

The key

Supporting schools through
The Key for School Leaders
and **The Key for School Governors**



State of Education Survey Report



The Key is an independent company dedicated to providing high-quality support for over 48,000 school leaders and governors in England and Wales. The Key answers live questions from its member schools by means of authoritative, no-nonsense articles published on The Key for School Leaders and The Key for school Governors websites. It organises highly-valued regional and national events which feature leading practitioners, and offer evidence-based ideas and support.

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Foreword

The last three years have seen rapid change in the education sector, with the expansion of the academies programme, creation of free schools, a new Ofsted framework, and changes to the examination and assessment systems. At The Key, we know that school leaders and governors are concerned about how to keep ahead of that change. Over 48,000 use our question-answering services, so we are well placed to reach those with most influence over how our schools are run.

To learn more about where school leaders and governors are, and where they are going, we surveyed our members in spring term 2014. We asked them to reflect on the quality of the school system and governance nationally, the state of the teaching profession, and government policies and initiatives.

Their responses provide for interesting – and sometimes surprising – reading. They show a sector that's positive about the quality of schools and teaching, and is committed to equipping young people for adult life and to be good citizens. At the same time, there are concerns about morale and work-life balance, the headteacher role, government policies and the effectiveness of governance.

This report helps us hear the voices of those leading and governing our schools. Those voices are a vital part of the conversation on where our schools are headed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fergal Roche".

Fergal Roche
CEO, The Key

Executive summary

In spring term 2014, The Key surveyed a sample of school leaders and governors designed to be representative of its membership. A total of 1,198 school leaders and 1,079 governors responded. The Key's membership covers a high proportion (84%) of schools in England, and the results provide an indication of the opinions of school leaders and governors in state schools across England.

Independent schools were under-represented in the responses received, so the findings cannot be taken as indicating the opinions of school leaders and governors working in these schools.

We found that:

- Overall opinion about the quality of schools and teaching in England is broadly positive among school leaders and governors. Almost half of school leaders and half of governors believe that the quality of teaching has improved since 2010
- Governors are largely positive about school governance in England, and particularly so about governance in their own school. There is uncertainty among school leaders about the quality of school governance in England, although they are more convinced about governance in their own school
- School leaders are sceptical about the ability of the examination and inspection systems to accurately measure pupil ability and school performance. Opinion on this among school governors is divided
- Almost all school leaders and governors surveyed believe that their pupils are happy at school
- Two thirds of school leaders feel that morale in the teaching profession is poor nationally. Likewise, almost seven in ten school governors consider morale in the teaching profession to be worse now than in 2010
- On balance, school leaders are more likely to feel that the teaching profession is an unattractive career than an attractive one. School governors are more divided on this
- The vast majority of school leaders believe that qualified teacher status (QTS) is an essential requirement when recruiting for a teaching post. The majority of school governors also believe it is essential
- The majority of school leaders believe that the headteacher role is unattractive to those in senior leadership positions. While governors express mixed views about this, just over half agree with school leaders that headship is a less attractive career choice than it was in 2010
- Most school leaders are satisfied with their current role, although the majority feel that their work-life balance is poor
- School governors are very positive about the effectiveness of their school's governing body, while school leaders are broadly positive. The majority of school governors believe that their governing body gives a high level of focus to their strategic responsibilities. However, most school leaders and governors believe that the role of school governor is unattractive to volunteers
- School leaders are dissatisfied with the current government's performance on education. Many school governors are also dissatisfied, but to a lesser extent
- Among current national policies and initiatives, school leaders are most likely to support Pupil Premium funding, 0-25 statements for children with special educational needs and universal free school meals for infants. They are least likely to support forced academisation for underperforming schools and the creation of free schools. School governors share these views. However, they are also more likely to support performance-related pay for teachers
- Just over half of school leaders believe that the Pupil Premium has been effective in helping to close the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds, but a third do not feel it has been effective. School governors are more positive about the effectiveness of the funding
- Many school leaders and governors do not express a preference for the education policies of any of the main political parties

Introduction

School leader survey

The Key designed the school leader questionnaire with guidance from Ipsos MORI, and conducted the survey online.

The Key invited a sample of 12,000 school leaders from its membership database to complete the online survey: of these, 1,198 completed the full survey. Ipsos MORI then analysed the data on behalf of The Key. All percentages quoted in this summary have been rounded to whole numbers; where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is due to rounding.

The Key's database of school leaders lists at least one school leader across 20,480 schools in England, out of 24,372¹ schools in England as a whole (84% of schools). The profile of schools for which The Key's members work and all English schools was compared, and was very similar.

Findings represent the views of The Key's members. The data results from school leaders have been weighted to match the population profile of The Key's database in terms of local authority region, school phase and school type. The results described in this summary can therefore be taken as representative of the views of school leaders on The Key's database, which in turn indicates the opinions of leaders in state schools across England.

Only 21 members from independent schools responded to the survey, so school leaders from this sector are under-represented, even after weighting. The findings cannot therefore be taken to indicate the opinion of school leaders working in independent schools.

Governor survey

As with the school leader survey, The Key designed the governor questionnaire with assistance from Ipsos MORI and conducted the survey online.

The profile of the schools for which The Key's governors work broadly matches the profile of all English schools. The Key's Governor database lists at least one governor across 18,152 separate schools in England, out of 24,372² schools in England as a whole (74% of schools).

The Key took a census of the 7,000 school governors on its membership. A total of 1,079 governors completed the full survey. The profile of the schools in which The Key's governor members work broadly matches the profile of all schools in England. Findings can therefore be taken to indicate the opinions of school governors in English state schools.

