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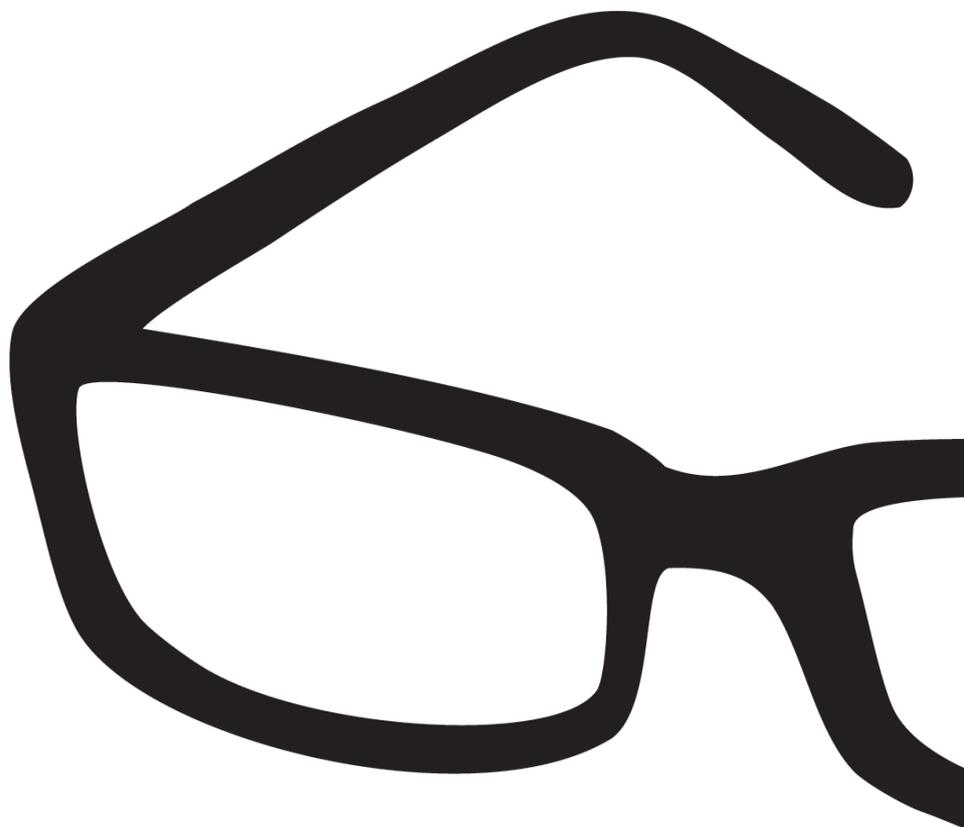
# Implementing the 2014 Primary Curriculum

How are schools tackling the challenge?

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## Executive Summary

### **Are primary schools ready to start teaching curriculum 2014 from September? Will schemes of work continue to evolve?**

With the revised primary curriculum due to be rolled out in September 2014, Schoolzone aimed to find out how ready schools are for the change. Of the teachers asked, 46% had chosen to phase in the programme of study, predominantly for years 3 and 4. The remainder were waiting until September to put the changes into full swing, except for a small 5% of schools in special circumstances who did not intend to adopt the 'new' curriculum.

The general feeling from teachers was one of excitement coupled with apprehension. Respondents echoed each other's comments about exercising more freedom to meet the learner's needs using the thematic, cross-curricular methods of delivery that they have become accustomed to in recent years, with 78% already sure that they would teach with this approach. A greater emphasis on flexible and tailored sequences of lessons will likely lead to the redundancy of the more prescriptive and 'scripted' schemes of work previously relied upon such as QCA.

### **How confident do they feel about implementing a curriculum that meets the needs of their pupils and Ofsted?**

Although 70% of teachers say that they are confident about putting in place a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils and Ofsted, they're not quite sure how they'll do it with little support, a punitive (or so teachers believe) Ofsted regime, and no budgets to invest in training or new resources. Areas of the curriculum which teachers have tried and tested, such as English, are likely to see less change and higher levels of confidence. However, with 61% anticipating a change of more than half of their maths curriculum, it is likely that teachers will be less confident in providing Ofsted-ready lessons which also meet the needs of their pupils.

### **Which of the new freedoms are they exercising?**

The prospect of delivering personalised sequences of learning which match the needs of the children they teach, rather than delivering content based on a fixed year-group objectives is greeted with enthusiasm by many. 77% of teachers agreed that they would move content around between year groups, although unsurprisingly this is more likely for the foundation subjects than English and Maths. Teachers are therefore more likely to seek planning and assessment guidance based around skills progression rather than support which is specific to year groups.

### **How much of their existing curriculum are they retaining?**

Whilst teachers are positive about the new changes that the curriculum will bring, they are keen to maintain aspects of the 'old' curriculum – keeping what they know works well.

In English, 62% of respondents anticipated keeping over half of their existing curriculum. On closer analysis of their responses, retaining their use of genre and delivery of SPaG featured most commonly, although teachers were keen to ensure that the genres link to the topic of study where possible. It is clear that whilst teachers want to integrate English to the topic-led curriculum, they also want to maintain a sense of structure over English skills, which is unsurprising given the pressure on progress and attainment.

In Maths, teachers expect to keep the overall structure and coverage, but they anticipate delivering the same concepts to younger children due to the much higher expectations, specifically in areas of 'number' and 'problem solving'. Again, this is unsurprising given the greater pressure on progress and attainment.

Across the foundation subjects, teachers anticipate a shift in coverage, most notably in areas of History, Geography and ICT. They are keen to maintain topics such as Ancient Egypt, Romans, Greeks and WW2 which they know work well. This demonstrates that using topics which engage and ignite the children's enthusiasm is at the heart of what teachers want to carry forward to the new curriculum.

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## Profiling summary

In total, 415 primary school teachers took part in this survey, of whom 320 teach in schools in England. For the purposes of this report, responses from teachers outside England were suppressed. Respondents taught at schools across England, although there is a skewing towards those in the South East, reflecting a higher population density overall in this region.

Three quarters teach in primary schools. Twelve percent teach in junior schools and 7% in Infant schools.

Two thirds of respondents teach at Local Authority controlled schools, just under a fifth at voluntary aided, 9% at Academies, and 7 % work at independent schools.

Nineteen percent of respondents said that their school's Ofsted rating was 'Excellent'; fifty nine percent said it was 'good'. This is closely aligned with the latest official statistics, which show that on the 31<sup>st</sup> March, the proportion of schools judged good or outstanding in their most recent inspection was 79%<sup>1</sup>.

Just under half the respondents were classroom teachers; a fifth were deputy or assistant heads; 6 percent were Heads, and 15% were subject specialists.

Six out of 10 had been teaching for 11 years or longer.

A full analysis of profiling charts is set out in Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/latest-official-statistics-maintained-school-inspections-and-outcomes>

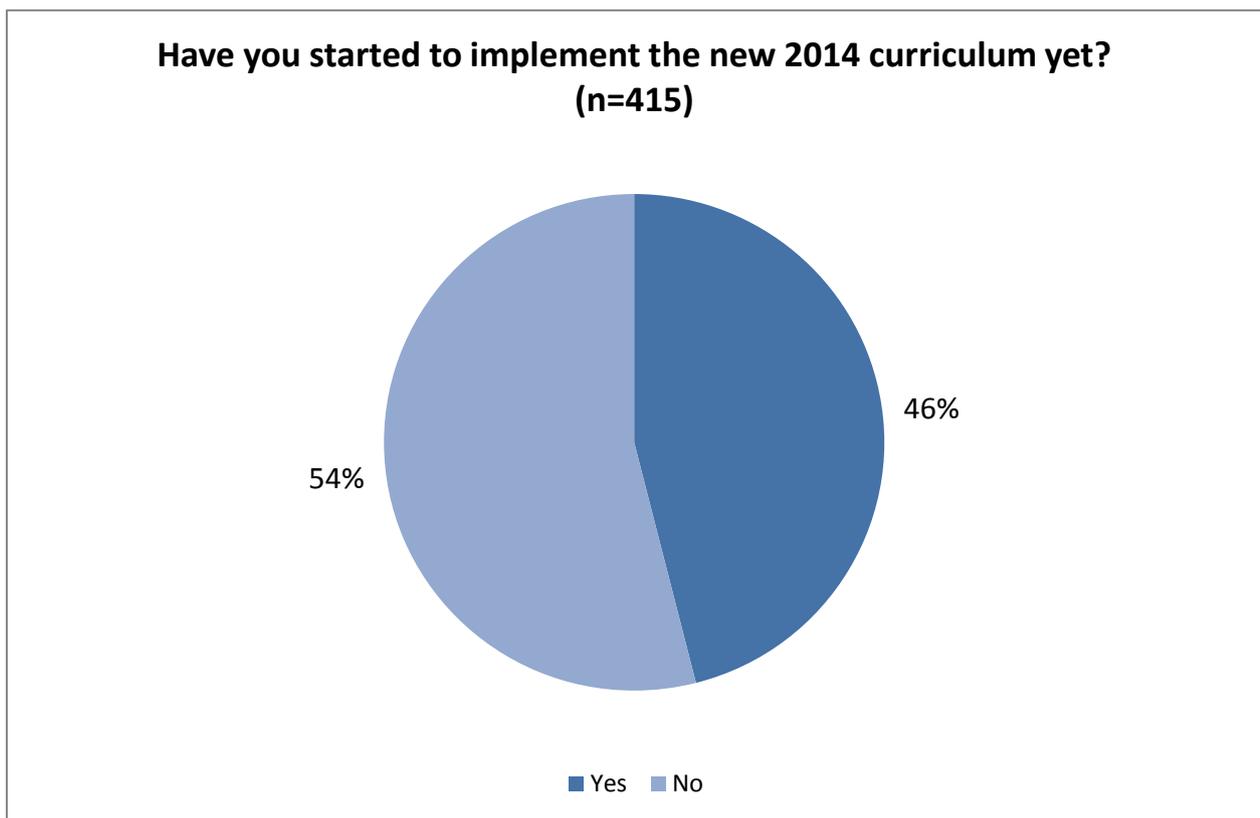
## Curriculum 2014: Implementation

With the official launch date of September 2014 looming at the time of this survey in April, the crucial question was to establish where schools were on their journey to implementation. Unlike previous 'launches', this one has been staggered: schools were given the option of starting to teach the new curriculum to years 3 & 4 in 2013/14, and will continue to teach the 'old' curriculum to the Y2 & 6 cohorts in 2013/14, as they will be taking the 'old' SATs tests.

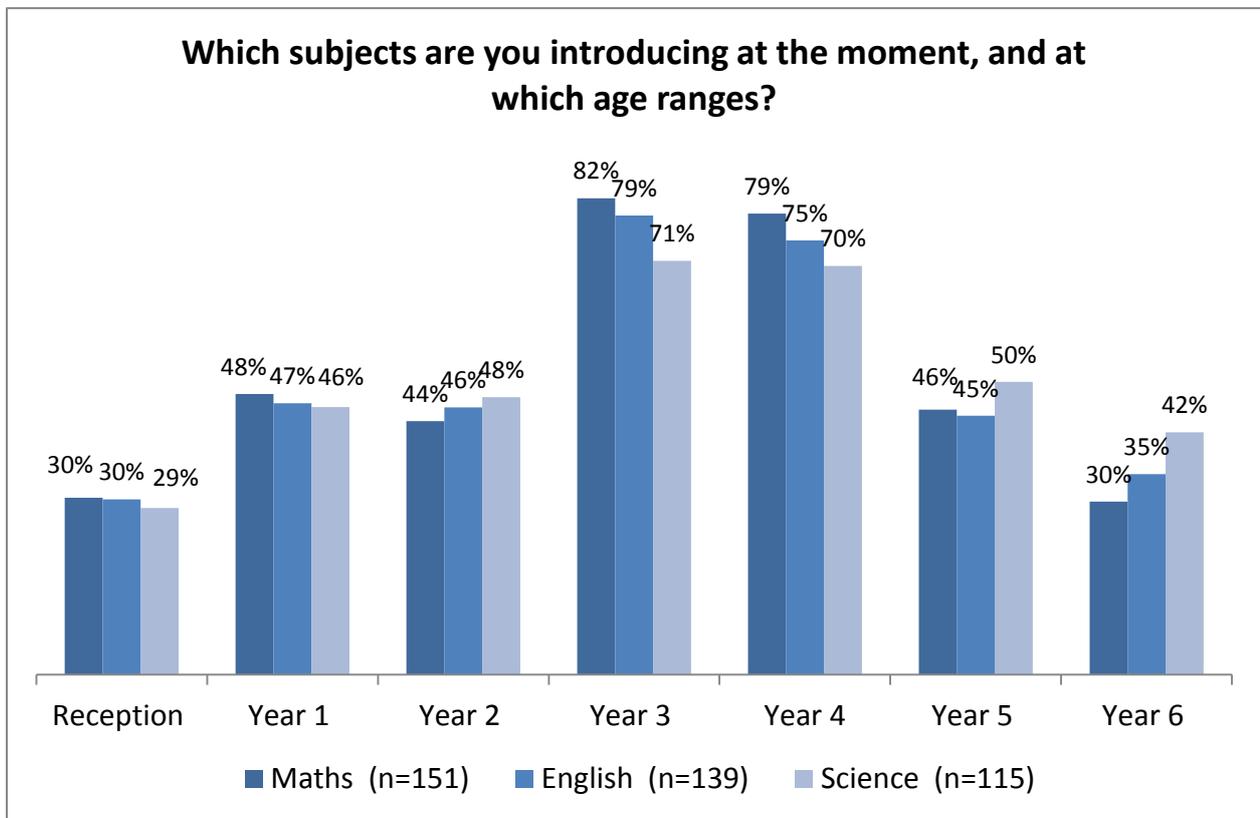
As responses show, schools have taken advantage of this flexibility, with some choosing to start rolling out the curriculum sooner. However, lack of certainty amongst a large number of teachers over fairly fundamental decisions such as the choice to build their new curriculum around topics indicates that at this point in time, many are still clearly some way off designing their new curriculum.

