

# Historical Association

## Survey of History in Schools in England 2018

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### 1. Summary

#### 1.1 Data on which this report is based

This online survey was launched in August 2018, just after the publication of the A-level and GCSE results, and closed in October. Responses were received from 305 history teachers working in 281 different schools, including 240 non-selective, state-maintained schools, 12 grammar schools, 42 independent schools, seven sixth-form colleges and four special schools or pupil referral units. Since nearly four-fifths of respondents (79%) had been teaching for at least five years and over half (56%) were heads of department, the opinions reported here tend to reflect those of experienced practitioners.

#### 1.2 Key Stage 3 history

##### ***Continuing impact of the revised National Curriculum***

Schools are continuing to treat the National Curriculum in history as an advisory, rather than regulatory, framework for structuring their Key Stage 3 curriculum. Only around a quarter of state-funded secondary schools reported that they *closely* aligned their programmes of study to the National Curriculum. The fact that so many secondary schools are neither required to adhere to the National Curriculum nor feel obliged to follow it raises an important question about the purpose that it serves.

##### ***The impact of GCSE on Key Stage 3 assessment, content and length***

The findings from 2018 reinforce those from 2017 in highlighting the increasing impact of GCSE on approaches to assessment and particular aspects of the curriculum within Key Stage 3. Nearly half of non-selective, state-funded secondary schools reported using GCSE-style grading or marking systems at Key Stage 3, while almost four-fifths (79%) of schools reported that they had adapted the kinds of questions that they were asking students to tackle in order to align more closely with GCSE-style questions. The proportions of schools that reported having made similar adaptations to the ways in which they ask students to use sources and to the ways in which they teach historical interpretations were also very high – at 68% and 69% respectively.

Nearly half of the schools (46%) reported that they planned the curriculum so that Key Stage 3 content could be revisited at GCSE, while 56% of schools reported that their choice of Key Stage 3 content was intended to ‘provide context’ for GCSE topics. Only 18% of schools (a slightly smaller proportion of respondents than in 2017) reported that they deliberately sought to *avoid* revisiting content taught at Key Stage 3 in their GCSE course. It increasingly looks as if schools are basing their Key Stage 3 content choices on maximising examination success at GCSE.

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In other areas, the impact of the GCSE specifications is more limited, and the findings for 2018 are very similar to those reported in 2017. Only around one third of schools (36%) reported that they tackled history on different timescales within the Key Stage 3 curriculum (reflecting the GCSE focus on depth studies, period studies and thematic studies over time), while only 19% of schools reported including a local history study in Key Stage 3, as preparation for the study of an ‘historical environment’ required at GCSE.

When asked directly whether the introduction of the new GCSE (9–1) specifications had informed a decision to reduce the length of Key Stage 3 (previously or for the year ahead), 55% (126 out of 230) of the schools that responded indicated that Key Stage 3 had been or was going to be shortened for this reason. These reductions continue to be a matter of profound regret to the Historical Association, since changes of this kind have a significant impact on young people’s access to history by reducing the period of secondary education in which the subject is taught to *all* young people. Overall, around 44% of schools that responded to the survey reported that in 2017–18 they allocated only two years to Key Stage 3. (It should be noted, however, that this figure excludes those that start teaching the GCSE course part-way through Year 9.)

### ***Curriculum resources***

Although it has been suggested that teacher workload issues could be addressed by providing teachers with ready-prepared teaching resources, less than 20% of respondents claimed that they *frequently* struggled to find appropriate resources for their Key Stage 3 teaching, although another third reported that they *sometimes* found it difficult to do so.

## **1.3 GCSE**

### ***Teachers’ responses to the new GCSE specifications***

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (86% in both cases) continue to regard the new GCSE (9–1) specifications as inappropriate for students with low levels of prior attainment or for those who are at a relatively early stage of learning English as an additional language. The fact that these proportions are very similar to those of the 2017 respondents makes it clear that the experience of taking candidates through the exam has not generally led to any change in teachers’ views of how appropriate the new qualifications are for certain students. With many individuals reporting how demoralised their students felt as they worked through the course, these figures continue to call into question the feasibility of the government’s target that 90% of the cohort should be studying the EBacc suite of subjects by 2025.

While respondents generally continue to regard the *range* of content now required at GCSE as appropriate (welcoming, for example, the inclusion of three different time periods and the thematic study), the view that the *amount* of content is essentially unmanageable is even higher than it was among respondents in 2017: 84% of respondents claimed to regard it as unmanageable, compared with 75% in 2017. As a result, some 55% state that they had simply not been able to fit the content into the teaching time available, a claim that explains the continuing trend among schools to reduce the length of Key Stage 3.

Although only a quarter of teachers agreed that they had been given sufficient information and sample assessment materials before the first round of exams, two thirds reported afterwards that

the exam questions and content had been essentially in line with their expectations. Concerns, where they were expressed, centred on the very narrow focus of a few questions (requiring detailed knowledge of a very limited period/issue) and a few unexpected types of question.

Around 40% of respondents noted that textbooks had not been available at the point at which they had needed them, while 37% reported that they had not been able to provide sufficient textbooks for their students.

The lessons that teachers are learning from the experience of taking their first cohort through the new GCSEs tend to focus on ways of managing the amount of content – both finding ways to get through it all and supporting students in retaining and recalling the necessary substantive knowledge. Other than allocating more time to GCSE by starting to teach it in Year 9, suggestions include simply teaching faster or setting more independent work. There is a strong focus on the use of strategies derived from cognitive science, focusing on regular retrieval practice (frequent short tests). Equally prominent, however, are responses emphasising the need to focus heavily on exam techniques. Concerns about the demands of the course for those with low prior attainment mean that there is also a strong focus on the need for differentiation: tailoring both teaching and revision strategies, and making strategic choices, for example, about just how much content some students are asked to try to master. Many respondents expressed concerns about how demoralised and disheartened some students had become.

### ***The extent of non-specialist teaching at GCSE***

The proportion of schools reporting that they were able to staff *all* their GCSE classes with specialist teachers – 88% – is higher than it has been among respondents at any point since 2012. Schools have obviously invested considerable effort in ensuring that they have specialist teachers in place at GCSE. While this is very encouraging, it is important to note that a quarter of non-selective, state-funded schools report that an increase in specialist teaching at GCSE (in response to the emphasis given to history by the EBacc measure) has meant fewer history specialists at Key Stage 3.

### ***The degree of freedom that students can exercise in relation to GCSE choices – with reference to the EBacc and Progress 8 accountability measures***

Although a majority of respondents' schools (57%) continue to *require* all or some of their students to choose either history or geography at GCSE, often explicitly citing the EBacc as a reason for doing so, this proportion is no higher in 2018 than it was last year, suggesting that the official EBacc target for 2025 is not driving *further* reforms to schools' option systems – although 55% claim that the target has had an effect on their school.

Fears noted last year that more schools might be forcing students to choose *between* history and geography have not been confirmed by this year's survey. Only 3% of respondents noted that this was the case in their schools – although some others did point out that it can be difficult or impossible for students to take both subjects along with a modern foreign language.

Another encouraging finding is the fact that the proportion of respondents (around 30%) noting that some students are explicitly prevented or actively steered away from taking history GCSE is, for the second year running, a little smaller than it was in the previous year, suggesting that the Progress 8 measure has encouraged more schools to allow students who are not expected to achieve a grade 4

(regarded as a 'standard pass') to take the subject. When asked *explicitly* about the impact of the Progress 8 measure, only 43% of respondents suggested that it had made an impact on history options in their school, but in most cases this impact was seen as positive.

The combined impact of measures intended to encourage students to take history (or geography) among their GCSE subjects, along with the introduction of more rigorous GCSE examinations and the exclusion of other qualifications from the accountability systems used to report on schools, is unsurprisingly viewed both positively and negatively by teachers. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents in the non-selective, state-funded sector suggested that the proportion of students taking history had increased as a result of the EBacc target, but 41% pointed out that this had led to increased class sizes, while 56% highlighted the fact that it has led to more students taking a course with which they clearly struggled and/or that their teachers regarded as inappropriate for them. The pressures of supporting students with poor levels of literacy and low prior attainment through the new courses, at a time when budget cuts have also led to a reduction in the provision of teaching assistants, means that teachers are particularly worried about the lack of appropriately differentiated resources and the damaging effects of the new exam demands on student morale and well-being.

#### **1.4 A-level history**

##### ***The proportion of students and time allocated to studying history in Years 12 and 13***

Since the national statistics provided by the Joint Qualifications Council for exam entries in 2018 have clearly demonstrated a significant reduction in the number of students entered for A-level history (a 12% reduction since 2015), it is not surprising that the survey shows a reduction in many schools in the proportion of students taking A-level history. In 2015, 57% of respondents noted that only 20% or less of their Year 12 cohort were studying history; in 2018, this was true of 70% of the respondents' schools.

While most schools and colleges tend to allocate either four or five hours' teaching each week to their history students, there is a marked difference between the time allocated to the subject by selective state schools and independent schools on the one hand and by non-selective, state-funded schools on the other. Among the former, 70% of the grammar school respondents and 73% of the independent school respondents reported allocating five or more hours a week to the subject, while only 56% of the comprehensive, academy and free schools could allocate at least five hours to history.

##### ***The experience of teaching the linear A-level history***

When asked to sum up their experience of teaching the current GCE specifications, 55% of respondents regard their experience as mainly positive and only 37% suggest that it has been very mixed. Less than 5% of respondents suggest that their experience has been essentially a negative one – although, when invited to explain their judgements, teachers tend to comment on the aspects that frustrate or worry them, such as the extent of the content to be covered, the way in which their choice of units has been restricted, or the quality of marking and coursework moderation.

## **1.5 Teachers' concerns**

As in 2017, teachers remained particularly concerned about inadequate funds to buy the new resources necessary to teach their examination courses. This was identified as a current or serious concern by around 60% of respondents. The lack of provision of subject-specific CPD and lack of opportunity for teachers to attend such CPD when it is offered continue to be concerns reported by around two thirds of teachers. A quarter of respondents also rated the amount of history being taught by non-specialists as a matter of current concern.

### ***History teacher recruitment***

Although there were fewer cases of schools recruiting teachers without Qualified Teacher Status [QTS] than in 2017, over half of schools reported that they had only a limited field of applicants (i.e. five or fewer) for each history post they had advertised. While history is not officially regarded as a shortage subject, it is clear that many schools face recruitment challenges.

### ***The reported effects of budget cuts***

Many schools are now facing financial constraints, and their effects were evident in a number of responses. Approximately 80% of respondents indicated that class sizes had been increased (or were expected to increase) either in Key Stage 3, at GCSE and/or at A-level. A further 20% of schools reported that the time allocated to teaching history within one or more key stages was being reduced in an attempt to save money.

Six schools also reported the removal of history from some parts of the school; in one case this was in Key Stage 3, another two had done so at GCSE, and three others were no longer offering A-level history. Although this is a small number of schools, it is deeply worrying that some schools feel compelled to make such decisions.

## **1.6 The use of teaching assistants in history classrooms**

Budget cuts have also had a considerable impact on schools' capacity to provide teaching assistants (TAs). In non-selective, state-funded schools, around 80% of respondents reported cuts to support provided by teaching assistants. This is concerning on two counts. It means both a drop in support offered to students with additional educational needs, and that teachers are expected to step into that gap, providing the necessary additional help themselves (which often requires adaptations to resources) at a time when there are already considerable concerns about teachers' workload.

At Key Stage 3, very few schools provide TA support in every history lesson, even for students that have a formal statement of special educational needs (an education and health care plan or EHC plan). TA support in every history lesson for such students is offered by only 7% of comprehensives, academies and free schools, and by only 10% of independent schools. While most students with an EHC plan in all school contexts are offered some kind of support, more than half (52%) of those in non-selective, state-funded schools receive only 'occasional' support in history lessons, while 7% never receive any TA support. Overall, schools seem to invest a little more in TA support for history at GCSE. TA support in every lesson for those with an EHC plan is provided by 12% of schools, while a further 22% receive 'regular' help. However, no TA assistance is ever provided for such students in

29% of schools – while 37% of schools can only provide ‘occasional’ TA support in history. These figures provide further evidence of the pressures that teachers face in teaching the new GCSE (9–1) qualifications and emphasise the urgent need for appropriate teaching materials for those students whose special needs have resulted in low levels of literacy.

### **1.7 Curriculum decision-making**

As more schools have become part of multi-academy trusts (MATs), which, in some cases, are large enough to employ specialists to oversee subject teaching across the whole trust, curricular decision-making has become more centralised. Across the state sector (selective and non-selective), 11% of respondents reported that at least some decisions about the history curriculum were now made at the level of the whole trust, but in only one case was the trust reported to make the decision for every key stage. In most cases (74%), all decisions about the history curriculum are reported to be taken at department or faculty level.

## **2. Nature of the survey**

The findings reported here are based on the response of history teachers in England to an online survey sent by the Historical Association to all schools and colleges teaching students in the 11–18 age range. The survey was launched in August 2018, just after the publication of the A-level and GCSE results in 2018, and closed in October.