Only six governors from independent schools responded to the survey, so governors from this sector are underrepresented; findings cannot therefore be taken to indicate the opinion of school governors working in independent schools.

Ipsos MORI analysed the data on behalf of The Key. All percentages quoted in this summary have been rounded to whole numbers. Where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is due to rounding.

¹ Department for Education, January 2012 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/number-of-schools-teachers-and-students-in-england/number-of-schools-teachers-and-students-in-england>

² Department for Education, January 2012 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/number-of-schools-teachers-and-students-in-england/number-of-schools-teachers-and-students-in-england>

All charts are based on a full sample (Base: 1,198 school leaders; 1,079 school governors).

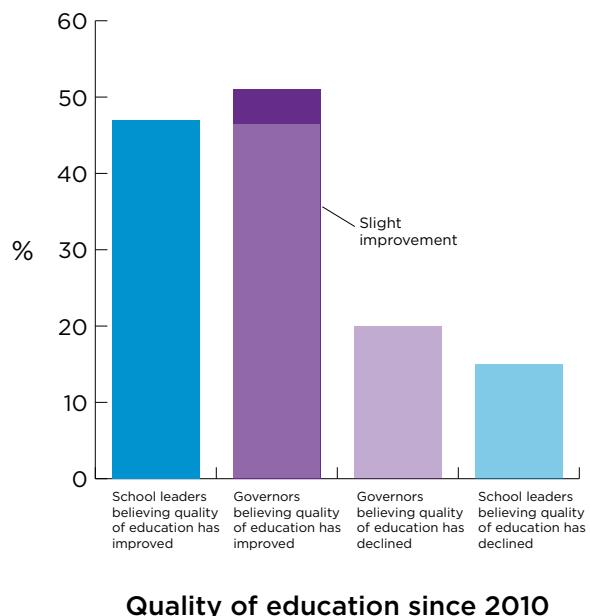
'Don't know' responses are not illustrated.

Section 1: School standards

Opinion about the quality of schools and teaching in England is broadly positive among school leaders and governors. Almost half of school leaders and half of governors believe that the quality of teaching has improved since 2010.

Six in ten school leaders (61%) think that the quality of schools in England is good, with a further quarter (27%) believing it is very good. Just 2% think that it is poor. A similar proportion of school governors (63%) think that the quality of schools in England is good, with 18% believing that it is very good and 3% that it is poor.

Almost half of school leaders (47%) believe that the quality of education in England's schools has improved since 2010. Around half of school governors (51%) agree that the quality of education is better than it was in 2010, although most (46%) believe that it is just a little better. A higher percentage of school leaders (20%) than governors (15%) feel that the quality of education has got worse since 2010.



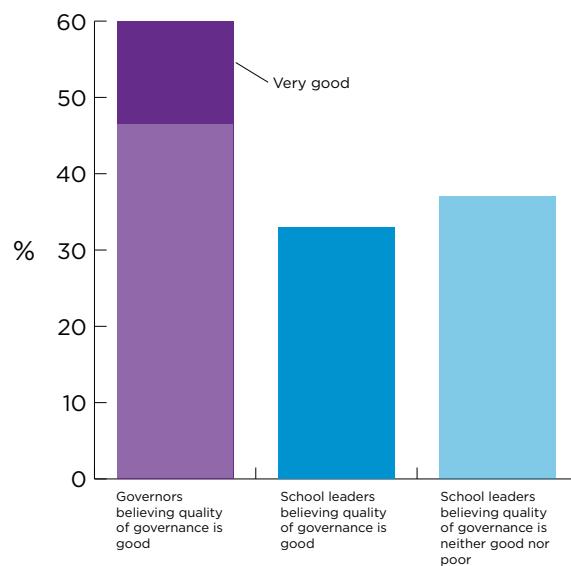
School leaders and governors feel broadly similar about the quality of teaching in England, with 60% of school leaders and 60% of governors believing teaching is

good. A further 25% of school leaders and 21% of governors feel that it is very good.

Respondents are more positive when they consider their own school. The majority of school leaders (93%) and school governors (92%) believe teaching at their own school to be at least good. Four in ten school leaders (42%) think teaching in their school is very good and 15% believe it is excellent. Most school governors rated teaching at their school positively, with 35% believing it to be good, 39% very good and 18% excellent.

School governors are largely positive about school governance in England, and particularly so about governance in their own school. School leaders are also positive about governance in their own school, though they are less convinced about governance across the country.

Almost half of school governors (47%) believe that the quality of school governance in England is good, with a further 13% believing it to be very good. In contrast, only a third of school leaders (33%) rate the quality of school governance in England as good; a further 37% rate it as neither good nor poor.



School leader and governor opinions on governance in England

The vast majority of school governors (86%) think that the quality of school governance in their own school is at least good, with 36% rating it as good, 35% as very good, and 15% as excellent.

School leaders are more convinced about the quality of school governance in their own school than nationally. However, they are less positive than governors: a third (33%) believe that governance in their school is good, 23% that it is very good, and 12% that it is excellent.

School leaders are not wholly convinced about the ability of the new National Curriculum to prepare children for the future, and more than one in five school governors are unsure.

Just 3% of school leaders and 3% of school governors think the new curriculum will prepare children very well for further or higher education, although almost half of school leaders (47%) and school governors (48%) think it will prepare children fairly well. Three in ten school leaders (31%) do not feel that it will prepare children well, while almost a quarter of school governors (24%) feel unsure about this.

More than four in ten school leaders (43%) feel that the new National Curriculum will not prepare children well for their future lives in general. Governors are also divided about this: four in ten (40%) believe that the new National Curriculum will prepare children fairly well, a third (35%) do not feel that it will prepare children well, and a further 22% are unsure.