### Progress towards implementation of the new curriculum

Just under half of schools in England have started to launch their new curriculum. These teachers (190) were asked which subjects and year groups they were currently rolling out.



## Subjects and year groups



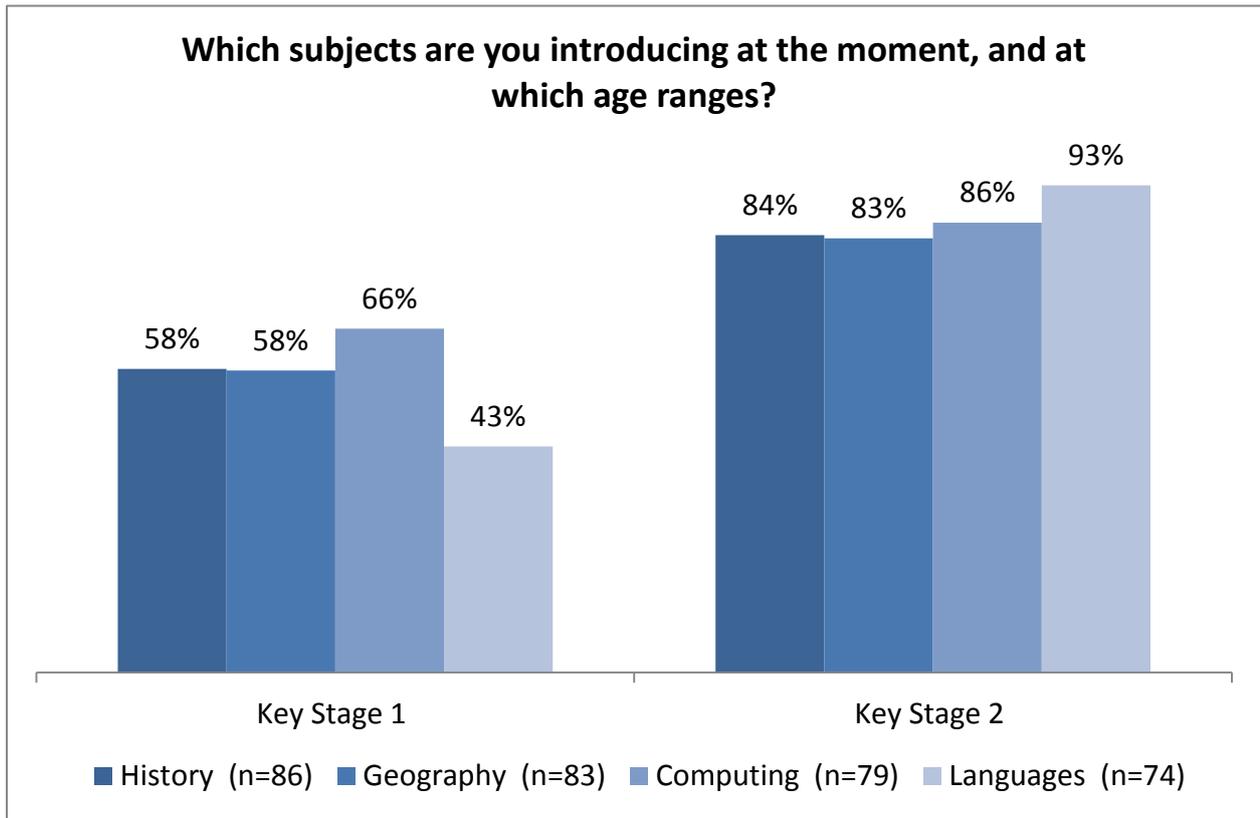
Unsurprisingly, with the old curriculum disappplied for Y3 & 4 as these will be the first year groups to take the new SATs tests, schools are most likely to be leading with these year groups. Although only marginally so, schools are slightly more likely to be launching their maths curriculum before their English or Science curriculum.

Surprisingly, in spite of the current Y5 & 6 groups being tested via the 'old' SATs system, some schools are rolling out the new curriculum across these years, too.

### Foundation subject rollout

Schools are prioritising KS2 ahead of KS1 for foundation subjects, although with computing representing the greatest step change, this subject is a slightly higher priority than other subjects at KS1. Although languages aren't becoming compulsory for KS1, it's worth noting that 30 respondents are introducing it amongst lower year groups.

Of the languages being introduced at Primary level, French is the most popular choice, with 212 of 262 schools opting to teach it, compared with only 37 opting for Spanish, the next most popular choice.



## Intentions to introduce the new curriculum

Those who hadn't yet started to introduce the new curriculum were asked whether they intended to do so in September.

Only 5% said that they did not; these were special schools or those in unusual circumstances.

All who indicated that they intended to introduce the new curriculum were asked whether would start teaching all subjects from September 2014. Of these, 9% (17 respondents) said that they would not introduce all; these were most likely to prioritise Y5, and least likely to prioritise Reception and Y2 – but this is a very small sub set of data. In other words, most who have not yet started to roll out the new curriculum, plan to launch it across all subjects and year groups from September 2014, with a small handful of exceptions from special schools, independents and schools in a state of flux, such as a change in senior management.

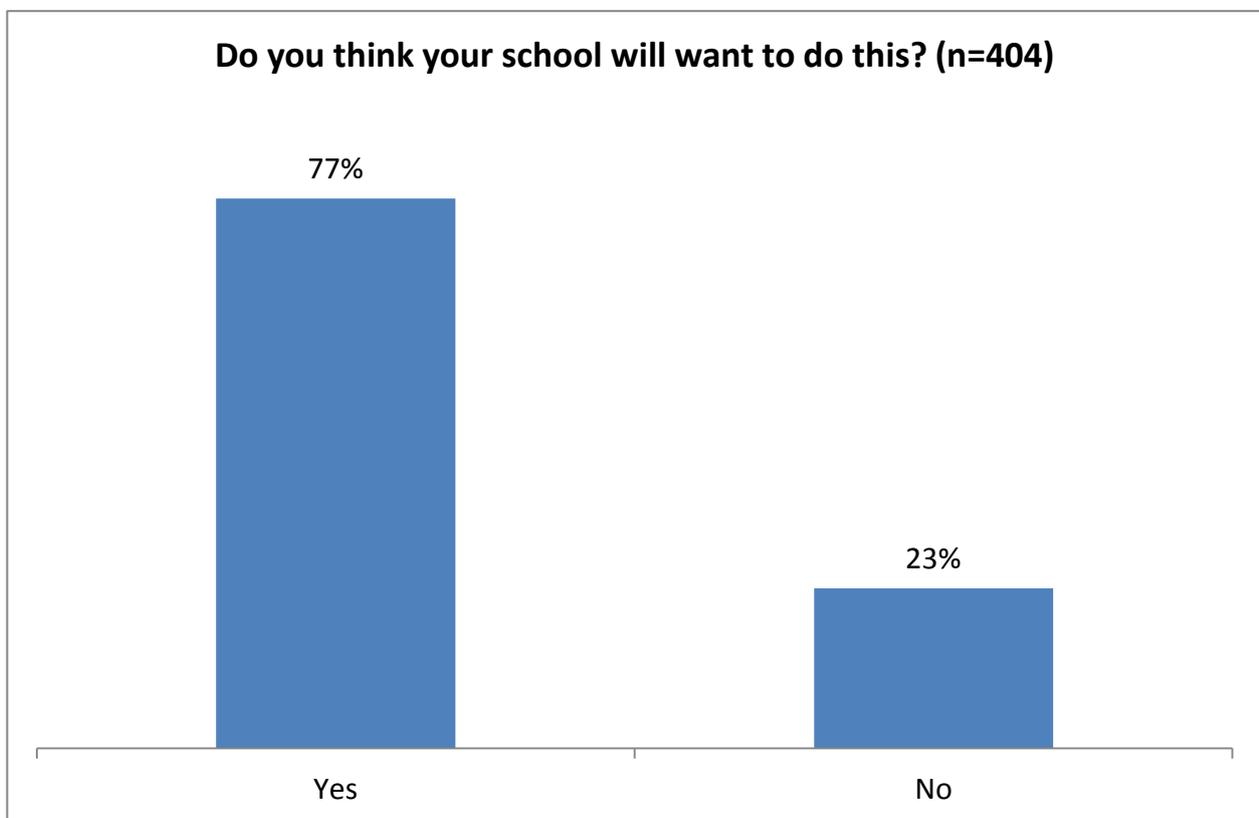
## Taking advantage of greater freedom

One of the changes to the new curriculum is the greater freedom: as long as schools cover all the learning objectives by the end of each key stage, the content and learning objectives can be moved between year groups. This greater level of flexibility is built into the English programmes of study, with the KS2 curriculum organised around paired year groups, i.e. Y3&4; Y5&6. We were interested in finding out how many schools planned to exercise this option to personalise the sequence of learning.

As this shows, nearly three quarters of respondents anticipate doing so.

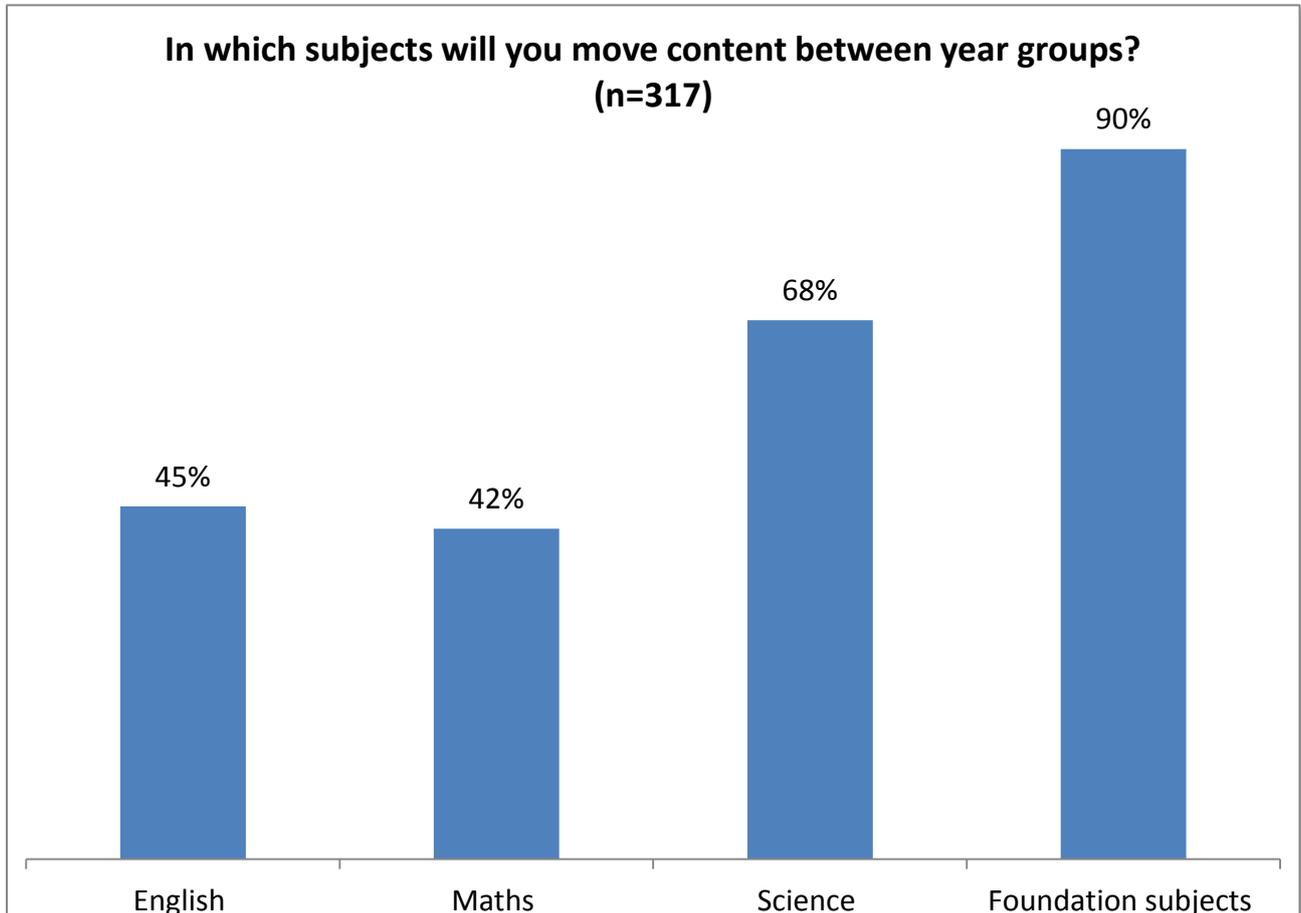
### Moving content across year groups

Over three quarters of schools think that they will move content around between year groups:



## Subjects likely to see greatest flexibility

Teachers feel most confident about moving content around in the Foundation Subjects, and least likely to exercise this flexibility for Maths and English, the SATs subjects.



