

Crazy About Work

***An investigation and commentary on
work-related factors influencing teacher
mental health***

*Conducted by John Illingworth on behalf of the Nottingham City
Association of the National Union of Teachers*

February 2007



Introduction

Growing evidence of increasing levels of unmanageable stress amongst teachers, prompted Nottingham City NUT to try and find out more about the scale of the problem and its possible causes.

- We knew that there had been a dramatic increase in number of teachers calling the 'Teacher Support Line, citing problems with stress at work, between 2004 and 2005.
- Local mental health practitioners had noticed the significant and growing number of their patients who were teachers.
- Levels of referrals to the Union concerning work-related stress were on the increase.
- Workforce Remodelling had not achieved a reduction in teacher working hours, known to be the primary cause of teachers leaving the profession. (OME Survey 2006)
- There was emerging evidence that an increase in accountability and monitoring measures were changing the nature of teachers work and adding to their stress.

Nottingham NUT therefore decided to conduct a survey of our members to find out more about teachers mental health and the work-related factors that are potential causes of stress.

Why, **Crazy About Work**? Because it encapsulates most teachers determination to do a good job, even at the expense of their mental health.

The Survey

We decided to survey a random sample of one third of our in-service members (351 from 1053) through a questionnaire. 139 completed surveys were returned (40%) and we thank the respondents for providing the essential data to inform our work. We also drew on previous surveys on teacher stress and would like to thank Bradford NUT in particular.

The questionnaire was anonymous. Those surveyed were asked to respond to 23 statements on the following 5 point scale.

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	I have no view	Tend to disagree	Disagree strongly
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Respondents were also asked to add additional comments of clarification wherever they thought it might help to illustrate our analysis. We also asked teachers to identify their age band to help with analysis.

The Report

The report that follows includes:

- Charts showing the percentage of responses on the above 5 point scale. For most questions these are presented in two ways. One shows the response for all 5 points. The other compares agreement with disagreement ignoring those who have no view. For a few questions only one chart was adequate to show the response.
- A spreadsheet showing the numbers and percentages of actual responses Appendix - page 24).
- Examples of written comments from respondents. In general very similar comments have not been repeated and not all comments could be included. An attempt has been made to genuinely represent the feelings expressed. The very few critical comments about the survey have been included. Some comments relate to individual statements, whilst others are of a more general nature given on pages 3 and 4.
- A commentary to accompany each statement giving some analysis of the work stress faced by teachers, some underlying causes and suggestions for remedies.
- A summary of the findings.
- Recommendations.

The latter two items are given at the start of the report (pages 2-3), preceding the more detailed analysis that follows.

Summary of the Findings

There can be no doubt that the survey confirms teaching as a profession that feels under pressure.

The most significant headlines with high percentages of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing are as follows:

- More than 7 out of 10 teachers feel their working hours are excessive and a similar proportion think that they have insufficient time to spend with family and friends.
- 8 out of 10 are anxious about OFSTED inspection
- 8 out of 10 feel the increased frequency of classroom observation and other monitoring is adding significantly to work related stress
- 6 out of 10 wake up in the night and can't get back to sleep because they are thinking about work.

Although lower proportions identify the following areas of stress, they can represent a serious problem for those who do:

- 1 in 3 struggle to deal with disruptive pupils.
- 1 in 4 are afraid of violence from pupils or parents.
- 1 in 3 feel they have no control over their job
- 1 in 3 resort to alcohol, smoking, unhealthy eating or other substances to help them cope.
- 1 in 15 take prescribed medication to help them cope.
- 1 in 3 feel they are required to submit excessively detailed planning to their managers'
- 1 in 4 have been subject to harassment or bullying at work

The good news is that 6 out of 10 teachers still look forward to work and particularly enjoy the core activity of teaching pupils. However, many who used to enjoy work now don't. This seems to be explained by the significant changes in teachers' working lives in recent years.

Change seems to have accelerated and there is no evidence to suggest that either the Government or teachers' employers have any intention to reduce that pace of change. Its unrelenting nature seems to be a key factor in promoting teacher stress. When the change is accompanied by bureaucratic tasks, which teachers often perceive as unnecessary, they resent the excessive hours spent undertaking them. More than half express difficulties in dealing with the pace of change and amongst others there are expressions of irritation and frustration about change. Many teachers also resent the lack of consultation which precedes changes in policy.

The impact of work stress on teachers will vary. Some are more resilient than others and each will have different levels of support available to them. There is much that can be done to help teachers deal with the symptoms of stress. Teachers may need help to identify early signs of mental illness and access to good skilled support, which can help them continue their work as teachers. Too many leave teaching or move to part-time as full-time teaching becomes unsustainable. The survey shows that teachers of all ages are susceptible to stress with both young and old suffering work-related stress symptoms.

Finally, and most importantly, much more must be done to reduce the causes of stress in teaching. This could be achieved by policy makers. It cannot be right that policy makers can add to the duties of teachers without limit whilst setting no ceiling on working hours.

However, experience shows that teachers may have to seek solutions themselves through collective means. Raising standards in our schools will not be achieved by putting more and more pressure on teachers. A healthy, motivated profession may well do a much better job. If you value Education, value teachers.

Recommendations

- Government policy makers should place an immediate moratorium on all new initiatives in Education pending an independent and detailed review of teachers' current workloads. The outcome of this review should be used to implement a planned reduction in workload with teachers being fully consulted on decisions about priorities. The review should set statutory limits on teachers' maximum working time.

- The ‘Social Partnership’ set up as part of ‘Workforce Remodelling’ has failed to reduce teacher workload and should be abandoned with a return to proper consultation and negotiation with all teacher trade unions.
- Once independent review has demonstrated that teacher workload has been genuinely reduced, the impact on teacher workload of any subsequent policy initiatives must be fully costed. Policy should only be introduced when other elements of teacher workload are removed or sufficient additional teachers are employed.
- Employers should take steps to promote the mental well-being of all teachers by:
 - ◊ Helping teachers to review and maintain their mental-health, providing review mechanisms, training, counselling and high quality occupational health support;
 - ◊ Monitoring levels of stress-related illness amongst teacher employees;
 - ◊ Taking practical steps to review, reduce and monitor the overall working hours of teachers they employ.
 - ◊ Refusing to implement the policies of National Government which lead to excessive teacher workload and stress;
 - ◊ Reviewing, promoting and implementing policies on both harassment and bullying at work and the protection of employees from violence.
 - ◊ Consulting teachers, through the recognised trade unions, on all of the above.
- Teachers, with the support of their trade unions should:
 - ◊ Review their overall working time and set limits which allow a genuine work-life balance.
 - ◊ Ensure that they devote sufficient time to family, friends, physical activity and other recreation.
 - ◊ Work with other colleagues at a school level to agree working limits making full use of trade union guidance and support. (NUT members should operate the new workload guidelines.)
 - ◊ Take advantage of services provided by their employers, the Teacher Support Network or the NHS, if they have any concerns about their mental health or work-related stress;
 - ◊ Seek advice of their trade union if subject to harassment, bullying or any kind of violence in the workplace.
 - ◊ Take on no new workload without seeking a matching reduction in work elsewhere. If pressed to do so they should contact their union.

General Comments in the Survey

Apart from the comments included alongside the individual statements which follow, there are some of a more general nature. Some examples which reflect the survey as a whole are included here:

‘I’m trying to cope with an SMT (Senior Management Team) that believe once your classroom door is closed the problem is yours. I have only very few problems controlling my classes but the large number of aggressive/disruptive/noisy students truanting around the corridors makes teaching very difficult. The SMT are rarely to be seen and tell us we should deal with these truants departmentally—some chance. It has come to the point that, despite being heavily in debt, I have handed in my notice without a job to go to. I’m tired of jumping through hoops, dealing with ever changing ideas. I want to be a good teacher but I am being turned into an unprofessional whinger by the system I am working in.’

‘My stress is very real and sometimes worrying. I have received 10 free sessions of counselling...My days get longer and longer and paperwork gets higher and higher.’

‘I worry about everyone’s emotional health including myself.’

‘I graduated 8 years ago. Of the 6 Newly Qualified Teachers I started teaching with, I am the only one who still works full-time.’

‘Far too much emphasis on the ‘image’ of the school to the detriment of the staff.’

‘Constant changes in ‘new’ government initiatives. Why do we bother responding...where did RoAs (Records of Achievement) go?’

'I also want to add that constant target setting adds huge pressure and affects my mood. This, in turn, affects my performance in the classroom. It all has more of a negative effect and makes morale very low.'

'I regularly feel stressed and under pressure. Morale at work is very low.'

'Teachers need better support/counselling services. Daily demands of teaching are too great. Too many staff are physically and mentally exhausted at the end of each week. The stigma associated with mental illness make it difficult to admit and cope with.'

'Am I suffering from work-related mental illness? How severe is it? How will teachers know? The biggest problem in the teaching profession is the amount of paperwork that has to be completed at set times; additional roles and responsibilities add to the pressure.'

'My responses would be very different if I was still teaching in the state system. I now teach in an independent girls school and the pressures of poor pupil behaviour have gone. I consider myself very fortunate but all teachers deserve to work in a place where they do not feel threatened or overloaded with work pressures that are unrealistic. I still work hard but I feel more in control now.'

'LEA support is non-existent.'

'I work in a sixth form college and have a very rewarding post working 1:1 with students. My responses are, I suspect, not characteristic. I live alone so my personal life means that work is very important to me. I'm fortunate to have found this job.'

'I don't think the Union does enough—they don't support us either, same with the LEA. I wish there was one Union—the NUT -and that we got the upper hand...Basically, you're on your own and it's up to you to find mechanisms to survive. Some of us do it better than others—at what cost?'

A very small number of respondents (3 in total) were clearly unhappy that the survey was being carried out, or felt that it took a negative approach to teachers work. Whilst their views are not reflected in the vast majority of responses, it is important that they are included in this report.

'I am concerned that the NUT appears to be perpetuating the myth that teaching is more difficult than any other job. This is a negatively worded survey designed to build evidence for gain...'

'What a miserable, demoralising survey...I look forward to a survey which provides the opportunity for me to share the pleasure I get from my job.'

'I feel the questions in this survey are biased and leading. It focuses on the negative.... People are too willing to jump on the mental health bandwagon when the going gets tough.'

