

Ofsted, your colleagues and a return of GCSE coursework

As we approach the Easter holidays, it's normal for teachers to feel a little bit more exhausted than usual. In fact, the proportion of teachers who reported enjoying their work this week fell to 61%, the lowest for this academic year so far. While this may be disheartening for some, it's important to remember that this is a common feeling at this time of year. With the Easter break just around the corner, let's take a moment to reflect on the challenges facing the profession before our well-deserved rest.

Imagine there's no Ofsted... (It's easy if you try...)

At the weekend, we asked what you immediately stop doing if the government announced the abolition of Ofsted and promised no inspections for at least a decade. Interestingly, one-in-five of you said you would change nothing, suggesting that many don't believe their teaching practices are influenced by Ofsted inspections.

However, a quarter of you didn't mention particular tasks, rather you would stop worrying, feeling stressed, or losing sleep at night, indicating that the stress and anxiety associated with inspections is a significant burden for many of you. Another one-in-ten said you would stop some sort of paperwork, suggesting that inspections lead to excessive administrative workloads.

Looking more closely at the responses of headteachers, the majority stated that they would stop worrying, stressing, and feeling anxious about Ofsted inspections. They also mentioned that they would stop doing pointless paperwork, updating the SEF, and collecting evidence just for Ofsted purposes. Several headteachers also stated that they would focus more on the children's education and school improvement tasks. Some headteachers mentioned that they would continue to maintain high standards and keep everything the same, but with less pressure.

Taking a closer look at activities that would be stopped in schools currently judged as Requires Improvement or Inadequate, primary classroom teachers often mentioned work related to keeping students' books looking good, such as stamping for verbal feedback and sticking in photographs of practical lessons. This is a common response from a primary headteacher:

"Collecting and updating evidence in the detailed SEF that we keep ready for the call. Rehearsing conversations we might have with hypothetical inspectors. Keeping my diary clear on Monday and Tuesday mornings"

Secondary classroom teachers in RI/inadequate schools also mentioned a range of activities they would stop doing. Some mentioned what we might perceive as outdated fads, such as target grades on all books or a push on increased marking for PP students. Others mentioned new fads, for example:

“Adjusting curriculum intents with gibberish about what we want students knowing and redoing curriculum seq into pretty maps and to a fixed template. Having countless spreadsheets for random things.”

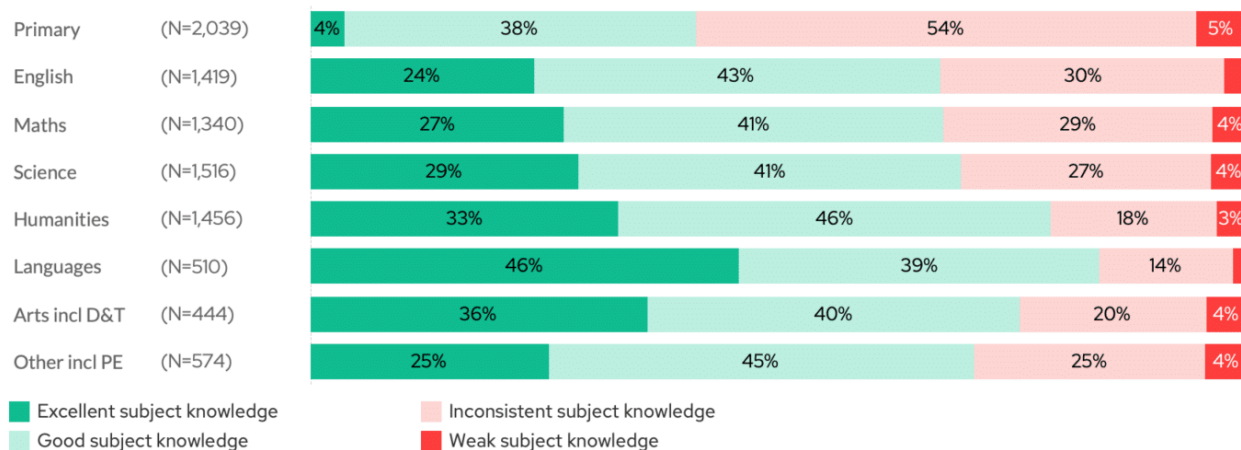
What would your teaching colleagues say about you?

As educators, we all want to work in an environment where we can thrive and grow as professionals. This week, we asked teachers across primary and secondary schools about their perceptions of their colleagues, and the results were encouraging.

The majority of respondents reported a strong working relationship with their colleagues and felt that their school or department provided a supportive environment for professional growth. However, when it came to subject knowledge, opinions were more mixed.