## Fluency and mastery

The new programmes of study (particularly maths) also emphasise the need to ensure that children do not progress until they have achieved complete fluency of new concepts and learning. As an alternative to 'setting' children within a class, we were interested whether any schools were considering arranging classes by the level at which children were working, rather than by age group.

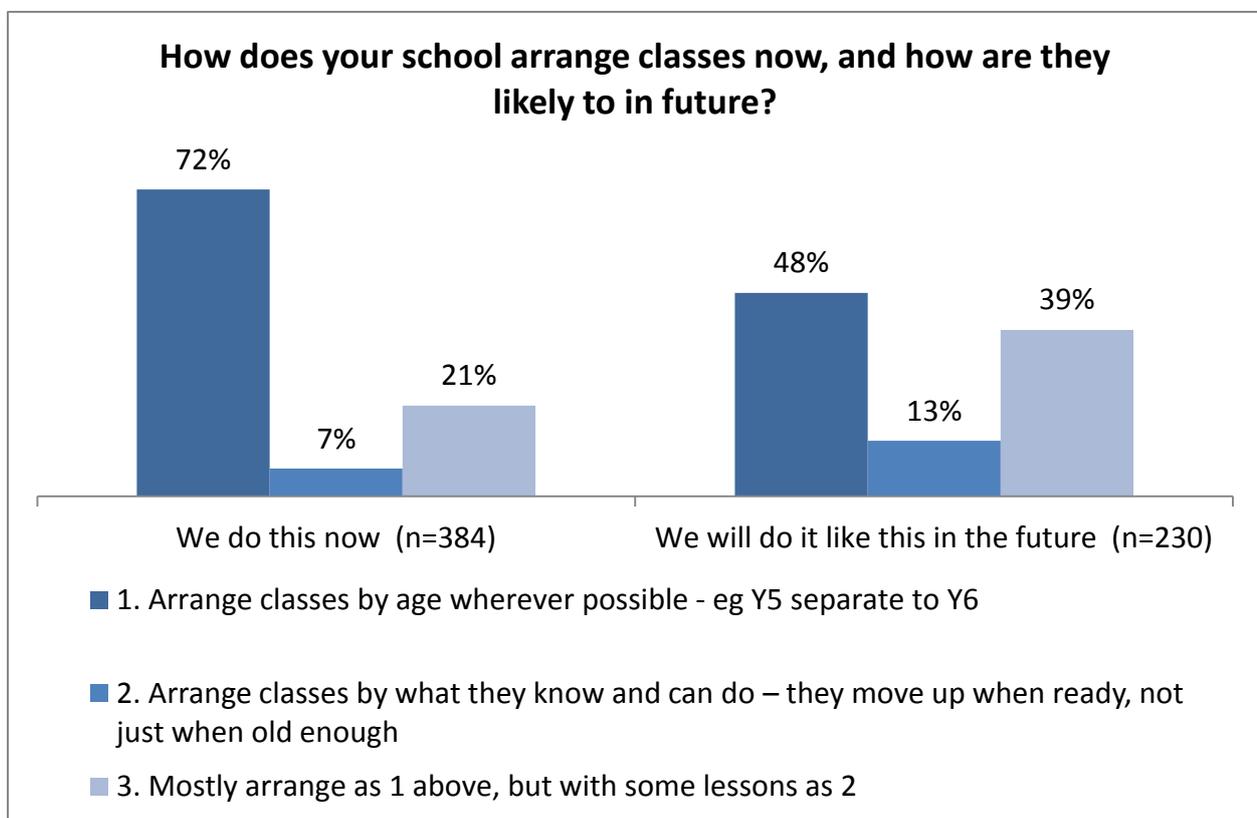
Teachers were asked: "There's also greater flexibility to teach classes according to how well they have grasped the content and skills rather than by how old the children are. How does your school arrange classes now, and how are they likely to in the future?"

This chart suggests that although most schools currently organise classes by year group (72%), in the future, more will arrange some classes on the basis of the level at which children are working. When asked which subjects they felt were most appropriate to organise by level rather than age, nearly all in favour of this approach (93%) felt that this was most appropriate for maths. This reflects the new emphasis in the maths Programme of Study. In total 134 of respondents

to this survey anticipated organising maths by level of learning not age. 96 thought that they would adopt this approach for English. Few will do so for Science and the Foundation Subjects.

Of those who expect to organise by level not age, nearly two thirds thought that the age range in classes would not be greater than 1-2 years, although a quarter felt the range could be up to 3 years, and 14% thought it could be wider than three years (although this is a small subset of data which in fact equates to only 8 teachers believing that they could accommodate more than three years age difference in a class).

The new Assessment and Accountability measures introduce the concept of 'secondary ready', setting the expectation that children should achieve an 'aspirational' target of 85% achieving the equivalent of level 4b in their KS2 SATs. Anecdotally, we have heard some teachers extrapolate this concept downwards, for example talking about 'Y3 ready'. This idea of 'readiness' goes hand in hand with fluency and mastery, and raises the possibility that if children aren't 'ready' to progress to the next level, they should perhaps not progress up through the school, although culturally there is widespread and endemic resistance to holding children back. It will be interesting to see whether this changes.



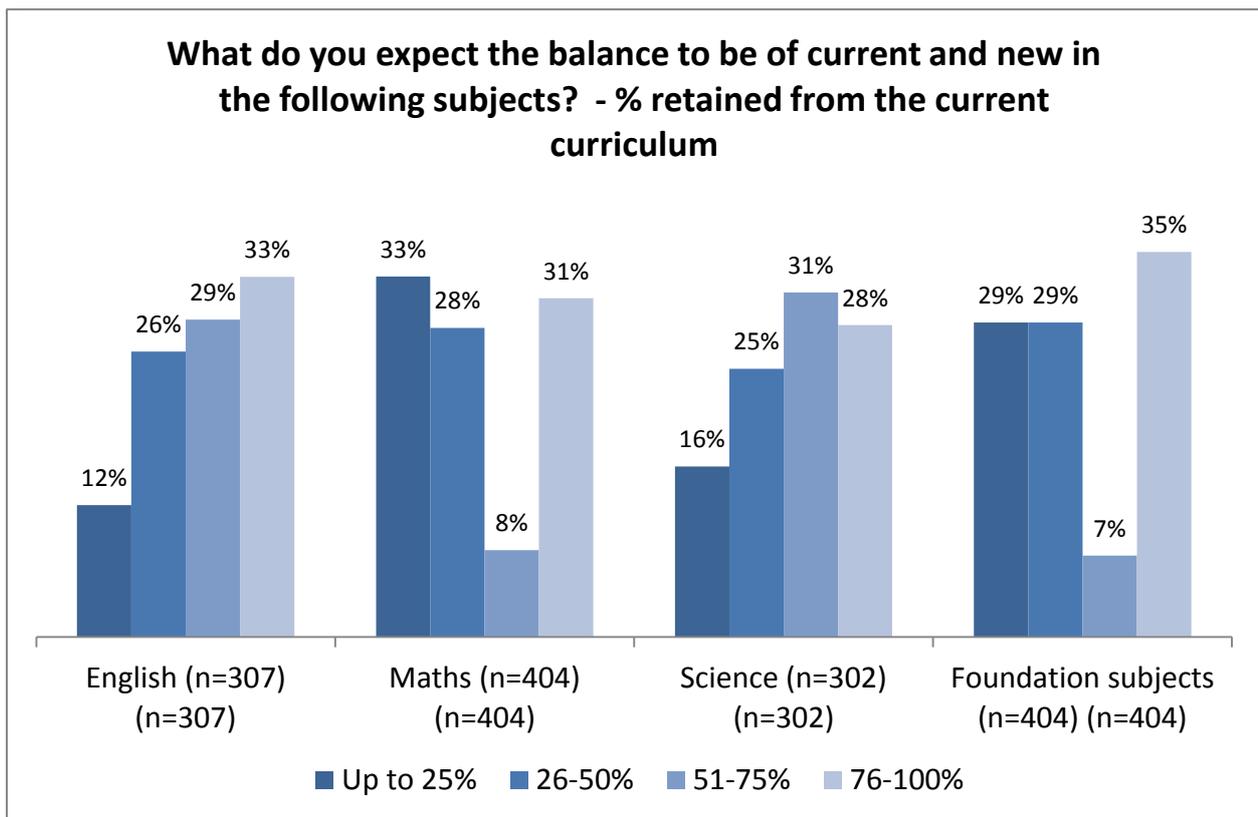
## Retention of current curriculum

Schools are being encouraged to build on the strengths of their current curriculum, retaining what works and improving on aspects that could be better.

As the chart below shows, this message has been taken on board, with a third of respondents indicating that three quarters or more of their current curriculum will be retained in their new curriculum, across all subjects. Maths is most likely to see the greatest level of change, with a third of respondents saying that they will need to replace at least 75% of this. 61% of respondents anticipate reworking more than half of their maths curriculum, while only 38% expect the same level of change for English.

Teachers are far more confident that their English curriculum is relevant, in line with the needs of their pupils, and delivers on the new objectives, than they are with any other subject.

For publishers, this indicates that schools are far more likely to buy in a whole sale solution for maths than for English, which is far more likely to see niche purchasing in areas of need. Based around other Schoolzone consultations, these are likely to be around the area of SPaG.



Teachers were able to detail aspects of their current curriculum they wanted to retain, with 84 commenting on English. A closer analysis of these responses showed that of the 84 who cited English, 10 specified their preference towards teaching genres. However, respondents often noted that the genres covered must have topical relevance and were adapted as needed to fit with the new English requirements.

***"We will follow the new curriculum fully but will keep some of the same themes as they fit well. Our Literacy will be SPaG based and the genres will be creative based - as it is now, but the new objectives will be followed."***

Twelve also commented that they wanted to retain their current methods of teaching grammar within English lessons, indicating that although English is becoming more topic-led, core skills in SPaG should be embedded. It is important therefore that there is relevant guidance and support to navigate teachers towards progression of core English skills, as the Literacy Strategy did previously.

Fifty teachers commented on aspects of the Maths curriculum that they would like to keep. A more detailed look at these responses revealed that teachers want to retain the effective strategies that they have developed for teaching 'number', such as the use of models and images, as well as the high level of differentiation now implemented. That said; teachers appear aware that their current maths curriculum will require some adaptation to ensure that it provides

opportunities for investigation and problem solving, which is placed with higher emphasis in the new programme of study. It is likely that the Numeracy Strategy is no longer a suitable tool for supporting teachers in the delivery of maths skills due to the change in emphasis of number and problem and also the change in expectations.

***"In maths we are already differentiating greatly and using models and images to teach concepts and skills. We will continue to do this and further develop the higher order thinking required by the new curriculum"***

Further analysis of what respondents wanted to retain found that they believed their current use of a creative, topic-based approach was strong, with 88 teachers alluding to it.

***"We will want to retain many of the topics that we have taught before - especially the ones we know have been well received by the children in the past; however we are also keen to introduce topics the children would like to learn. Many of the topics are History/Geography/Science based."***

There is an assurance amongst teachers that the topics they have worked hard to develop over recent years are led by the children's interests and are successful in the classroom. Coupled with this is the view that they are able to draw on their skills and knowledge of what works, to develop new topics that meet the needs of the new curriculum.

When asked to identify which subjects required the greatest improvements, 66 respondents mentioned Maths, History 43, Science and Computing 33, and 32 commented on SPaG. Many felt that these subjects required more clarity regarding skills and expectations, as more is now expected from a younger age. This was particularly notable where 32 teachers out of the 66 who suggested changes in Maths commented on concepts in 'number' and 'problem solving' being addressed sooner, and adjusting the content taught to accommodate the higher expectations.

Teachers had the option to comment on the subjects they would most like to retain. The most popular were History topics such as Ancient Egypt, Romans, Greeks and WW2. Just under a third of teachers were unsure at the time about which new topics would be introduced, although some remarked on changes towards more Ancient History, such as the Stone Age, reflecting greater awareness of the new History requirements. This high level of uncertainty over the choice of new topics again reinforces the message that teachers were at this point, some way off finalising their new curricula. For a full list of the topics teachers plan to keep, and a list of those they intend implement, please see Appendix B.

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## Topic versus subject based curriculum

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Only 4% of respondents do not intend to organise their curriculum around topics, although a fifth aren't sure yet, suggesting that they are still some way off rolling out their new curriculum, as this is a fairly fundamental decision.

When asked which subjects they are most likely to teach in a cross-curricular, topic-based way, 97% said 'Foundation subjects', 73% said English, and 71% said Science.

Only a quarter (26%) plan on teaching Maths in a cross-curricular way.