### **2.1 Number of responses**

Responses were received from 305 history teachers in England working in a range of different contexts (although 17 of these only left details about their role and/or school's characteristics and did not answer any of the substantive survey questions, while one did not provide sufficient detail about their school for us to be able to categorise it). While some responses – such as teachers' concerns – were analysed at an individual level, multiple responses from teachers within the same school were eliminated to ensure that each school was counted only once in response to questions about the nature of provision for history at different key stages. The school-level responses were analysed in relation to different types of schools: state-maintained, non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies and free schools), state-maintained grammar schools, independent schools and sixth-form colleges.

### **2.2 The range of schools represented**

Of the 304 individual respondents who gave sufficient detail about their school for us to be able to categorise them, 240 are from state-maintained, non-selective schools (comprehensives, academies and free schools), 12 are from grammar schools, 42 from independent schools, seven from sixth-form colleges and four from pupil referral units or other schools catering exclusively for students with special educational needs.

When counting the number of responses from individual schools (that can be categorised), the total is reduced to 281. All of the duplicates that were removed when counting school responses came from state maintained, non-selective schools, so the total number of schools of this kind is only 224.

Responses to questions about teaching history at Key Stage 3 (traditionally the first three years of secondary school for students aged 11–14, but increasingly reduced in many schools to the first two years of secondary provision, for students aged 11–13) were received from 256 individual schools: 205 comprehensives, academies or free schools, 11 grammar schools, 37 independent schools and three special schools or pupil referral units. Responses to questions about provision at Key Stage 4 (conventionally ages 14–16) were received from 282 schools, while 174 individual schools and sixth-form colleges reported on their A-level history provision. (A further seven respondents reported that their school had a sixth form but did not offer A-level history.)

### **2.3 Ethnicity of respondents**

Of the 305 individual respondents, all replied to the question about ethnicity. The vast majority, 293 (96%), described themselves as white, including 281 white British and five white Irish. Three respondents (1%) described themselves as Asian or Asian British and four (1.3%) as of mixed

heritage – among whom only one described themselves as having any black heritage. Four respondents (1.6%) preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.

## **2.4 The experience of the teachers**

The overwhelming majority of the 304 teachers who gave details about the length of their experience had been teaching for over five years. This was the case for 239 (78.6%) respondents. A further 49 (16.1%) had been teaching for between one and five years, with the remainder being NQTs (13) or in training (three).

Of these respondents, 171 (56.3%) are designated as the lead teacher or head of department for history, 107 (35.2%) as main-scale teachers and 15 (4.9%) as members of senior leadership teams (SLT), and a further nine (3%) held other positions of responsibility in school.

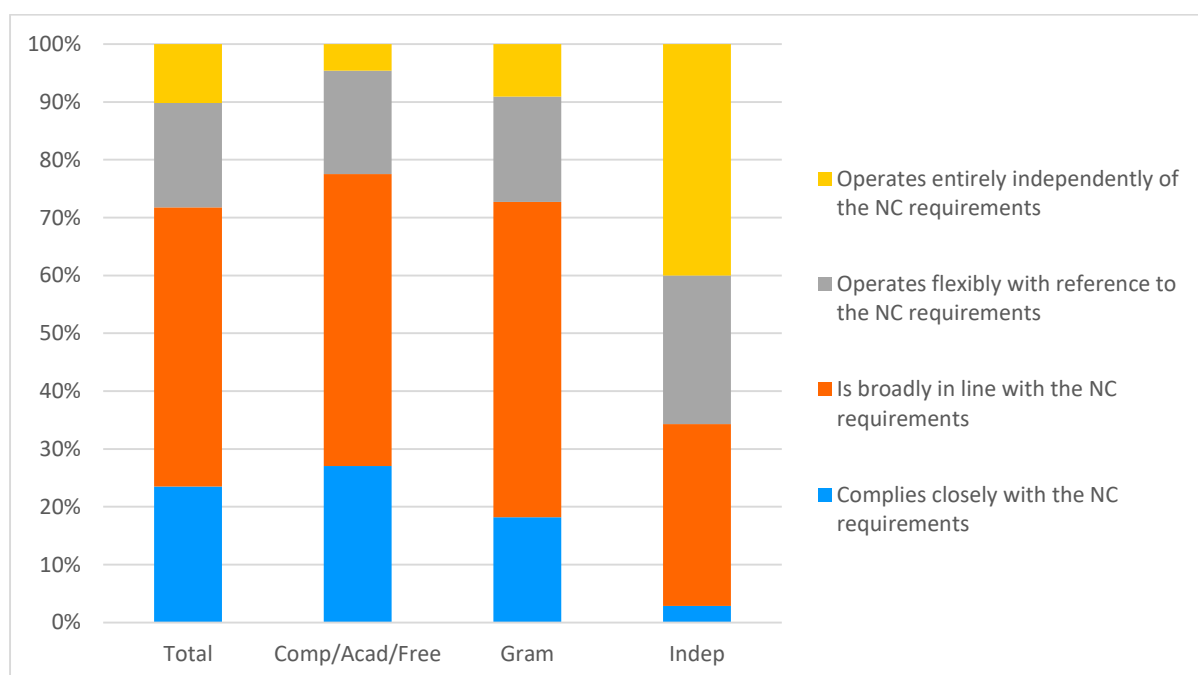


### 3. Key Stage 3 history

#### 3.1 Continuing impact of the revised National Curriculum

The revised National Curriculum was introduced in 2014, and adherence to it is formal requirement for all local authority maintained schools. However, many state-funded schools – such as free schools and those with academy status (both comprehensive and selective) – and all independent schools have no obligation to follow this curriculum. As Figure 1 illustrates, almost three quarters of state-funded schools among the respondents claimed that their Key Stage 3 curriculum was at least ‘broadly in line’ with the National Curriculum (with little change here between the 2018 results and those of 2017), but only around a quarter of them reported that this was a *close* alignment. Within the independent sector, only a third of respondents sought to keep their Key Stage 3 curriculum ‘broadly in line’ with the National Curriculum, and less than 3% reported following it closely.

Figure 1: The extent to which respondents’ schools in 2018 were following the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum



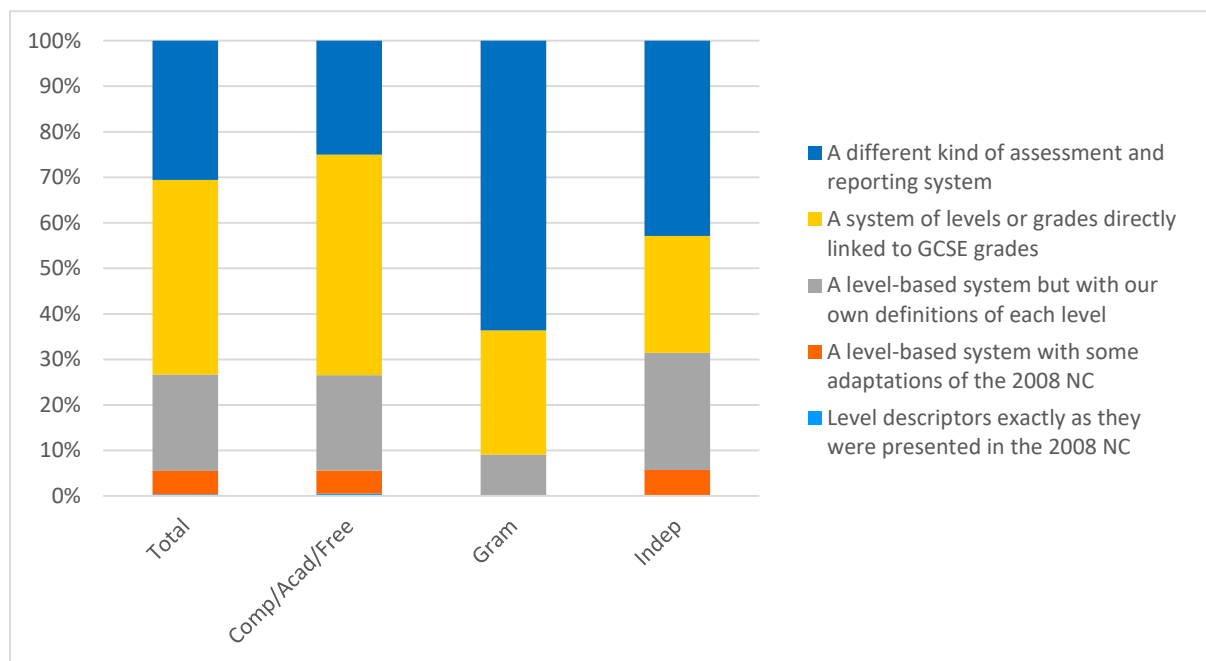
#### 3.2 Approaches adopted to assessment at Key Stage 3

Last year’s report noted a marked rise in the proportion of schools that had adopted GCSE-style grading in Key Stage 3. As Figure 2 demonstrates, this trend appears to be continuing within the state-funded, non-selective schools, although the increase is only a small one: from 44% in 2017 to 49% in 2018. A more marked increase is evident among independent schools – from 10% to 25% – but the overall proportion is obviously much lower. Although the grammar school respondents seem to buck this trend, with only a quarter reporting using GCSE-style assessments at Key Stage 3 in 2018 (compared with half in 2017), it is important to note that the number of grammar school respondents is very small (only 12 in total), which means that just a few respondents changing their approach can give the impression of a big shift. Overall, the general tendency thus seems to be a further slight increase in the extent to which GCSE is shaping approaches, which raises questions

about the extent to which students are being encouraged to understand their progress purely in terms of potential GCSE grades, rather than developing more complex or nuanced understandings of what getting better at the subject might mean.

Around a third of schools reported having developed an alternative grading or reporting system of their own, while a further fifth were using a levels-based system (as in the previous National Curriculum) but significantly adapted. Simple replication of National Curriculum levels has largely disappeared, with only 14 schools (out of 255 that responded to this question) reporting that they were using them or something similar to assess students.

Figure 2: The approaches to assessment being used in 2018 within Key Stage 3



### 3.3 The impact of GCSE on Key Stage 3

Other specific ways in which teachers reported that they had begun to approach their Key Stage 3 curriculum in light of the new GCSE (9–1) specifications are presented in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows, schools are not simply using GCSE grades (or measures related to them) to record and report Key Stage 3 students’ progress; the vast majority of them (79%) reported using GCSE-style questions to set assessment tasks. The figures for 2018 show that this trend is increasingly evident in state-funded schools (both selective and non-selective), although it seems to be less prevalent in the independent sector. As last year, this trend, which is also reflected in many of the schools’ later responses about the most important lesson that they have learned from their experience of the new GCSE exams, continues to raise concerns about a process of extended ‘teaching to the test’.

Table 1: The ways in which GCSE was reported to have influenced schools' approaches to assessment and teaching of particular aspects at Key Stage 3

Number of responses (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)<sup>3</sup>

Type of school	The kinds of questions that we ask students to tackle (to reflect the style and focus of new GCSE questions)	The way in which we use sources in KS3 history	The way in which we introduce students to different historical interpretations at KS3	The number of schools answered this question
<b>Comprehensive/academy/free 2018</b>	<b>154 (80.6%)</b>	<b>133 (69.9%)</b>	<b>138 (72.3%)</b>	<b>191</b>
<i>Comprehensive/academy/free 2017</i>	155 (79.5%)	128 (65.6%)	126 (64.6%)	195
<b>Grammar 2018</b>	<b>7 (77.8%)</b>	<b>5 (55.6%)</b>	<b>6 (66.7%)</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Grammar 2017</i>	13 (76.5%)	8 (47.1%)	5 (29.4%)	17
<b>Independent 2018</b>	<b>11 (57.9%)</b>	<b>11 (57.9%)</b>	<b>8 (42.1%)</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Independent 2017</i>	13 (59.1%)	14 (63.6%)	12 (54.5%)	22
<b>All 2018</b>	<b>172 (78.5%)</b>	<b>149 (68.0%)</b>	<b>152 (69.4%)</b>	<b>219</b>
<i>All 2017</i>	181 (77.4%)	150 (64.1%)	143 (61.1%)	234

For many schools, it appears that Key Stage 3 is becoming a 'training ground' for GCSE, rather than being seen as a distinct curriculum phase with its own priorities and aims – an approach reflected in the 'lessons' that some respondents claimed to have learned from the experience of teaching the new GCSEs:

*We need to expose younger years to [the GCSE] styles of questions.*

*(Teacher 245, comprehensive/academy/free)*

*Continue to seek opportunities to familiarise students with [the GCSE] assessment style in Key Stage 3.*

*(Teacher 30, comprehensive/academy/free)*

*The importance of updating Key Stage 3 assessments to prepare students for the demands of Key Stage 4.*

*(Teacher 28, comprehensive/academy/free)*

Similarly, the way in which more state-funded schools reported that they were adapting their approaches to using sources and teaching about historical interpretations to align them with the way in which those aspects are examined at GCSE also suggests that the new examination course has been a powerful influence on curriculum decisions lower down the school. The proportions of

<sup>3</sup> The percentages add up to more than 100 as schools could tick more than one response.

schools that reported the adaptations to the ways in which they asked Key Stage 3 students to use sources, and to the ways in which they teach historical interpretations, to more closely reflect GCSE demands were 68% and 69% respectively.

