the chair of parliament's education committee, Robert Halfon, has called for GCSEs to be scrapped. So far, there's no sense the government will follow his call, but the debate is back.

But, what do you, the teachers, think of these ideas?

1. You are not impressed by the idea of scrapping GCSEs

The head of the parliamentary education committee, Robert Halfon, has called for GCSEs to be scrapped. Do you agree with his idea?

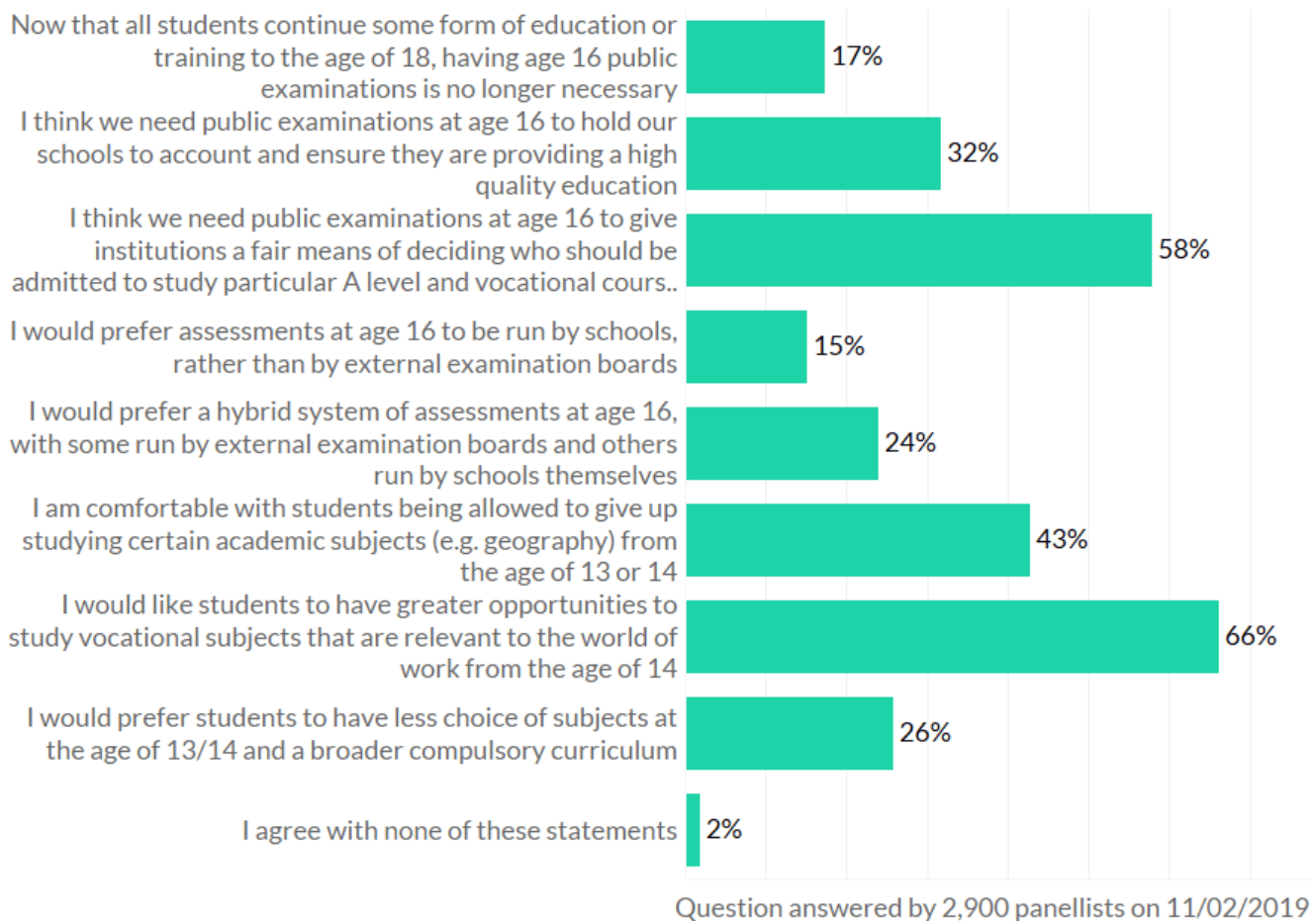


Question answered by 2,891 panellists on 11/02/2019

Only 26% of teachers even slightly agreed that GCSEs should be scrapped. Advocates of change sometimes say this is because teachers are inherently cautious of all change.