School leaders are sceptical about the ability of the examination and inspection systems to accurately measure pupil ability and school performance.

Opinion among school governors is divided.

More than half of school leaders (55%) do not feel that the current examination system accurately measures the abilities of pupils, while six in ten (64%) do not believe that the inspection system accurately measures schools' performance.

Opinion among school governors is more divided. More than four in ten (42%) believe that the examination system measures pupil ability quite accurately, while a similar proportion (46%) believe it does not measure this accurately. Just 1% believe that the system measures pupil ability very accurately.

Almost half of school governors (47%) believe that the current school inspection system measures school performance accurately, with just 4% believing that it measures performance very accurately. Half of school governors (50%) feel that it does not measure school performance accurately.

Section 2: Pupil wellbeing and happiness

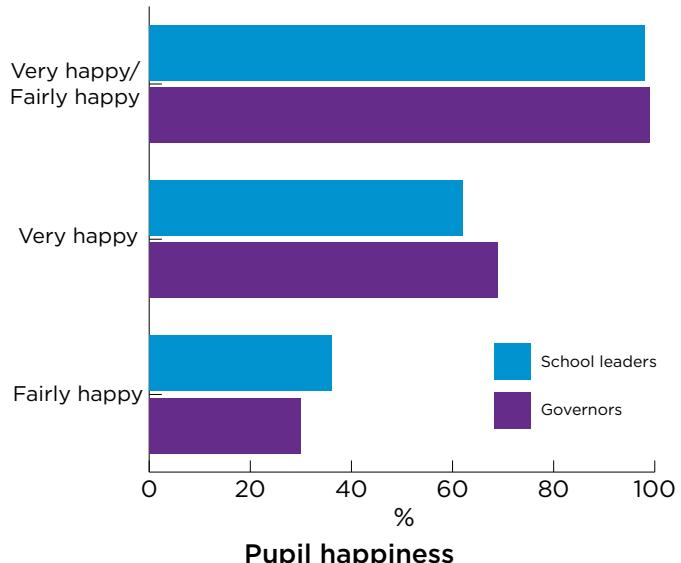
Almost all school leaders and governors surveyed believe that their pupils are happy at school. They are most likely to agree (from options offered) that the role of their school is to equip young people with the skills required for adulthood, to help young people to have high self-esteem and be happy, and to create good citizens.

Almost all the school leaders (98%) and school governors (99%) who responded believe that their pupils are happy at school. Six in ten school leaders (62%) believe that their pupils are very happy at school, with a further 36% believing that their pupils are fairly happy at school.

Governors are even more optimistic: almost seven in ten (69%) believe that pupils are very happy and three in ten (30%) that pupils are fairly happy.

The questionnaire asked school leaders and school governors to select the three most important roles of their school from nine options. From these options, both groups are most likely to agree that the most important roles of their school are to equip young people with the skills required for adulthood, to help young people to have high self-esteem and to be happy, and to create good citizens.

A table of responses for all nine options can be found in Appendix A.

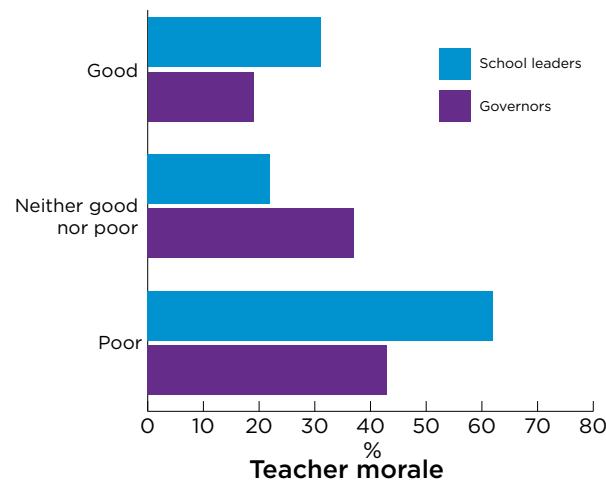


Section 3: Status and morale of the teaching profession

Two thirds of school leaders feel that morale amongst the teaching profession nationally is poor. School governors are more divided on teachers' morale, although almost seven in ten feel it is worse now than in 2010. However, teachers are comparatively positive about morale in their own school, and on the whole are satisfied in their own role.

Two thirds of school leaders (66%) believe that morale in the teaching profession is poor. The majority (82%) believe that morale is worse now than in 2010, with almost half (49%) feeling it is a lot worse.

School governors also feel that morale is not good in the teaching profession nationally, but are more divided on this than school leaders. Just 19% of governors believe morale to be good, very good or excellent, while 43% rate it as poor and 37% rate it as neither good nor poor. However, almost seven in ten (69%) feel that morale is worse now than in 2010, while just 8% feel that it is better now than in 2010.



On balance, school leaders believe that morale among teaching staff at their school is positive. Three in ten school leaders (31%) think that morale among teaching staff at their school is good, with a further 16% believing that it is very good. However, a quarter (26%) feel that morale is poor, very poor or extremely poor.

Governors are more positive than school leaders about morale of teachers in their school. More than seven in ten are positive about morale, with 41% rating it as good, 25% as very good and 6% as excellent. Only one in ten (11%)

believe that the morale of teaching staff at their school is poor.

Despite school leaders perceiving that morale nationally is suffering, they are, on the whole, satisfied with their jobs: 66% are satisfied in their current role.