While the precise nature of teachers' practices cannot readily be determined from their acknowledgement that GCSE requirements are shaping the way in which they teach these aspects of history at Key Stage 3, there is clearly a risk that teachers' explicit focus on these demands may be encouraging a reductive approach, focusing more on gaining good results than promoting a genuine understanding of the subject discipline.

*Table 2: The way in which CSE has been influencing the choice of content at Key Stage 3*  
**Number of responses** (as a percentage of the schools that answered this question)<sup>4</sup>

Type of school	Specific content – avoid repetition	Specific content – revisit aspects at GCSE	Specific content – background for GCSE	Number of schools that answered this question
<b>Comprehensive/academy/free 2018</b>	<b>34 (17.8%)</b>	<b>88 (46.1%)</b>	<b>106 (55.5%)</b>	<b>191</b>
<i>Comprehensive/academy/free 2017</i>	<i>48 (25.5%)</i>	<i>92 (47.2%)</i>	<i>104 (53.3%)</i>	<i>195</i>
<b>Grammar 2018</b>	<b>2 (22.2%)</b>	<b>1 (11.1%)</b>	<b>6 (66.7%)</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Grammar 2017</i>	<i>5 (29.4%)</i>	<i>5 (29.4%)</i>	<i>10 (58.8%)</i>	<i>17</i>
<b>Independent 2018</b>	<b>6 (31.6%)</b>	<b>4 (21.1%)</b>	<b>7 (36.8%)</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Independent 2017</i>	<i>11 (50.0%)</i>	<i>6 (27.3%)</i>	<i>10 (45.5%)</i>	<i>22</i>
<b>All 2018</b>	<b>42 (19.2%)</b>	<b>93 (42.5%)</b>	<b>119 (54.3%)</b>	<b>254</b>
<i>All 2017</i>	<i>64 (27.4%)</i>	<i>103 (44.0%)</i>	<i>124 (53.0%)</i>	<i>234</i>

Again, the pressures to focus on later exam demands, even at Key Stage 3, are evident from teachers' comments elsewhere in the survey about GCSE content overload and particularly in the 'lessons' that they had taken from their experience of the new exams. Many of these lessons are about using Key Stage 3 to support the development of the knowledge required at GCSE:

*Build content into Key Stage 3.*

*(Teacher 129, comprehensive/academy/free)*

*Greater emphasis on content delivery at Key Stage 3 to prepare for Key Stage 4.*

*The same with exam-type questions.*

*(Teacher 145, comprehensive/academy/free)*

<sup>4</sup> Since schools could tick more than one response, some schools may have claimed to be doing both these things (in relation to different topics). The percentages reported in Table 2 thus add up to more than 100.

*Need to integrate more content into Key Stage 3 to provide context for when teaching GCSE.*

*(Teacher 245, comprehensive/academy/free)*

*The value of ensuring very secure foundations of knowledge, including retention of knowledge from Key Stage 3, to support effective answers, rather than relying on teaching 'exam technique' to jump through hoops as emphasised in the past.*

*(Teacher 202, comprehensive/academy/free)*

*It can be delivered in two years with good preparation and careful thought about how Key Stage 3 builds up to GCSE (not doing GCSE questions at Key Stage 3 though!).*

*(Teacher 225, comprehensive/academy/free)*

As these varied comments reflect, the picture of curriculum planning that emerges is a complex one. While some of the 'lessons learned' from the experience of GCSE suggest a potential distortion of the curriculum in order to cover specific topics that fall within the GCSE specification, others suggest careful consideration of the contextual background needed to make sense of particular subjects later studied in depth, and quite deliberately reject any practising of 'exam techniques'. Another positive sign is that there has been no increase in the proportion of state-funded, non-selective schools that reported *revisiting* topics at GCSE (46.1% of the 2018 respondents compared to 47.2% of those in 2017).

Without more detailed accounts of their curriculum, it is, of course, difficult to know exactly what different respondents mean by providing 'background' or 'context'. While such a claim might indicate a well-designed and wide-ranging curriculum plan, ensuring coherence across the key stages, there is a risk that it may conceal a very narrow conception of the secondary school history curriculum, unduly restricting the range of students' knowledge in the hope of guaranteeing familiarity with particular periods or topics featured in the GCSE specification. In these circumstances, the fact that the new Ofsted inspection framework is intended to focus careful attention on departments' curriculum planning to explore the 'quality' of students' experience of history at Key Stage 3 – in its own right, rather than treating GCSE outcomes as a proxy for that experience – would seem to be a valuable safeguard.

The requirement of the GCSE (9–1) specifications that all students should learn about history on different scales (i.e. in depth, in breadth and across time in a thematic study), as well as studying 'the historic environment', seemed to be having less of an impact on what happens at Key Stage 3. The figures for 2017 and 2018 are virtually identical, with only around 35% of respondents (in both years) reporting that they included history on different scales within their Key Stage 3 curriculum and a smaller proportion (around 19%) reporting that they included a study of the historic environment at Key Stage 3.

### 3.4 The length of the Key Stage 3 curriculum

Last year we noted a large shift in the number of schools reporting they were teaching a shorter Key Stage 3 (and thereby lengthening the GCSE course to three years). The figures for 2018, set out alongside those for recent years in Table 3, are similar to those from 2017, with 44% claiming that they now teach a condensed Key Stage 3 within two years (this proportion excludes those schools that begin GCSE part-way through Year 9). The proportion of grammar schools that reported a two-year Key Stage 3 was much higher than in previous years, but the number of grammar schools responding to the survey is very small, and only ten such schools answered this question. It would appear, however, that only schools in the independent sector seem relatively immune to this development. The fact that more than half of the independent schools that responded to the survey continue to enter students for the IGCSE exam, rather than the new GCSE (9–1) specifications, makes it even more apparent that the introduction of the new GCSE examinations is the main driver behind reductions in time allocated to the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Table 3: The length of the Key Stage 3 programme in respondents' schools over the past five years

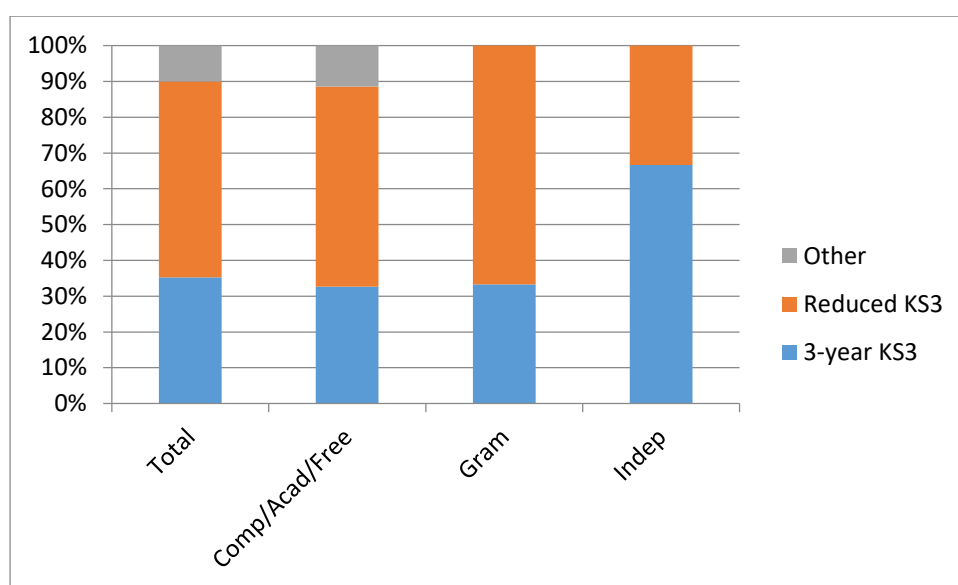
Year	Type of school	Three-year Key Stage 3		Two-year Key Stage 3	
<b>2018</b>	<b>Comprehensives, academies &amp; free</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>56.1%</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>43.9%</b>
2017	Comp/academy/free	113	55.9%	89	44.1%
2016	Comp/academy/free	159	68.5%	73	31.5%
2015	Comp/academy/free	180	75.9%	57	24.1%
2014	Comp/academy/free	174	75.6%	56	24.3%
<b>2018</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>60%</b>
2017	Grammar	12	66.7%	4	33.3%
2016	Grammar	19	86.3%	3	13.6%
2015	Grammar	9	56.3%	7	43.8%
2014	Grammar	5	62.5%	3	37.50%
<b>2018</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>82.9%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17.1%</b>
2017	Independent	35	85.4%	6	14.6%
2016	Independent	40	93.0%	3	7.0%
2015	Independent	49	89.1%	6	10.9%
2014	Independent	34	89.5%	4	10.5%
<b>2018</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>40.2%</b>
2017	All schools	162	60.7%	6	39.3%
2016	All schools	219	73.5%	79	26.5%
2015	All schools	238	77.3%	70	22.7%
2014	All schools	213	77.2%	63	22.8%

The impact on schools' decisions about the length of their Key Stage 3 curriculum over time, as the new GCSE (9–1) qualifications were announced, developed and implemented, are summarised in Figure 3. Out of 230 schools that responded to a specific question as to whether the new GCSE had already had an impact or would do so on the length of their Key Stage 3 provision, 126 (55%)

indicated that they already had or were planning to shorten their Key Stage 3 provision in light of the demands of the new specifications. (This might mean either a two-year Key Stage 3 or the start of GCSEs part-way through the third year.)

Of these 126 schools, 108 were comprehensive, academy or free schools. Further analysis of the 23 schools that indicated ‘other’ in response to this question reveals that 12 of these schools were, in fact, also planning to shorten the length of their Key Stage 3 teaching, while three were changing the content of their Key Stage 3 curriculum to better align with the topics they teach at GCSE. Five schools noted that they were being given more curriculum time at GCSE to manage the increased content demands of the subject, although it was not explained how this time had been created for them.

*Figure 3: Respondents’ claims in 2018 about the impact of GCSEs on the length of their Key Stage 3 curriculum*



### 3.5 The extent of non-specialist teaching at Key Stage 3

The results in Table 4 show the proportion of history lessons reported to be taught by non-specialists in Year 7. There are no clear trends from one year to the next but there are some signs of differences between different types of school.

While grammar and independent schools generally appear over time to employ more specialist staff to teach their Year 7 classes, the picture for comprehensive, academy and free schools in 2018 is a little more positive than it has been. Just under 40% of these schools reported in 2018 that all Year 7 classes had specialist teaching, compared to around 35% in the preceding year. The 2018 figure is higher than at any point in the past four years – but it still means that in around 60% of state-funded, non-selective schools, non-specialists are required to teach some Year 7 classes; and in a fifth of such schools, over 45% of Year 7 classes are taught by non-specialists (which was also the case in 2017).

Table 4: The proportion of history lessons in Year 7 taught by non-specialists (including schools with both a two-year and a three-year Key Stage 3)

	Type of school	0%	<15%	16–30%	31–45%	46–60%	60% +	Total respondents
<b>2018</b>	<b>Comprehensive, academy &amp; free</b>	<b>75 (38.5%)</b>	<b>42 (21.5%)</b>	<b>25 (12.8%)</b>	<b>16 (8.2%)</b>	<b>17 (8.7%)</b>	<b>20 (10.3%)</b>	<b>195</b>
2017	Comprehensives academies & free	66 (34.2%)	41 (21.2%)	31 (16.1%)	18 (9.3%)	17 (8.8%)	20 (10.4%)	193
2016	Comprehensives academies & free	72 (33%)	66 (30.3%)	32 (14.7%)	25 (11.5%)	15 (6.9%)	14 (6.4%)	224
2015	Comprehensives & academies	89 (34.1%)	60 (23%)	45 (17.2%)	29 (11.1%)	19 (7.3%)	19 (7.3%)	261
<b>2018</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>8 (80.0%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1 (10.0%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1 (10%)</b>	<b>10</b>
2017	Grammar	11 (61.1%)	3 (16.7%)	2 (11.1%)	0	1 (5.6%)	1 (5.6%)	18
2016	Grammar	10 (45.5%)	4 (18.2%)	4 (18.2%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)	0	22
2015	Grammar	7 (41.2%)	1 (5.9%)	2 (11.8%)	2 (11.8%)	4 (23.5%)	1 (5.9%)	17
<b>2018</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>28 (84.8%)</b>	<b>3 (9.1%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1 (3.0%)</b>	<b>1 (3.0%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>
2017	Independent	31 (81.6%)	5 (13.2%)	0	0	0	2 (5.3%)	38
2016	Independent	25 (59.5%)	2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	3 (7.1%)	1 (2.4%)	5 (11.9%)	42
2015	Independent	46 (75.4%)	3 (4.9%)	4 (6.6%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (4.9%)	3 (4.9%)	61
<b>2018</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>111 (46.6%)</b>	<b>45 (18.9%)</b>	<b>26 (10.2%)</b>	<b>17 (7.1%)</b>	<b>18 (7.6%)</b>	<b>21 (8.8%)</b>	<b>238</b>
2017	All schools	108 (43.4%)	49 (19.7%)	33 (13.3%)	18 (7.2%)	18 (7.2%)	23 (9.2%)	249
2016	All schools	107 (37.2%)	72 (25%)	42 (14.6%)	30 (10.4%)	18 (6.3%)	19 (6.6%)	288
2015	All schools	142 (41.9%)	64 (18.9%)	51 (15%)	33 (9.7%)	26 (7.7%)	23 (6.8%)	339

Last year for the first time we reported some slight concerns over an increase in non-specialist teaching in Year 8. In 2017, only 43% of comprehensive, academy and free schools reported that all classes had specialist teaching, which was lower than the previous year. This dip does not appear to have been sustained, in that 49% of schools reported in 2018 that all Year 8 history classes had specialist staff to teach them. There is, however, a big difference between the state-funded, non-selective schools on one hand and the grammar and independent schools on the other: 90% of the latter were able to report that all Year 8 history teaching was carried out by specialists. Although the picture appears to have improved slightly, there are concerns over the disparity of experience across different types of schools and the fact that just over half of comprehensive, academy and free schools cannot provide all Year 8 classes (which, for many students, may be their last year of studying history) with specialist teachers.