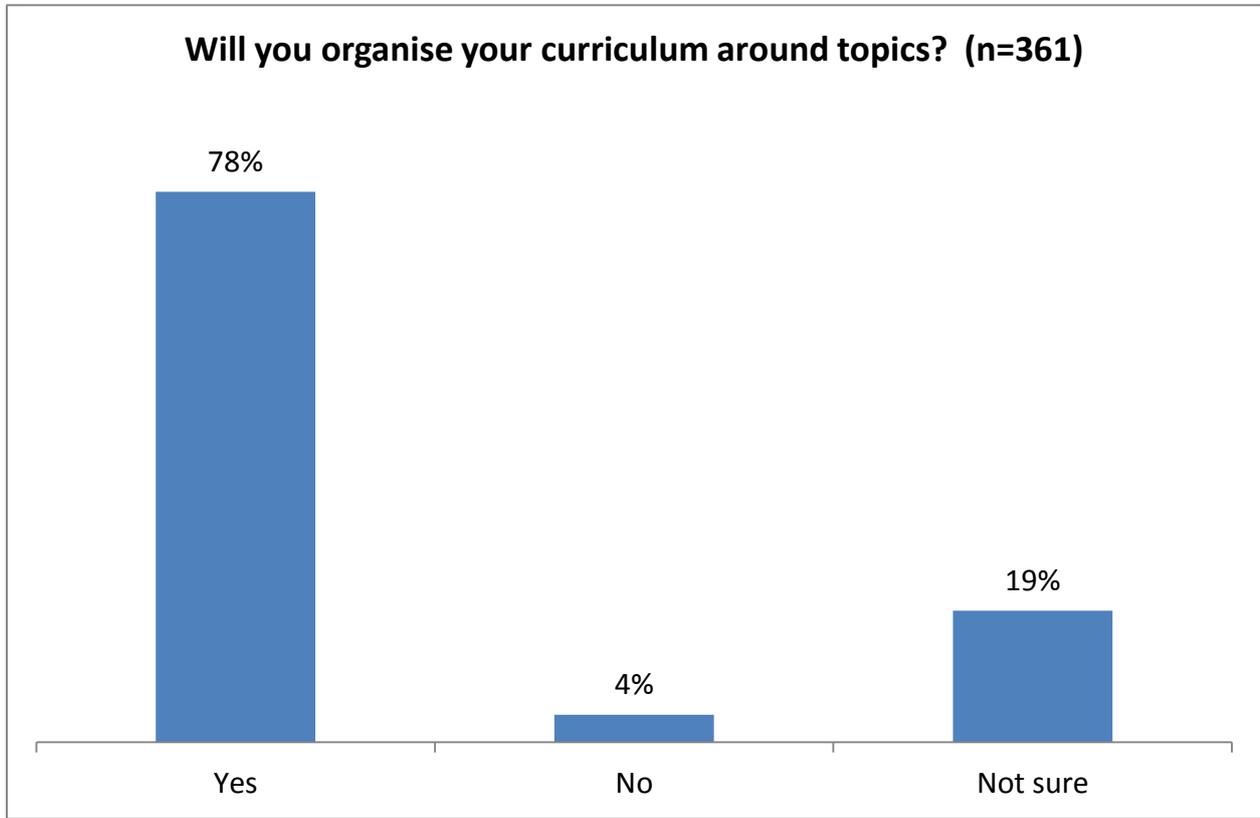
Many teachers commented that they anticipate cross-curricular teaching of the foundation subjects, and linking this with a text in literacy.

***"English is very cross curricular but we will further develop grammar and spelling skills."***

***"Overall topics which form our creative curriculum eg. a topic on animals in Y6 which incorporates autobiographies in literacy, science work about adaptations."***

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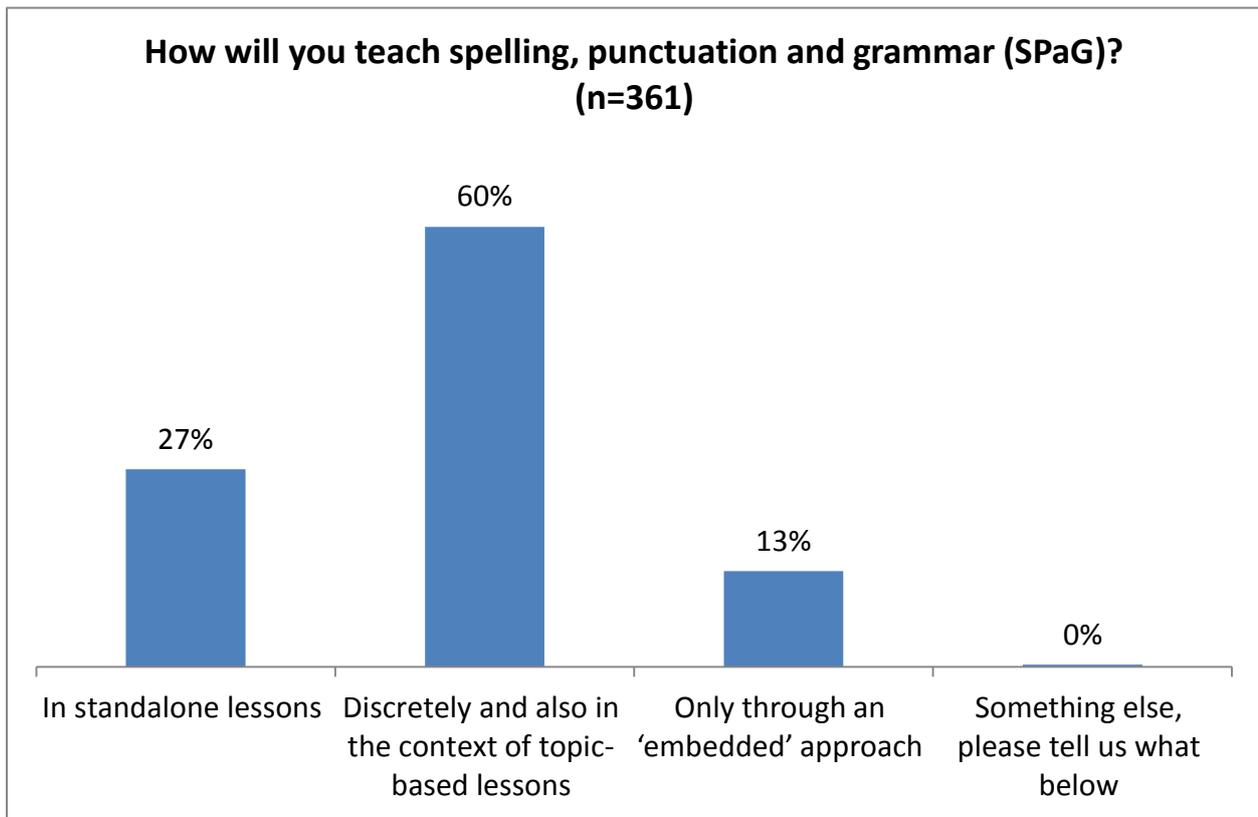
This suggests that the new curriculum will take a more 'hands on' creative approach, led by the children's interests. It still remains the case however, that the Maths will mostly be taught discretely – possibly because of the increased focus on problem solving and number.



## SPaG

Spelling, punctuation and grammar receives far greater emphasis in the new English Programme of Study, and this is reinforced through the introduction of a new SPaG test as part of the KS1 assessments.

Over half of respondents anticipate teaching SPaG as a discrete skill as well as embedding it more generically across other lessons, with just over a quarter will teach it only through standalone SPaG lessons. This suggests we are going to see far more emphasis on drilling and grilling children on traditional skills.



Respondents had a clear idea of how SPaG would be taught, with most planning on using a combination of approaches. Teachers had the opportunity to add their own comments but the fact that none chose to remark is telling in itself, indicating that in this area of the curriculum they felt prepared about how they were going to teach in September, or perhaps some had already started.

## Sources of training and support

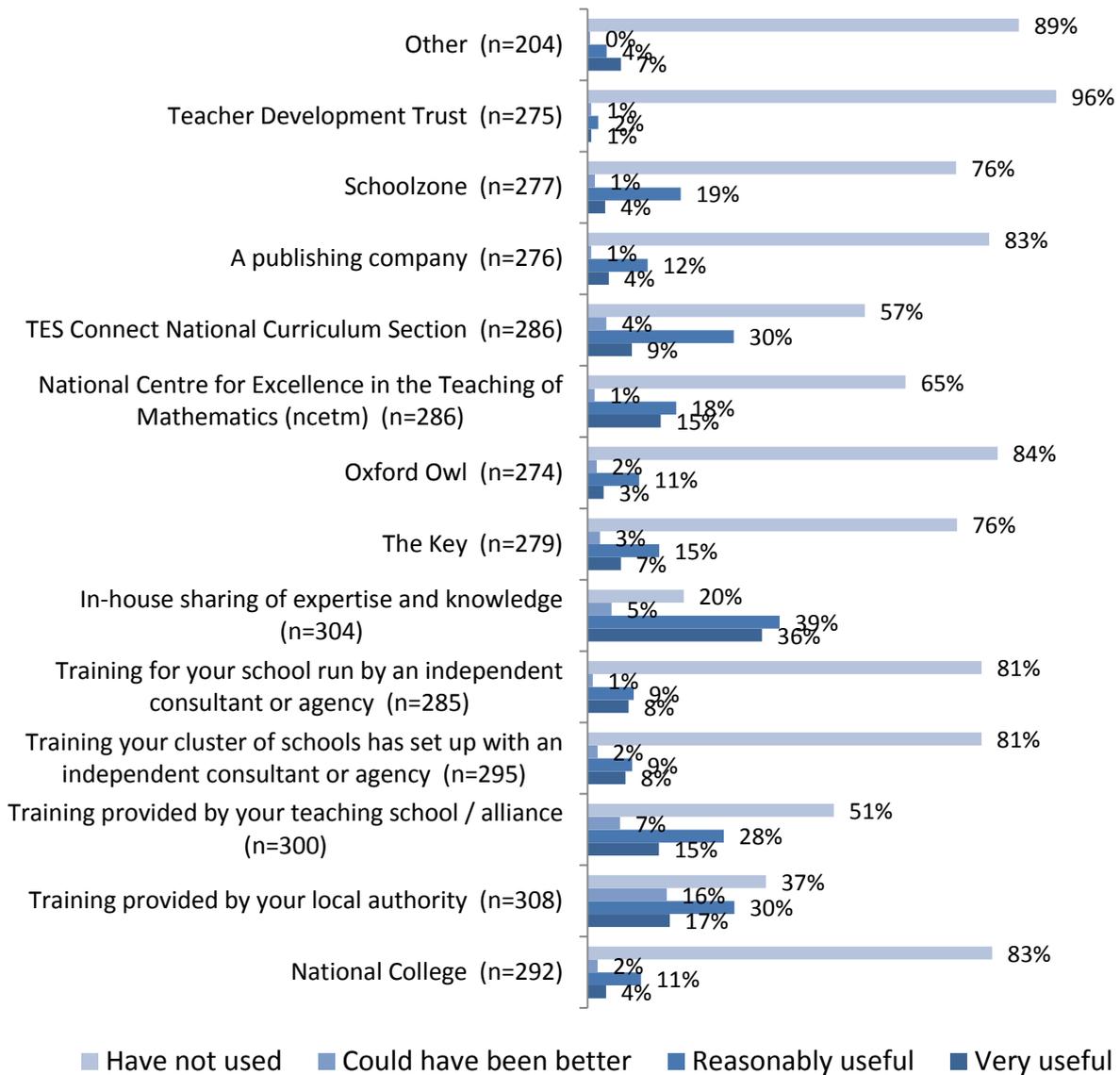
Although many local authorities are in a state of decline, they are still one of the most widely sources of support, training and advice for schools, with only 37% saying that they had not turned to their Authority for help.

Unsurprisingly, teachers are most likely to turn to colleagues for support, and are generally positive about the quality of the training they get. Increasingly, peer to peer training, observations, mentoring and paired moderating is favoured by schools with little or no budget for training, and within a collegiate environment this is seen as personal, relevant and supportive, although it assumes that schools have some staff with outstanding skills, or will lead to weaker schools getting less and less effective.

It's interesting to see that although 49% of respondents have taken part in training supplied by their teaching school alliance, satisfaction levels with this is lower than satisfaction with in house training – or perhaps expectations are higher?

Takeup of non-schools based support is low, even from those providing free information and advice, such as the National College and NCETM.