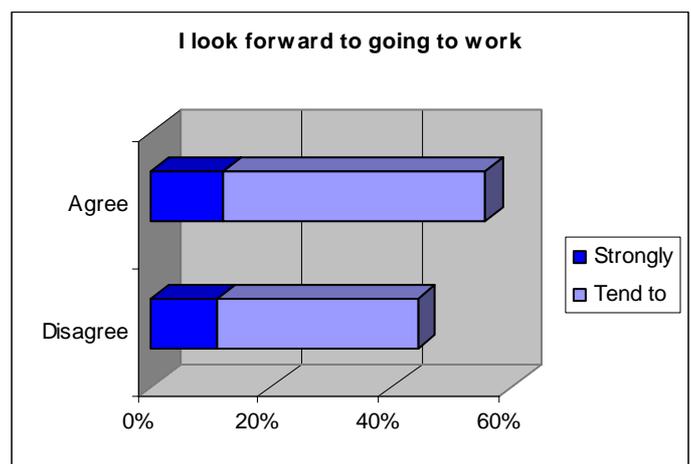
Responses to the Individual Statements

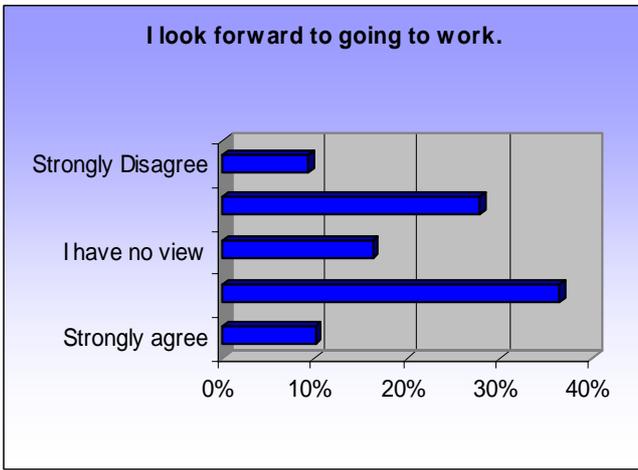
1. I look forward to going to work.

Responses to this question could be heartening in that around half of teachers agree with the statement.

But worryingly, about 4 out of 10 teachers do not look forward to going to work. Bearing in mind that teaching is still thought of as a vocation, one might have expected more teachers to agree.

The numbers strongly agreeing or disagreeing were fairly evenly balanced.





Individual comments included:

'I used to'

'But as term goes on it loses its appeal.'

'I am no longer a classroom teacher....now working in an advisory capacity.. While working as a class teacher my answers to questions 1-5 would have been reversed—that's why I changed my job.'

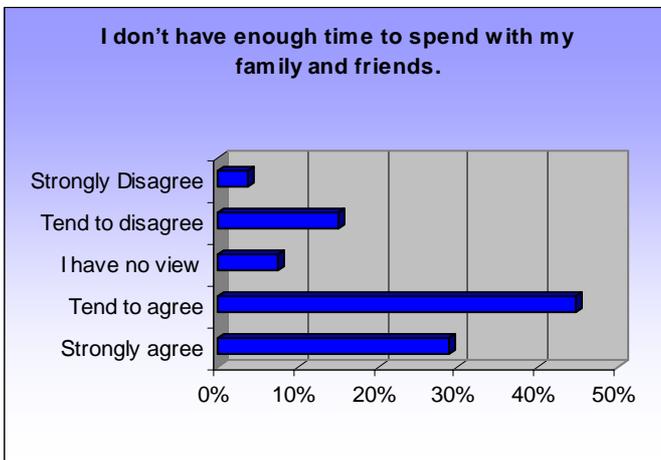
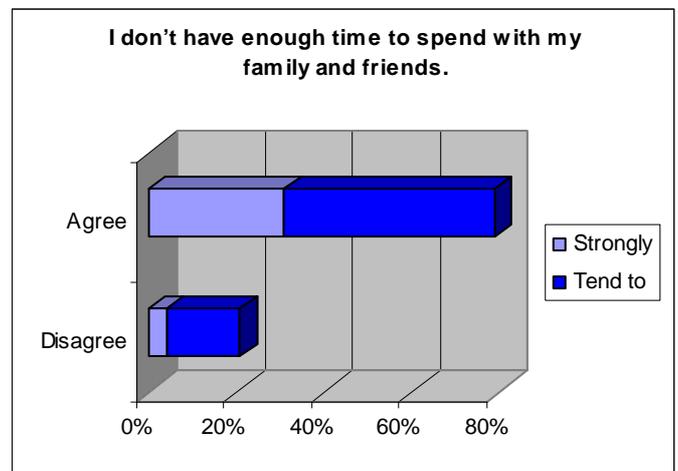
'I dread going to work; especially back to work after a holiday. I feel very stressed by it.'

'I certainly don't'

2. I don't have enough time to spend with my family and friends.
3. My working hours are excessive

It is very clear, from the responses to these two questions, that the vast majority of teachers surveyed do not feel that their work-life balance is healthy.

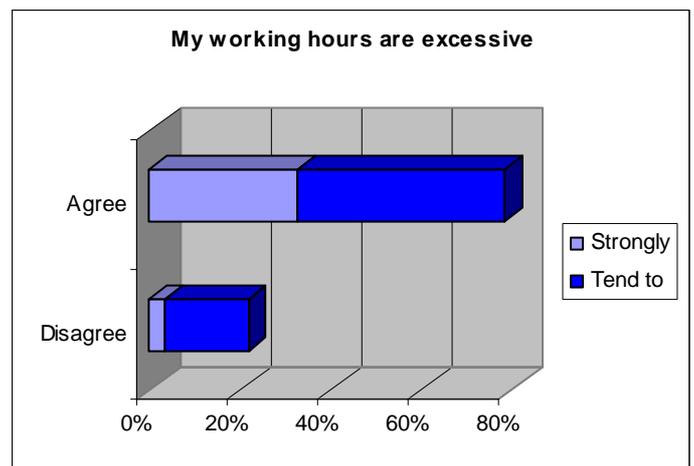
Because of the 'open ended' nature of the teachers' contract the only limits on a teachers working time are those set by the teacher themselves. Teachers may have difficulty in setting such limits, particularly if they are placed under unreasonable pressure through unmanageable workload.



In teaching there are always other things that could be done to help children succeed and the job is never 'completed'. In these circumstances, the most conscientious teachers may be those who find it hardest to establish a healthy work life balance. Employers must do more to help teachers to set reasonable limits on their working hours. In practice, this will require the Local Authority to issue firm guidance to head teachers and governors.

Governors of Academies, Voluntary Aided, Independent and Foundation Schools, will also need to take account of their duty of care as employers. The number of such non Local Authority employers is certain to increase as a result of Government policy, so the likelihood of consistent guidance is diminished.

Because many teachers work long hours this can develop into a culture where there is an unofficial 'expectation' on all teachers within a school to set a high limit on their working hours. Senior staff can



become role models for such long working hours and should reflect on the work-life example they set for others.

However, it is self-evident that there must be a point beyond which working longer hours leads to a worse outcome.

Individual comments on questions 2 & 3 included:

'Teachers at my school regularly work past 12 at night and all day Sunday, every week.'

'Too much work at home.'

'You are still working most evenings at home.'

'...but I enjoy doing the hours.'

'I have a 2 day a week contract.....I would not work as a full-time class teacher again. There is too much stress, however I love teaching children.'

'My social life ends during term time...don't have enough time for fitness activities.'

'I work part-time at the moment and that has made a huge change to my life.... I do not need to take much work home. This was very different when I had my own class.'

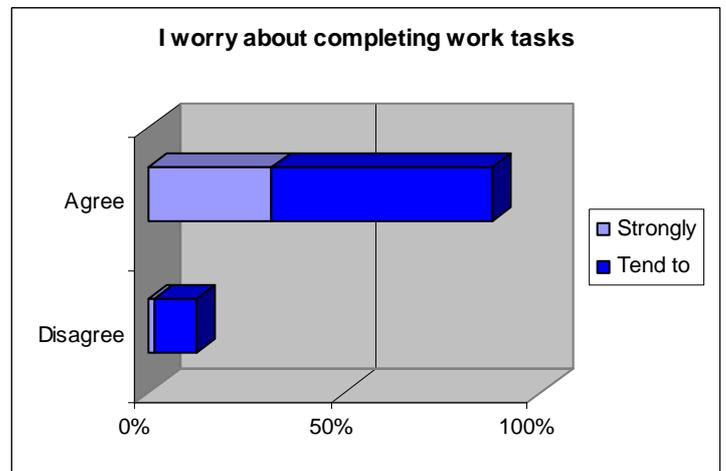
'The work life balance in this profession has to change.'



4. I worry about completing work tasks

It cannot be healthy that around 4 out of 5 teachers worry about completing work tasks. Even allowing for the fact that employees in other occupations must worry about meeting work demands, the fact that so many teachers agree with the statement suggests that there is some work overload for teachers.

It does seem that the number of tasks which teachers are expected to complete is on the increase, or changing. Some administrative tasks, historically carried out by teachers, have been removed, because of workforce remodelling, only to be replaced by new activities.



Examples cited by teachers include: increased target setting, more monitoring, more evidence collection and documentation, more detailed planning requirements.

It would probably be worthwhile to trawl any research, if it exists, on the range of current tasks and time spent undertaking them. If this research does not exist, it could be worthwhile commissioning it. Data for both primary and secondary teachers would be valuable.

The introduction of Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) Time has clearly not had the desired outcome of reducing teachers overall working time. (Confirmed by the 2006 OME Survey). Teachers tell us that other new tasks have rapidly filled the time made available by PPA. This seems to be particularly the case in schools involved in programmes such as the Intensifying Support Pilot (ISP).

This is a good example to illustrate the pressures faced by many teachers. Part of a national strategy, the ISP creates significant extra work for teachers involved on a six weekly cycle of target setting and review. The fact that each school is required to have an identified member of staff, the 'Driver', to ensure teachers complete all the required tasks, shows that even the language of such programmes is one of pushing teachers beyond reasonable limits they would set for themselves.

The rhetoric of both the Government and Nottingham City is that such programmes do not create extra work. An officer from Nottingham City Authority asserts that:

'...we are conscious of teachers' workloads ...In the case if ISP we have taken steps to help schools incorporate planning and meeting time into their normal working arrangements.'

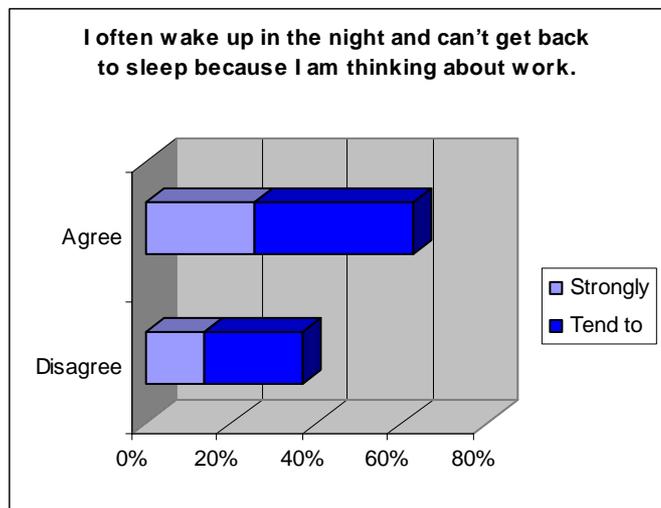
One NUT member who works as a 'Driver' in the ISP programme described this as 'laughable'.