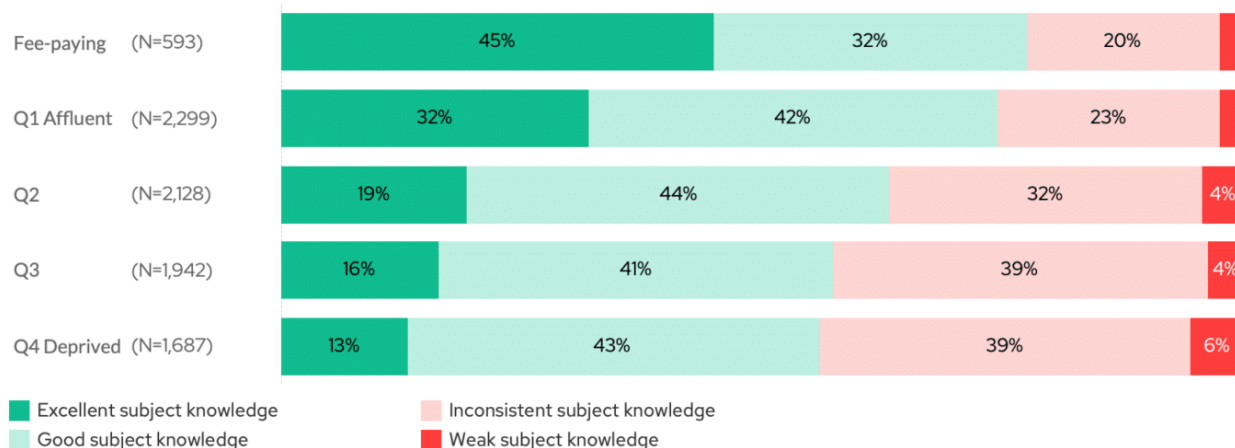
Many teachers felt that their colleagues had inconsistent or weak subject knowledge, with teachers of English, math, and science being less positive. Interestingly, language teachers had more consistently positive perceptions of their colleagues' subject knowledge.

For teachers in your school (primary) / department (secondary), what is your perceptions of their subject knowledge?



But perhaps the most concerning finding was the social gradient in responses. Teachers in private and low free school meal (FSM) schools were more positive about their colleagues' subject knowledge than those in high FSM schools. This is consistent with the evidence that high FSM schools have more difficulty employing teachers with the correct subject specialism and tend to have higher turnover rates.

For teachers in your school (primary) / department (secondary), what is your perceptions of their subject knowledge?



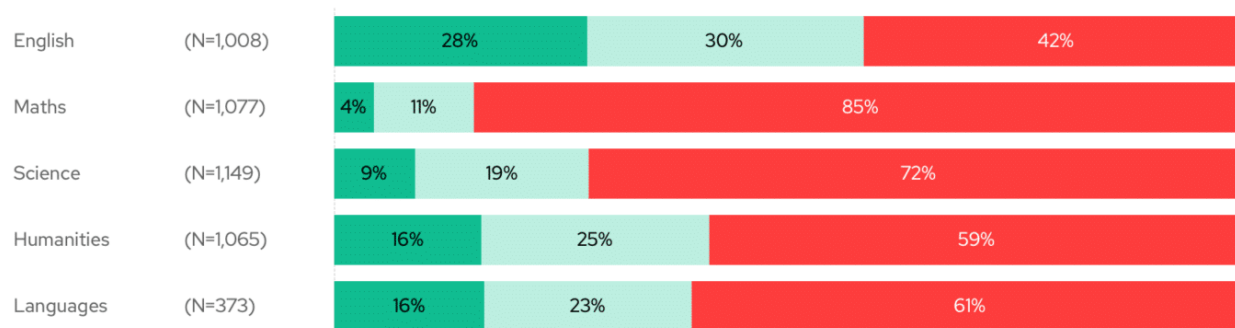
Is it Time to Bring Back GCSE Coursework?

The introduction of linear GCSEs in 2015 marked the end of an era for coursework in many subjects. But with a new generation of teachers who haven't experienced preparing classes for coursework, is it time to re-consider its value?

To find out, we asked teachers which subjects they would like to see the return of coursework in. Unsurprisingly, the response was mixed. However, it's clear that teachers are overwhelmingly against the return of coursework, especially in subjects like maths.

Of course, there are exceptions. English teachers are more willing to re-consider GCSE coursework, with nearly 30% wanting to see its return and a further 30% willing to consider it. (NB. We've excluded the arts, PE, and other small subjects from this chart since many of these already have coursework or practical assessments in place.)

For the main subject you teach, would you like there to be an assessed coursework component at GCSE?



Question answered by 5,137 teachers on 25/03/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



While the debate over the merits of coursework vs. exams will likely continue, it's important that we allow subjects to take different approaches to GCSE assessment.

And finally...

The most read tip this week was: [Don't upset the ecosystem](#)

And here are the rest for your reference:

- [Choosing where to deploy teachers](#)
- [How to achieve disruption free lessons](#)
- [Understanding forgetting](#)
- [Autonomy versus time](#)
- [No more marks?](#)
- [Doing fewer things better](#)