**Which of the following are you turning to for support, training and advice through the curriculum implementation process, and how useful has this been? (n=330)**

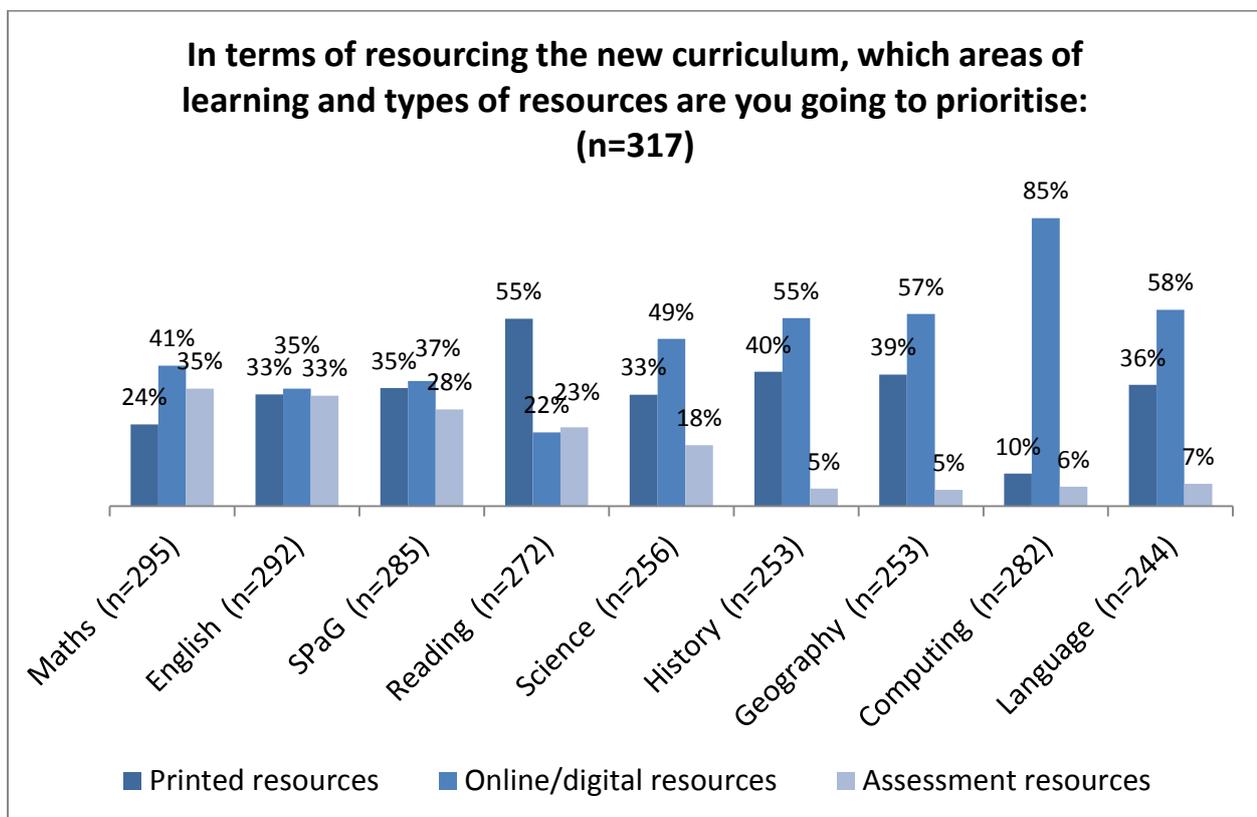


Teachers who responded saying that their school used independent consultants or agencies were prompted to enter the name of the agency used. Unsurprisingly, this yielded a diverse list of names, with Chris Quigley receiving seven mentions, Focus Education 4, and the remaining 24 consultants receiving one or two mentions. Amongst the 19 publishing companies offering training, 10 teachers mentioned Pearson, 8 Rising Stars, 6 Scholastic, 5 mentioned Abacus and Cornerstones, and 4 Collins and Oxford University Press. A further few agencies received three mentions or less.

## Resourcing priorities

In total, 317 teachers answered this question, and teachers were not 'locked in' to choosing an answer option for each subject. There is a small difference in purchasing priorities attached to subjects: for example, 295 teachers have indicated that they are likely to purchase maths resources of some kind, while only 244 are likely to buy language resources. However, response patterns are probably more revealing of their preferred format should they purchase resources within each of these areas, as teachers are unlikely to have the budget to support purchasing across all of these areas.

It also shows, unsurprisingly, that assessment support in Maths, English and SPaG is far more important than across the other subject areas.



Note that the responses within each subject total 100%.

Respondents were also asked to select the publishers they felt they were likely to turn to when looking for resources. The list of answer options included:

- Collins Education
- Rising Stars
- Scholastic
- Oxford
- Espresso Education
- Education City
- 3P Learning (mathletics and reading eggs)
- Pearson
- Charities' websites

- Other publisher not mentioned above

This chart is available on request.

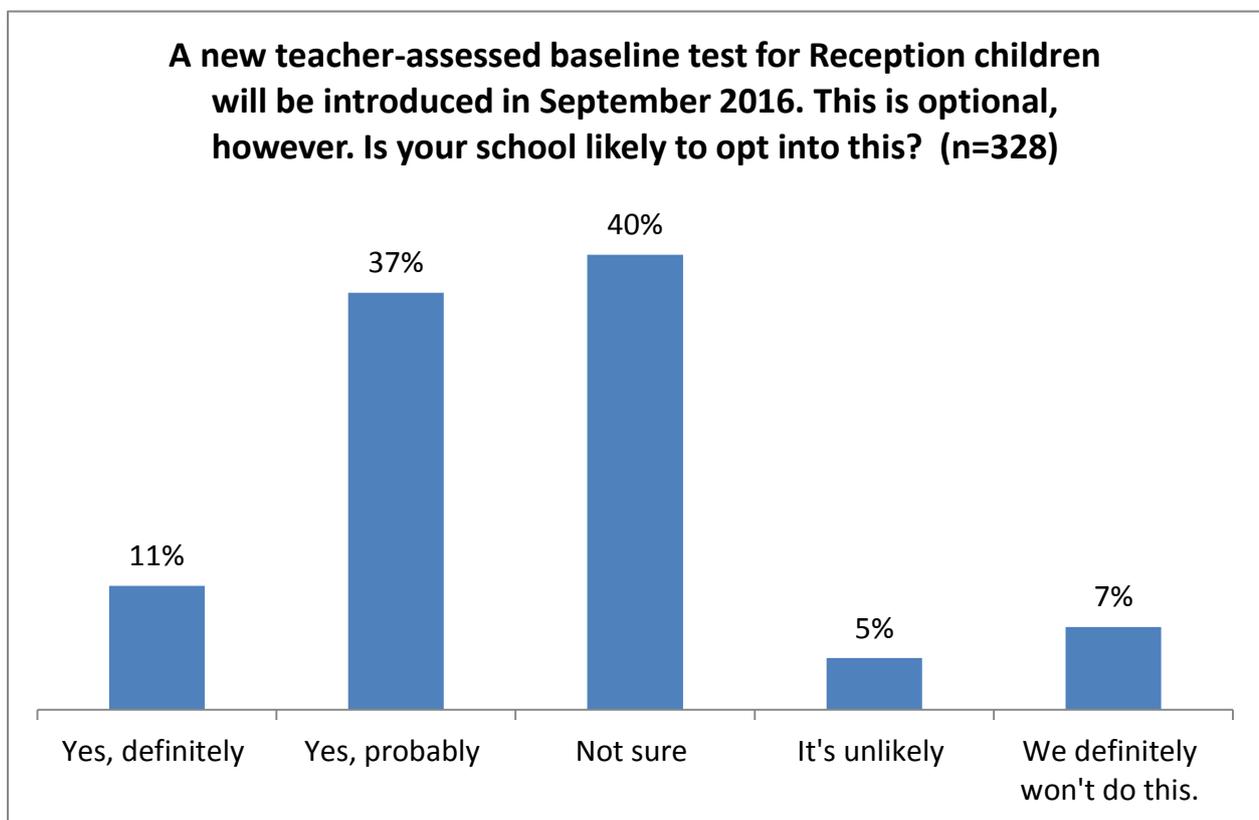
They were then offered the opportunity to identify any additional publishers that they turned to, with approximately half of those who responded using Hamilton Trust for resources. It may be the case that teachers are increasingly turning towards cheaper online solutions, such as Hamilton Trust for guidance.

## Baseline testing and progress measure

This survey was run shortly after the announcement of the new progress and accountability measures for primary schools in England. We were interested in a snapshot poll of teachers' intentions at that time regarding the optional baseline test for children in Reception, and their preferred accountability measure of progress versus attainment.

Unsurprisingly, given the proximity of this research to the announcement, and consequently the unlikelihood of respondents' schools having yet considered their response to the changes, the largest category of respondents was from those who didn't know what their school would do. However, just under half thought it probable that their school would introduce the new baseline measure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a reasonably high number of schools already test children when they start school, and track their progress across the year groups.

### Likelihood of implementing a Baseline Assessment



With the government opting against a 'national' test, schools will also have a choice of tests from which to choose. Those in areas with strong local authority support are likely to be guided by their authority on which to choose.

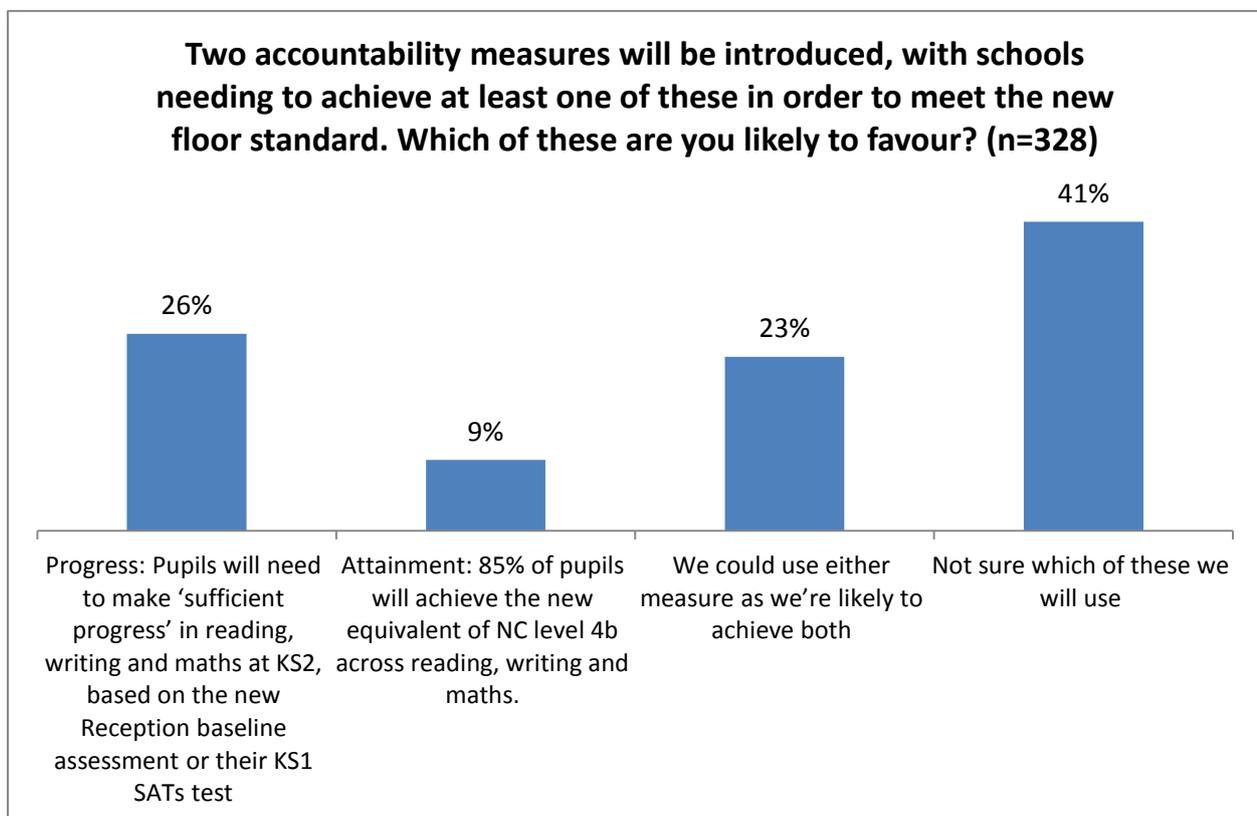
Regardless of the test chosen by each school, it will have an impact on budgets (schools will have to pay to buy into their chosen assessment product) and time (whether print based or digital, all will need to be administered by a teacher).

Test providers also need to show that their test produces year on year results which are appropriately distributed across the range. Currently schools have not considered the implications of this, or – at least to us – indicated that they may choose tests strategically to offer the lowest baseline results possible, and hence boost their progress score. We've seen this type of 'gaming' taking place amongst secondary schools, with schools changing Awarding Body to benefit from easier exam questions or lower grade boundaries. It will be interesting to see whether primary schools follow suit.

## Floor standard measures

Again, the biggest response category was from those who don't know which measure their school is likely to favour.

However, amongst those with an opinion, the Progress measure seems to be favoured above the Attainment floor standard. While for many schools, this will be based on concerns over children meeting the more challenging performance measure, anecdotal feedback suggests that there is a strong ethical preference for favouring progress over performance, as it is seen as fairer and more closely aligned with teachers' personal priorities, too. With the introduction of performance related pay, teachers may see progress as a less risky measure for them, personally, than performance – although this is speculative.