In reality, teachers have all kinds of reasons for thinking GCSEs may be important. For example, around a third of teachers (32%) felt GCSEs were an important accountability measure for schools. More than half (58%) said that exams at 16 were needed to decide who should be admitted onto A-level courses.

## Which of the following statements do you agree with? Tick as many as apply.



Not all teachers felt the same, though. (Shock, right?!)

For getting rid of exams at 16, only 10% of maths teachers agreed compared to 27% of language teachers.

When it came to exams as an important filter for who gets onto A-levels, maths and science teachers were largely in favour (upwards of 70%) whereas primary and arts teachers mostly didn't agree with this option (only around 40% ticked it).

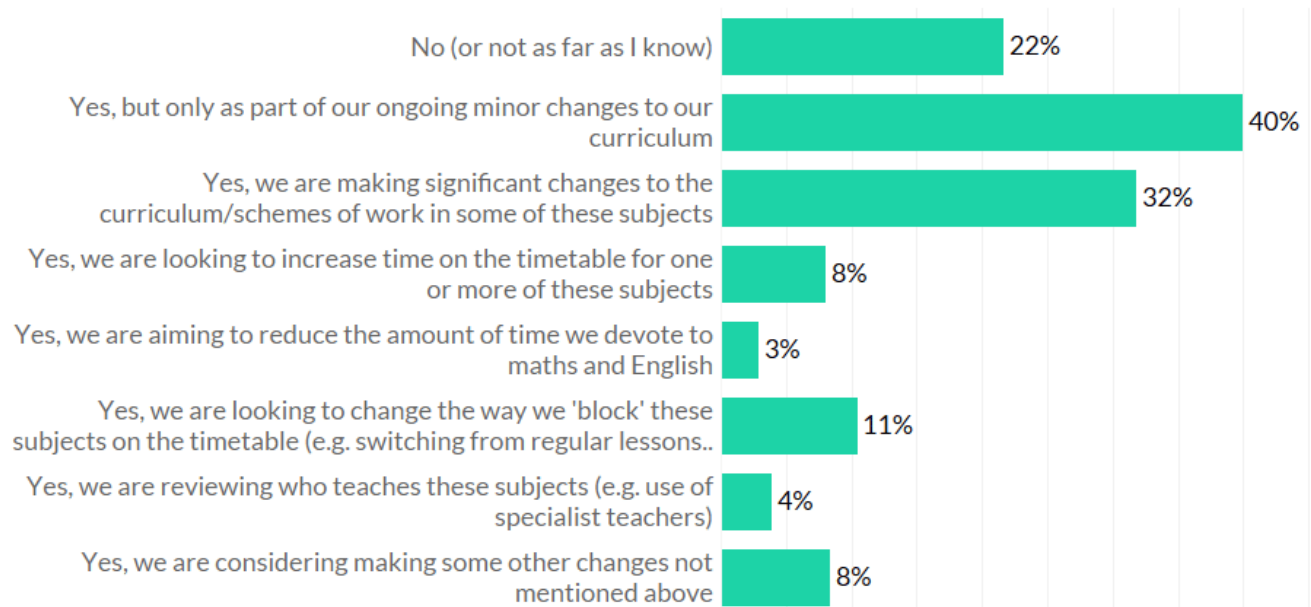
Overall, the pattern seems to be that maths and science teachers more often prefer a narrower curriculum, studied by all, but with rigorous mechanisms for weeding out pupils at 16. English, languages, and humanities teachers are more relaxed, and would prefer children to do more subject and are less inclined to believe filtering matters (though a good chunk of around 40% are still in favour of it). Note also that two in three teachers would like to see more vocational options available for pupils from the age of 14.

## 2. What Is Happening In Primary Schools?

Not only have schools inspectorate Ofsted made curriculum a central focus for the new framework, its leaders have also expressed concerns about the quality of science lessons in primary schools.