However, a comment from one teacher showed a positive strategy to task overload:

'I make people wait!'

Unfortunately other factors mean that not everyone is confident enough to do so.

5. I often wake up in the night and can't get back to sleep because I am thinking about work.



The experience of many teachers struggling with work pressures is that they awaken in the night and find it difficult to sleep because of thinking about aspects of work.

The survey showed that around 3 out of 5 teachers had experience of this with around 25% strongly identifying with the statement.

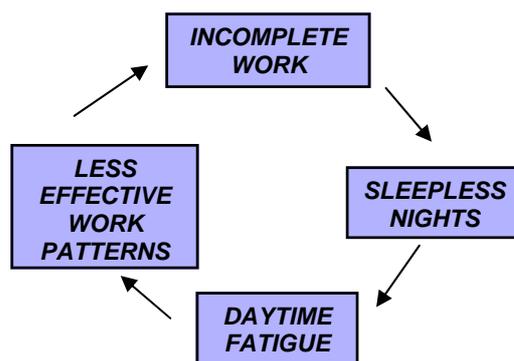
Difficulty in sleeping can, in turn, make teachers more tired at work and less able to function well. In particular, tiredness can have an impact on an individual's capacity to work efficiently and effectively and this then diminishes the teachers' capacity to meet excessive work demands.

At its worst, this can lead to a cycle of decline.

For a small proportion of teachers lack of sleep may become a more serious problem contributing to abnormal anxiety patterns or depression.

One respondent cited an increase in sleepless nights because of :

'the pressure of observation.'

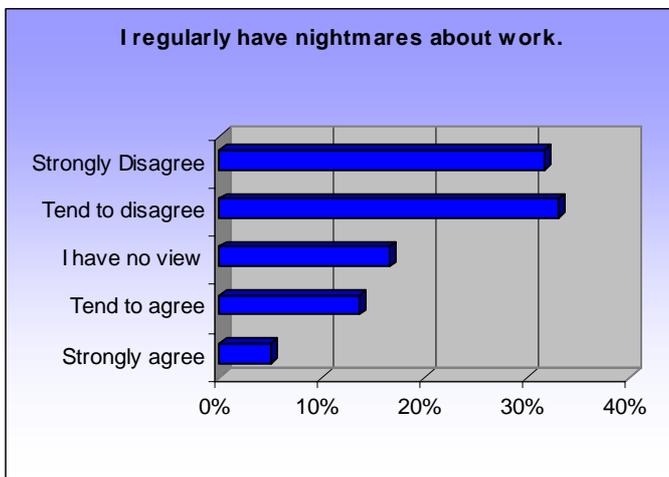
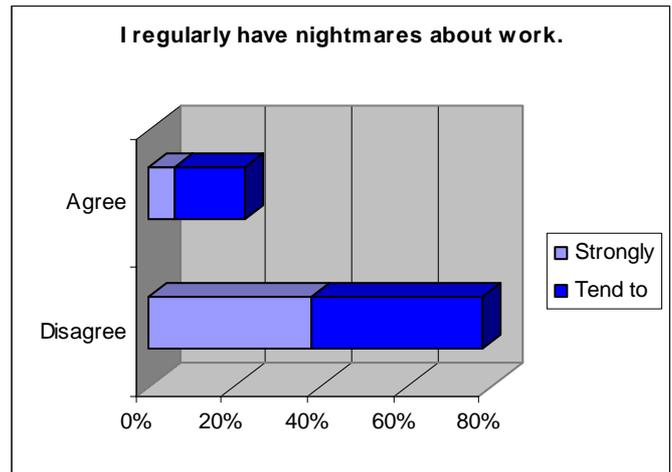


6. I regularly have nightmares about work

Fortunately the proportion of teachers experiencing regular nightmares about work is relatively low, but if such nightmares occur frequently this can be a symptom of a mental disorder.

If nightmares are restricted to work, and not other aspects of a teachers life, this suggests a work-related dimension.

The significance of such a symptom in relation to a teacher's mental well-being is one that requires expert medical knowledge. However, teachers who are experiencing a high incidence of such nightmares, particularly if associated with severe anxiety or depression should seek advice.



The survey suggests that there are likely to be between 100 – 180 Nottingham teachers falling into this category.

There may also be other signs. One teacher commented:

'I often talk in my sleep about school.'

7. I have difficulty in coping with the pace of change

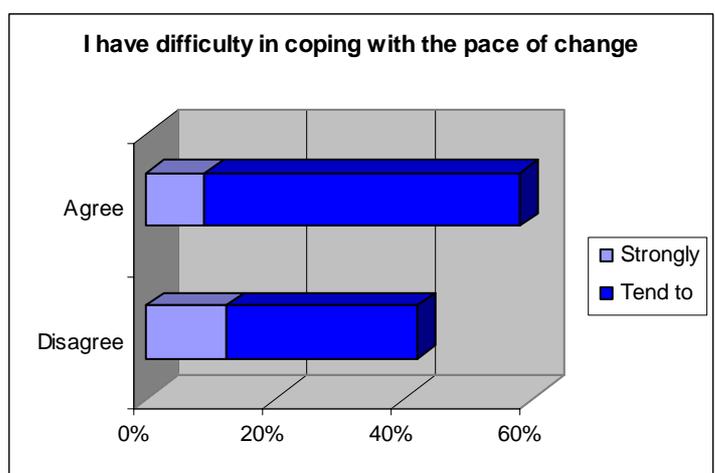
Change in the requirements placed on teachers is a well known phenomena. Since the 1980's there have been countless Government led initiatives which have impacted directly upon the working lives of teachers.

One might expect younger teachers to be more able to adapt to change, but older ones, will already have experienced many changes in their working lives and will be well used to managing such changes.

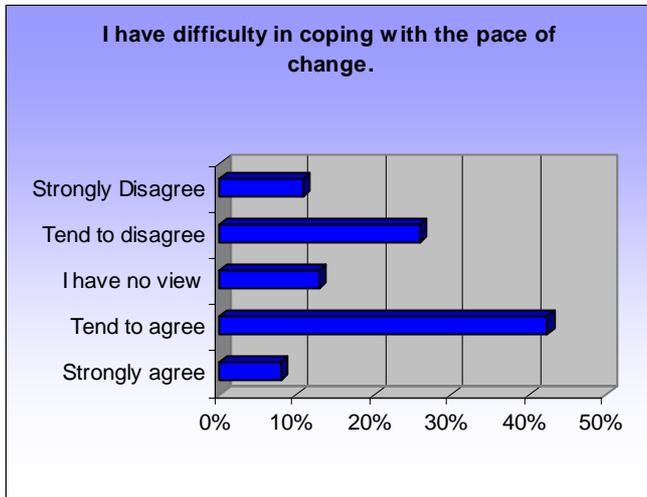
It is therefore surprising that well over half the teachers, of all ages, found change difficult.

Some teachers experience a much higher incidence of change because of particular circumstances. One respondent wrote:

'I have been through four school closures already in my career.'



On top of the significant change experienced by all teachers, it is hard to imagine the impact of the turmoil



faced by such teachers, but this experience is very far from unique.

Many Nottingham teachers have experienced such multiple school closures during their career. Others may soon do so as a result of more planned reorganisation.

The difficulty in coping with change is probably explained by its relentless nature. Teachers certainly express serious frustration when required to invest countless hours implementing an initiative only to be required to change their plans following radical changes to the same policy area within the space of a

few years, or sometimes even months. In recent years there have been multiple changes to policy in all of the following areas:

- National Curriculum,
- Teaching Strategies,
- Assessment Arrangements,
- OFSTED Frameworks,
- Teachers' Pay and Conditions,
- Performance Management,
- Health and Safety,
- Child Protection
- Special Educational Needs
- School Governance

and this list is not exhaustive. In addition, there have been new major initiatives like 'Extended Schools' and 'Every Child Matters.' When asked how their working lives could be improved, teachers often seek a period of calm or a moratorium on new initiatives to allow consolidation and reflection. No government has ever heeded this request and there is evidence that the rate of change has accelerated significantly in the last 10 years.

The changes have been so numerous and frequent that it would be virtually impossible to judge the effectiveness of any single policy.

Other comments included:

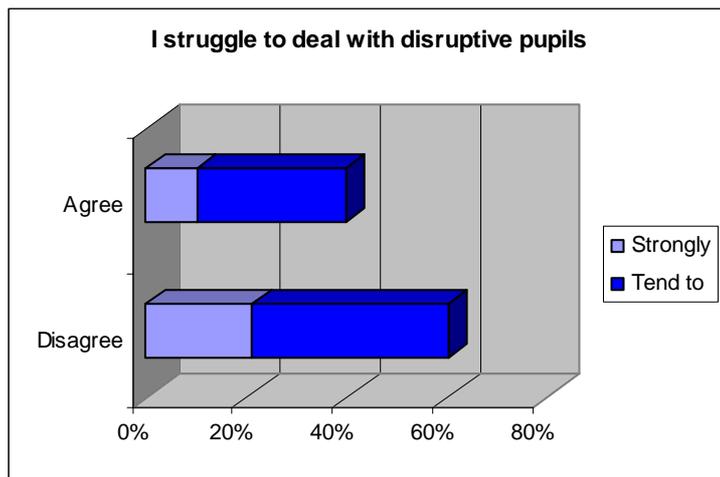
'but this is made worse in my current OFSTED fear driven situation'

'Too much change, too often.'

'I feel that many changes are unnecessary. Teachers are not allowed a comfort zone.'

'Not difficulty but definitely irritation and frustration.'

8. I struggle to deal with disruptive pupils



There is a commonly held view that the number of disruptive pupils in our schools is on the increase and it is certainly a factor cited by some teachers as a reason for leaving teaching.

Most teachers will have some contact with disruptive pupils and for many it will be a regular element of their daily lives.

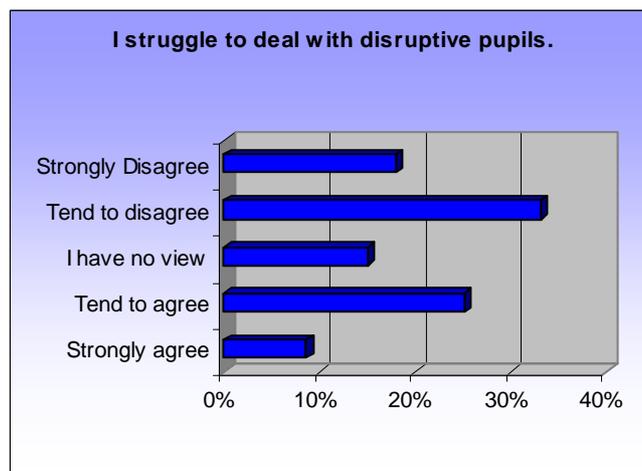
Around a third of teachers identify disruptive pupils as an area of work they struggle with, although most teachers must experience handling such pupils. However, it would be far too

simplistic to argue that some teachers can cope and others can't.