For schools that teach a three-year Key Stage 3, there also appear to be ongoing difficulties in providing specialist teaching in Year 9. In 2016, just over 70% of comprehensive, academy and free schools reported no non-specialist teachers being used, but in 2017 this proportion had fallen to 63%. The level is similar for 2018, with only 61% of schools reporting that they provided specialist history teaching to all Year 9 classes. This lack of specialist provision remains a matter of deep concern.

### **3.6 Time allocation at Key Stage 3**

The amount of time given to the teaching of history in Key Stage 3 seems similar when responses from the 2018 survey are compared to those for 2017, and they reflect a general upward trend over time. In 2012, just over 55% of respondents from all schools reported that pupils had more than 75 minutes of history per week; this figure rose to 58% in 2014, and to 64% in 2015. For the last two years it has remained at around 61%. In 2018, the grammar schools that responded appear to devote the greatest amount of time to the subject, with over 70% providing more than 75 minutes a week, compared to 62% of comprehensives, academies and free schools. This proportion, it should be noted, is higher than the 52% of independent schools offering over 75 minutes of history a week.

As reported previously, schools with a two-year Key Stage 3 are more likely to provide more curriculum time for history teaching each week than schools with a longer Key Stage 3, although the percentage difference reflects just a handful of schools, and it remains the case that more curriculum time over two years is unlikely to result in students having the same amount of time overall to study history as those in schools with a three-year Key Stage 3. At the top end of curriculum time allocation, there appears to be an increase among comprehensives, academies and free schools offering more than 90 minutes a week. In 2017, just over 40% of such schools with a condensed Key Stage 3 reported providing more than 90 minutes of history teaching a week, compared to 25% of those with a traditional three-year Key Stage 3. For 2018, the respective figures were 48% and 25%.

In 2018, around 25% of schools reported having changed the amount of time each week allocated to history within Key Stage 3 – a smaller proportion than reported changes last year (which was around 30%). Overall, a small majority (around three fifths) of these schools were decreasing the time allocation, rather than increasing it. There is, however, a noticeable difference in the pattern of changes between schools with a condensed Key Stage 3 and those with a more traditional three-year Key Stage 3. A larger proportion of the former reported making some kind of change to the time allocation (35% compared with 18% of those with a three-year Key Stage 3) and more of those changes were to *reduce* the allocation (with 20% cutting time and 13% increasing it). In the schools with a three-year Key Stage 3, the direction of the changes was more evenly balanced, with 8% cutting time and 10% increasing it. Interestingly, for the second year in a row, it is the grammar and independent sectors where there seems to be more change happening, and which are also seeing a greater tendency to reduce the time given to history. Over 27% of grammar schools and around 13% of independent schools reported having reduced teaching time for history (a change that is more common within those schools with a shorter Key Stage 3).

### 3.7 Curriculum resources for Key Stage 3

The government has recently been concerned about teachers' workload, and one response has been to identify areas where teachers might benefit from the provision of 'ready-made' resources. We were interested to find out the extent to which teachers themselves suggested that they found it difficult to resource Key Stage 3 and whether there were any specific topics that presented particular challenges. As Table 5 demonstrates, less than 20% of respondents claimed that they *frequently* struggled to find appropriate resources, although another third reported that they *sometimes* found it difficult to do so.

Table 5: The extent to which 2018 participants reported struggling to find resources for Key Stage 3

	Total		Comprehensive, academy & free		Grammar		Independent		SEN/PRU	
<b>Frequently</b>	41	17.9%	34	19.3%	1	10%	4	12.1%	0	
<b>Sometimes</b>	78	34.0%	63	35.8%	4	40%	8	24.2%	1	50%
<b>Occasionally</b>	56	24.5%	45	25.6%	3	30%	7	21.2%	0	
<b>Never</b>	54	23.6%	34	19.3%	2	20%	14	42.4%	1	50%
<b>Total number of respondents</b>	229		176		10		33		2	

When asked whether there were specific topics for which they had found it particularly difficult to identify appropriate resources, seven respondents said that the major issue was cost rather than the availability of resources, reinforcing previous comments about the financial constraints facing schools. A further six teachers also raised concerns about resources being available that were appropriate to meet the range of students' additional needs.

In total, 41 individual topics were identified by teachers as presenting particular problems in terms of identifying appropriate resources. However, these present an eclectic range, from the Romans to the Russian Revolution, and from local history to the wider world. The most common area highlighted was a request for resources to support the teaching of thematic units. This was mentioned 11 times, with examples of migration, women and terrorism being mentioned by teachers who were clearly undertaking at least one thematic overview at Key Stage 3 (reflecting the inclusion of this kind of unit within the new GCSE specifications). There were six requests for materials relating to the seventeenth century (with three specifically mentioning the Glorious Revolution). There were also five requests for resources about the British Empire and four for medieval Britain. The Industrial Revolution, civil rights in the USA, and international/wider world history were each mentioned three times. All other topics were only mentioned by one or two schools, and reflect a vast array of periods and topics.

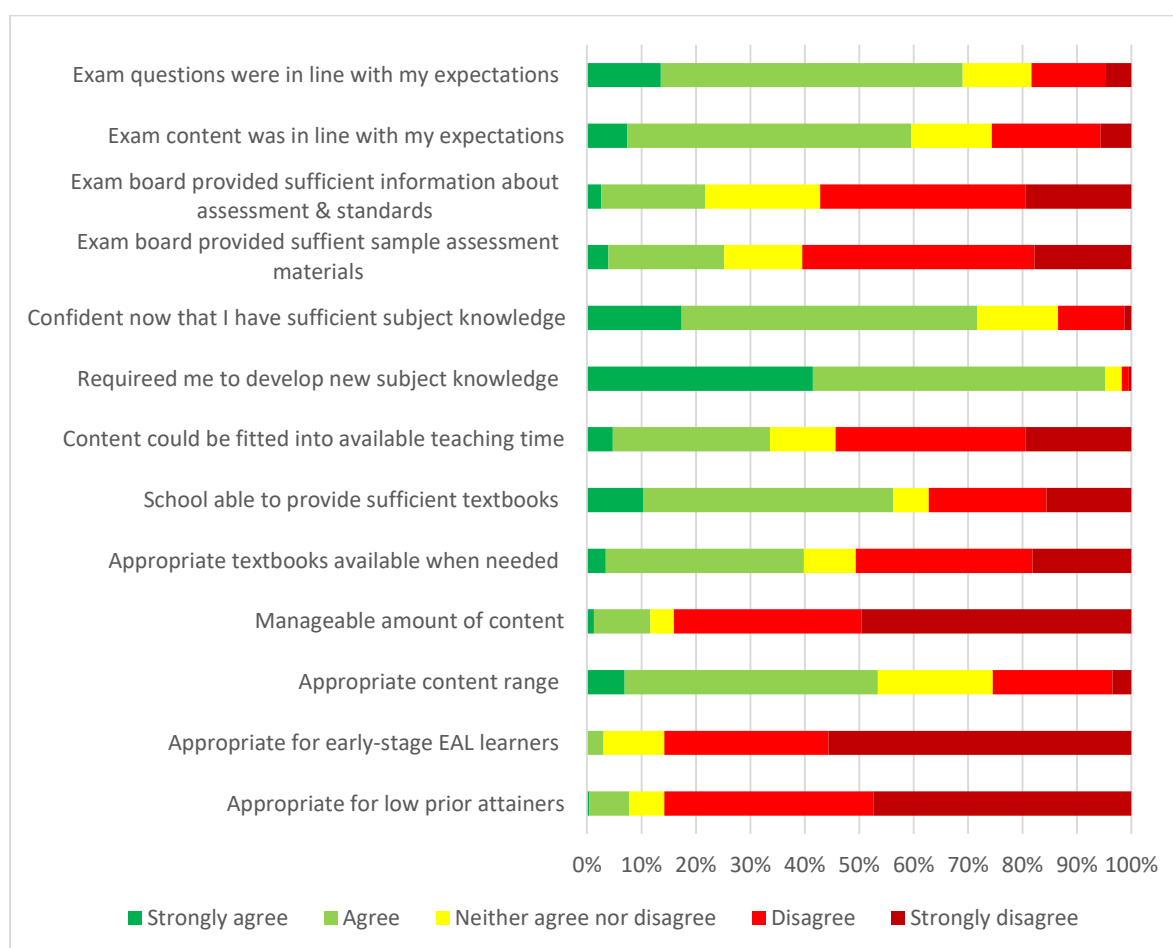
The prospect of seeking to offer ready-made resources produced for teachers obviously presents a number of challenges. First, from this survey, it is clear that, across the country, teachers in different contexts are tackling a wide variety of different topics in their classrooms, and any attempts to support this breadth will be difficult. One response may be to provide resources for a limited range of historical topics, but this may encourage teachers to narrow their curriculum, which in turn may provide a less varied experience for their students. Another significant challenge would be to provide resources that are suitable for a range of ages, needs and contexts.

## 4. GCSE

### 4.1 Teachers' responses to the new GCSE (9–1) specifications

Since 2018 was the first year in which students were examined in the new GCSE (9–1) specifications, the survey asked about their experience of the exams – and how this compared with their expectations – and revisited questions asked in previous years about how appropriate teachers thought the course content and assessment structures were and how easily they had been able to access appropriate support and resources for their students. The range of responses, from 247 individual teachers in each case, is shown in Figure 4. The teachers were also invited to offer any further comments that they wished to make, and 83 respondents chose to do so.

*Figure 4: The extent to which 2018 respondents from all school types agree with a range of claims about their experience of the new GCSE (9–1) specifications*



For the first time this year, the survey asked respondents who were taking the new GCSE (9–1) specifications to note which of the four examination boards they were working with. However, the total number of responses from schools following different specifications varied widely, with much smaller samples for some boards than others. It was therefore difficult to be confident that apparent differences between the views of teachers following different specifications were due to anything other than chance. Only one difference between respondents undertaking different specifications

was found to be statistically significant, so this is the only difference that is reported below. Where quotations are included to illustrate teachers' views, we have, however, noted the particular exam board to which they were referring.

### ***Appropriateness for particular kinds of student***

The recurring concerns that once again stand out from the teachers' responses are the anxieties felt by more than 86% of respondents about the demands that the exams presented for those who embarked on the history GCSE course with low prior attainment or at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The fact that these proportions are so similar to those of last year's respondents (86% and 91% respectively) suggests that actual experience of the examination and reflection on students' results has *not* generally reassured teachers about the demands of the course. Although some teachers reported their surprise that grade boundaries were lower than they had expected, this did not appear to overturn their view that the exams themselves were inappropriate for certain learners, and a strong message within many of the comments was about how demoralising and stressful many students had found the course to be, because they found it so difficult and appeared to be doing so badly:

*Several children were disappled because we had no idea of grade boundaries and they became quickly discouraged by the low %s they were achieving.*

*(Teacher 124, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*The amount of content knowledge required to be successful is a problem for low prior attainment students. In our cohort many 'switched off' because they were struggling so much. We had to put lots of intervention in place for out of class/school times. This increased the teacher workload but also increased the hostility of some students towards the subject.*

*(Teacher 206, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

### ***The extent to which teachers felt the exam boards had provided appropriate guidance***

The majority of teachers remained concerned right up to the exam that they did not have sufficient knowledge about how the new assessment would actually work. Only 22% of respondents agreed that their examination board had provided them with sufficient details about the way in which students' work would be assessed and about the standards expected, while just 25% thought that their board had made sufficient examples of assessment materials available to them. In each case, these proportions were just 2% higher than responses to the same questions given a year earlier. While all the exam boards had produced further guidance and sample material during the course of the year, some respondents noted that the publications of additional examples had added to the sense of confusion and uncertainty:

*The exam board made several changes within the course of the two years to questions and mark schemes (including during the exam marking process itself) so teachers were very much in the dark.*

*(Teacher 105, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*It wasn't until I went on a course about preparing for the exam (in about March of Year 11) that we understood what the questions were asking for. We had been told to deliver the content in less depth, but the sample answers (when they were finally produced by AQA – we're still waiting for some topics!) were exceedingly content-heavy and made us worried that we hadn't taught in enough depth.*

*(Teacher 124, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

Despite these anxieties and uncertainties, it should be acknowledged that a clear majority of respondents (69% and 60%, respectively) confirmed that the exam questions and the content on which they focused were essentially in line with their expectations. One statistically significant difference was evident here between the exam boards, with only 49% of those respondents who entered candidates for Edexcel reporting that the content of the exam was in line with what they had been led to expect.