So, are schools now starting to respond? Umm... a bit?

Ofsted have expressed concerns about the quality of the primary curriculum in science and other non-tested subjects. Is your school currently reviewing how these non-tested subjects are taught? Please tick all that apply.



The data shows that 22% of schools are not doing anything about their curriculum and 40% are only doing some minor ongoing changes. So far, so dull.

BUT, around a third of schools (32%) are making significant changes, with some increasing time for subjects that aren't English and maths, and reviewing the use of specialist teachers.

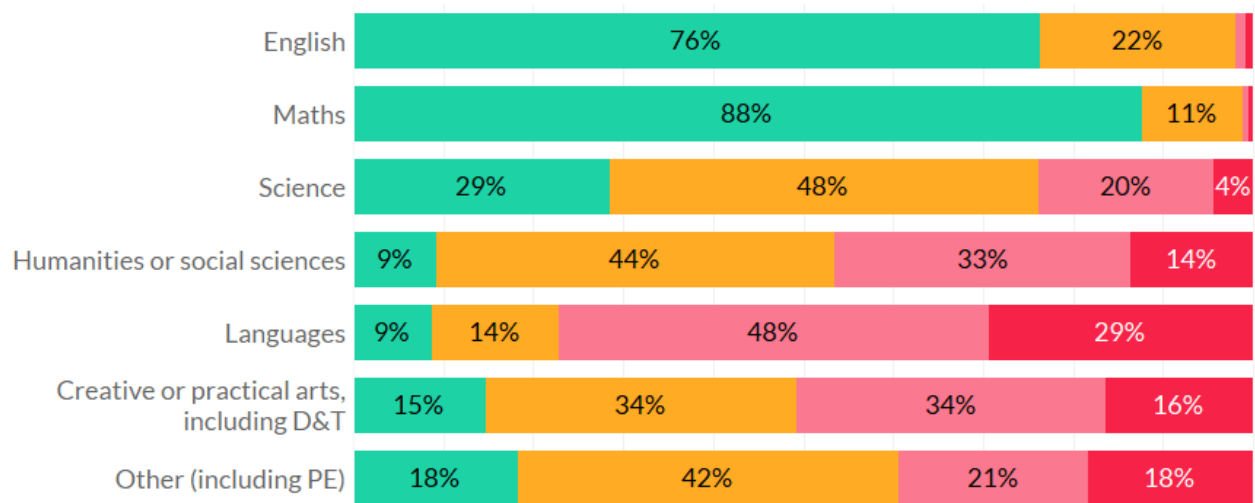
Schools rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate are particularly likely to be changing their curriculum. In all honesty, this is probably what Ofsted wanted as these are the schools they are most concerned about.

Now, here's a thought... Do secondary teachers really care whether their Year 7 pupils gained broader subject knowledge while at primary school?

3. Turns out, English and Maths teachers feel it is very important that pupils turn up with strong prior knowledge.

But everyone else? They're largely ambivalent.

Think about the main subject you teach. How important to you is it that students arrive from primary school with a strong prior knowledge in your subject?



