

Strikes, the key to morale, 'generating evidence', observations and pay

Strikes – how are we feeling?

First up, strikes. We asked for your thoughts on the current situation. Over 4,500 of you responded – thank you. Given the high proportion of teachers who voted to strike, we weren't surprised that a majority of your comments supported action. "Up the workers!" was one favourite. Other favourable comments included a teacher who expressed "Huge support – pay and conditions have been awful for too long." Another teacher described strikes as "A necessity if we want the best for children and teachers." A fourth said it was a shame things had come to this, but that "It's about time that government listened. We can't keep being overlooked and to agree a pay rise without funding it is appalling and affects all stakeholders."

Yet many teachers tempered their support for action with worries or regrets. One Tappster put it succinctly: "Valid, necessary, but sad." Others detailed the conflicts they perceived. One said they were in "two minds": "I promote the strikes, yet equally can't afford to strike due to losing a full day's pay." Another felt it was a "hard call": "Government need to take action but children shouldn't have to suffer." Newer teachers mentioned uncertainty about what to do: one felt "Very confused what to do as an ECT in a new job!" A teacher who isn't eligible to strike told us they "really support the pay strikes on principle but it is difficult to square the impact on learners and striking teachers' pay docking in the cost of living crisis. Sympathies all round."

Some Tappsters linked their responses to broader economic and social issues. This often made them less sure about strike action: "It's hard for everybody," one wrote. Another wondered whether "strikes are helpful when so many people on low/no incomes are struggling." A third was "broadly supportive," but felt that "above inflation pay rises are not realistic in any sector at this moment in time despite the real terms loss over the years." In some cases, this was linked to the concerns of the wider school workforce. "As a 'supply' teacher," one teacher went on, "I didn't get a vote anyway as unions will not campaign for pay parity in this sector." Another teacher told us that "It's not just teachers pay it's all school staff that need to be remunerated properly."

We also asked whether you planned to switch unions due to industrial action. (A reminder: NEU members voted to strike; voting NASUWT members voted in favour of a strike, but the

turnout wasn't high enough to permit them to strike). Nationally, 16% of teachers are considering switching unions. But the proportion was highest among NASUWT members: 7% said they definitely would, 22% said they might.

We'll be doing our best to keep track of what's happening, who's doing what, and how everything pans out over the next few weeks: stay tuned!

The key(ness) to good morale

We also recently asked you to tell us why morale is high or low in your school. Iain, one of our resident analytical geniuses, has been playing around with how best to show word frequencies, and introduced us to a 'Keyness' chart. This allows us to see which words are more likely to be used to explain morale by teachers who say that morale is high, or low, in their school.