The level of difficulty faced by teachers can be very dependent on the scale of the problem and the support systems provided by the school and Local Authority. Teachers are normally able to manage a small number of pupils whose behaviour is disruptive provided it is not exceptionally so. However, if the number of disruptive pupils within a particular class exceeds a 'critical mass' the situation can become impossibly difficult for any teacher. In a few cases even one very disruptive pupil can become a serious problem.

It is impossible to over-emphasise the emotional impact on a teacher when things become unmanageable. If this is happening in a school where teachers are expected to cope alone, with little support, it can be devastating to a teacher's self-esteem and can destroy their capability to teach effectively. Once confidence is lost, it is hard to maintain the authority essential for a teacher to manage a classroom. Some teachers, who are not supported by good behaviour management policies, suffer a break down and leave teaching.

Teachers often identify the current pressure of an overcrowded curriculum, targets and testing as a contributory factor in the growth of disruptive behaviour. Two factors may be at play here:



- Teachers have insufficient time to invest in providing emotional support for pupils. 'Talking' solutions can be effective but require an investment of time. Because teachers and schools are increasingly judged against test data, the provision of pastoral care and emotional support is now given much lower status. This has been made worse by the Government's imposition on schools of new management structures. (Management Allowances - MAs - replaced by Teaching and Learning Responsibilities - TLRs). Pastoral responsibilities are now not seen as worthy of the same status and financial recognition.
- Pupils themselves are increasingly under pressure from the target and testing regime. The frequency of tests, mock tests and teaching towards tests leave some of our most disadvantaged or less able pupils in circumstances where they can easily become demoralised. Failure, if reinforced, is known to be de-motivating to children. The compulsory and 'high stakes' nature of the assessment regime in England makes it impossible for teachers to shield some children from a sense of failure. De-motivated and struggling to succeed, pupils can turn their attention to disruptive behaviour.

Comments included:

'Disruptive students and verbal abuse are a key form of stress at school. Initially incidents will be followed up. What I find most frustrating are long term problems that, after sanctions are put in place, continue time and again.'

'I no longer classroom teach.'

'At times, especially doing supply teaching.'

'A lot of time is taken.'

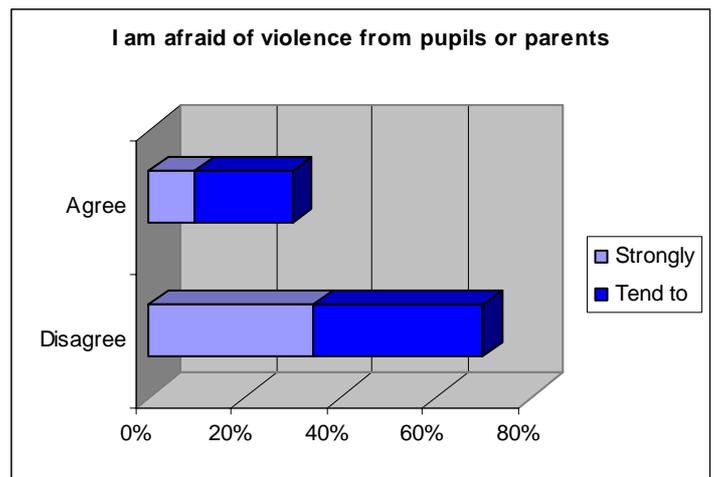
9. I am afraid of violence from pupils or parents

Fortunately most teachers are not victims of violence at work, but physical and verbal assault is now common, particularly in a City like Nottingham with higher than average levels of violent crime. Children exposed to violence outside school are more likely to exhibit it in school.

It isn't a problem faced by the majority of teachers, but for some it can be a very serious cause of work-related stress

Unfortunately, assaults on teachers are not always taken seriously enough or dealt with appropriately.

It is common, for example, for teachers who have been assaulted to be expected to continue to teach or interact with the perpetrator of the violence with little or no measures put in place to protect them against future incidents.



Assaults from pupils or parents often remain unreported as criminal offences and far too often putting up with assault is viewed as part of the job. Although older pupils present a greater threat of serious injury, assaults from even small children can cause significant trauma to teachers.

Pregnant teachers can be particularly anxious if required to teach a pupil with a history of violent behaviour towards staff.

If assaults are not dealt with appropriately, the potential for further assaults is high. In these circumstances, teachers can develop a genuine and justifiable

fear of violence.

There are examples of teachers leaving the profession following assaults, particularly where the victim is not confident that measures to protect them have been put in place.

Comments included:

'Isn't everyone?'

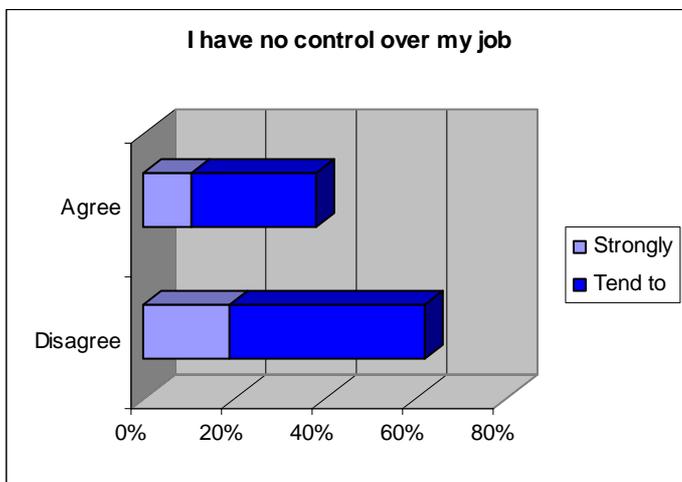
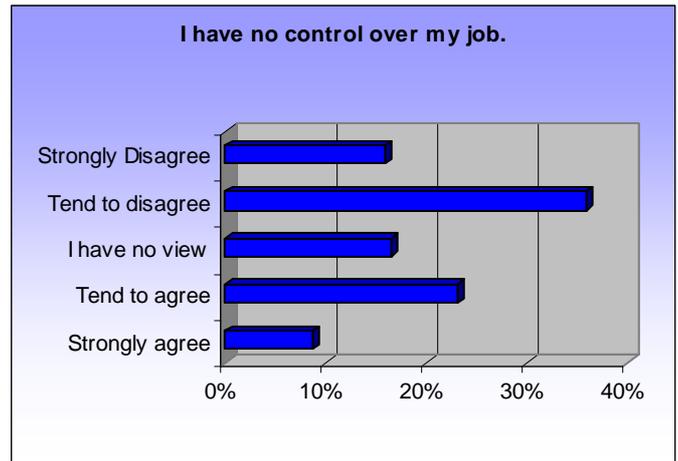
'My school is open at all times to the public, no security system.'

'I fear parents...their aggressive behaviour.'

10. I have no control over my job

It is somewhat surprising that over a third of teachers agreed with this statement. Teachers spend roughly half of their working lives in a classroom teaching and much of the other half preparing for or evaluating that teaching (most of this in their own time outside the school day.) What they teach is now largely defined by the National Curriculum and although there are some national strategies seeking to prescribe how teachers teach, most are non-statutory. Nevertheless many teachers clearly feel they have lost all control of how they carry out their work.

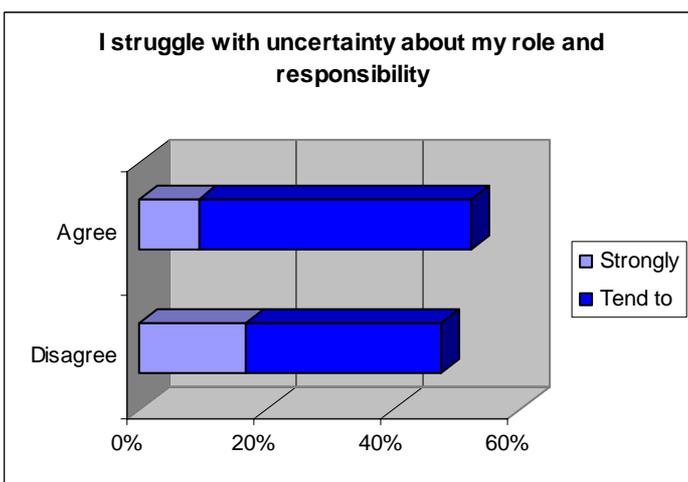
Some feel that the significant accountability measures (OFSTED, performance league tables, Performance Management, etc.) push them into working in a way they would not do, given a free choice. As much now depends on statutory test results, it is easy to see why teachers would feel pressured to ‘teach to the test’, even at the expense of other important aspects of Education, which are difficult or impossible to measure. This is partly confirmed by the response to statement 18 (I am often required to undertake tasks in conflict with my professional judgement.).



There may however be another explanation for some teachers. Agreement with the statement may simply be an emotional response to work overload. If teachers find their workload unmanageable and are suffering from stress, it would be easy to feel that they had no control over their job.

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11. I struggle with uncertainty about my role and responsibility.



Around half of teachers do not appear to have a clear view of their role. There are a few possible explanations for this:

- Initiative overload with regular changes in policy and the requirements that fall on teachers, have caused uncertainty about their role and responsibility.
- Managing the pace of change has deflected school leaders from making sure teachers roles are clearly defined and that they have adequate training to understand and carry out their responsibilities. It may be that change is so rapid that teachers simply don't know who's responsible for what.

- The wide ranging duties of teachers combined with the difficulty of managing a heavy workload can cause role confusion unless the leadership of the school defines these clearly.
- There is inevitably some overlap of roles and responsibilities within any school..

One respondent suggested a way of dealing with uncertainty:

'If it's not clear, I don't do it.'

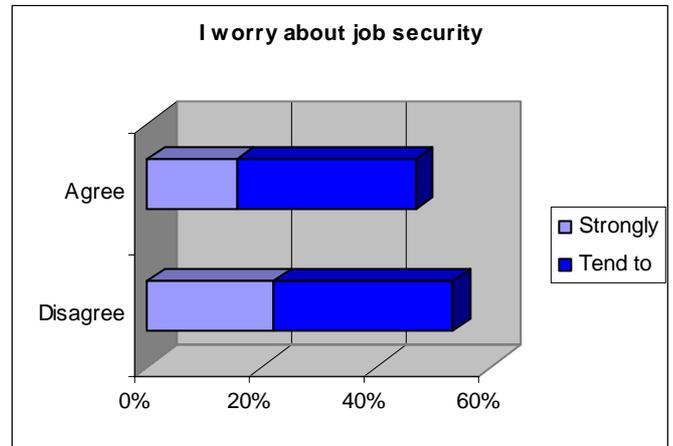
12. I worry about job security

Traditionally teaching has been thought of as a secure occupation and until the late 1980's teacher redundancies were almost unheard of. In the early 1990's, LEAs were forced to delegate budgets to schools and subsequent funding cuts forced many schools to make teachers redundant. Since then we have seen several reasons for teacher redundancy including:

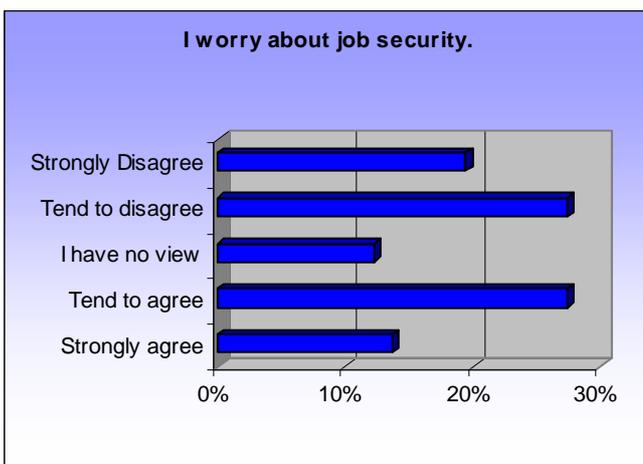
- Falling rolls;
- School reorganisation;
- School closures due to initiatives such as 'Fresh Start' and 'Academies.'