Question answered by 1,438 panellists on 12/02/2019

Answer Text

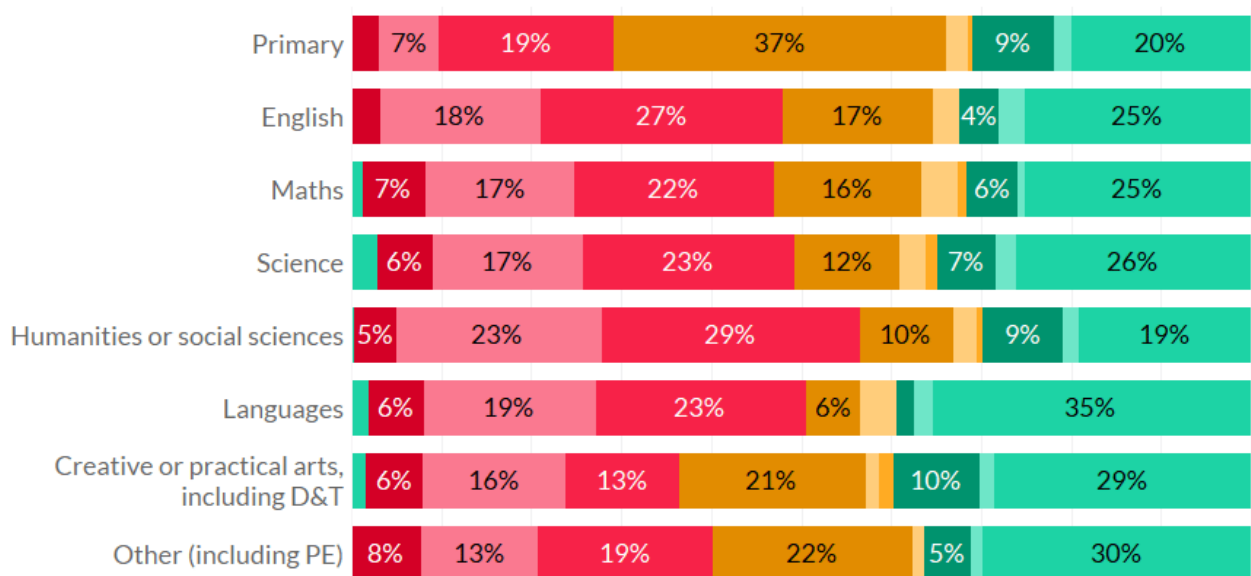
- Not at all important
- Not particularly important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

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Language teachers, in particular, don't think it's too important, presumably because the lack of agreed second language means that children can turn up from a variety of feeder schools having been taught a whole variety of languages. Which makes this next finding even more interesting...

Over a third of primary teachers would remove modern languages from their national curriculum if one had to be removed.

All these subjects are on the English National Curriculum and so should be taught in state-maintained schools. If you had to remove ONE subject from the Primary National Curriculum - what would you remove?



Question answered by 2,161 panellists on 12/02/2019

#### Answer Text

- Religious Education
- Physical Education
- Music
- History
- Geography
- Languages
- Design & Technology
- Computing
- Art
- Science

Note that the linguists don't agree! Just 6% of language teachers think it should go from the primary curriculum. Which means that even though language teachers don't think prior knowledge is all that important, they nevertheless want primary schools to keep teaching it.

Again, this shows the complexity of views on curriculum. Teachers often have beliefs that conflict with each other. Hence, policymakers typically cannot keep everyone happy.

In Sum: We've learned this week that most teachers want to keep exams at 16 AND it probably is very important that primary pupils focus on English and Maths (at least according to English and Maths secondary teachers)!

### A few other findings from this week:

A. Primary teachers praise AND reprimand pupils more in assembly

Reports in the press of an academy chain's behaviour management policies, led to several teachers on social media discussing the way teachers manage behaviours in assembly.

But what do most teachers see in assembly? It seems most primary and secondary teachers see a great deal of praise and positivity in assemblies, but also a decent chunk of pupil removals, reprimands, and 'shouting at's'.

Think of all the assemblies you have attended since the start of the academic year. Have any of the following happened during one or more of these assemblies? Tick all that apply.

|                                                                                | Primary | Secondary |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Individual students have been brought up in front of their peers for praise    | 97%     | 80%       |
| Individual students have been brought up in front of their peers for criticism | 3%      | 4%        |
| Individual students have been publicly awarded for good behaviour              | 83%     | 68%       |
| Individual students have been publicly reprimanded for poor behaviour          | 13%     | 9%        |
| You have shouted at a student in front of their peers in assembly              | 8%      | 5%        |
| You have had to remove a student from assembly for poor behaviour              | 32%     | 25%       |
| A member of SLT has shouted at a student in front of their peers in assembly   | 15%     | 18%       |
| A member of SLT has removed a student from assembly for poor behaviour         | 29%     | 35%       |
| I have attended at least one assembly but none of these has ever happened      | 4%      | 13%       |

Notably, primary teachers saw more individual students reprimanded for poor behaviour and were more likely to remove or shout at a child themselves during assembly, compared to secondary colleagues.

In secondary schools, senior leaders were more commonly involved in removals or shouting-

ats – but, overall, primary picked more behaviour issues than secondary ones.