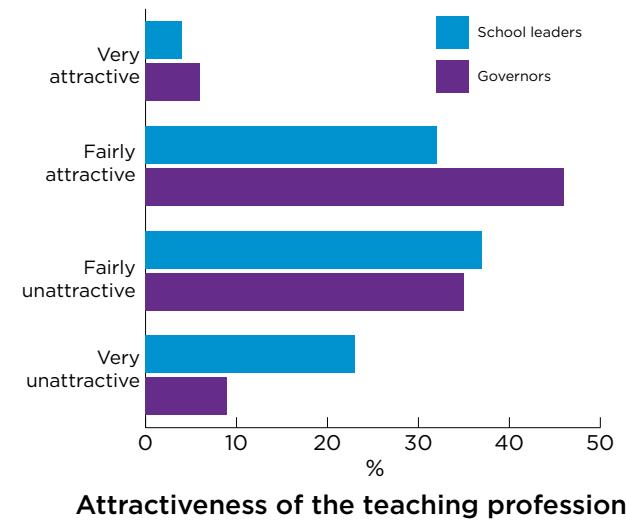
School leaders are more likely to feel that, on balance, teaching is an unattractive career rather than an attractive one. Opinion is more divided among school governors. However, most school leaders and governors would still recommend the teaching profession if they knew someone with the relevant skills and experience.

Less than four in ten school leaders (36%) think that teaching is an attractive career, with most of these (32%) believing that it is fairly attractive. Almost a quarter (23%) believe that teaching is a very or extremely unattractive career.

Despite this, more than six in ten school leaders (63%) might recommend the teaching profession to somebody with the relevant skills and experience, and 29% would be very likely or definitely likely to recommend the profession.

School governors are divided about the attractiveness of teaching as a profession, although governors are more positive about it as a career than school leaders. Just over half of school governors (52%) feel that the teaching profession is an attractive career, although the largest proportion (46%) feel that it is just fairly attractive. Just under half (45%) of school governors feel that the teaching profession is unattractive, with 35% believing it to be fairly unattractive, and a further 10% believing it to be very or extremely unattractive.

Almost three quarters (74%) of school governors would be likely to recommend the teaching profession to somebody they felt had the relevant skills and experience, with 43% saying they would be fairly likely to recommend, 23% very likely to recommend, and 8% saying they would definitely recommend it.



Section 4: Recruitment and retention of staff

The vast majority of school leaders believe that qualified teacher status (QTS) is an essential requirement when recruiting for a teaching post. The majority of school governors also believe it is essential.

Four in five school leaders (81%) believe that QTS is an essential requirement when recruiting for a teaching post. A further 10% believe that it is at least desirable when recruiting.

The majority of school governors (60%) also think QTS is an essential requirement. A further quarter (25%) think QTS is desirable when recruiting for a teaching post.

School leaders believe that school leadership is the most important factor in attracting and retaining high-quality staff into the teaching profession. Performance-related pay is considered to be the least important factor.

School leaders were asked to rate the importance of six factors in attracting and retaining high-quality staff into the teaching profession. Almost nine in ten school leaders (89%) believe that better school leadership is the key to attracting and retaining high-quality staff and is the most important factor. More than seven in ten (74%) believe better opportunities and more responsibilities for new teachers, shorter working hours (70%) and more interesting work (69%) are important in attracting and retaining high-quality staff into teaching.

Six in ten school leaders (59%) believe that performance-related pay is not important in attracting and retaining high-quality staff – judged the least important factor of those listed.

A summary of responses to this question can be found in Appendix B.

Like school leaders, a large majority of school governors (92%) believe that better school leadership is key to attracting and retaining high-quality staff and is the most important factor. However, to a greater extent than school leaders, they believe that better opportunities and more responsibilities for new teachers and more interesting work are also important.

School governors were also asked to rate the importance of the same six factors in attracting teachers to the profession

and retaining them. Like school leaders, a large majority of governors (92%) believe that better school leadership is the most important factor of those listed. Around eight in ten governors believe that better opportunities and more responsibilities for new teachers (84%) and more interesting work (78%) are important.

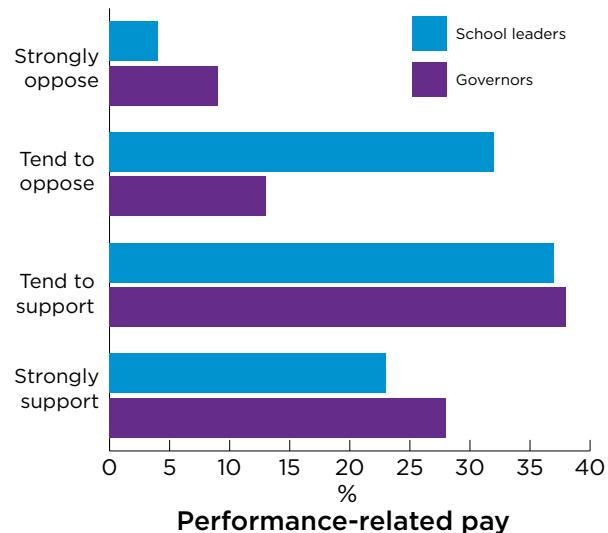
Performance-related pay divides opinion amongst school governors, with equal numbers believing that it is important (46%) and not important (46%) in attracting and retaining high-quality teaching staff.

A summary of responses to this question can be found in Appendix B, alongside the responses from school leaders.

School governors are more convinced than school leaders that performance-related pay will improve teaching. More than half of school governors believe performance-related pay will improve the quality of teaching. Only a third of school leaders agree.

More than half of school governors (54%) believe that performance-related pay will improve teaching quality, with 42% believing that it will make teaching a little better, and 13% that it will make it a lot better. One in ten (10%) believe that performance-related pay will reduce the quality of teaching.

School leaders are less convinced that performance-related pay will improve teaching. More than a third (35%) feel that teaching quality will get better as a result of performance-related pay. However, a similar number (36%) feel that performance-related pay will make no difference to teaching quality and 17% believe that teaching quality will get worse.