If redundancy become necessary in a particular school, the decision about which teacher(s) to make redundant is in the hands of the school governors (usually following the head teacher's advice). Teachers do not always perceive that these decisions are made against objective criteria, so anxiety about job security can be common. Even objective selection does not remove the job loss and associated anxiety.

This threat of redundancy is not particularly greater than in other occupations, but its probably worth noting that the public perception may be that teachers jobs are 'safe' or 'for life' when they are not.



It is now much more common for teachers to leave teaching on the grounds of capability. Although actual dismissals due to capability may still be few, many teachers resign, during capability procedures, in the knowledge that they would otherwise be dismissed.



The introduction of much more punitive Performance Management systems, which are target driven, has led to an increase in teachers facing capability procedures.

There have always been a numbers of teachers who leave the profession due to ill-health, but the growth in applications for ill-health pensions prompted changes in the Teachers Pension regulations to make this more difficult. Because of this, some teachers are now dismissed as unfit for work by their employers whilst still being considered fit to teach by the Teachers' Pension Agency. Absence monitoring policies, introduced by local authorities and schools, can trigger procedures,

with the potential to lead to dismissal, after a relatively short periods of staff absence.

For all of the above reasons, it is understandable that teachers may worry about their job security. Sadly there are a few head teachers who are prepared to use the threat of redundancy or dismissal as a management device. Some teachers have been subject to harassment or bullying in this way.

The fact that almost a half of teachers worry about job security suggests that teaching is no longer the secure profession it once was.

One respondent commented on a related issue:

'New TLR points mean I have to apply for my own job. It is being advertised nationally as -Director of Learning- If I don't get it I will lose £4,000 plus.'

13. I am often in conflict with my managers.

The response to this statement suggests that, on the whole, the relationship between teachers and their managers is a good one. In spite of the work-related pressures faced by teachers, they tend to adopt a collegiate approach to the daily pressure of work. In most circumstances they recognise that the pressure on managers is equally great. Conflict only arises in some circumstances and seems to be more likely where a school is experiencing multiple challenges at a particular time. Relationships can be difficult to maintain when teachers are under severe stress.

Where conflict does arise, it can be very debilitating to the work of a school. Extreme instances of conflict leading to a total breakdown of relationships can be the cause of stress related absence and illness.

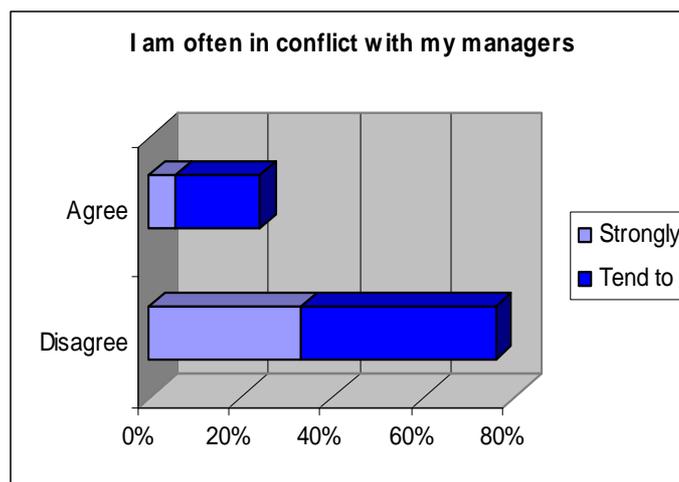
Conflict needs to be dealt with appropriately, but teachers are often reluctant to seek expert help. It is important that teachers and their managers are aware of the conciliation and mediation services that are available through trade unions, employers and other agencies. Local Authority employers should make sure they have adequate provision for conflict resolution between their employees.

Comments included:

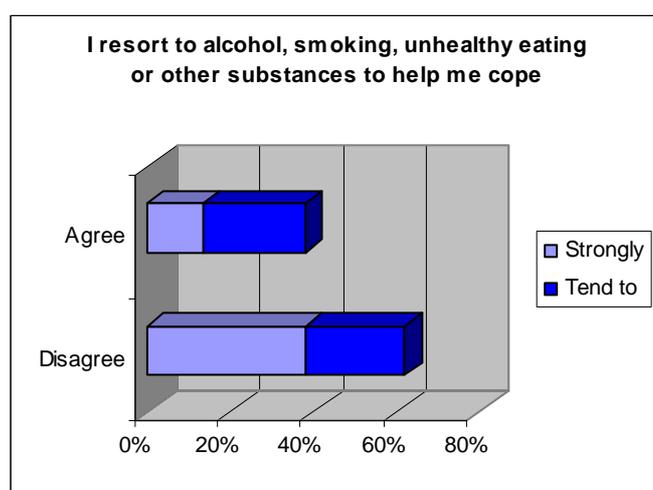
'A platform for discussion no longer exists.'

'I disagree with managers but don't confront them!'

'Only about targets but I don't care about what they think.'



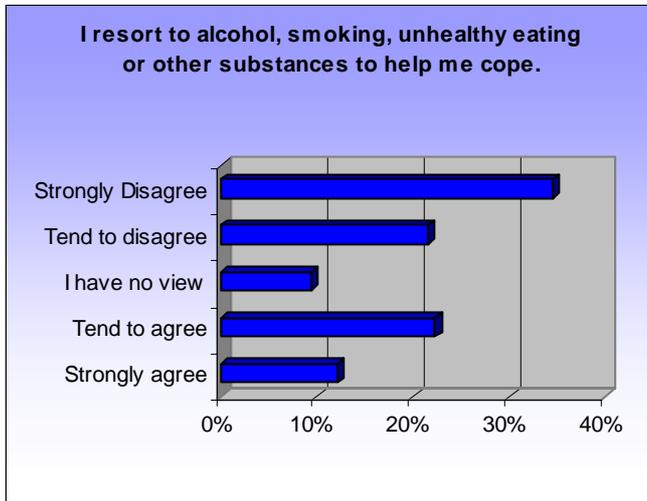
14. I resort to alcohol, smoking, unhealthy eating or other substances to help me cope.



It is known that alcohol, nicotine and other unhealthy substances can contribute to stress levels. However, at times of stress, many people get short term relief by resorting to such life styles. Whilst logic may tell teachers this is an unhelpful long-term strategy, there is little doubt that people are more likely to resort to such relief when under stress.

The survey shows that over a third of teachers admit to adopting such strategies in the context of helping them cope. The statement is not specific about coping with work and many teachers will be subject to serious stress not related to work. However, it is reasonable to assume that many of these will see work as the impetus.

For some of these teachers, excessive dependence on alcohol or other substances will, in turn, make them less able to manage work pressures, so adding to the stress which fuels the abuse. This can lead to a cycle of decline and more serious illness.



Conversely, taking regular exercise is known to be helpful in reducing stress. Although not formally part of this survey, some respondents made reference to their heavy work load resulting in insufficient time for physical exercise, especially during term time.

Comments included:

'I have an unhealthy lifestyle as a result of lack of time rather than as a coping strategy.'

'Alcohol only'

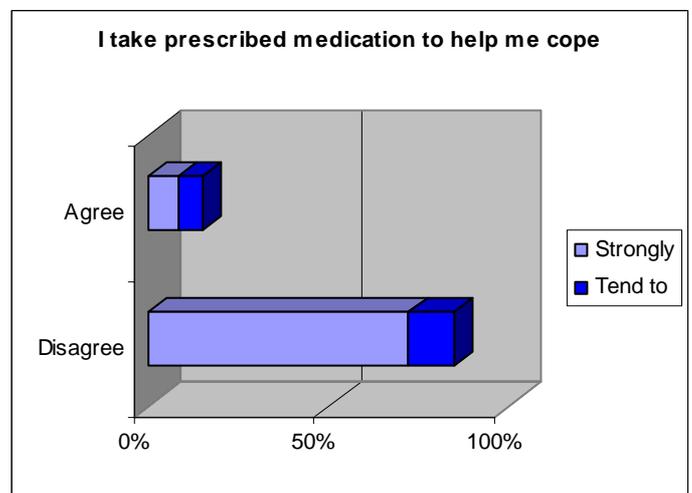
'Yes, unhealthy eating.'

'I overeat through stress and pressure.'

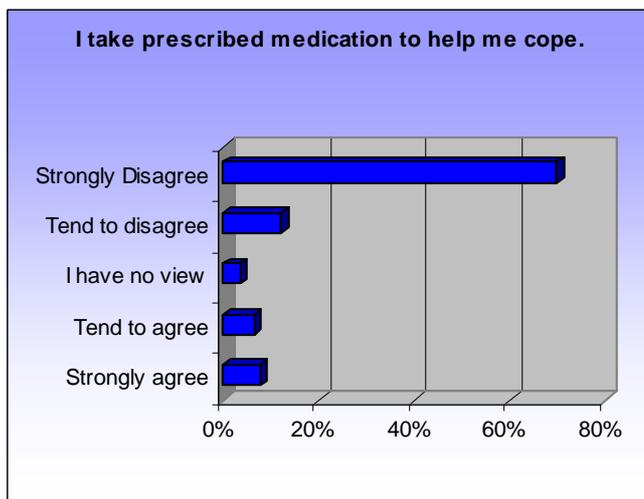
15. I take prescribed medication to help me cope

Unsurprisingly, the proportion of respondents in agreement with this statement is low, but if the number of teachers taking medication to help cope with work-related stress is the 1 in 15 suggested by the survey, this is still a matter of concern. On the basis of this evidence, it is likely that 150-200 Nottingham teachers take such medication. In addition, we know from comments on the survey that other teachers have taken medication in the past or have preferred other remedies rather than medication.

We are also aware, from direct contact with members, that some would rather leave the profession than take medication to help cope with staying in it. Others have been taking anti-depressants for several years and may have difficulty coming off the medication.



