

Over quarter of headteachers say no to flexible working

According to an interim report by Department for Education, more than one-quarter of senior leaders in schools (29 per cent of 1,589) said that flexible working requests had been declined in their schools.

Where flexible working requests had been declined, the most common reason given by senior leaders was not being able to organise work amongst existing staff/timetabling issues (69% of 453 senior leaders).

Both senior leaders and teachers most commonly reported that their own requests for flexible working had been declined due to perceptions that flexible working did not work in school environments. Teachers also noted that requests were declined due to perceptions of a potential detrimental effect on pupils.

Most senior leaders (83% of 1,589) stated that their school had a procedure in place for managing

flexible working requests, and the majority had received requests for flexible working in the past five years (77% of 1,589).

Where a flexible working procedure was not in place in a school, this was most commonly reported to be because senior leaders were unsure about what should be included in such a policy, or how to go about developing one (38% of 264).

Nearly all senior leaders (92% of 1,371) said that childcare was the main reason for staff requesting flexible working arrangements, with over half (57% of 1,371) mentioning work/life balance as a key driver for requesting flexible working.

Just over a third of senior leaders (34% of 1,371) said that nearing retirement/wanting to work less hours per week for more years was a key reason for requesting flexible working.

Academies must focus on community to overcome resistance



Academy schools risk being rejected by local communities if their management is remote and motivated more by rapid growth than improvement, according to a report by the National Governors Association (NGA).

The NGA warns that the lack of parent representation on the boards of schools run by multi-academy trusts (Mats) has created a 'democratic deficit' made worse by the trusts attempting to improve their financial position by taking over more schools.

'The evolution and promotion of Mats without sufficient thought to governance has produced a [democratic] deficit that requires debate, one that must not be ignored any longer,' the

report states.

The government recently announced that more than half of England's state school pupils were being taught in academies, following the explosion in numbers after policy changes by the coalition government in power from 2010-2015.

But Sam Henson, NGA's director of policy and one of the report's authors, said there was still scepticism towards academies, driven by media reports of high-profile cases of mismanagement. Henson said trusts needed to be more transparent to avoid their negative image. Some were already willing to include representatives of parents on governing boards.

Privately Educated Elite Ruling the Country

A social mobility charity says top professions in the UK are still unduly dominated by people who have gone through private schools and Oxford and Cambridge universities.

The Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission analysed the educational background of 5,000 people in top jobs and it found these influential people were five times more likely to be privately educated than the average population.

Trust chairman Sir Peter Lampl warned of an 'increasingly divided society'.

The study, [Elitist Britain](#), looked at the schools and universities attended by 5,000 high achievers at the top of business, politics, the media, public organisations, creative industries and sport.

It does not name individuals but concludes that 'power rests with a narrow section of the population - the 7% who attend private schools

and the 1% who graduate from Oxford and Cambridge'.

It might not be a huge surprise that the upper ranks of the judiciary, the diplomatic service, the armed forces and public bodies are stuffed by a disproportionate number of former public-school pupils.

But it might raise an eyebrow that today's pop stars are more likely to have gone to private school than university vice-chancellors - 20% compared with 16%.

For the purposes of this survey, a 'pop star' is someone from the UK who has had a top 40 selling album in the past four years.

This echoes warnings that the creative industries, once an express train of social mobility, are increasingly becoming populated by the offspring of wealthy, well connected parents.

In terms of the overall 'power gap', the report says 39% of people in these elite groups were privately educated, compared with 7% of the population.

England ranks worst in the world for cyberbullying

Headteachers around the world were asked how many incidents of students, parents or guardians posting hurtful information online about students occurred at least weekly in their schools.

According to the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) report, an average of 2.5% of headteachers reported such incidents.

However, England has been ranked the worst in the world for cyberbullying—with 13.9% of headteachers reporting that students had been subject to malicious comments online.

A further 27% received reports of unwanted electronic contact among students in their school. This is in contrast to the OECD average of 3.4%.

The international report surveyed 260,000 teachers and school leaders in 15,000 schools across 48 countries and economies.

In England 2,376 teachers of children aged 11-14, and 157 heads completed the Talis questionnaires.

Australia came closely behind England with 10.6% of principals reporting regular incidents of cyberbullying. This was followed by the USA (10.2%) and Belgium and Brazil (both 9.2%).

In contrast, the OECD report found that the countries with 0% reports of regular cyberbullying were Vietnam, Chinese Taipei, Slovak Republic, Russia, Portugal, Lithuania, Korea, Kazakhstan, Finland and Chile.

Andreas Schleicher, OECD director for education and skills, said: 'Cyberbullying in terms

of unwanted contact or students being exposed on the internet is the dark side of the modern age. But it is something that schools really need to get to grips with.'

He added: 'I don't think English schools and the schools system have yet the policy. There are some school systems that make this a priority, establish a policy.'

'They are sometimes controversial, like in France they have banned mobile phones.'

'But I do think we can no longer ignore it, or leave it for individual schools to sort out, this is probably something that school systems need to look at systemically.'

The report also found that more than one-fifth (21%) of heads said intimidation or bullying among their students occurred regularly, compared to an OECD average of 14%.

The proportion of school leaders reporting physical and non-physical bullying also doubled from 14.5% in 2013 to 29% in 2018.



Reinspection resulting in 'Outstanding' schools' rating revoked from most schools



Data covering the period from September to the end of March shows that just 16 per cent of 'outstanding' schools inspected during that time kept their top grade. Twenty-five per cent dropped to 'requires improvement' and 5 per cent were 'inadequate'. Fifty-four per cent fell to 'good'.

'Outstanding' primary and secondary schools are usually exempt from routine inspection, but Ofsted can go in if it has concerns about their performance or safeguarding processes.

These figures come almost six months after Ofsted launched a clampdown on underperforming exempt schools, have prompted renewed calls from Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector of schools, for the exemption to be lifted.

Between September 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019, Ofsted inspected 305 'outstanding' primary and secondary schools, which represents 8 per cent of all exempt schools and is more than double the number inspected during the full 2017-18 academic year.

Only 49 of the 305 (16 per cent) 'outstanding' schools inspected so far this academic year remained outstanding, compared with 49 of 150 (33 per cent) of exempt schools inspected during the previous academic year.

Ofsted said that, given that most of the inspections were carried out because of concerns over performance, it was not surprising that a significant proportion lose the top grading.

Spielman said, 'The fact that outstanding schools are largely exempt from inspection leaves us with real

gaps in our knowledge about the quality of education and safeguarding in these schools. Some of them have not been inspected for over a decade, and when our inspectors go back in, they sometimes find standards have significantly declined.

'We believe most schools judged outstanding are still doing outstanding work. But for the outstanding grade to be properly meaningful and a genuine beacon of excellence, the exemption should be lifted and Ofsted resourced to routinely inspect these schools.'

Last year the government told Ofsted to step up its interventions of exempt schools so that poor standards of safeguarding could be picked up.