School leaders generally feel that in-service training for staff is good and there is enough of it. School governors are even more likely to think that the quality of training is good and the amount is right.

Four in ten school leaders (41%) rate the quality of in-service training for their staff as good, with a further 35% rating it as very good or excellent. The majority (72%) say there is enough training, although a further 21% feel there is not enough.

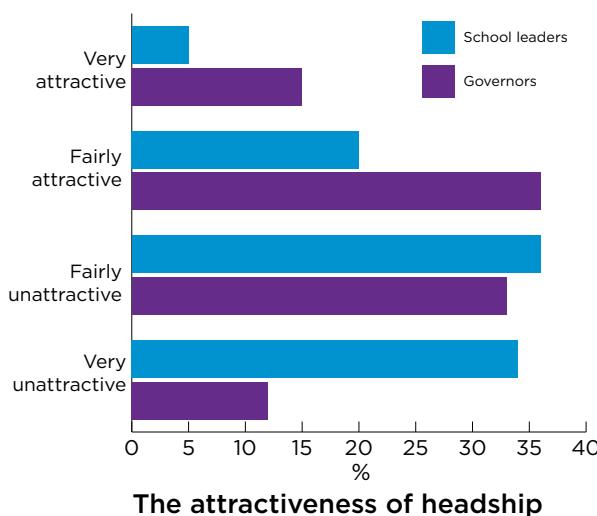
More than eight in ten school governors (83%) rate the quality of training provided to their staff as at least good. A similar proportion (81%) say there is enough training at their school.

Section 5: Senior leadership roles

The majority of school leaders believe that the role of headteacher is unattractive to those in senior leadership positions. School governors are divided on this. However, school leaders and governors agree that headship is a less attractive career choice than it was in 2010.

Seven in ten school leaders (71%) feel that the role of headteacher is unattractive to those in senior leadership positions, with more than a third (35%) believing the role to be very or extremely unattractive.

Almost three quarters of school leaders (74%) believe that headship is now less attractive as a career choice than it was in 2010, while more than a third (35%) believe it is a lot less attractive. Just 3% of school leaders feel that headship is more attractive now.



School governors are split on whether the role of headteacher is attractive to senior leaders, with half (51%) saying that the role is attractive and just under half (45%) that it is unattractive.

The majority of school leaders feel that their work-life balance is poor, although, in the main, most are satisfied with their current role and level of pay.

Almost six in ten school leaders (58%) feel that their work-life balance is poor, with one in three (30%) believing it to be very poor. Just 14% feel that their work-life balance is good.

Two thirds of school leaders (66%) are satisfied with their current role, although 19% are dissatisfied.

More than half (57%) are satisfied with their level of pay, although almost a quarter (24%) are dissatisfied.

Section 6: Effectiveness of governing bodies

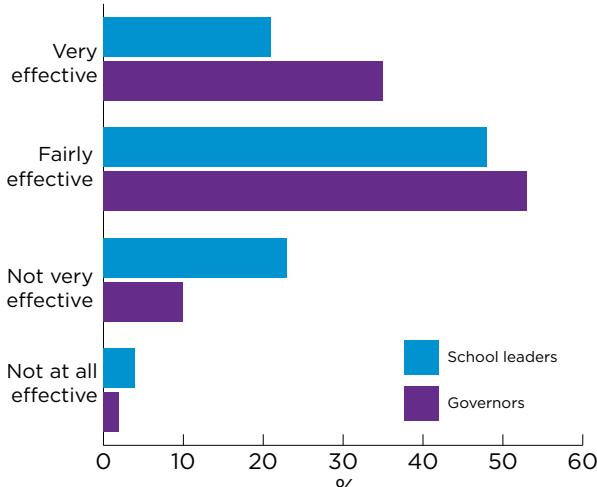
School governors are very positive about the effectiveness of their school's governing body, while school leaders are broadly positive. School leaders are, however, less positive about the quality of their school's governance than about the teaching.

Nearly seven in ten school leaders (68%) consider the quality of governance in their school to be good, very good or excellent. However, leaders were notably less positive about the quality of governance (35% rated it as excellent or very good) than they were about the quality of teaching in their school (58% rated teaching as excellent or very good).

School leaders are broadly positive about the effectiveness of governance at their school. Almost three quarters (73%) feel that their school's governing body is effective at holding the headteacher to account, with a quarter (26%) believing the governing body to be very effective at doing this.

The majority of school leaders (69%) believe that the governing body is effective at supporting delivery of the school's strategic aims, with one in five (21%) saying the governing body is very effective at this.

More than eight in ten school governors (86%) believe that the governing body at their school is effective at holding the headteacher to account, while almost nine in ten (89%) believe that the governing body is effective at supporting delivery of strategic aims.



Effectiveness of governing body in supporting the delivery of the school's strategic aims

The majority of school governors believe their governing body gives a high level of focus to ensuring financial efficiency, setting and monitoring the school's strategy, and holding the headteacher to account.

School governors were asked to rate the level of focus their governing body gives to each of three tasks on a scale of 1 (very high) to 5 (very low).

At least eight in ten school governors rated the level of focus as either 1 or 2 for each task, with 87% believing their governing body has a high level of focus on ensuring financial efficiency, 81% on setting and monitoring the school's strategy, and 80% on holding the headteacher to account.

A breakdown of results can be found in Appendix C.

The majority of school leaders and governors believe that the role of school governor is unattractive to volunteers.

More than six in ten school governors (64%) feel that the role is unattractive to volunteers – 48% feel that the role is fairly unattractive, and 16% feel that the role is very or extremely unattractive. Just three in ten (31%) governors feel the role is attractive to potential volunteers, and most of these (28%) feel that the role is just fairly attractive.