Where respondents noted differences from their expectations, the concerns that they expressed often related either to the use of some unexpected types of question or unfamiliar question stems or to the very narrow focus of certain questions (discussed further below).

*Some of the key language in questions was a surprise. For example, asking students to identify and explain 'turning points' where no sample questions had asked this style so therefore I did not teach them how to approach this type of question.*

*(Teacher 146, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Some questions on the new exams were very different to the few samples we had seen or guidance we were given. For example, in Edexcel's Paper 2 (Paper 25) on the American West, the narrative account question only covered two years. This made it very difficult to answer and it required very specific knowledge. All sample questions we had seen had a longer time-frame.*

*(Teacher 206, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

### **Teachers' views about the content of the specifications and what was tested**

As has been the case since the national requirements for the new GCSEs were first proposed, teachers generally continued to believe that the *range* of content in the specifications is appropriate, with 53% of respondents regarding the range of different types of content as appropriate for young people growing up in Britain today (and only 26% actively disagreeing with this suggestion). But this endorsement of the *range* of content does not carry through into agreement that the *amount* of content to be accommodated is actually manageable in the time available to them. Eighty-four per cent of respondents regarded the amount of content as unmanageable and only one third of respondents agreed that they could fit all the content into the amount of teaching time that they had available. Since well over half (55%) of schools that responded to the survey reported that they have made more than two years available for teaching GCSE (either by allocating three full years to it, or by starting the course part-way through Year 9), it is clear that even those with more than two years' teaching time available actually found it difficult to accommodate all the material that they were expected to deal with in sufficient depth.

Complaints made in respondents' comments about the amount of content to be covered were often combined with a deep sense of frustration about the relationship of the exam questions to the specified content, with many concerns that questions often dealt with very narrow topics or periods of time and thus provided little opportunity for students who had invested in learning about the whole unit to demonstrate the knowledge and understanding that they had developed. In some cases, the high level of specificity in the questions was regarded as very unfair:

*Very narrow range of content from the specification was tested, about 8% in one unit.*

*(Teacher 61, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*They were examined on too narrow content. Felt the exam does not allow students to fully express what they do know or make questions accessible to the lower end.*

*(Teacher 31, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*The amount of content they have to learn vs the % of content they are examined on was ridiculous. The 'accessible' 4-mark 'Describe' questions were not accessible in terms of knowledge needed. Many of our students gave up on Paper 2, due to how narrow the questions were.*

*(Teacher 118, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

The effects of these pressures were reported as being felt by both high- and low-attaining students:

*The increased difficulty means that the more able students suffer as they become more stressed, especially with the huge number of exams they have to complete. The lower ability are more likely to write nothing. There were a large number of students who didn't write anything in their exam (this is my experience as an examiner alongside other examiners).*

*(Teacher 105, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

Teachers reported that they had still been working extremely hard to develop the subject knowledge necessary to teach the new specifications – with 96% agreeing that they had been required to build their knowledge of new topics and some 14% still not fully confident that they had learned all that was really required of them.

### ***The availability of appropriate textbooks***

Concerns about the availability and adequacy of textbooks remained high (though it must be acknowledged that teachers here were reflecting on their experience over the past two or three years, and not necessarily on the position in which they found themselves at the start of the academic year 2018–19). Forty-one per cent of the respondents disagreed with the suggestion that they had appropriate textbooks available when they needed them, and there were several specific complaints about the quality of those that had been produced.

*Textbooks produced contain multiple errors – both grammatical and historical.*

*(Teacher 43, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Textbooks contained contradictory details, which seemed to suggest inadequate editing had taken place.*

*(Teacher 268, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

A small number of those who had bought the first books to be published (when they urgently needed teaching resources) now regretted it, as they found them less helpful than subsequent publications:

*We bought the text books that were available in September 2016 but now wish we had been able to buy the better textbooks published this year.*

*(Teacher 167, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

More than a third of respondents (37%) disagreed with the suggestion that their school had been able to provide sufficient textbooks for their students. One head of humanities in a comprehensive school noted, for example, that they had only 15 textbooks between three classes for some topics, pointing out that the cost of providing a textbook for each of the four units was more than £50 per student and more than twice the price of equipping students for the new geography course.

### ***Exam outcomes in relation to teachers' expectations***

When it came to the actual results of the examinations, exactly half of the schools that responded reported that their GCSE history results were essentially in line with their expectations, and those that reported a difference were pretty evenly split, with 25% reporting better results and 22% reporting results that were worse than expected. Only 3% of the schools reported an unclear pattern of variation from their expectations. (As noted above, the data did not reveal any significant differences between exam boards in terms of the relationship of results to expectations.)

### ***The lessons that teachers learnt from this first experience***

Only a few schools reported that they were considering changing either their exam board (7%) or one or more modules within the specification (9%) as a result of their experiences. When asked explicitly what lessons, if any, they had learnt from their experience of taking the first cohort right through the new GCSE (9–1) specification, 192 respondents made some kind of comment.

The issue of the amount of time needed to cover the content is absolutely pervasive in these comments. There are few respondents who do not make some reference either to the amount of content or to the lack of time they have to teach it (although one or two suggest that the amount is 'just about manageable'). While most offer some kind of 'strategic' response to the challenge presented by the content demands and a few suggest that they will need to review their experience and the students' results more thoroughly before drawing any specific conclusions, 13% of the responses overall offer an essentially despondent or resigned response, simply conveying the conclusion that they (and/or their students – particularly the lower attainers) are simply faced with an impossible task:

*It is impossible to teach all the content and technique in the time we are given – five hour-long lessons a fortnight.*

*(Teacher 51, comprehensive, academy/free, AQA)*

*The difficulty of delivering a very detailed syllabus to a wide range of students in the time available...*

*(Teacher 55, comprehensive, academy/free, AQA)*

*Level 4 is largely unachievable. The focus is heavily on knowledge recall, which disadvantages weaker students.*

*(Teacher 57, comprehensive, academy/free, AQA)*

Among the 'strategic' responses to the question of content, the most common suggestion is to allocate more time to the subject, either by reducing the length of Key Stage 3 to two years, or by starting to teach the GCSE content within Year 9. Where this is not regarded as a viable option (or that change has already been implemented), some teachers emphasise the need for speed of coverage – simply teach it faster – and stress the need to stick to the planned schedule. Other ways of creating more time are to require students to work more independently, increasing the amount of homework that they do (which is advocated particularly by those teaching in grammar or independent schools) or timetabling more additional sessions after school:

*We have to teach it faster – which, again, impacts the weakest.*

*(Teacher 44, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Students will have to do more work at home.*

*(Teacher 4, independent, Edexcel)*

*Students are required to do more work outside of lessons.*

*(Teacher 288, grammar, Edexcel)*

*Students have to be reviewing work from the start to attain highly. You have to set lots of independent learning to get through all the content in two years.*

*(Teacher 180, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Teaching of content is a nightmare – and teaching of exam practice – both are vital and there is not enough time to do both. I have had to communicate with parents a lot more in order to ensure enough work is being done at home. Lots of this feels outside of my control and a major negative for Pupil Premium students.*

*(Teacher 240, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*As there are so many different question types/stems in the four sections, it is proving very challenging to effectively teach content alongside skills. Additional sessions for students may have to be timetabled after school.*

*(Teacher 298, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

Some respondents, however, are adopting a different kind of strategic view, either questioning whether all the content they have tried to include is really necessary or suggesting that for certain students they abandon the attempt to cover everything in the specification and focus on identifying the absolutely essential elements, thereby reducing the sense of pressure and failure that unrealistic demands create:



*You don't need to complete all the knowledge in the textbook.*

*(Teacher 163, comprehensive/academy/free, OCR)*

*Trim down the content for lower ability students.*

*(Teacher 90, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

A small number of respondents also challenge the assumption that focusing on content and recall will help their students, by pointing out the discouraging effect that this can have. Their concern is to find ways of maintaining students' engagement and interest, preventing students from becoming utterly disheartened:

*Keep the students engaged because they will all want to quit at some point. Go quickly, even if it removes chance for development.*

*(Teacher 7, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*That we need to find ways of maintaining student enthusiasm throughout the course, as many students become overwhelmed by the amount of content, tight timing of the questions in the exams and the number of questions.*

*(Teacher 104, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*Students need help to maintain motivation, faced with the depth of knowledge required across all their GCSEs.*

*(Teacher 175, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Keeping lower-attaining students interested is the key to having a successful cohort.*

*(Teacher 223, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

Opinions are clearly divided (even among those preparing students for the same exam specification), with some insisting that they have to find ways to increase students' factual knowledge and sharpen its precision, and others concluding that knowledge per se is less significant than they had assumed and that it is exam techniques and a clear appreciation of exactly what is required and how to deliver it that matter most:

*Much greater focus on learning facts, far less on historical skills than we thought. Most of the skills questions (e.g. interpretation, sources) are quite low-level – it is really just about knowing lots of stuff. We can strip out some of the analytical material and focus on content for future year groups.*

*(Teacher 132, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Teach more to the exam question and only the key content, not in-depth due to time limitations and constraints from other key subject priorities.*

*(Teacher 15, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

Both issues feature prominently among other kinds of strategic response. Some 32 of the 'lesson learned' comments focus on strategies for securing the retention and recall of content knowledge, and in some cases reflect strategies rooted in cognitive science that have been found to strengthen these processes. While technical terms such as 'interleaving' are only occasionally mentioned,

frequent reference is made to practices intended to support retrieval practice – essentially regular small-scale tests or quizzes and regular revisiting of content previously covered.

*To drill students in terms of subject content.*

*(Teacher 127, comprehensive/academy/free, OCR)*

*Teachers need to know the new content in detail to be able to give students the extra knowledge. Students need to be shown how to revisit knowledge regularly to help them remember so much material.*

*(Teacher 38, grammar, OCR)*

*I need to give them more homework and more knowledge quizzes.*

*(Teacher 154, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Unfortunately, you need to start during Year 9 in order to get through it all. There need to be systems in place to support students retaining things in long-term memory.*

*(Teacher 109, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Interleaving activities are essential and must not impede the teaching of the other topics.*

*(Teacher 310, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*I have to find new and different ways to constantly test and review their knowledge. Constant exam skills practice as there are so many different types of questions. Does not feel like my hard work as a teacher pays off in the slightest.*

*(Teacher 61, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*(1) It can be taught in two years but it is tight with in-class revision included.*

*(2) Specific nature of exam questions means practice questions, but be incredibly focused. (3) Regular and varied low-stakes tests makes a great impact on recall.*

*(Teacher 139, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

Various kinds of strategies for developing students' familiarity with exam demands are mentioned even more often, featuring in 45 separate comments – sometimes (as the last two comments illustrate) alongside a strong focus on factual knowledge recall. The range of these suggestions is quite wide, with many schools suggesting (as noted previously) that exam-style questions have to be used in Key Stage 3 and others focusing on regular, repeated practice and explicit teaching of exactly what is required for each kind of question and how it should be answered. Becoming an examiner is suggested by several respondents as the best way of developing their own understanding of exam requirements, allowing them to give more accurate guidance to their students:

*It is hard to fit skills and content development into lessons in the time allowed.*

*Finding the balance is everything. They must start tackling exam-style questions early on in secondary school.*

*(Teacher 53, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Exam technique and ensuring that the students are very clear on how to answer each question.*

*(Teacher 68, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*That the content for the exams isn't necessarily important. There is no way they can know all that knowledge, and I need to teach buzz words for Paper 2, which is what the exam board seemed to want.*

*(Teacher 100, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Technique is key, especially on source questions. Rote learning might be the way to go, unfortunately.*

*(Teacher 262, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*Examiner marking is essential. I learnt more in the exam marking training about what the board were after than from any of the other offered training, documents or textbooks from the exam board. Some questions were marked completely differently to what we had expected. Unfortunately, I only marked one paper but hopefully the training for the other papers will now become available.*

*(Teacher 41, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

Again, opinions are divided and it is not always clear what respondents mean in practice when they refer to skills development or question demands. Some are obviously referring to tightly focused, regular practice using the kinds of question stems found in specimen papers; others are referring to systematic development over time of students' understanding of how different second-order concepts underpin and shape appropriate answers to different kinds of historical question:

*Rigorous application of knowledge is essential – students must be able to apply their knowledge to explain and make substantiated judgements; knowledge is not enough so skills have to be taught in equal measure, which is challenging in only two years.*

*(Teacher 171, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*They need time to learn the new and different type of exam skills. They also need to bring in new skills, especially around historical interpretations.*

*(Teacher 172, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*The value of ensuring very secure foundations of knowledge, including retention of knowledge from Key Stage 3, to support effective answers, rather than relying on teaching 'exam technique' to jump through hoops as emphasised in the past.*

*(Teacher 202, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

Beyond the specific demands of content recall and its application in response to specific kinds of exam question, two other common themes are evident among teachers' suggestions about lessons learned. Although mentioned by only seven teachers, the thematic unit is the only one identified as a particular concern by more than one individual and, in some cases, those who raise it as a particular issue note that they have only previously taught 'modern world' GCSE specifications, which did not include a study in development over time. They recognise that they still need a better understanding of the requirements of such a study and of the most effective ways of teaching it.