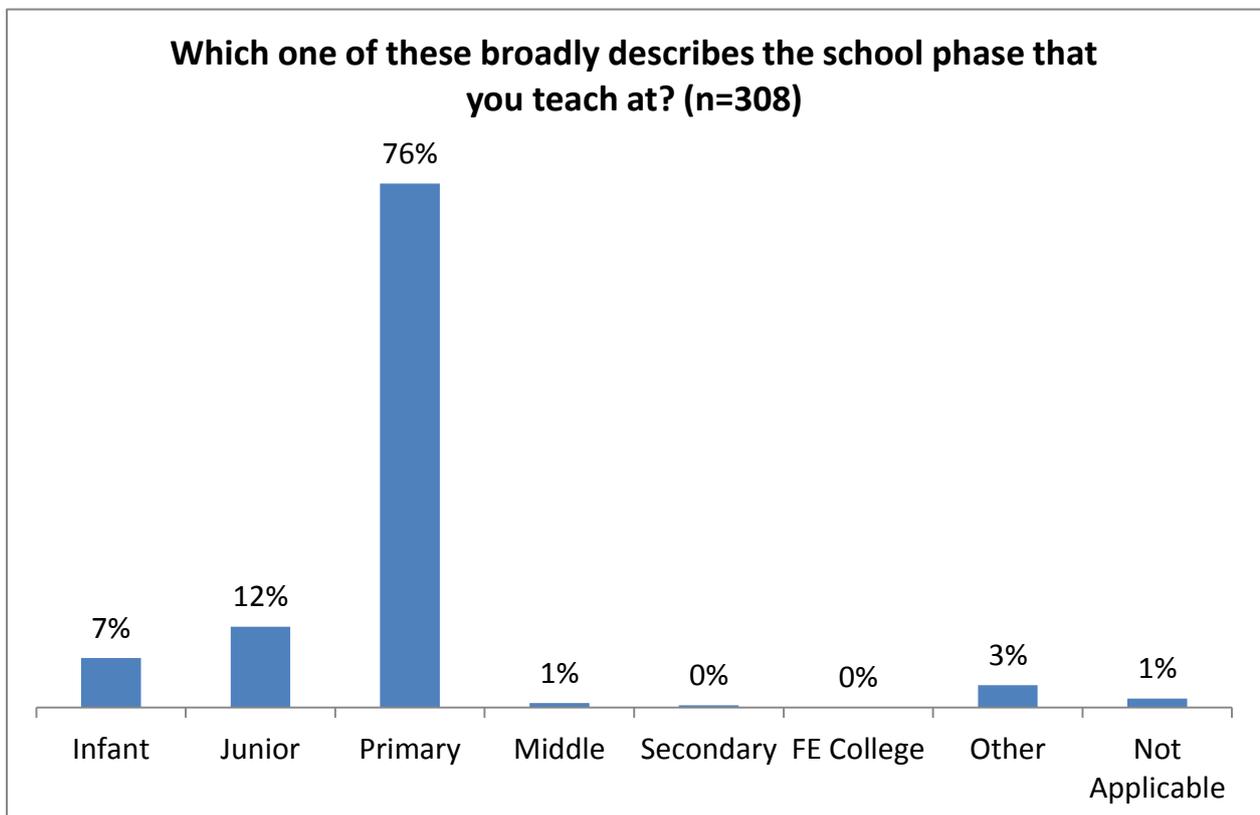
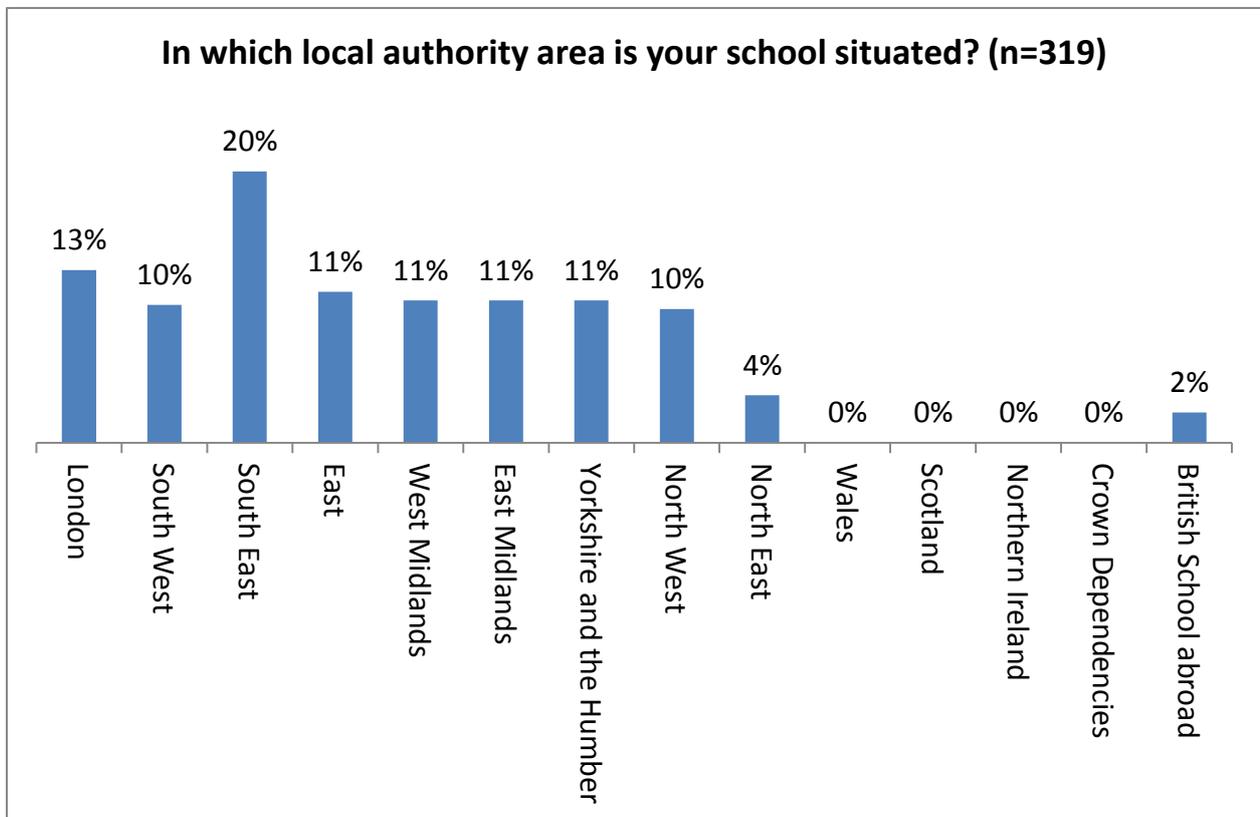


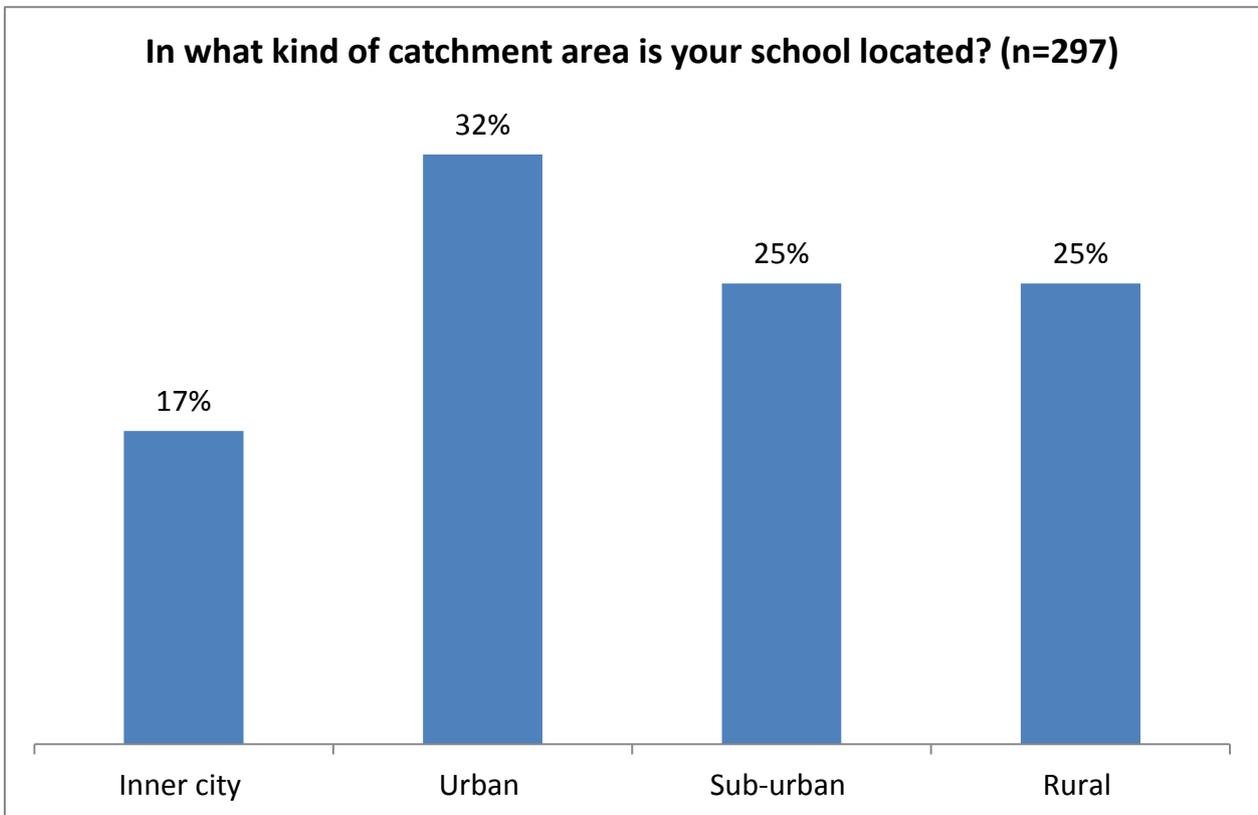
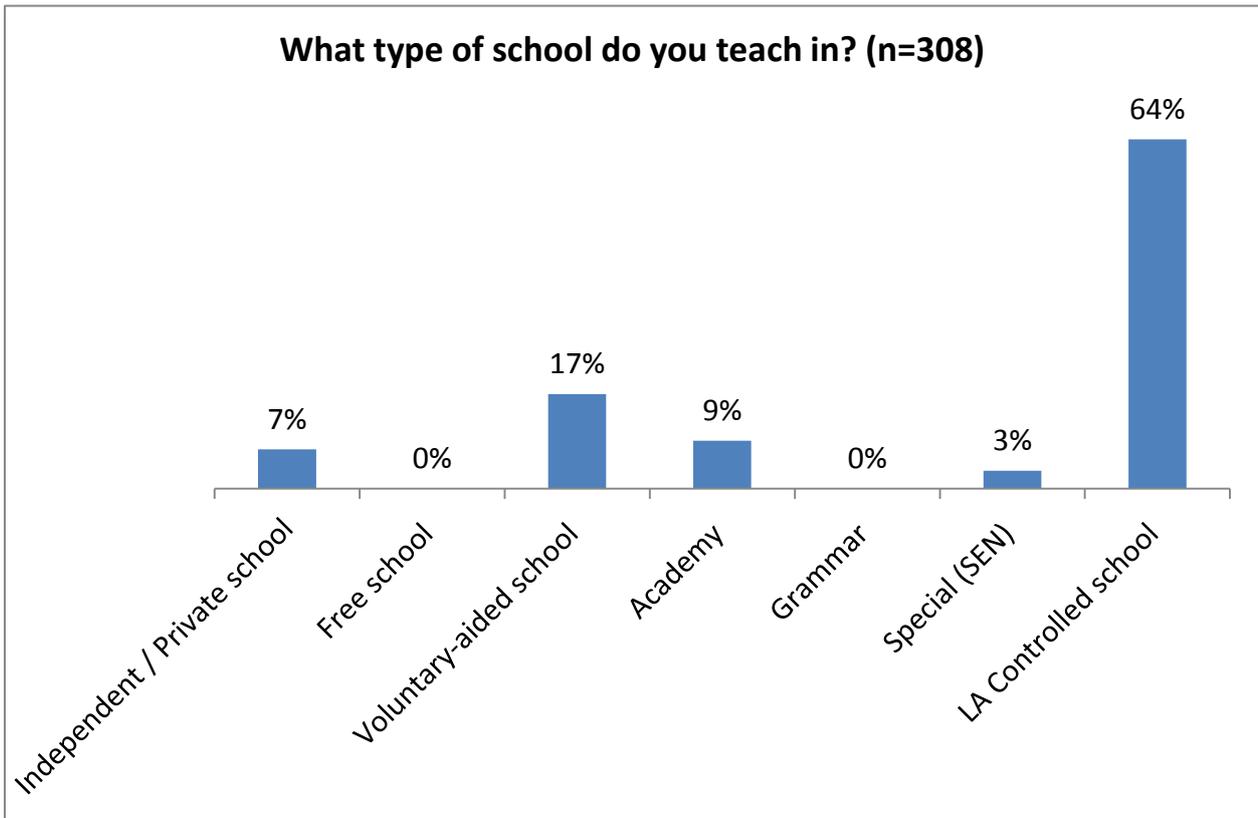
The likelihood is that schools will 'hedge their bets' and implement baseline testing, as this allows the choice of whether to be judged on progress or attainment.

The increased spotlight on accountability is highly likely to affect the structure of the new curriculum since teachers, and pupils, are under pressure to ensure that sufficient progress is made. This suggests that an increased amount of time will be spent on Reading, Writing, SPaG and Maths to ensure such progress. We can expect to see teachers highly assessment focussed in order to closely monitor the performance of children.