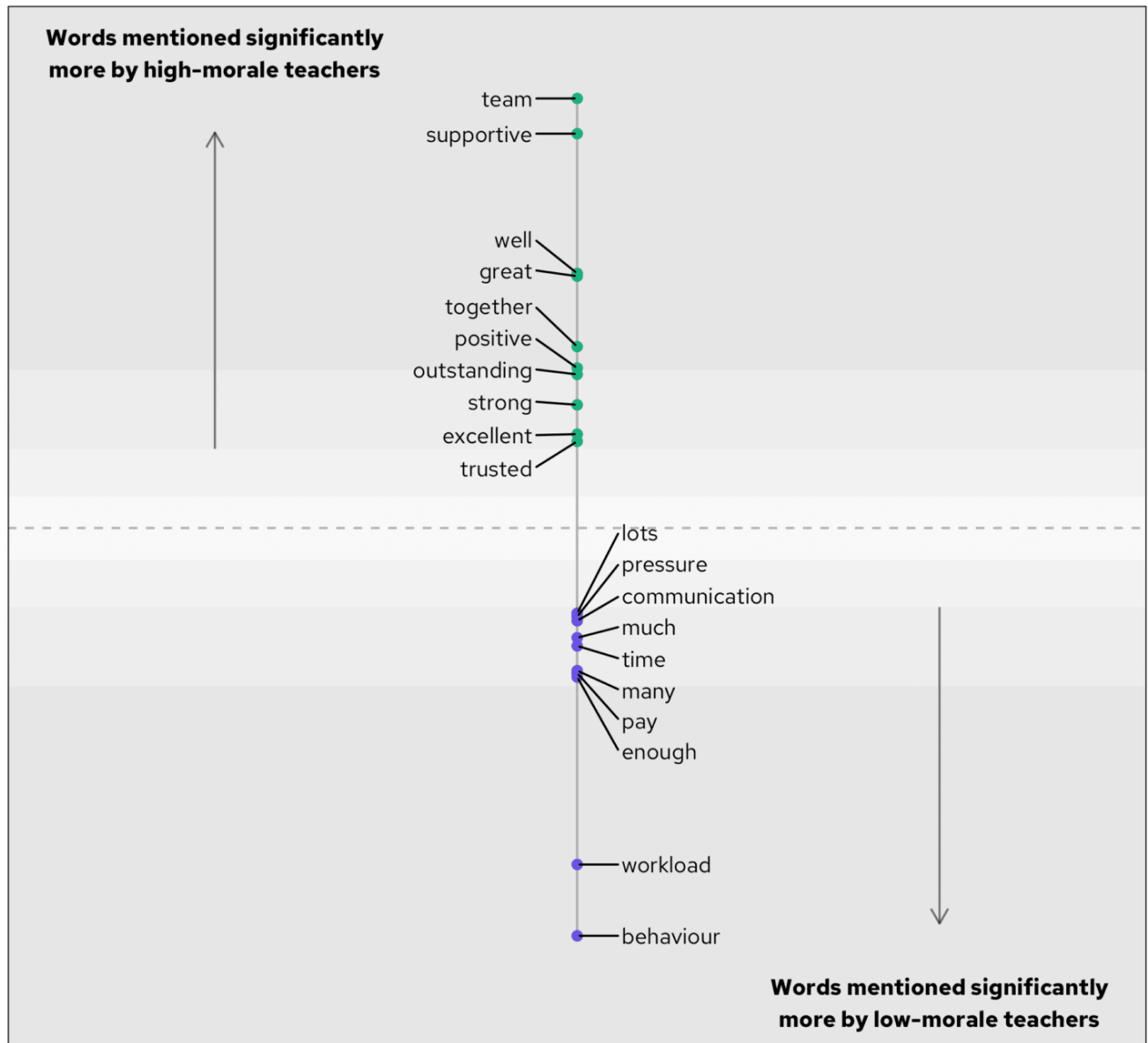
The chart is below... We find that teachers in schools with high morale use lots of synonyms of good, like excellent, strong, outstanding, great, well, and supercalifragilistic. Clearly, in schools with high morale, things are great. More revealing were three other words, they used, trusted, and - by far and away the most common words: team and supportive.

Meanwhile, teachers with low morale had a lot of synonyms for quantity: lots, much, many and enough. Presumably, the main thing they're encountering is too much of everything. They also mentioned time. Then they mentioned three concrete issues, communication and - again, standing out from the crowd - workload and behaviour.

So there we have it: be more 'great, team, supportive', and be less 'lots, workload, behaviour'. We hope the DfE are taking note.

Keyness Analysis by Morale

Keyness analysis of question "Tell us why morale is high or low in your school", crossed against teachers' responses to how morale is in their school



Generating evidence for evidence's sake...