School leaders share this concern. Three-quarters (76%) believe that the role of school governor is unattractive to volunteers, with almost three in ten (29%) believing that it is very or extremely unattractive.

However, both groups say they would be likely to recommend the role to someone with the relevant skills and experience. Two thirds of school leaders (66%)

would be likely to recommend the role, with more than a quarter (29%) saying they would be very likely or would definitely recommend it.

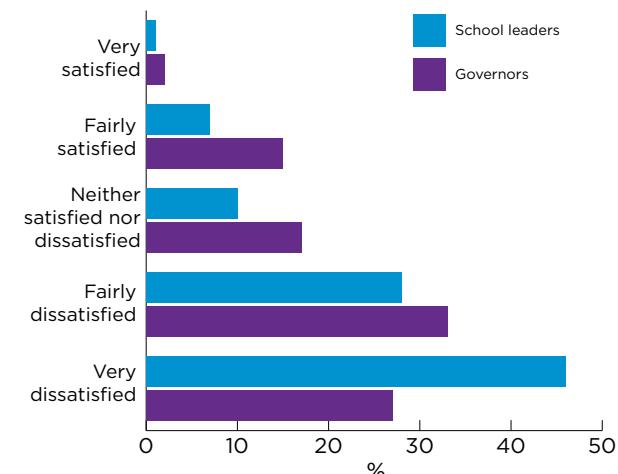
Similarly, nine in ten school governors (90%) would recommend the role to somebody with the relevant skills and experience; 29% would be fairly likely and 38% very likely to recommend, while 23% definitely would recommend.

Section 7: Effectiveness of national policy

School leaders are very dissatisfied with the current government's performance on education. Many school governors are also dissatisfied.

Three-quarters of school leaders (75%) are dissatisfied with the current government's performance on education, with almost half (46%) saying they are very dissatisfied. Just 8% say they are satisfied.

Six in ten school governors (60%) are dissatisfied with the government's performance on education, with more than a quarter (27%) very dissatisfied. Only 18% are satisfied, with just 2% very satisfied.



Satisfaction with the current government's performance on education

Among current national policies and initiatives, school leaders are most likely to support Pupil Premium funding, 0-25 statements for children with special educational needs and universal free school meals for infants. They are least likely to support

forced academisation for underperforming schools and the creation of free schools.

The school leader questionnaire asked about level of support for 12 national policies and initiatives. Of these policies, school leaders are most likely to oppose forced academisation for underperforming schools (73% strongly or tend to oppose) and the creation of free schools (69% strongly or tend to oppose). They are most likely to support Pupil Premium funding (74% strongly or tend to support), 0-25 statements for children with special educational needs (55% strongly or tend to support) and universal free school meals for infants (51% strongly or tend to support).

A full table of results can be found in Appendix D.

School governors broadly support and oppose the same policies and initiatives as school leaders. However, governors are also more likely to support performance-related pay for teachers.

Of the 12 national policies and initiatives we asked about in the survey, school governors are most likely to oppose forced academisation for underperforming schools (65% strongly or tend to oppose) and creation of free schools (58% strongly or tend to oppose). They are most likely to support Pupil Premium funding (80% strongly or tend to support), 0-25 statements for children with special educational needs (65% strongly or tend to support), and universal free school meals for infants (52% strongly or tend to support). Unlike school leaders, governors were also likely to support performance-related pay for teachers (64% strongly or tend to support).

A full table of results can be found in Appendix D.

Just over half of school leaders believe that the Pupil Premium has been effective in helping to close the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds. However, a third do not feel it has been effective. School governors are more positive about the effectiveness of this funding.

Over half of school leaders (56%) feel that the Pupil Premium has been effective in helping to close the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds, with most (47%) believing that it has been fairly effective, and 9% that it has been very effective. A third (33%) of school leaders do not feel that it has been effective.

School governors are more positive than school leaders about the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium funding. More than six in ten governors (65%) feel that the funding has been effective, although the majority (55%) feel that

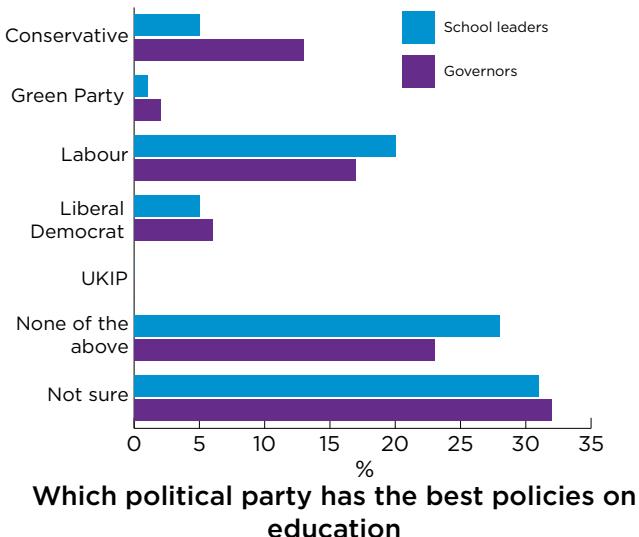
it has been fairly effective. A quarter (26%) do not feel that it has been effective.

Many school leaders and governors do not favour the education policies of any mainstream political party.

Six in ten (60%) school leaders did not express a preference for the education policies of any of the mainstream political parties. Of the mainstream parties, Labour receives the highest endorsement, with one in five school leaders (20%) believing it has the best education policies.

More than half of governors (56%) did not express a preference for the education policies of any of the mainstream political parties. Labour receives the highest endorsement with 17% of school governors believing that it has the best education policies, followed by the Conservatives (14%).