Alternative 'talking remedies', for those experiencing depression or anxiety, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) are known to be effective for some. However, they are not easily available because of limited resources in the NHS. Waiting times for expert support from mental health teams can be long. As many teachers don't seek help until a 'crisis' in their mental health, their GP may understandably recommend medication as the only route available to immediate relief.



If teachers were more aware of the potential for mental illness and were able to identify warning signs before serious problems arose, skilled support could help the teacher to take steps to prevent the onset of illness. Employers should consider how all teachers can be helped to review their mental well-being.

It is also clear that the employers of teachers could give much greater emphasis to preventative measures. Training, counselling and therapy can all have a place in preventing illness, but measures to reduce excessive workload and other stress 'triggers' identified in this survey are vital.

Comments included:

'but that is because I refuse to, yet!!'

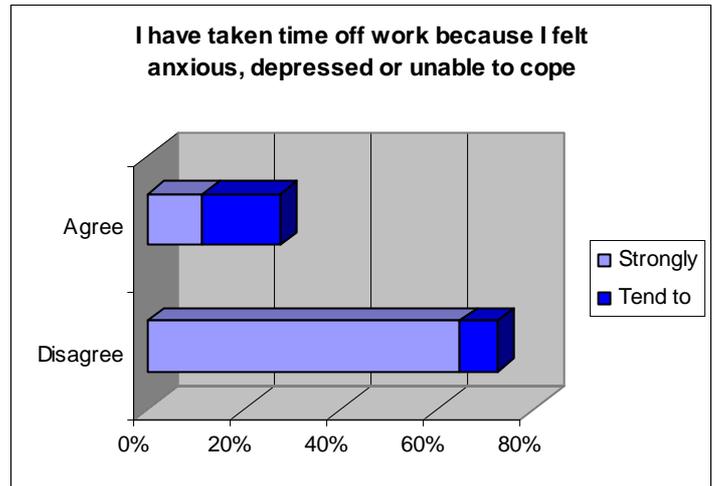
'Lots of times.'

'Not yet!'

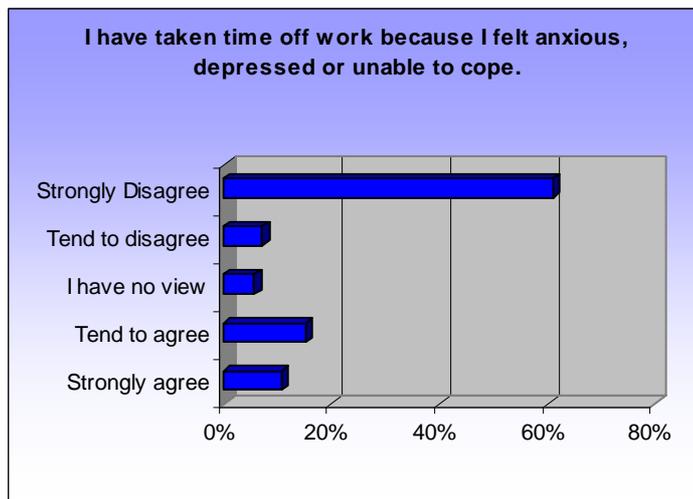
16. I have taken time off work because I felt anxious, depressed or unable to cope.

Most respondents strongly disagree with this statement which perhaps demonstrates the strong work ethic amongst teachers. In general, teachers are very reluctant to 'give in' to illness, particularly if stress-related. It is common to find teachers at work who are unwell. Because teachers know that their absence will probably have a negative impact on pupils and colleagues, they are reluctant to take time off work.

In the case of stress related illness, things may have to reach a crisis before a teacher will take any time off work. Unfortunately, illness which remains untreated until 'breaking-point' may be much more difficult to treat. Early intervention may help teachers to overcome illness without the need for any absence from work. However, early symptoms of illness are not always recognised.



We are uncertain about the scale of stress related illness amongst teachers. It is not clear if employers monitor the causes of teacher absence. If they don't should they be required to do so?



There is still a significant stigma attached to mental illness and GPs will often ask teachers what they want writing on a medical certificate. Teachers believe, with some justification, that medical certificates identifying causes such as 'depression' or 'stress related illness' will have a negative impact on their future careers. So, even if the causes of teacher absence were being monitored by employers through medical certificates, there would be a hidden proportion of teachers not identified.

It would certainly be worthwhile trying to quantify the mental illness amongst teachers but it is not immediately obvious how this might be achieved. To do so accurately might require some method of anonymous self-certification for all absence, or some way in which GPs can report the statistical incidence of mental illness amongst teachers.

A minimum starting point would be for employers to quantify the number absences where mental illness is shown to be the cause on medical certificates and self-certification. This information would need to be used to support teachers rather than fuel absence monitoring procedures. Otherwise it would be counter productive.

Comments from respondents included:

'No, but there is time yet.'

'I was absent long term with depression and anxiety.'

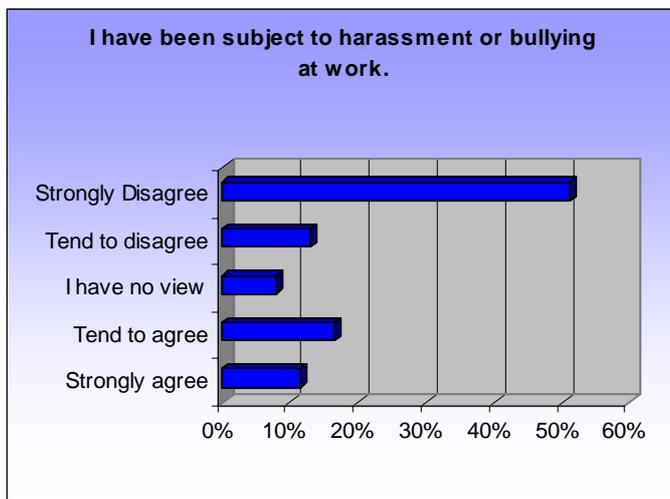
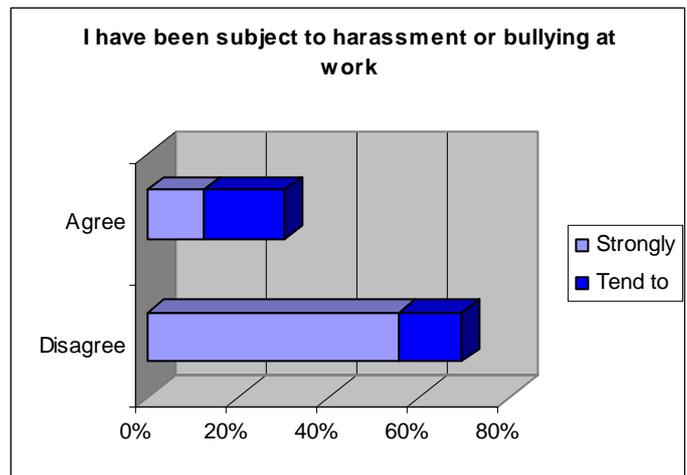
'I took early retirement due to ill-health. Through the support of family and friends I eventually, and very gradually, returned to teaching.'

17. I have been subject to harassment or bullying at work.

The survey suggests that around 1 in 4 teachers perceive that they have been subject to harassment or bullying at work.

The nature of such harassment or bullying may vary a great deal and although 'management' bullying will constitute a proportion of this, that is certainly not the only cause.

Staff can feel bullied or harassed by colleagues, parents of pupils and pupils themselves. Some teachers and head teachers have even complained about being 'bullied or harassed' by local authority staff. So this statement covers a wide range of circumstances. Some harassment is overt, but often bullying can be very subtle. It can nonetheless be devastating in its impact. Bullying can also be collective, with groups of staff excluding an individual. Refusal to share resources or planning may seem trivial, but for a young teacher joining a school, long term exclusion from collective support is a form of bullying.



It can nonetheless be devastating in its impact. Bullying can also be collective, with groups of staff excluding an individual. Refusal to share resources or planning may seem trivial, but for a young teacher joining a school, long term exclusion from collective support is a form of bullying.

Increasingly, 'management' bullying is becoming linked to excessive workload when senior staff, themselves under pressure to meet targets, pass on the pressure to other staff in an inappropriate 'bullying' fashion.

Faced with excessive demands, sometimes teachers approach managers about overload. Being told, for example, that 'Shit happens' or 'I haven't got a

magic wand' is not helpful to someone on the verge of breakdown..

At its worst, bullying can destroy a teacher's ability to work in a school and can dominate their lives. The number of cases of harassment and bullying reported to the NUT is on the increase representing a significant proportion of the Union's casework.

Comments included:

'..the whole school is bullied. Everyone is frightened.'

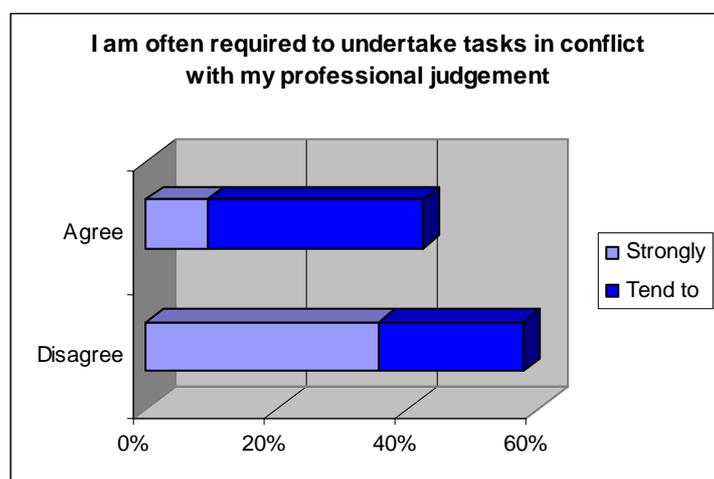
'I have wondered sometimes if this is because I don't want to subscribe to this target-driven climate where targets abound and have to be met.'

'Not presently, but by a former head teacher.'

'I have received bullying and racist comments'

'Not personally but others have and it is a fear at the back of my mind, given how excessive the demands are and the difficulty in meeting deadlines...'

18. I am often required to undertake tasks in conflict with my professional judgement.



In some respects this statement links to section 10. *I have no control over my job.*

For many teachers it is a source of stress to be required to work in a way which is contrary to their professional judgement. Most teachers are highly motivated by interaction with pupils and identify this as the most enjoyable aspect of their work. Typically, teachers take pride in evaluating their work in order to inform their planning to meet the varied needs of the pupils they teach. They feel well placed to select the most appropriate teaching methodology and feel frustrated when instructed to work to a 'top-

down' national strategy. It is even more frustrating when such strategies are defined without proper consultation with the wider teaching profession. A 'think tank' in Whitehall is no substitute for the collective wisdom of teachers.