The other theme – which echoes all the concerns noted above about the demands faced by low attainers and those with low levels of literacy – is the need for a more differentiated approach. This has been mentioned already in relation to content coverage, with some teachers suggesting that they will have to focus on a narrower core of essential content. Other suggestions included a differentiated approach to revision sessions and reference to the creation or purchase of differentiated resources (such as a ‘foundation’-level textbook):

*Create a set of ‘must know’ statements or facts so differentiation can occur, especially at lower levels.*

*(Teacher 145, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

*The need to teach students to be tactical in answering questions for lower ability – e.g. leave out certain questions but always answer certain ones.*

*(Teacher 158, comprehensive/academy/free, Eduqas)*

*Continue focusing on answering sample questions early on. Need more intervention early on with students who are underachieving. Create our own differentiated resource packs for weakest students. They are unable to access even the Target 5 workbooks from the board. These were the students who underperformed in the exam.*

*(Teacher 102, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Limit the content for low ability. Push high ability harder than is reasonable. It needs three years to teach.*

*(Teacher 106, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*We need to work harder at differentiating at the lower end.*

*(Teacher 112, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*The syllabus is very content-heavy. Higher prior attainers can achieve well (if they have enough time to revise) whereas middle prior attainers struggle more and low prior attainers seriously struggle. The textbooks are very content-heavy and not readily accessible for lower prior attainers. Pearsons have brought out a foundation edition (too late for the first cohort). We will aim to teach ‘streamlined’ content pitched at LPAs and MPAs (so they can cope with it) and extend the HPA accordingly.*

*(Teacher 185, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*We have decided (as a school) to start GCSE at the beginning of Year 9 to get through the content. Low-ability students are really struggling and as a result we are considering moving towards ‘setting’ groups.*

*(Teacher 206, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

As this last comment reveals, one or two history departments are considering the introduction of setting at GCSE.

It is clear from these reflections and many others discussed earlier in this report that many history teachers remain deeply concerned about the experience of students with low levels of literacy or

poor English and of other lower attainers. While more appropriate resources may provide them with valuable support, profound questions remain for the majority of teachers about whether and how these new specifications can be taught to 90% of all young people (the current government target for 2025), without alienating a significant proportion of those whom the government, quite rightly, would like to see studying history to the age of 16.

*Low literacy students are doomed to fail due to the vast depth of literacy required. They switch off and are unable to remember the quantity of knowledge required to access papers.*

*(Teacher 198, comprehensive/academy/free, Edexcel)*

*Many students do not like the new course. Several 'gave up' as they became overwhelmed with content. Numbers are down by 30% for next year.*

*(Teacher 215, comprehensive/academy/free, OCR)*

Teacher 124, working in a non-selective, state-funded school, sums up many of the previous themes in their answer:

*Slow writers and the less able are going to struggle to access the exam. For the first time ever we have an options pathway for less able students, which doesn't allow them to take history. Answering the question with a modicum of knowledge gets better marks than using lots of knowledge and not answering the question. It is essential to teach exactly how to answer each question as the question doesn't make obvious what is required. Differentiated revision sessions (we teach mixed ability) worked really well because students require different things from revision. Children can still succeed at history but it's even tougher than before. We need to make even more adjustments in Key Stage 3 and begin teaching the GCSE course earlier.*

*(Teacher 124, comprehensive/academy/free, AQA)*

## **4.2 The extent of non-specialist teaching at GCSE**

The extent of non-specialist teaching at GCSE has always been much lower than at Key Stage 3, and Table 6 shows that the proportion of schools reporting that they were able to staff all their GCSE classes in 2018 with specialists (88.3%) is higher than it had been among respondents in 2017 (78.5%). Indeed, this proportion is higher than it has been in any survey since 2012. Given the concerns noted elsewhere in this report about the effect of budget cuts and increasing difficulties in some contexts in recruiting history teachers, this is a very encouraging finding – one that reflects schools' determined efforts to provide specialist input in tackling the new specifications.

As in previous years, grammar schools were the best staffed in this respect, with all GCSE classes in respondents' schools staffed by teachers with a history-specific qualification. Apart from the specialist sector (two special schools/PRUs that were teaching GCSE history but had no specialist input), the highest proportion of non-specialist teaching at GCSE was in the state-funded, non-selective sector, where 12.6% of respondents reported some non-specialist teaching at GCSE. In most cases (23 out of the 25 schools), this applied to less than half of their GCSE groups. Just one

respondent reported that GCSE in their school was taught entirely by non-specialists. The proportion of non-specialist history teaching in the independent sector (5.7%) was also lower than in previous years.

Table 6: The proportion of schools reporting different levels of non-specialist GCSE teaching

Type of school	No non-specialists teaching at GCSE	Up to 25% non-specialists	25–50% non-specialists	51–75% non-specialists	76% or more non-specialists
<b>Comp/grammar/free 2018</b>	<b>87.4%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>
<i>Comp/grammar/free 2017</i>	<i>76.7%</i>	<i>14.1%</i>	<i>6.8%</i>	<i>1.5%</i>	<i>1.0%</i>
<b>Grammar 2018</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Grammar 2017</i>	<i>92.3%</i>	<i>7.7%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
<b>Independent 2018</b>	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Independent 2017</i>	<i>83.3%</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>4.8%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4.8%</i>
<b>SEN/PRU 2018</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>All schools 2018</b>	<b>88.3%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
<i>All schools 2017</i>	<i>78.5%</i>	<i>12.6%</i>	<i>6.1%</i>	<i>1.1%</i>	<i>1.5%</i>

### 4.3 The degree of freedom that schools can exercise in relation to GCSE choices

One of the main purposes of the survey is to track the effect of different performance measures on the curricular decisions that schools make. As in previous years, the survey included questions about the way in which history is presented within the options systems that operate for GCSE and about the extent of choice that students are offered – including specific questions about whether some students are actively prevented or deterred from taking history beyond Key Stage 3.

The 2018 results, presented in Tables 7 and 8, suggest that the trend towards increased coercion, which has most often meant some or all students being *required* to take at least one humanities subject (history or geography) – and that has been apparent in each successive survey since 2014 – may perhaps have stalled. Overall, the proportion of schools that reported a requirement for some or all of their students to take at least one of the two subjects – 57% – is the same in the 2018 survey as it was in 2017. In most cases – 41% of all schools – the expectation extends to *all* students, but 16% of respondents' schools only require *some* of their students to choose at least one of the official humanities subjects. With the exception of one independent school, the schools that reported imposing the requirement on *some* but not *all* students are non-selective, state-funded schools. Grammar schools tend to either require all students to take at least one humanities subject (45%) or give their students a completely free choice (54%). When schools responded (as 58 did) to the invitation to explain what kind of students were particularly steered towards history, they either made reference to the level of students' perceived abilities (the 'most able', 'high and middle attainers', 'everyone except the very weakest') or to their capacity to achieve the EBacc. In a few

cases, the options system meant that the choice of another subject – usually a modern language, but, on one occasion, music – obliged them to take history. In many cases, however, respondents used the comment box to reiterate the point that their school allowed every student a free choice.

Among the independent schools, 86% of respondents reported that they offered students an entirely free choice about whether or not to take history. Obviously, the independent sector is not subject to the EBacc accountability measure, and so has less reason to restrict students’ choices, but it is equally true that the proportion of students that opt for history at 14+ has always been higher in the independent sector, and formal requirements for them to do so are not regarded as necessary.

It is encouraging to find that the concerns raised by last year’s survey, about more schools restricting students’ chance to take *both* history and geography if they wished to do so, have not been reinforced this year. Only 3% of the schools that responded in 2018 (compared to 10% in 2017) reported that some or all of their students were required to take *only* one of the two subjects.

*Table 7: The kinds of choice related to history at GCSE that survey respondents over the past five years have reported are given to students across all types of school*

	A requirement that <b>all</b> students must take						A requirement that <b>some</b> students must take						A completely free choice about history		Total
	History		History <b>or</b> geography		History <b>&amp;/or</b> geography		History		History <b>or</b> geography		History <b>&amp;/or</b> geography				
<b>2018</b>	5	2.0%	5	2.0%	92	37.1%	5	2.0%	2	1.2%	32	12.5%	107	42.7%	248
<b>2017</b>	5	1.9%	26	10.0%	85	32.6%	0	0	1	0.4%	33	12.6%	111	42.5%	261
<b>2016</b>	3	1.0%	16	5.6%	84	29.2%	3	1.0%	5	1.7%	34	11.8%	141	49.0%	288
<b>2015</b>	8	2.1%	10	2.7%	83	22.3%	3	0.8%	5	1.3%	50	13.4%	214	57.4%	373
<b>2014</b>	0	0	7	2.6%	44	16.5%	7	2.6%	8	3.0%	46	17.3%	154	57.9%	266

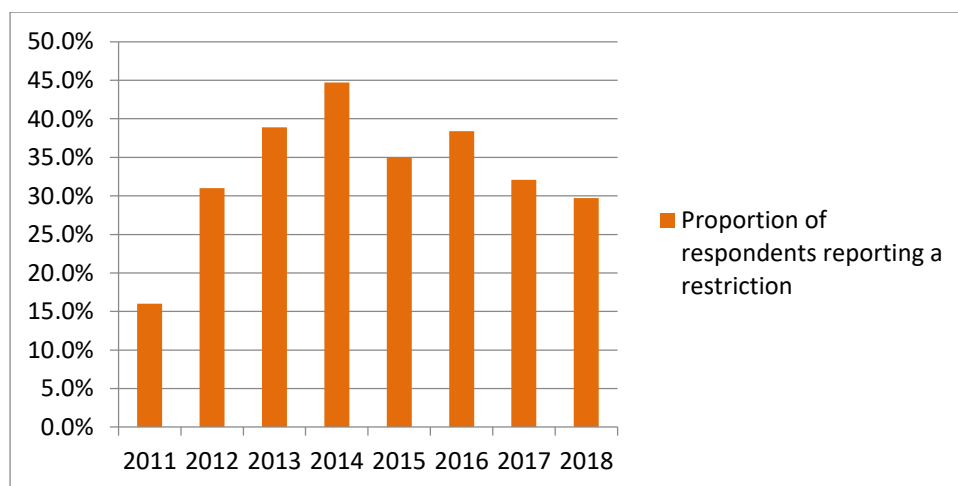
*Table 8: The kinds of choice related to history at GCSE that 2018 survey respondents reported being given to students in different types of school*

Type of school	A requirement that <b>all</b> students must take			A requirement that <b>some</b> students must take			A completely free choice about history
	History	History <b>or</b> geography	History <b>&amp;/or</b> geography	History	History <b>or</b> geography	History <b>&amp;/or</b> geography	
Comprehensive academy or free	2.0%	2.6%	42.3%	0%	2.6%	14.8%	34.7%
Grammar	0%	0%	45.5%	0%	0%	0%	54.5%
Independent	0%	0%	11.4%	0%	0%	2.9%	85.7%

Despite all the concerns that teachers expressed about the suitability of the new GCSE (9–1) specification for many students, the proportion of respondents’ schools that reported actively preventing or discouraging certain students from taking history at GCSE is slightly lower in 2018 than it was in 2017 – 29.7% compared to 32.1% the previous year. While the proportion was

unsurprisingly much lower among grammar and independent school respondents (at 9% and 20% respectively), only 32% of comprehensives, academies and free schools reported that they discouraged or prevented students from taking the subject. This reduction is very encouraging, since it confirms the gradual downward trend seen in recent years and lends weight to the conclusion that the introduction of Progress 8 as one of the accountability measures for schools has helped to combat an exclusive focus on promoting history to those thought capable of securing a pass at grade 4 (standard pass) or 5 (strong pass). Obviously, as Figure 5 illustrates, the proportion steering some students away from history at 13/14+ remains twice as high as it was in 2011 (before the EBacc was first introduced) and most teachers remain deeply worried about how inaccessible the new GCSE specifications are for many young people. As they explained in terms of the ‘lessons learned’, it seems likely that many teachers will be devoting considerable time to developing more tailored resources for teaching and revision purposes.

*Figure 5: The proportion of schools reporting that some students were actively discouraged or steered away from taking a history GCSE course in Key Stage 4*



This assumption is supported by Table 9, which sets out the grounds on which students tended to be steered away from the subject. While a smaller proportion of schools than in previous years are restricting access to the subject simply on the grounds of students’ current level of attainment or predicted grades, a much larger proportion (19%) are turning students away because they believe that they will struggle with the literacy demands that the GCSE specifications and exams present. Although the proportion doing so is much smaller in grammar and independent schools (at 9% and 14%, respectively), the fact that even some selective schools are concerned that students will struggle with the level of literacy required illustrates the nature of the challenge that teachers perceive. Other reasons given for discouraging students from taking history GCSE relate to the particular demands that EAL learners will face (in handling written sources and interpretations, as well as in constructing their own answers) and the fact that some students have been assigned to a ‘pathway’ in which they have no opportunity to continue with history. The proportion of schools excluding children from history GCSE on these particular grounds is essentially unchanged from last year.