A full table of responses for school leaders and governors can be found in Appendix E.



The Key's Analysis

The Key's survey, designed with Ipsos MORI, gives us a real insight into what school leaders and governors think about the sector, their roles, and the policy environment at this time of rapid change.

Their responses provide for interesting – and sometimes surprising – reading. The results are largely consistent across regions and phase of school, suggesting there's some consensus in schools.

The state of the education sector

From the news, it's easy to end up with a downbeat assessment of our schools, but we found both school leaders and governors to be broadly positive about the quality of schools and teaching. Almost half of each group also believe that the quality of education has improved since 2010.

Both groups, though, are dissatisfied with the current government's performance on education. Of the policies mentioned, they are least likely to support two close to the education secretary's heart: creation of free schools and forced academisation. These policies are underpinned by a belief that greater autonomy in the school system can lead to improvement. However, greater autonomy requires strong accountability mechanisms, and we found that school leaders, in particular, are sceptical about the mechanisms in place. More than half do not feel that current exams accurately measure pupils' abilities and, despite changes to Ofsted's inspection framework, over six in ten do not believe the inspection system accurately measures schools' performance. The exam system is changing, so we will see if this helps build confidence, but perhaps now is also the time to consider Ofsted's role in a more autonomous system.

Despite a long consultation, school leaders also remain unconvinced about the new National Curriculum, and are divided on its ability to prepare children for the future. Our results suggest there's an interesting difference in viewpoint here. The government's focus on academic achievement and competition doesn't quite tally with what school leaders and governors say about the role of schools – that they should equip young people with the skills for adulthood, help them to have strong self-esteem and be happy, and support them to become good citizens. In our survey, all of these came above preparing young people for the world of work, or for further or higher education.

This focus on the wider role of education can also be seen in the policies that school leaders and governors are most likely to support: the Pupil Premium, 0-25 statements for children with special educational needs, and universal free school meals for infants. In many ways, pupil health and wellbeing and pastoral issues have taken a back seat in recent years, but schools continue to view their role as supporting the whole child.

Status and morale in the teaching profession

Our findings on the morale of teachers make for sobering reading. Two thirds of school leaders say morale in the profession is poor, and eight in ten say it is worse than in 2010. Perhaps more worryingly, almost a quarter of school leaders believe that teaching is a very or extremely unattractive career, though most would recommend it to someone with the right skills and experience.

School leaders are even more worried about the headteacher role, with seven in ten saying it is unattractive to senior leaders, and almost three quarters saying it's a less attractive career choice than in 2010. This may reflect the challenges of greater autonomy and accountability, with those in charge of schools more responsible than ever for their success or failure. Despite this, our survey found that the majority of school leaders are satisfied with their current role. Almost six in ten, though, feel their work-life balance is poor. This needs to be addressed if we want to attract talent, and keep talented people in leadership positions.

Indeed, attracting and retaining high-quality staff is a challenge for all schools. For school leaders, leadership is key. They also see shorter working hours, better opportunities for new teachers and more interesting work as important, but not performance-related pay. Over a third believe it will make no difference to the quality of teaching, while more than half of governors believe it will improve teaching. Both groups also support professional training for teachers, with four in five school leaders and the majority of governors saying that qualified teacher status is an essential requirement when recruiting a teacher.

Around half of school leaders and governors think the quality of education in England is better than it was in 2010 and a big majority believe the quality of teaching at their school is at least good. In general, we found

that school leaders and governors are much more positive about their own school than the picture nationally. This could mean that improvement is being driven by schools themselves.

The state of school governance

We're great believers in the importance of school governance, so we welcome the higher profile of governance recently in discussions about driving school improvement. There's little doubt that governors are taking on greater responsibilities, particularly in academies. At the same time, the Department for Education is talking about the need for more professional governing bodies, with the skills to hold headteachers to account.

Perhaps this extra pressure explains why both governors and school leaders are worried that the role is unattractive to volunteers. Despite this, nine out of ten governors say they would recommend the role to someone with the right skills and experiences. That's a huge vote of confidence in its importance.

School governors are also largely positive about the quality of governance in the country, with six in ten believing that it is good or very good. Governors are more convinced about the effectiveness of governance in their own school than school leaders, though they too are positive. However, school leaders are less positive about governance nationally. Only a third say that governance in England is good, and just over a third rate it as neither good nor bad.

Our results also suggest that governors are less certain than school leaders about some aspects of the school system. A high proportion of governors are unsure about the new National Curriculum, and they are divided over the effectiveness of exams and inspection. Does this reflect less knowledge of the details of policies? If so, they need support to keep up to date, so they can see what is and isn't working in their schools.

Interestingly, the governors in our survey were more likely to support the policies and initiatives we listed, while school leaders were slightly more likely to oppose them. School leaders and governors don't have to think the same way for an effective working relationship, but they must be on the same page on the role of governance.

Conclusions

We all know that bad news sells and we see this every day in stories about our schools. So I'm pleased to counter that trend with some of the findings from our survey – positive news on pupil happiness, the quality of teaching, and the willingness of those working in the sector to recommend both teaching and governor roles.

At the same time, we can't ignore our other findings, particularly on teachers' morale. It's clear that we need to think about how to attract and retain good teachers, and what can be done to make sure talented school leaders want to be headteachers. The challenges are similar with school governance. How can we make the role attractive to skilled volunteers? We need to make sure governing bodies are effective, and keep school leaders and governors in agreement about what effective governance looks like.

I'm proud of the work of The Key in helping school leaders and governors meet the challenges they face, by keeping them up to date, answering their questions, and sharing good practice from across the country. I see this survey, too, as part of our commitment to them. Let's make sure we hear their voices, loud and clear.