In the last 10 years teachers have seen their professional judgement wither because of requirements to follow national strategies, focussed on meeting measurable Government targets. They may have lost some professional skills as a result. Although many national strategies are non-statutory they have a quasi-statutory status because their application is policed by OFSTED and, increasingly, Local Authorities.

Whilst there may be aspects of national strategies which teachers wish to adopt or modify to suit their own circumstances, a 'one size fits all' approach to teaching can work contrary to a teachers professional judgement. Imposing a methodology on teachers may well be counterproductive because professional commitment and enthusiasm are inevitably reduced.



Increasingly, teachers also find themselves required to take on duties which have little or no educational value, in their eyes. For example, the vast majority of them feel that the current arrangements for statutory assessment are damaging to the interests of pupils. They are nevertheless obliged to implement them.

For some, the above are a source of sustained internal conflict, known to be a factor in mental disorders.

Comments in the survey included:

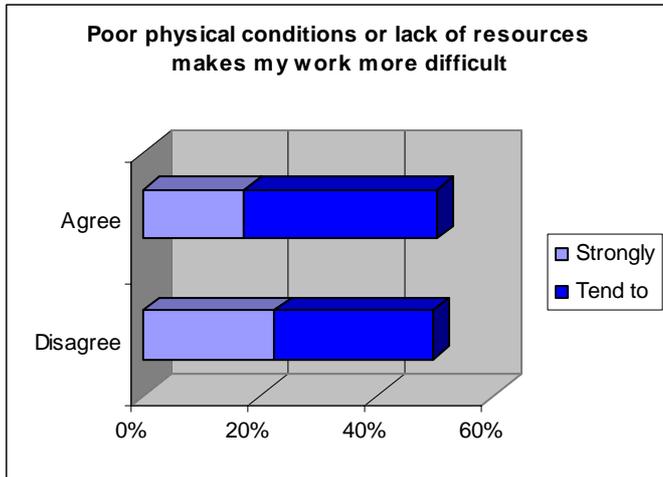
'Imposed externally rather than internally.'

‘Curricular targets are a real burden as the paperwork associated is excessive. They are not helpful to staff or pupils.’

‘I feel that we are doing so much assessing, levelling, benchmarking, checking for targets that at times we seem to be hardly teaching.’

‘Standards agenda versus what is right and needed’

19. Poor physical conditions or lack of resources makes my work more difficult .



As with many statements in this survey, the response of individual teachers may depend upon the individual circumstances of the school within which they work.

Government claims significant additional funding of Education in recent years, but the impact on buildings and resources still leaves about half of our teachers agreeing with this statement.

In spite of the partial delegation of capital budgets to schools, the condition of some buildings is beyond the capacity of the school to resolve. A programme

of re-building secondary schools is now underway but this will take time. Renewal of most primary school buildings remains a future hope.

Setting aside the condition of buildings, the provision of resources varies widely. Revenue budgets have now been delegated to schools for almost two decades. Schools experiencing budget difficulties often reduce ‘capitation’ budgets to a bare minimum. Many teachers subsidise classroom resources from their own income. Leaving children without resources is a difficult option for a conscientious teacher.

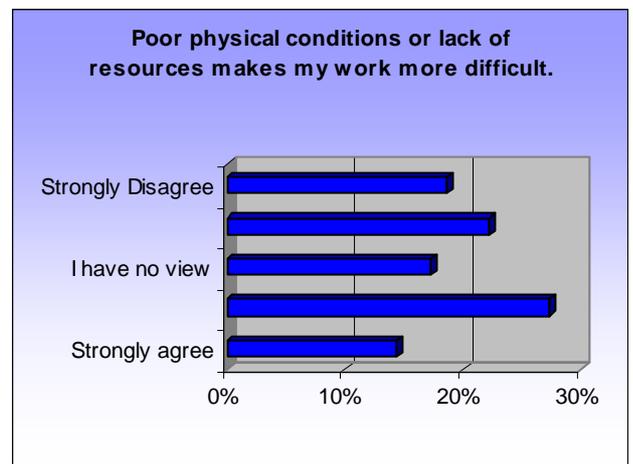
Lack of adequate resources is just one more pressure that teachers have to deal with. If poor school resources means teachers have to spend long hours making their own, and many do, this adds to the overall workload and contributes to the long hours culture described earlier in this report.

Comments included:

‘I’m frequently making resources.’

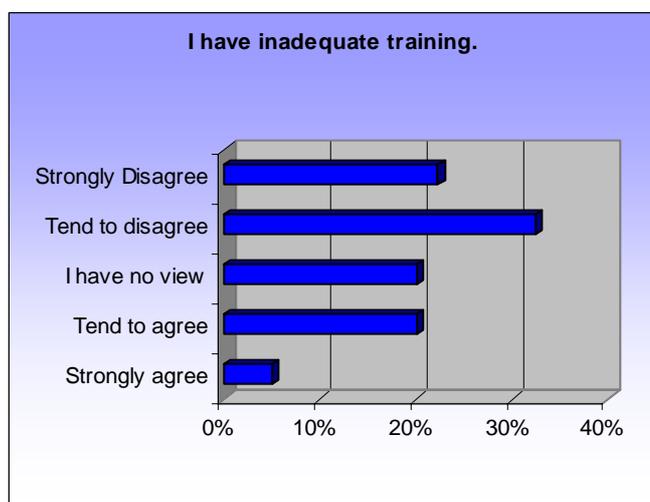
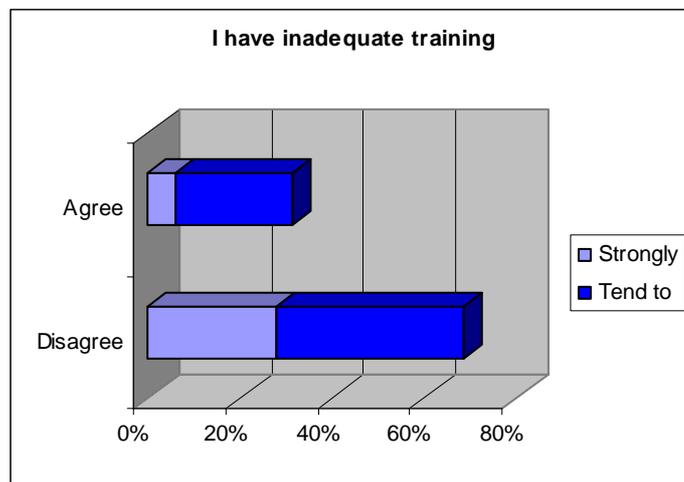
‘Extremely limited resources affects all aspects of my work.’

‘A considerable problem is lack of storage. Our bedroom is full of boxes and files on a permanent basis and I frequently have boxes of resources and boards for training stacked up. If our children were younger it would be a real problem.’ (Support Service Teacher)



20. I have inadequate training.

Amongst the third of teachers who feel inadequately trained there were comments from respondents that helped to explain some of the circumstances. In recent years, much of the in-service training for teachers has been school based taking place during INSET closure days or twilight sessions. The quality of such training and the emphasis given to it will therefore vary from school to school. Training provided by the Local Authority has usually been linked to particular national initiatives or areas where they have legal responsibilities such as Health and Safety, or Child Protection.



Much school based training will have been a response to national initiatives and training material 'boxes' have been provided using a 'cascade' approach. The drawback of such an approach has been that national initiatives have dominated the training agenda. This training also takes little account of the teachers existing knowledge and skills with all receiving the same training diet whether it meets their needs or not. The 'top down' domination of CPD by the Government's agenda means teachers seeking training in other areas have sometimes found it hard to find. Some feel seeking such training is down to them. The situation is illustrated by the following comment from respondents:

'All training is for subject managers'

'It's up to me to get what I need...It's all rubbish anyway, mostly.'

'In some subjects.'

'my initial training was good. Professional development since has been poor.'

Some teachers complained of too much training:

'...more training than we can cope with.'

Professional development, where teachers determine the focus, is now much rarer than it was in the 1980's and opportunities for CPD on an extended 'action research' model are hard to find.

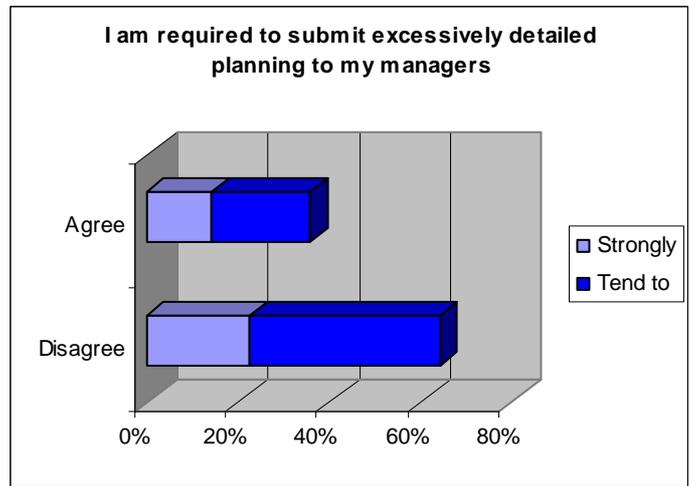
21. I am required to submit excessively detailed planning to my managers.

About a third of teachers agree with this statement which probably reflects the different expectations in particular schools. All teachers are expected to plan and want to do so. Planning can help many teachers to feel secure in their teaching and, as such, is not necessarily a cause of work-related stress.

Most teachers see the sharing of long and medium term planning as essential to ensure that there is a coherent coverage of learning objectives as pupils move through a school. However, a teacher's preferred style and detail for short term planning will vary. In many schools planning at the weekly or daily basis is

left entirely to the professional judgement of the teacher.

However, some schools routinely expect short term planning to follow a prescribed format, how ever useful the teacher finds it, and for all planning to be submitted to senior staff for scrutiny. Increasingly, some schools go beyond daily planning and demand that teachers provide individual lesson plans, sometimes in great detail. It is common for teachers to report that such detailed planning takes as long or longer than the actual teaching activity. On top of this, teachers need the time necessary for follow-up evaluation and marking.



Faced with a burden of planning, which can mean teachers working into the early hours on a daily basis, some resort to downloading lesson plans from websites to reduce their workload. However, the spectre of ‘national lesson plans’ which can be ‘delivered’ at a school level clearly undermines the professional nature of teaching. If it can be done from a ‘script’ why do we need trained and expensive teachers? Evaluation of individual pupil progress and needs must be integral to a teachers planning and it is hard to imagine that prescribed lesson plans can be in the interests of pupils and their varied learning styles.

Some teachers report that the extra time for planning made available through the introduction PPA has been more than filled with extra planning demands.

Comments included:

‘I am a professional and don’t see the need for continuous scrutiny—whether from the immediate boss, the LEA or OFSTED etc. We overplan and over record!!’

