

Teacher Views of the New School Report Cards

Introduction

In an announcement in October 2008, Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, announced that School Report Cards would be introduced to give parents a new, simpler and more comprehensive way of understanding schools' performance and achievements. The Report Cards would be based on the model in use in New York schools. Subsequent to the announcement, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) launched a consultation on the Report Cards and their proposed content. A model for School Report Cards is currently being developed and piloted in England.

Methodology

In November 2009 the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) conducted its regular Teacher Omnibus survey, with 1,378 practising teachers from 911 schools in England. The panel included teachers from a wide range of roles, from headteachers to NQT (Newly Qualified Teachers): 692 teachers were from primary schools and 686 were from secondary schools. Within this survey NFER included questions investigating teachers' views of the proposed School Report Card (SRC). The questions investigated teachers' views in general to the proposed introduction of the SRC, and their thoughts about specific measures to be included.

Results

Throughout the responses the results were largely comparable for teachers in either the primary or the secondary sector so combined results are given in each case.

When asked if the introduction of the SRC is a good idea, 30% of teachers responded positively and 37% responded negatively, the remaining teachers were unsure.

We then went on to ask about the specific details which could be included in the SRC, some of which are currently included in the proposal and some of which are not. A number of factors were considered to be 'very important' or 'quite important' for the majority of the teachers:

pupil attainment (86%),

pupil progress (93%),

pupil well-being (90%),

pupil behaviour (91%),

curriculum (82%),

working with the community (61%),

parent views (79%),

pupil views (82%).

Only two measures were seen as of less importance: teacher continuing professional development and teacher retention. Of the former, 36% of teachers thought the inclusion of this information is 'very important' or 'quite important', whereas 55% of teachers thought it was 'not very important' or 'not at all important'. For the latter, 43% considered the inclusion of this information to be 'very' or 'quite important' whereas 48% felt it is 'not very' or 'not at all important'.

It is interesting to note that all of those measures included in the current proposals are those which teachers considered to be important, while the two that teachers did not consider to be important are not included in the current proposals.

A number of suggestions were made for other measures which could be included on the Report Cards. Each suggestion was made by more than two but fewer than six teachers:

pupil attendance/ punctuality

staff views

extra-curricular provision

school context.

Conclusions

With 37% of teachers saying that the Report Card is not a good idea, and 33% saying that they were unsure, it is clear that a majority of teachers are uncertain about the benefits of the introduction of the School Report Card. Comments included that there is already sufficient monitoring of schools taking place and that current school literature, such as prospectuses, contains sufficient information of this nature. As the SRC is being piloted and further developed, it is likely that these attitudes could change before its full introduction. As part of its introduction a marketing campaign around the benefits of the SRC is likely to be of value, especially as a significant minority of teachers remain uncertain about whether the introduction is a good idea or not.

When looking at the particulars of the proposals for School Report Cards, the findings from this survey would suggest that teachers are supportive of the current proposals. Each of the measures that are in the current proposals, were supported by a large proportion of the teachers. While those measures not in the current proposals, were supported by far fewer teachers.