Appendices

Appendix A:

School leader and governor responses to the question 'Which of the following are most important in your school?' shown as a percentage of respondents.

Role of school	% School leaders	% School governors
Preparing young people with the skills needed for adulthood	68	61
Helping young people to have high self-esteem	54	54
Creating good citizens	47	41
Helping young people to be happy	45	42
Creating well-behaved young people	23	31
Ensuring young people do well in their examinations	19	24
Preparing young people for the world of work	15	15
Ensuring that young people are healthy	15	16
Preparing young people for further or higher education	14	20

Base: 1,198 school leaders and 1,079 school governors

Appendix B:

School leaders were asked to rate the importance of six factors in attracting and retaining high-quality staff into the teaching profession. The table below summarises the results for these questions. The ranking is sorted by the percentage who believe each factor is very important.

How important, if at all, do you think each of the following are in attracting and retaining high quality staff into the teaching profession?	% Very Important	% Fairly Important	% Not very important	% Not at all important	% Don't know	% Not stated
Better school leadership	48	41	3	*	1	7
Shorter working hours	31	39	16	6	2	7
More interesting work	27	42	14	6	4	8
Better opportunities/more responsibilities for new teachers	23	51	16	3	1	7
New teachers having more input into how the school is run	11	39	34	7	2	7
Performance-related pay	8	23	30	29	4	7

Base: 1,198 school leaders

School governors were asked to rate the importance of six factors in attracting and retaining high-quality staff into the teaching profession. The table below summarises the results for these questions. The ranking is sorted by the percentage who believe each factor is very important.

How important, if at all, do you think each of the following are in attracting and retaining high quality staff into the teaching profession?	% Very Important	% Fairly Important	% Not very important	% Not at all important	% Don't know	% Not stated
Better school leadership	56	36	2	1	1	4
Better opportunities/more responsibilities for new teachers	33	50	9	1	2	4
More interesting work	29	49	11	4	2	5
New teachers having more input into how the school is run	17	46	26	4	3	5
Shorter working hours	14	40	31	8	2	4
Performance-related pay	13	34	28	18	3	4

Base: 1,079 school governors

Appendix C:

School governors were asked to rate the level of focus their governing body gives to each of three tasks on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being a very high level of focus and 5 being a very low level of focus. Results are shown as percentages.

How much focus does your governing body place on each of these tasks?	% Ensuring financial efficiency	% Holding the Headteacher to account	% Setting and monitoring the school's strategy
1 Very high level of focus	54	48	46
2	33	32	36
3	7	11	11
4	4	6	5
5 Very low level of focus	2	2	3

Base: 1,079 school governors

Appendix D:

School leaders and governors were asked them about their level of support for 12 national policies and initiatives. The table below summarises the school leader results. The table is ordered according to the column 'percentage who strongly oppose'.

How far do you support or oppose each of the following national policies/initiatives?	% Strongly oppose	% Tend to oppose	% Neither support nor oppose	% Tend to support	% Strongly support	% No opinion	% Not stated
Forced academisation for underperforming schools	49	25	11	6	2	1	6
Creation of free schools	43	25	15	5	2	2	7
'Outstanding' and 'good' schools being able to convert to academy status	24	18	28	14	8	2	7
Performance-related pay for teachers	20	17	9	32	14	0	7
End to government reporting of National Curriculum levels	19	22	22	19	9	2	7
Revision of the Ofsted inspection framework in September 2012	18	18	27	22	6	2	7
Introduction of the English Baccalaureate	17	14	34	14	2	13	7
The introduction of the new National Curriculum	14	24	31	21	2	2	7
Universal free schools meals for infants	12	14	17	26	25	1	6
Introduction of 'Attainment 8' and 'Progress 8' in performance measures	9	11	34	11	2	25	8
Pupil Premium funding	3	6	11	42	31	0	7
0-25 statements for children with special educational needs (SEN)	1	8	22	32	24	7	7

Base: 1,198 school leaders

The table below summarises the responses from governors. The table is ordered according to the column 'percentage who strongly oppose'.

How far do you support or oppose each of the following national policies/initiatives?	% Strongly oppose	% Tend to oppose	% Neither support nor oppose	% Tend to support	% Strongly support	% No opinion	% Not stated
Forced academisation for underperforming schools	37	28	16	10	3	1	5
Creation of free schools	32	26	20	12	4	2	5
'Outstanding' and 'good' schools being able to convert to academy status	17	19	30	18	11	2	4
Introduction of the English Baccalaureate	12	14	35	19	6	9	5
Performance-related pay for teachers	9	13	10	36	28	0	4
End of government reporting of National Curriculum levels	9	19	30	22	9	7	5
Universal free school meals for infants	9	15	19	28	24	1	4
The introduction of the new National Curriculum	8	21	34	25	4	4	4
Revision of the Ofsted inspection framework in September 2012	7	16	28	33	9	3	5
Introduction of 'Attainment 8' and 'Progress 8' in performance measures	5	8	36	18	4	25	5
0-25 statements for children with special educational needs (SEN)	1	3	17	42	23	10	4
Pupil Premium funding	1	5	9	40	40	1	5

Base: 1,079 school governors

Appendix E:

School leaders and school governors were asked which mainstream political parties they thought have the best education policies. The results are shown as a percentage of school leaders and a percentage of school governors.

Political party	% School leaders	% School governors
Not sure	31	31
None of the above	28	23
Labour Party	20	17
Not stated	8	6
Conservative Party	5	14
Liberal Democrat Party	5	6
Green Party	1	2
UK Independence Party	0.1	0.3

Base: 1,198 school leaders and 1,079 school governors