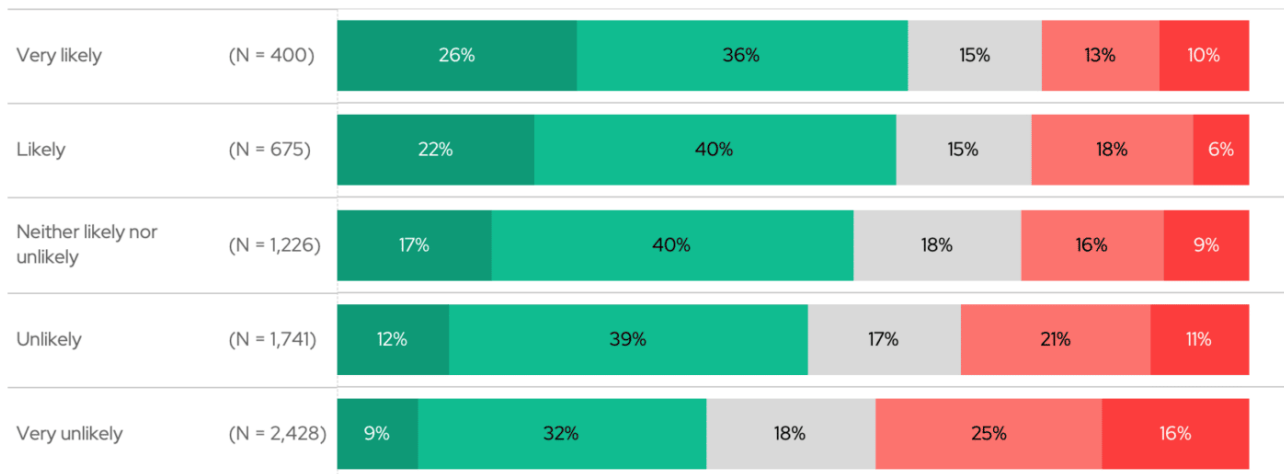
One fun (?) question we asked this week was whether or not you are expected to do things "solely for the purpose of generating evidence." Imagine our surprise that over half of you (51%) said yes, while only 32% said no. The remainder (17%) were neutral, which presumably means you're still weighing up how useful that annotated seating plan really is.

Where is this more common? Well, the lower the Ofsted grade of the school, the more likely teachers were to say they were just generating evidence. In Outstanding schools 49% of teachers (still surprisingly high) said this happened. But in Ofsted 3/4-rated schools, this figure reached 57%!

But presumably there are great reasons for generating all this evidence, and teachers buy into them wholeheartedly? In December, we asked how likely a teacher was to plan to *leave* their

school at the end of this year. The next chart shows what happens when we compare your answers. We found teachers who spend more time generating evidence are more likely to intend to leave their school at the end of this year. As ever, this isn't causal – there are no doubt other reasons for quitting. Still, we'd encourage leaders to consider this before issuing the next five-page pupil premium enhancement strategy audit for staff to complete in quadruplicate.

**How likely is it that you will leave your school at the end of this academic year? (down) versus
In my school, I am expected to do things solely for the purpose of generating evidence (across)**



Question answered by 6,470 teachers on 26/12/2022 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



Lesson Observations

On the subject of things which might make you want to leave your school, we asked again about graded lesson observations. Thankfully, the practice of grading lessons has fallen off a cliff, which your author tends to think is where it belongs. So while 28% of teachers said this happened in their school in 2018, this week, it has fallen to just 10%. Intriguingly, the proportion of teachers saying the school doesn't grade observations hasn't changed much (5% now, 6% back in 2018). Entertainingly though, the (small proportion of) teachers who liked graded lessons were the most convinced their school's observation process was helping them to become a better teacher. While 63% of teachers who like getting graded observations say observations are helping; only 40% of teachers who don't get graded observations say they're helping. Perhaps we should generate some more evidence around this?

And finally...

Gillian Keegan (this term's education secretary) suggested this week that we might consider paying teachers of shortage subjects more. We asked whether you thought this would be a good thing, mentioning two shortage subjects (maths and physics). Only 15% of teachers were in favour of this. But guess which teachers were most in favour? Mathematicians and scientists! Even those who stood to benefit couldn't muster a majority in favour though: just

46% of mathematicians and 44% of scientists thought it was a good idea.

Daily reads

We know you love our blogs, so...

The most read blog post of the week was [what is Question-Level Analysis really useful for?](#)

Other posts last week were:

- [What's your core curriculum system?](#)
- [How analogies can promote learning!](#)
- [Is promoting a growth mindset worth it?](#)
- [Are students getting better at cognitive science?](#)
- [There are lots of ways to dislike school!](#)