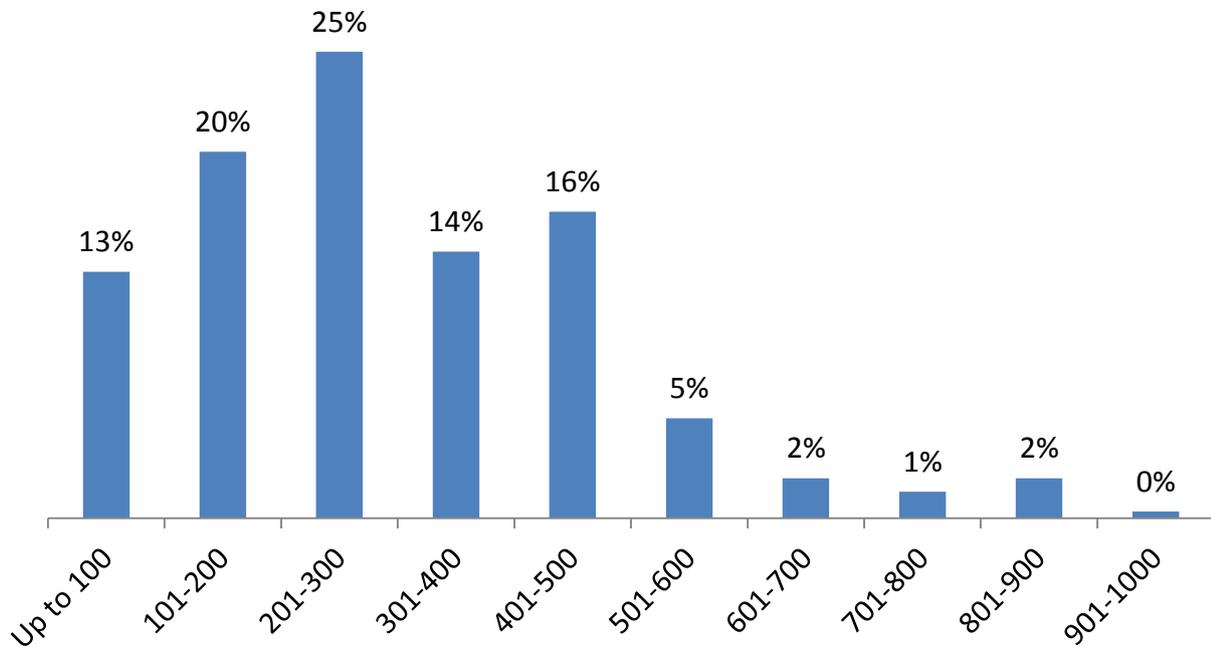
In parallel with this survey, Schoolzone ran a consultation amongst 14 primary senior leaders, to explore their response to the policy changes. This report is available separately on the Schoolzone website.

## Appendix A: Respondent Profiling

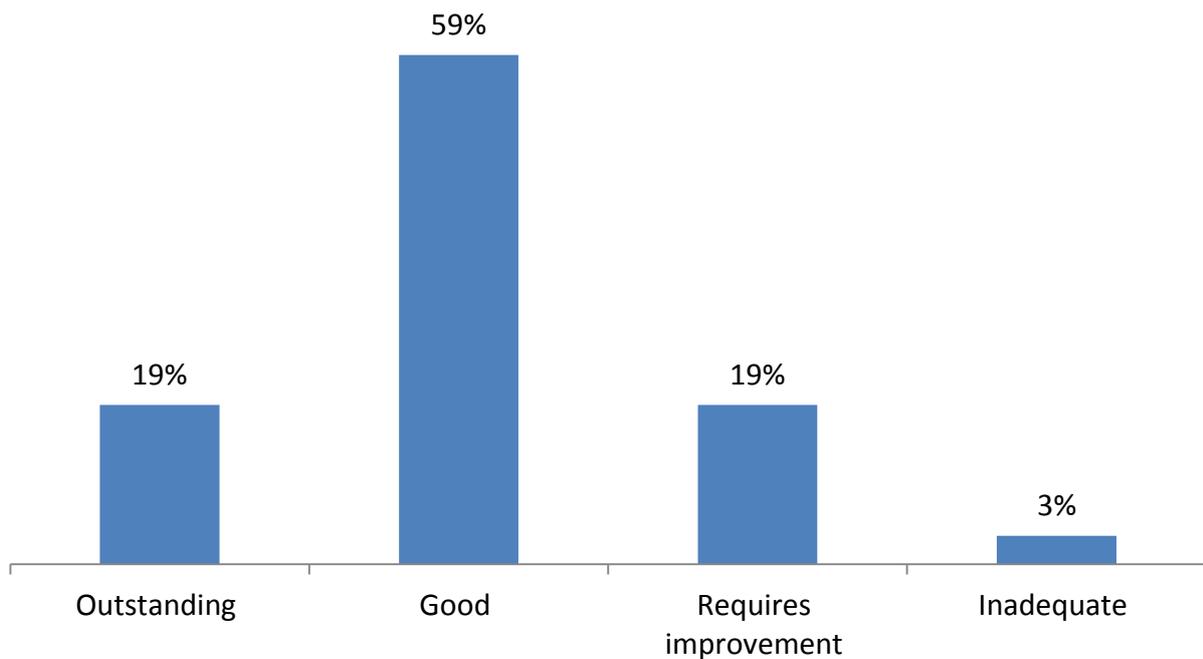


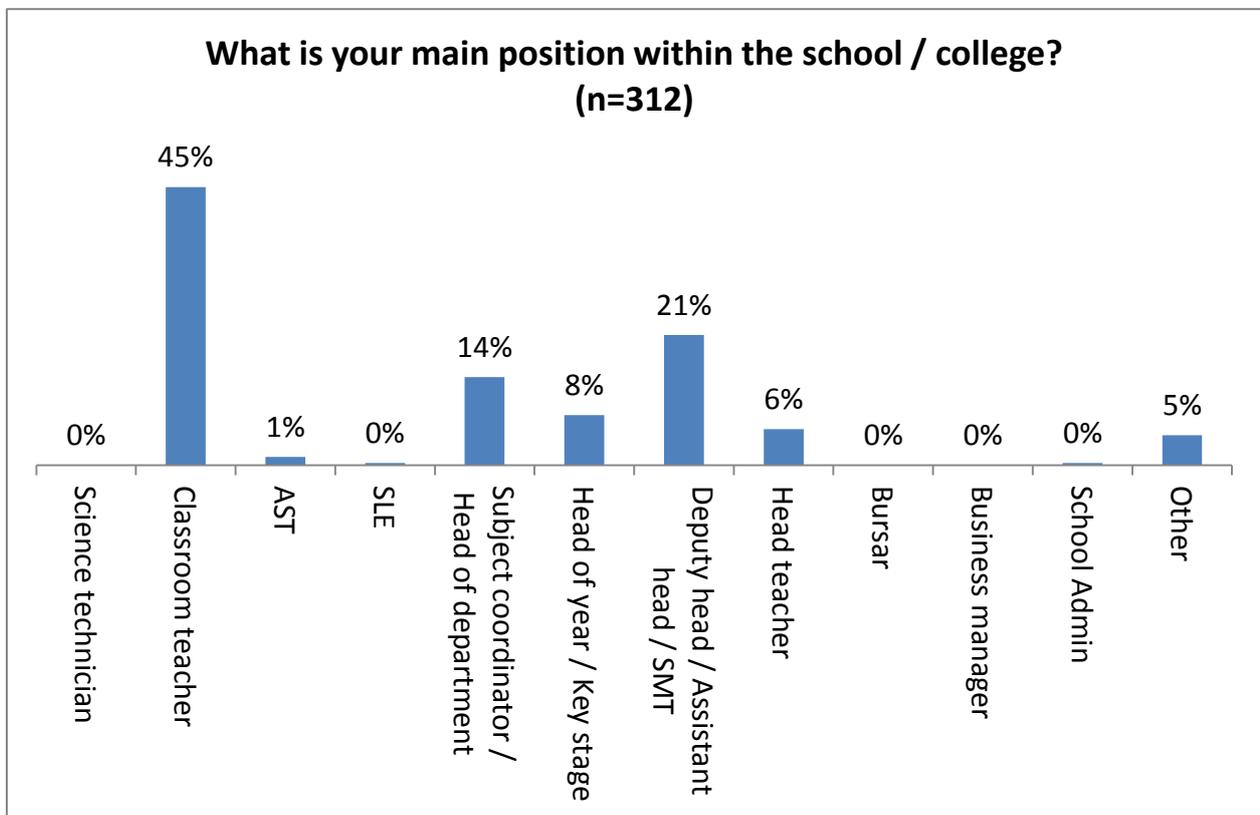
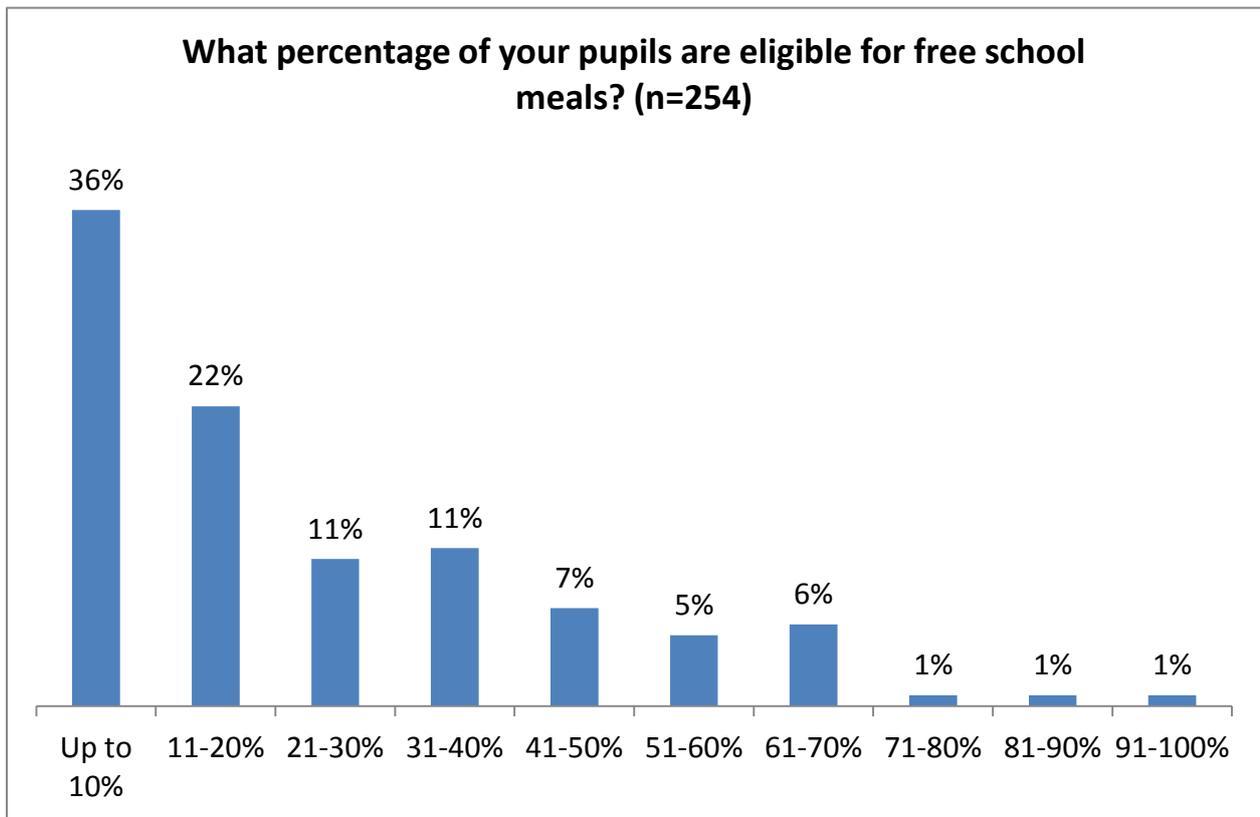