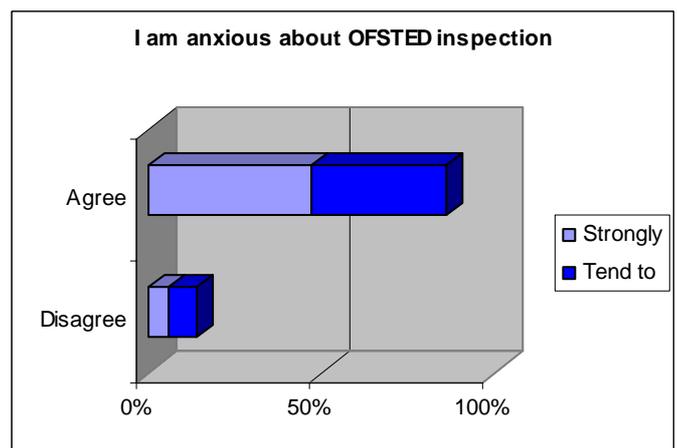
‘4 lesson plans a day—regular audits including naming and shaming.’

‘They are detailed for a reason.’

22. I am anxious about OFSTED inspection.

A significant proportion of teachers are judged good or outstanding by OFSTED with very few identified as unsatisfactory. OFSTED is therefore likely to confirm many teacher’s strengths. So, why are more than 4 out of 5 teachers anxious or very anxious, about the inspection process?

Part of this is explained by teacher’s experience of OFSTED since its introduction. OFSTED is not perceived as an entirely objective process by teachers. Some have been judged in one inspection as good or outstanding only to find themselves judged unsatis-



factory in another. A teacher’s work is not independent of the situation within which they work and, given the very different circumstances, the outcome of inspection is often seen as unfair by teachers. It is particularly the case if a judgement is made following a brief observation of as little as 5 minutes.

The high stakes nature of OFSTED inspection is also a major factor in promoting anxiety. Teachers know that a judgement of ‘Notice to Improve’ or ‘Special Measures’ will have massive implications on their working lives. Teachers in such schools are bombarded with additional accountability and monitoring systems and are forced to work under even greater pressure than the generality of teachers. It is not surprising that teachers dread such an outcome. We know from casework that there are more teacher resignations and higher levels of sickness absence following a ‘Notice to Improve’ or ‘Special Measures’ inspection report. Unfortunately, schools falling into these categories can find themselves there unfairly. Teachers in such schools can be quite unfairly labelled as ‘failing’ and understandably resent it. In some cases the OFSTED judgements are highly questionable based on any reasonable criteria.

Many teachers perceive OFSTED inspection as both punitive, inconsistent and unfair. Most are therefore anxious about it.

Comments included:

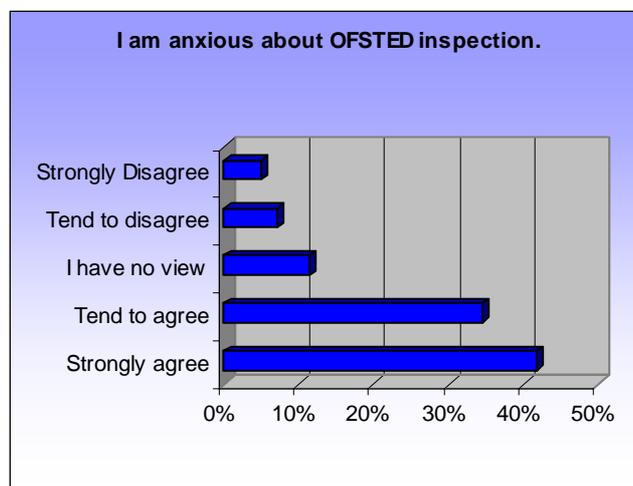
‘Only because they are so unreasonable, biased and unpredictable even though our last 2 have been “excellent” in outcome. They make you feel...well all sorts of things.’

‘I had a bad and unnecessary experience.’

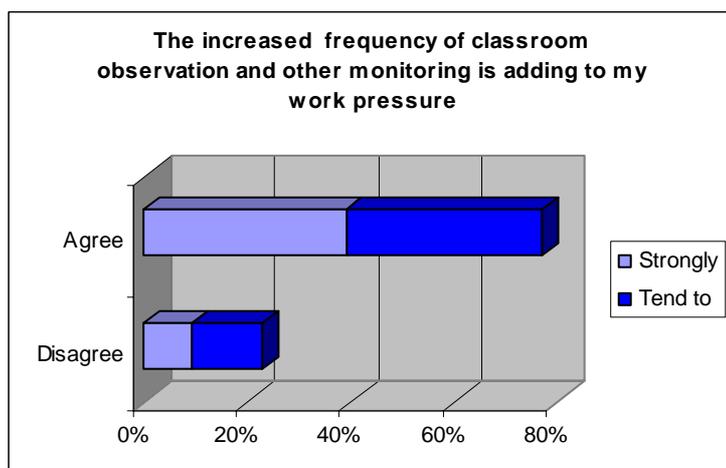
‘Heads have to roll so that we will get a “glorious OFSTED report.”’

‘Horrible feelings.’

‘No more than anyone else.’



23. The increased frequency of classroom observation and other monitoring is adding to my work pressure.



It is alarming, but understandable, that almost 4 out of 5 teachers agree with this statement. At a time when Workforce Remodelling was supposed to reduce teacher workload, the opposite seems to be happening. Teachers tell us that much of the new allocation of PPA time is now taken up by monitoring activity. So what is happening?

The introduction in 2005 of the new OFSTED Framework seems to be a major cause. It requires schools to conduct detailed self-evaluation on an annual basis and has shifted the workload of evaluating and collecting evi-

dence from OFSTED inspection teams to schools. Huge amounts of effort are now invested in the self-evaluation activity.

Teachers report a significant increase in the frequency of classroom observations. This includes increased

requirements to be observed and to conduct observations of others.

The collection of evidence to support other aspects of the schools self-evaluation has also increased greatly. It seems that schools, who may already have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, feel compelled to collect more evidence to support their conclusions. Monitoring, evaluation and evidence collection has become a significant and growing proportion of a teachers work.

The growth in activity may be most significant in very challenging schools. Some challenging schools, for very good reasons, have assessment levels below the ‘floor targets’ set by the Local Authority. The need to explain and justify such results puts additional pressure on teachers to collect evidence.

The structure of the new OFSTED framework is also pressing schools to carry out evaluative activity well beyond the boundary of the classroom. Regular trawling of parent opinion is expected and the views of the wider community must now be sought and documented.

In fact, schools are now expected to do far more than an OFSTED inspection team would have done (every 4-6 years), on an annual basis. This is additional workload , following the OFSTED changes, is not funded, so it is just one more thing to do.

The changing role of Local Authorities is also significant. Once seen as a supportive agency for schools, their new monitoring duties have placed them in a much more inspectoral role. The role of School Improvement Partners is also one which has potential to add to the mounting pressure on schools.

Comments included:

‘The pressure as a middle manager (a job I have done for 18 years) is becoming unbearable—even in a school that is fairly successful. The amount of paperwork and justification of existence is beyond a joke. I wish I was old enough to retire!’

‘I love teaching, not filling in pointless tick charts, or duplicate assessment forms, unless they are of use to me and my colleagues.’

‘As a middle manager in a comprehensive, I feel that our tasks are constantly being increased—every initiative created new systems, monitoring needs, new resources etc. There is enormous pressure to reach targets, set externally (LEA etc.) and everything is becoming statistics and data led.’

‘I have a team of four to monitor every half term.’

‘I try to exert as little pressure as I can on my staff. I loathe observing them (I know what they can do) so do it rarely and make up the paperwork.’

‘I have 6 frees per week—in that time I have to carry out observations, line manage others, have weekly meetings with my line manager, as well as the usual ‘fire-fighting’ required. I also do cover, although this is not usually excessive.’

About the Author

John Illingworth recently retired from his post as a primary head teacher following a period of work-related mental illness. A teacher for 33 years, he first became a primary head in 1982 and led three schools before his retirement.

John has been active in the National Union of Teachers throughout his career and was their National President in 2001/2002. He announced his decision to leave teaching in a well publicised speech at the NUT Annual Conference in 2006.

Having experienced stress-related illness himself, and discovering its high incidence amongst teachers, John is now devoting his energies to exploring its magnitude, causes and remedies.

Appendix - Spreadsheet of Survey Return Data

Nottingham City NUT - Mental Health Survey											
		Raw Score				Percentage					
		Strongly agree	Tend to agree	I have no view	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	I have no view	Tend to disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I look forward to going to work.	14	52	22	37	14	10%	37%	16%	27%	10%
2	I don't have enough time to spend with my family and friends.	42	61	10	21	5	30%	44%	7%	15%	4%
3	My working hours are excessive	43	56	13	23	4	31%	40%	9%	17%	3%
4	I worry about completing work tasks.	40	66	19	12	2	29%	47%	14%	9%	1%
5	I often wake up in the night and can't get back to sleep because I am thinking about work.	34	49	7	31	18	24%	35%	5%	22%	13%
6	I regularly have nightmares about work.	7	19	23	46	44	5%	14%	17%	33%	32%
7	I have difficulty in coping with the pace of change.	11	59	18	36	15	8%	42%	13%	26%	11%
8	I struggle to deal with disruptive pupils.	12	35	21	46	25	9%	25%	15%	33%	18%
9	I am afraid of violence from pupils or parents.	11	23	26	40	39	8%	17%	19%	29%	28%
10	I have no control over my job.	12	32	23	50	22	9%	23%	17%	36%	16%
11	I struggle with uncertainty about my role and responsibility.	10	46	32	33	18	7%	33%	23%	24%	13%
12	I worry about job security.	19	38	17	38	27	14%	27%	12%	27%	19%
13	I am often in conflict with my managers.	7	22	19	51	40	5%	16%	14%	37%	29%
14	I resort to alcohol, smoking, unhealthy eating or other substances to help me cope.	17	31	13	30	48	12%	22%	9%	22%	35%
15	I take prescribed medication to help me cope.	11	9	5	17	97	8%	6%	4%	12%	70%
16	I have taken time off work because I felt anxious, depressed or unable to cope.	15	21	8	10	85	11%	15%	6%	7%	61%
17	I have been subject to harassment or bullying at work.	16	23	11	18	71	12%	17%	8%	13%	51%
18	I am often required to undertake tasks in conflict with my professional judgement.	11	39	21	26	42	8%	28%	15%	19%	30%
19	Poor physical conditions or lack of resources makes my work more difficult.	20	38	24	31	26	14%	27%	17%	22%	19%
20	I have inadequate training.	7	28	28	45	31	5%	20%	20%	32%	22%
21	I am required to submit excessively detailed planning to my managers.	17	26	19	50	27	12%	19%	14%	36%	19%
22	I am anxious about OFSTED inspection.	58	48	16	10	7	42%	35%	12%	7%	5%
23	The increased frequency of classroom observation and other monitoring is adding to my work pressure.	46	45	21	16	11	33%	32%	15%	12%	8%
351 Surveys Issued						139 % Returned					
										40%	

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