Table 9: The grounds on which schools reported steering certain students away from history GCSE

Grounds on which students were steered away from history	Percentage of schools that reported steering students away from history on these grounds		
	2016	2017	2018
Current attainment too low for it to be regarded as worthwhile	16.9%	15.1%	11.4%
EAL students thought likely to struggle with written English	6.3%	10.4%	10.2%
Low level of literacy	22.9%	9.7%	18.7%
Not included in the options for those on 'vocational' pathways	11.3%	8.9%	9.8%
Predicted low grade at GCSE	5.6%	5.0%	3.3%

When asked about the alternatives that such students are encouraged to undertake, geography is the single subject most frequently mentioned (by 18 schools) – sometimes, but by no means always, with the suggestion that it is regarded as the easier option within the EBacc. The other most common alternatives mentioned were 'vocational' subjects, with reference, for example, to design and technology, art and business studies; to BTEC courses, including health and social care; and to City and Guilds qualifications. Occasionally, vocational courses would be linked with a college placement for part of the week. A few schools explained that some students might take a reduced number of GCSEs, with time given to additional lessons in English (including lessons for EAL learners) and in maths. Five schools mentioned the ASDAN qualification, but we are only told explicitly in one case that this offer includes a history-specific ASDAN award.

#### 4.4 The nature of the courses offered at Key Stage 4

The EBacc accountability measure applied to the state sector only includes history GCSE rather than any broader 'humanities' GCSE course. Neither the EBacc nor the Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures recognise the international IGCSE course (which has not been subject to the revisions required by the new national requirements for the GCSE 9–1 qualifications). It is therefore unsurprising that no schools reported offering a humanities GCSE course, while only two state schools (both grammar schools) reported offering the IGCSE qualification (see Table 10). In 2017, the IGCSE was offered by 45% of the independent school respondents. Among the 2018 respondents, it appears even more popular, with 22 of the 36 independent schools (61%) offering the IGCSE. Concerns have been raised elsewhere about the comparability of the two qualifications.<sup>5</sup> While these claims cannot be explored or evaluated with reference to the data provided by this survey, the rise in popularity of the IGCSE within the state sector, at a time when state schools are essentially obliged to

<sup>5</sup> A parliamentary question was tabled about the issue by Lucy Powell, and a DfE spokesperson noted that 'International GCSEs have not been through the same regulatory approval and quality control as the new gold-standard GCSEs, which is why we no longer recognise international GCSEs in school performance tables. The new GCSE qualifications have been reformed to provide more rigorous content, so young people are taught the knowledge and skills they need for future study and employment.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/dec/29/exam-reforms-boost-private-pupils-in-race-for-universities>

use the new GCSE (9–1) specifications, suggests that very careful consideration needs to be given to questions of comparability, given the kinds of decisions (about entrance to employment and to subsequent levels of education) that are based on examination results at 16+

*Table 10: The number of schools of each kind in 2018 offering particular qualifications at Key Stage 4*

<b>Numbers</b>	Total	Comprehensive, academy and free schools	Grammar	Independent	SEN/PRU
History GCSE – as a one-year course	4	2	0	1	1
History GCSE – as a two-year course	145	124	5	14	1
History GCSE – as a three-year course	84	77	4	1	1
History IGCSE	25	0	2	22	0
Humanities GCSE	0	0	0	0	0
Any other accredited or non-accredited history course.	5	2	1	1	1
Total number of respondents <i>Note: some schools offered more than one type of qualification</i>	250	198	11	36	3

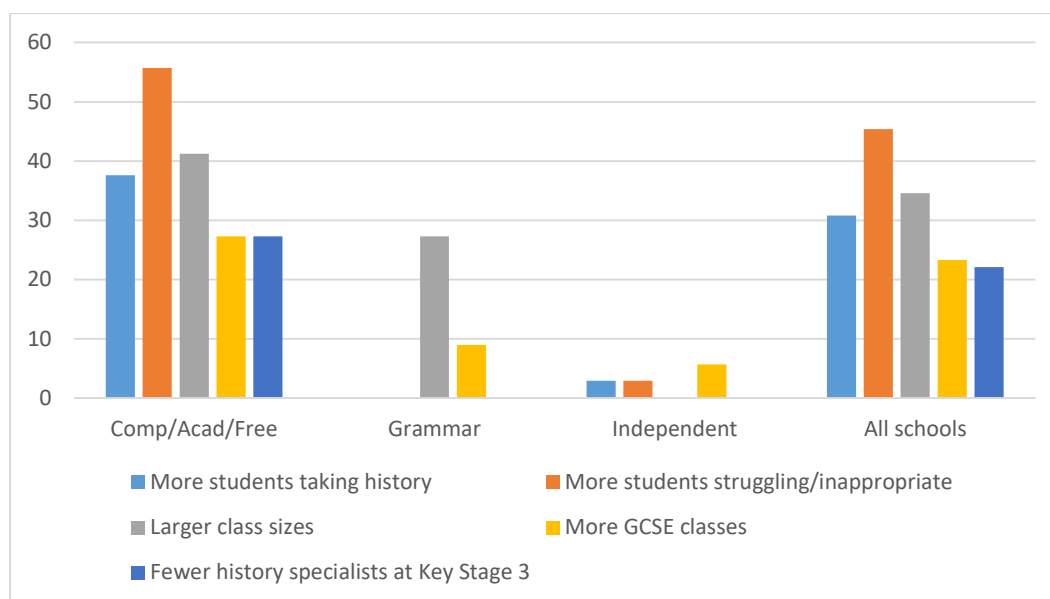
Only five schools reported offering any other kind of qualification. One grammar school offered GCSE ancient history, while a comprehensive school offered classical civilisations. Another comprehensive school offered the chance to take an ‘entry level’ qualification to those students who seemed extremely unlikely to secure any kind of GCSE grade (but noted that they might revise this decision in light of their knowledge about where the GCSE grade boundaries were actually set in 2018). One of the special schools in the sample offered the ASDAN qualification in history to their students. The very low numbers of respondents that provide any kind of ‘entry level’ programme makes it clear that the choice faced by the vast majority of students in the state sector is to undertake the new GCSE (9–1) specification in history or not to take the subject at all. This stark choice makes it all the more important that the GCSE history specifications and exam papers should be accessible to all the students for whom they are intended (which the government claims to be 90% of the cohort) and that teachers are equipped with appropriate resources and the support of teaching assistants for students with identified special educational needs. Their comments elsewhere within the survey make it clear that this is not the case.

#### **4.5 The impact of the EBacc accountability measure**

The survey also invited respondents to identify explicitly whether and, if so, how they thought that the government EBacc target (that 90% of each cohort should be entered for the EBacc suite of subjects by 2025) had affected the teaching and uptake of history in their school. Unsurprisingly, the types of school most affected were non-selective, state-funded schools – with 55% claiming that the target had had an effect on their school and only 24% claiming that it had made no difference at all (the remaining 20% were unsure). Among the small number of grammar school respondents, only

18% were confident that it had made a difference. A majority (63%) were confident that it had not. All but one of the independent sector respondents reported confidently that the target (which obviously only applies to the state sector) had made no difference to their school – but one or two then did identify specific influences that they had observed. Figure 6 sets out the percentage of schools that reported each particular effect (with respondents permitted to identify as many effects as were evident in their particular school).

*Figure 6: The percentage of schools (of each kind) in 2018 that reported experiencing particular consequences as a direct result of the EBacc target set by the government (that 90% of each cohort should be entered for the EBacc suite of subjects by 2025)*



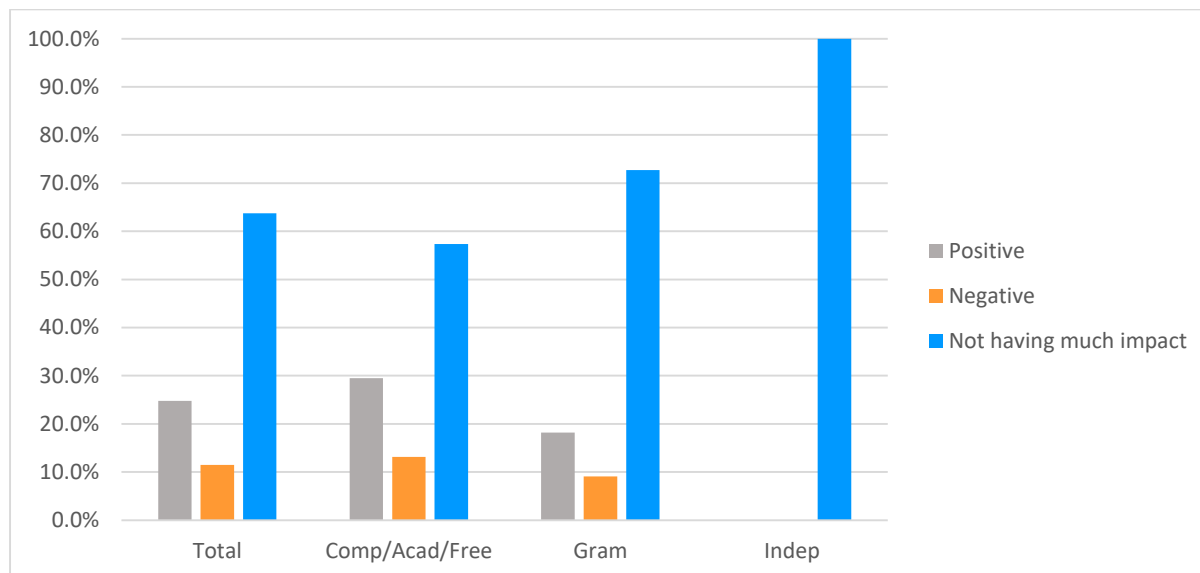
A significant minority of grammar schools reported an increase in class sizes, but there had rarely been an increase in the number of GCSE groups within each cohort. Within non-selective, state-funded schools, there is a widespread claim that the EBacc target has led to an increase in the number of students taking history at GCSE – a view reported by 37% of respondents in that sector. This increase is reported to have led both to increased class sizes, which was reported by 41% of respondents, and to the creation of more GCSE groups within each cohort, reported by 27% of respondents. The effects of increasing the number of groups have included both a reduction in the amount of specialist teacher expertise available at Key Stage 3, reported by 27% of comprehensives, academies and free schools, and – for over half (56%) of these respondents – an increase in the number of students who are struggling with the subject, or at least with the specific demands of the new GCSE history specifications.

#### **4.6 The impact of the Progress 8 accountability measure**

Alongside the EBacc target, the Progress 8 accountability measure has also been seen as a deliberate attempt to broaden the range of students encouraged or inspired to take history. While the introduction of the EBacc measure in itself tended to focus attention on those students thought likely to achieve a C grade (now a standard pass at level 4 or a strong pass at level 5), Progress 8 has given greater weight to students' *progress* (measured in relation to Key Stage 2 SATs results) rather than raw attainment. By looking at respondents' judgments of the impact of the Progress 8 measure in

their school, shown in Figure 7, we could test our assumptions that its introduction may be responsible for the reduction in the proportion of schools discouraging certain students from taking history GCSE.

*Figure 7: Respondents' views in 2018 of the impact of the Progress 8 measure on the way in which history is promoted in their school's GCSE options*



We were surprised to discover that the reported impact of the measure was much smaller among the 2018 respondents than in the previous year. In 2017, 57% of respondents from comprehensives, academies and free schools had suggested that Progress 8 was having some kind of impact (and, in more than two thirds of cases, this was regarded as being a positive one). In 2018, as Figure 7 illustrates, only 43% of such respondents thought that that the measure was exerting an influence on the options process – with a generally similar balance between those who thought the effect was positive (30%) in allowing or encouraging more students to take history and those who regarded it as negative (13%) in terms of pushing students towards other subjects. In contrast, it should perhaps be noted that three of the grammar school respondents suggested that it was having an impact in their schools – in two cases positive – whereas none of them had reported any impact at all last year.

When respondents were invited to explain or comment on their judgements, most comments – even from those who had judged the effect to be ‘positive’ overall – reflected on *negative* outcomes of the measure. Only two comments actually identified other positive influences – one noting that students no longer took ‘easy’ options, which they regarded as less worthwhile, and another noting that comparisons of results between schools now operated more fairly (since they had always allowed all students to take history, whereas other schools had previously prevented lower-attaining students from taking the subject). Among the concerns noted (both by those who saw the effect of the measure as positive overall and by those who identified it as essentially negative), the most prominent was the fact that many students were being required to take a subject with which they struggled. Two teachers expressed regret that it was difficult for students to take history and geography or to combine both subjects with a modern foreign language. The difficulties that they faced made teaching (often of larger classes) more stressful for teachers.