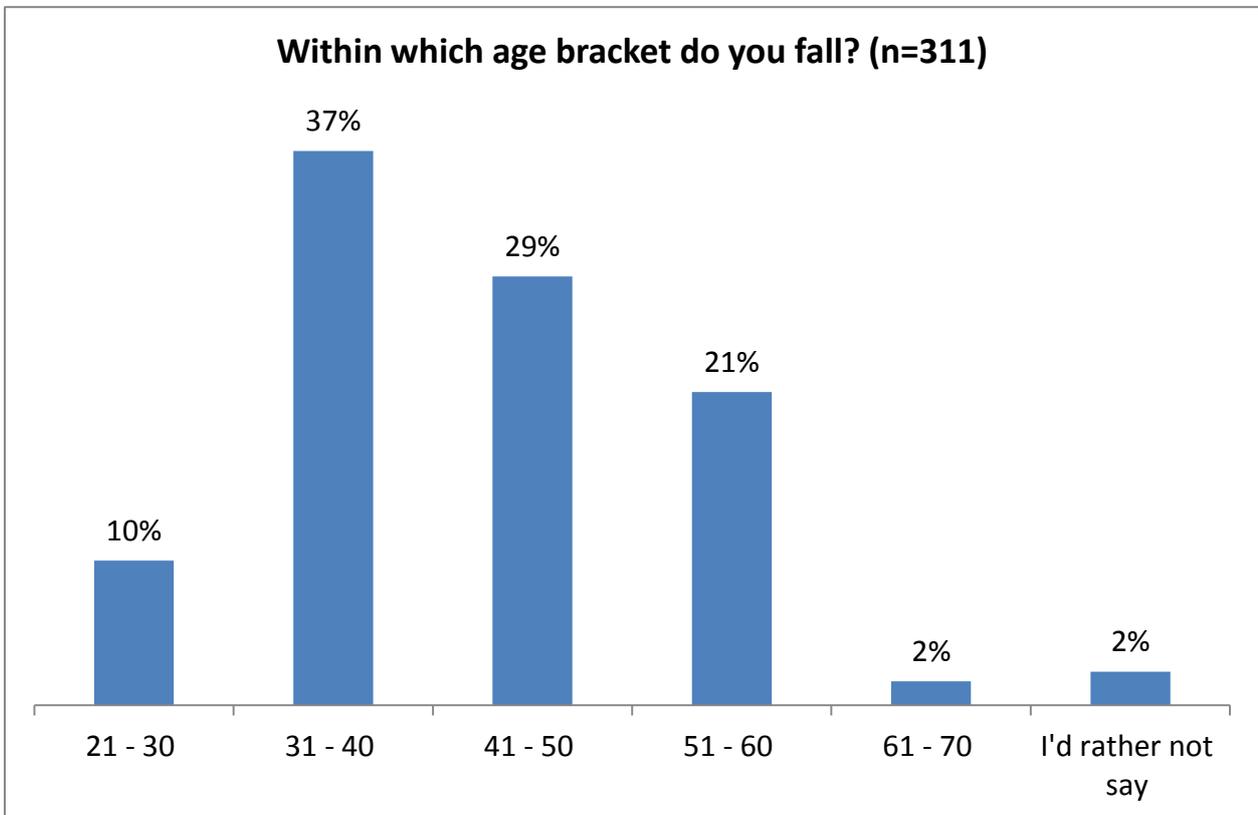
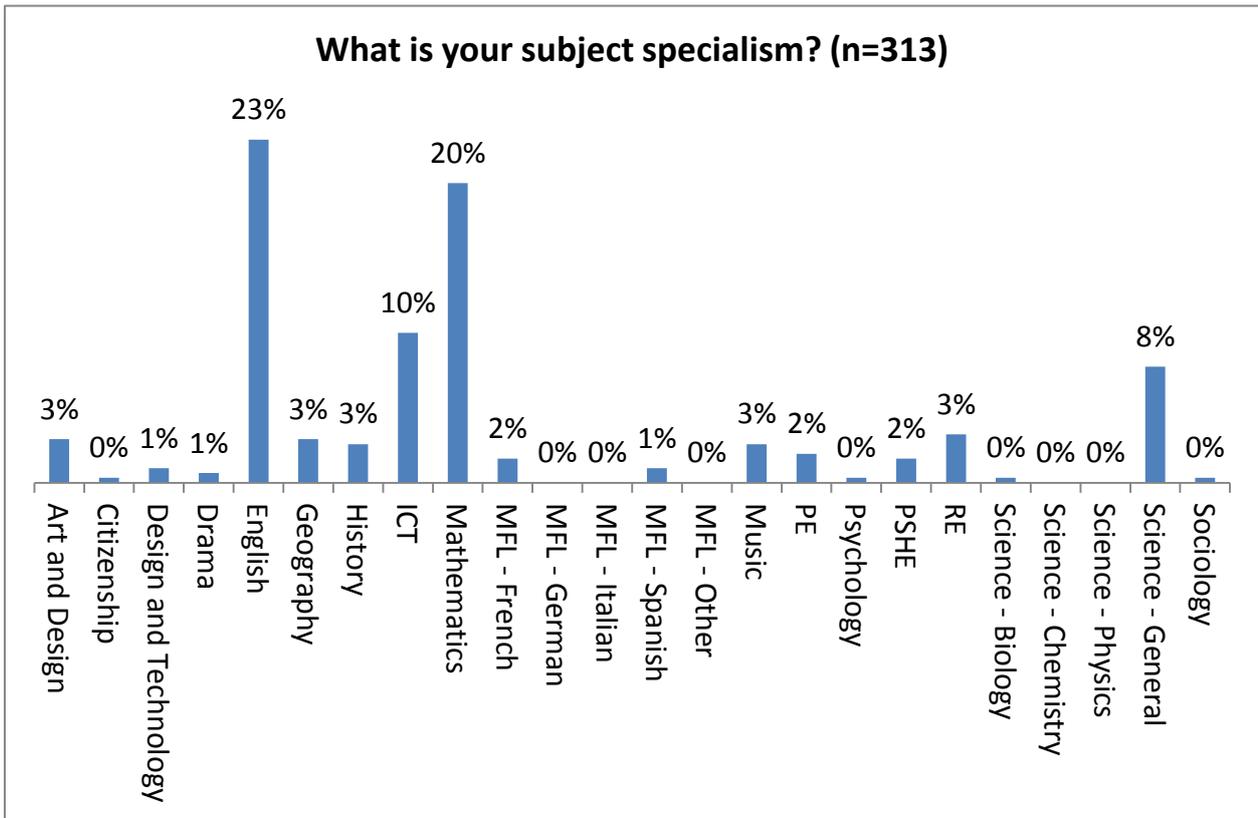
**Approximately, how many pupils do you have on roll? (n=280)**

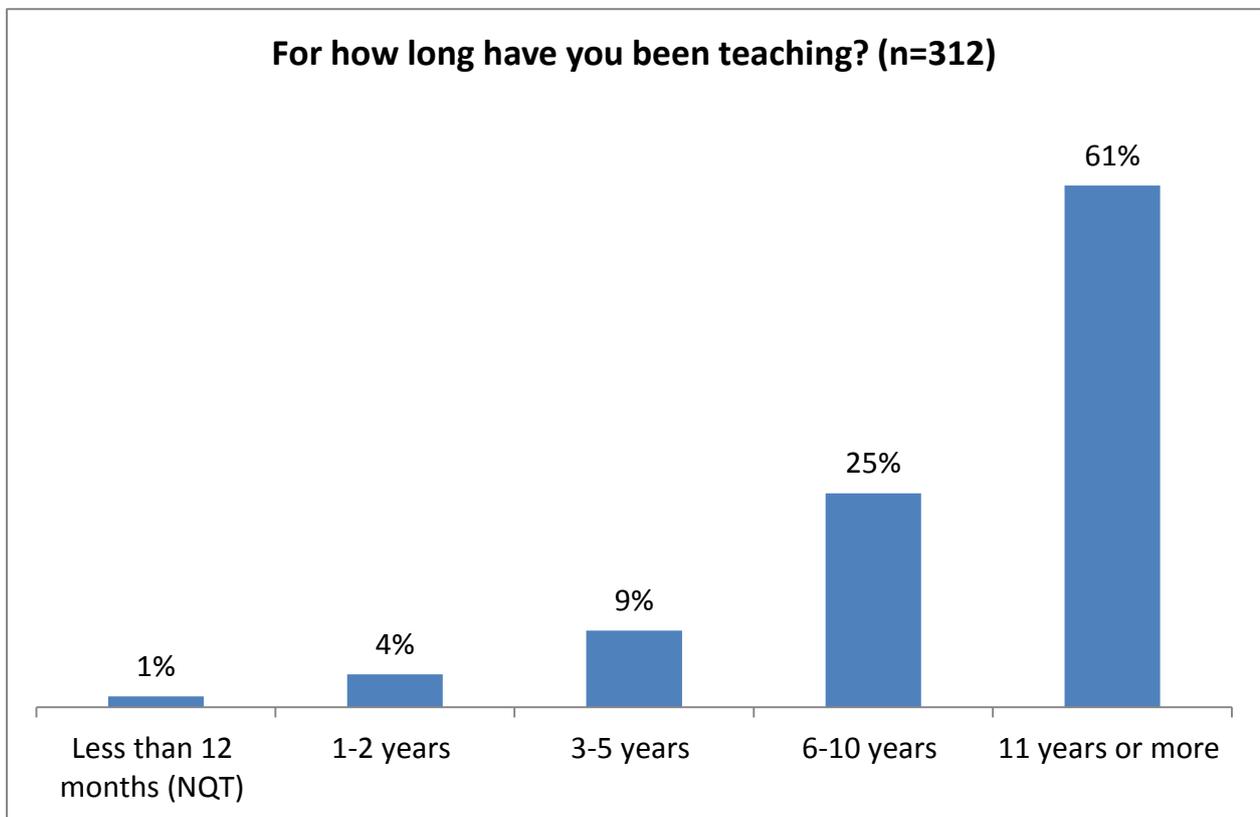
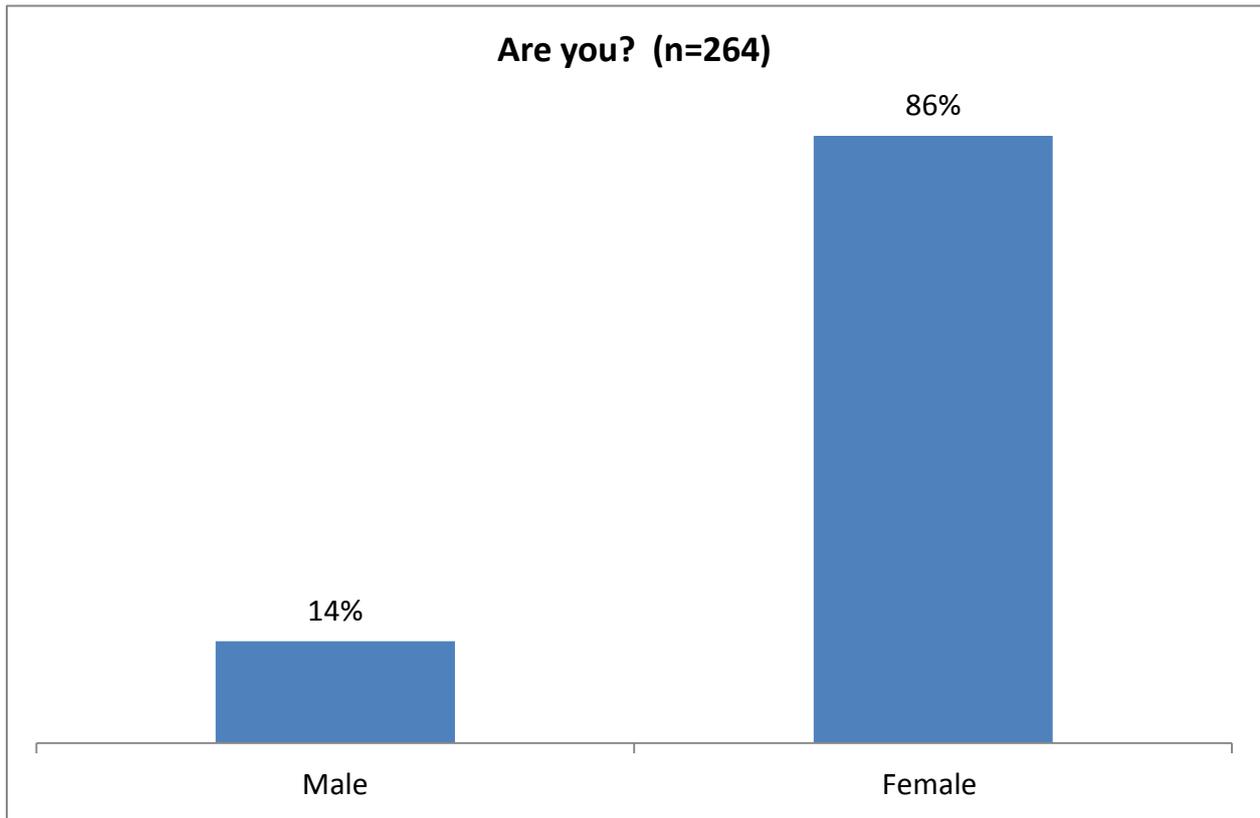


**What was your school's most recent ofsted rating? (n=301)**









## Appendix B: List of Topics

Topics teachers intend to retain and the frequency of responses (where there were 3 or more):

Don't know	55
Ancient Egypt	40
Romans	31
Greeks	29
WW2	28
Space	23
Keeping most / all topics	23
Local studies	21
The Victorians	16
Topics change each year	15
Rainforest	15
Most History topics	13
Vikings	12
Rivers & coasts	11
Tudors	10
Pirates	10
Ourselves and our school	8
Chocolate	8
Most Science topics	7
Invaders and settlers	7
Most Geography topics	6
All IPC topics	6
Polar regions	6
Fire of London	6
Anglo Saxons	5
Some literacy topics	5
Africa	5
The Aztecs	4
Seaside	4
Dinosaurs	4
Plants	4
Electricity	3
Superheroes	3
Florence Nightingale	3

**Topics teachers intend to introduce and the frequency of responses (where there were 3 or more):**

Unsure at this stage	102
Stone Age	22
History topics: general	14
Mayans	13
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