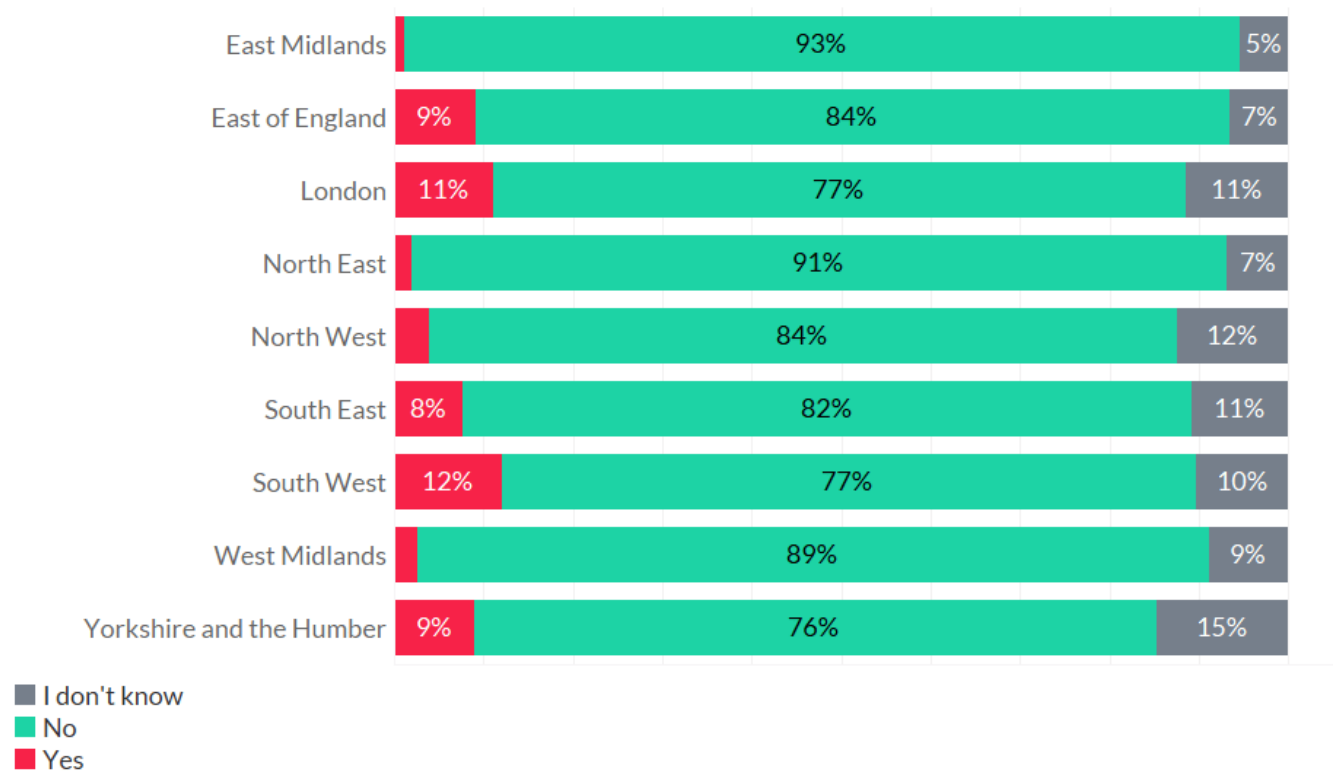
Primary schools do call pupils up for individual praise more often, though.

## B. Protests: Mass or Minor?

We've written before about the revolutionary tendencies of South West of England, as the area with the [largest number of SATs boycotters](#).

Now we find they're also the region with the highest percentage of teachers affected by pupils exercising their right to march last week. The rebels!

Were any of the students you teach absent from your lesson yesterday because they were exercising their right to march at a political protest?



Finally, finally, this week's tips...

We know you love the tips so here they are for last week:

[Retrieval practice - three experiments](#)

[Can arts boost writing AND compassion?](#)

[Teachers need to love all children \(especially the difficult\)](#)

[Behaviour Buddy Guide to Retrieval Practice](#)

[Modelling in lessons](#)

[Engelmann Tribute: The Importance of Direct Instruction](#)