Our analysis of respondents' views over time makes clear the difficulty of judging the impact of any single government intervention, since successive changes interact with one another. While the introduction of the EBacc measure undoubtedly encouraged more schools to promote history to a wider range of students and boosted the proportion of the cohort taking the subject, it also prompted increased reluctance to promote history to certain students (those thought unlikely to achieve a pass at grade C). The later introduction of Progress 8 does appear to have had some effect in challenging this exclusive approach – and the effect of this challenge has been strengthened by the government's ambitious EBacc target. But the impetus that means that many schools are encouraging (or requiring) more students to take history has coincided with the introduction of the new GCSE (9–1) specifications, which many teachers regard as inappropriate for those with low levels of literacy, poor English skills (because they are at a relatively early stage of learning the language) and low prior attainment. The inevitable outcome in these circumstances is that many teachers are feeling under considerable pressure. While some regard the history course as essentially inaccessible to certain students who are being pushed to take it, others are more confident that failing students could achieve more within the new specification if they were able to develop more appropriate or better tailored resources – but they have little time to do this, and less support than in previous years from teaching assistants. They remain deeply concerned that the nature of some of the exam questions and the low (raw) marks that many students obtain – in addition to the extensive content demands – are leaving many of their weaker students demoralised and in despair. Trying to provide the tailored support that they need and adapting their planning for different students within their classes have become urgent priorities.

## 5. A-level history

### 5.1 The proportion of students within Years 12 and 13 taking A-level history

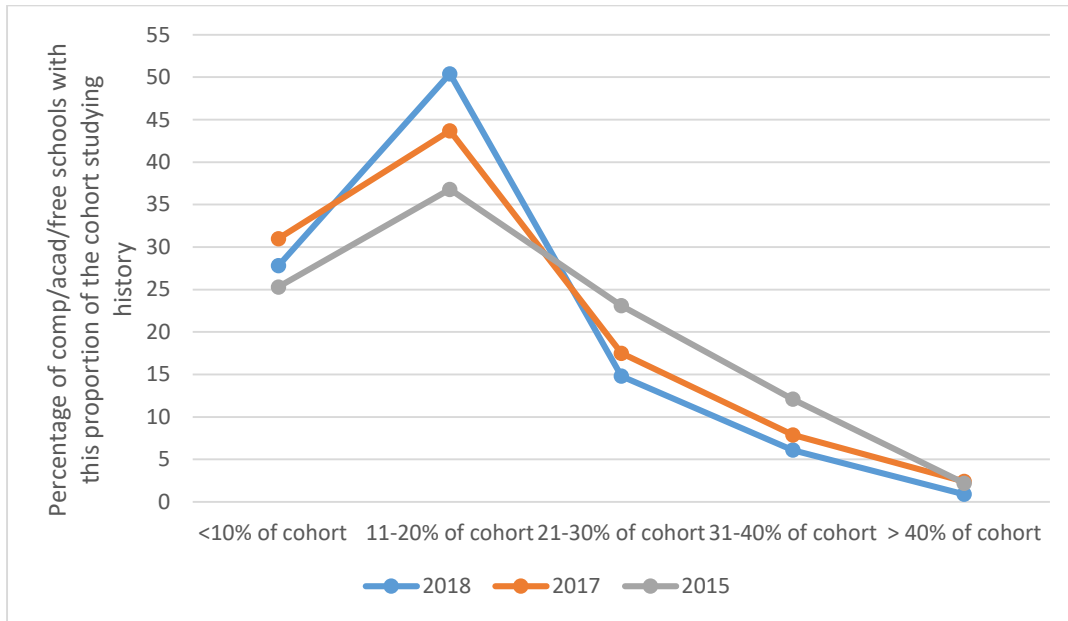
National statistics for GCE exam entries published by the Joint Qualifications Council each year provide clear evidence of the impact of the A-level reforms first implemented from September 2015 on the uptake of history. The reinstatement of linear A-levels (with exams taken at the end of two years) and severing the link between AS and A-level (so that AS results for particular units no longer contributed to students' final A-level result) have been followed by a dramatic decline in the number of students entered for AS-level history – from 74,329 in 2015 to 9,282 in 2018 (an 88% reduction). In itself, this decline does not indicate that fewer students are studying history post-16, since most schools have stopped routinely entering students for AS-level exams. However, there has *also* been a significant reduction in the number of students taking history A-level: from 50,365 in 2015 to 44,403 in 2018 (a 12% reduction). As we noted in last year's report, just as history benefitted from the introduction of AS-levels, which encouraged students to take a fourth subject, so the increasing tendency within most schools to encourage students to take just three A-levels (which was clearly indicated by last year's survey) has led to a corresponding decline in the number of students studying history post-16. This reduction over the past three years can be traced in Table 11, which shows a marked increase over that time in the proportion of schools that have only 20% or less of their cohort taking history – from 57% of respondents in 2015 to 70% in 2018.

*Table 11: The percentage of respondents with different proportions of their Year 12 cohort studying history – a comparison of the survey results for the summer of 2015 (before the GCE changes were introduced) with those of 2017 and 2018*

Percentage of cohort studying history	All types of school	Comprehensive, academy and free schools	Grammar	Independent	Sixth-form colleges
<b>&lt; 10% 2018</b>	<b>22.9%</b>	<b>27.8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
< 10% 2017	24.2%	31.0%	17.6%	10.1%	20.0%
< 10% 2015	22.6%	25.3%	11.8%	14.5%	40.0%
<b>11–20% 2018</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>27.3%</b>	<b>41.2%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>
11–20% 2017	40.9%	43.7%	23.5%	40.5%	40.0%
11–20% 2015	34.0%	36.8%	11.8%	29.1%	50.0%
<b>21–30% 2018</b>	<b>19.9%</b>	<b>14.8%</b>	<b>54.5%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
21–30% 2017	24.2%	17.5%	41.2%	37.8%	40.0%
21–30% 2015	24.5%	23.15	41.2%	27.3%	10.0%
<b>31–40% 2018</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>0%</b>
31–40% 2017	8.6%	7.9%	17.6%	8.1%	0%
31–40% 2015	14.3%	12.1%	23.0%	21.8%	0%
<b>&gt; 40% 2018</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
> 40% 2017	2.2%	2.4%	0%	2.7%	0%
> 40% 2015	2.3%	2.2%	11.8%	7.3%	0%

The pattern of change over time, as it has affected the comprehensive, academies and free school respondents, is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The percentage of respondents from comprehensives, academies and free schools with different proportions of their Year 12 cohort studying history – a comparison of the survey results for the summer of 2015 with those of 2017 and 2018



Figures 9 and 10 allow comparisons to be made between different types of school in terms of the proportion of the cohort that were studying history in Years 12 and 13 during the academic year 2017–18.

Figure 9: The percentage of the Year 12 cohort reported by schools in 2018 to be studying history in Year 12

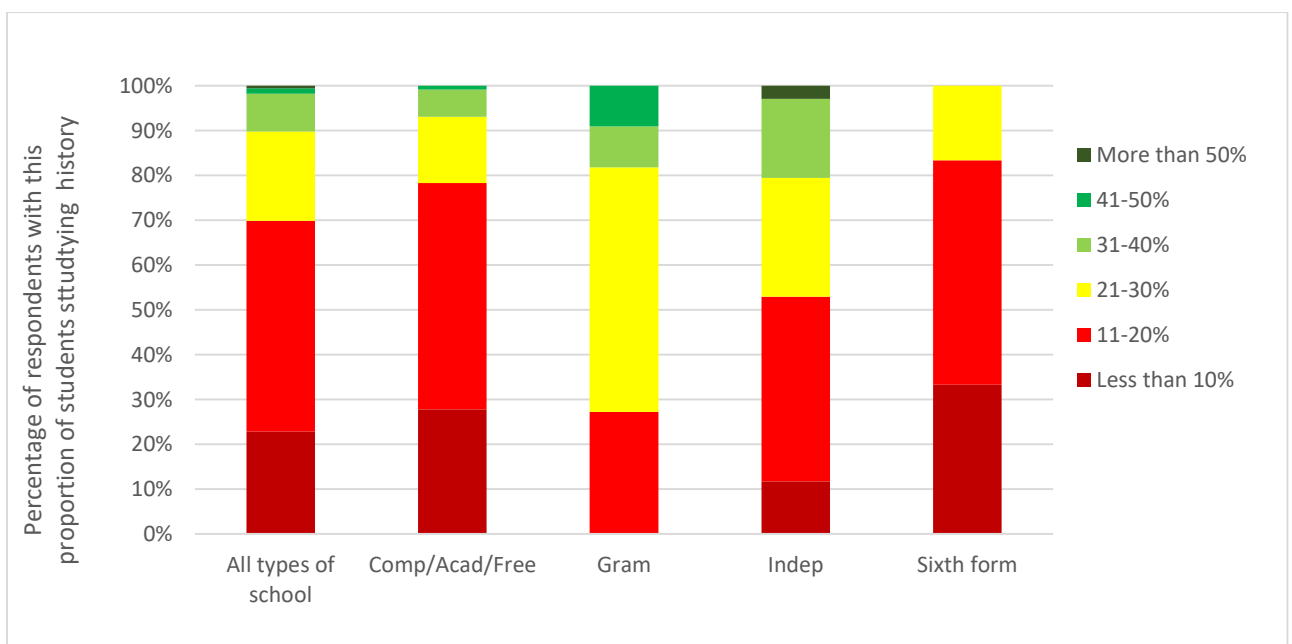
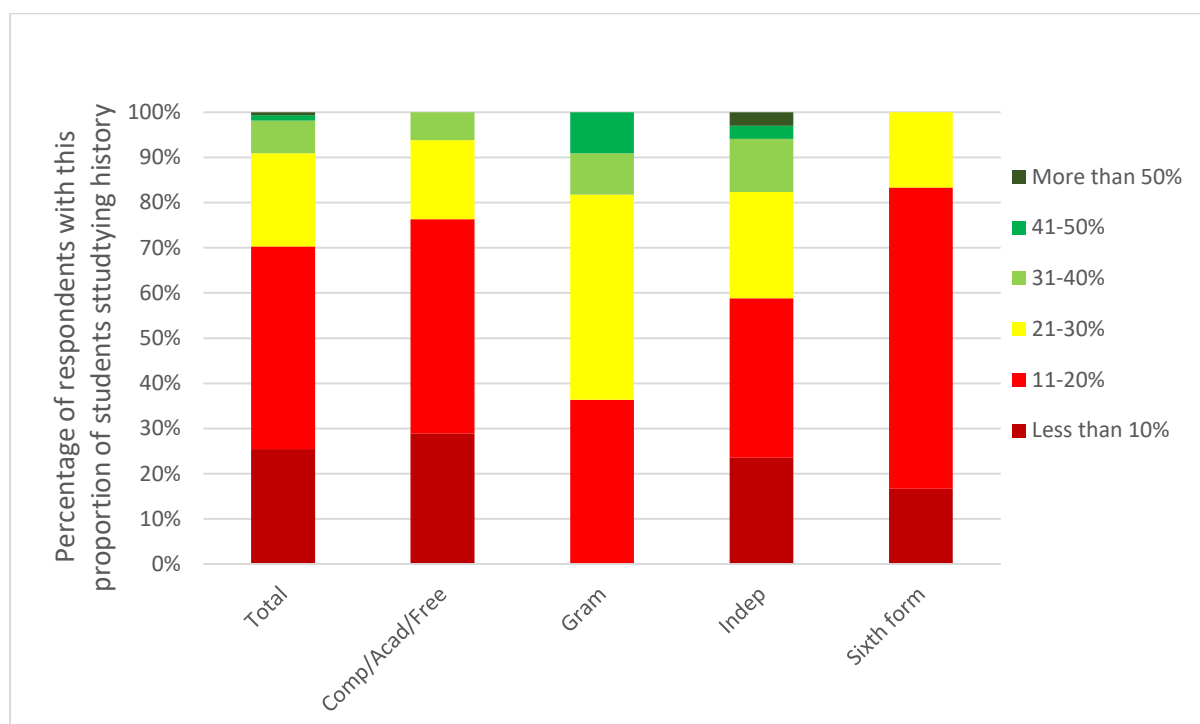


Figure 10: The percentage of the Year 13 cohort reported by schools in 2018 to be studying history



As these figures reveal, the independent sector and selective schools within the state sector tend to have a larger proportion of post-16 students studying history. In only 27% of the grammar schools and 63% of the independent schools was 20% of the cohort or less taking history in Year 12 – compared with 78% of comprehensives, academies and free schools where this was the case. The corresponding proportions for Year 13 were 36% of grammar schools, 59% of independent schools and 76% of the comprehensives, academies and free schools. The proportion of independent and grammar schools with more than 30% of the cohort studying history tended to be around 10% in both Years 12 and 13 – roughly twice the proportion of non-selective, state-funded schools.

## 5.2 Time allocation for A-level history

Although most schools tend to allocate either four or five hours a week to teaching history for students in Year 12, as shown in Table 12, it is clear that the proportion of schools that allocate five or more hours a week to history teaching is much higher in the independent and grammar schools (at 79% and 73% respectively) than it is in the non-selective schools in the state sector (56%).

Table 12: Time allocation in hours for students in Year 12 taking history

Hours allocated	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All schools	0.6%	1.8%	6.0%	30.5%	44.3%	7.8%	3.6%	1.2%	1.8%	2.4%
Comp/Acad/Free	0.9%	2.6%	6.8%	34.2%	41.0%	5.1%	3.4%	0.9%	2.6%	2.6%
Grammar	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	18.2%	63.6%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Independent	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	18.2%	48.5%	18.2%	6.1%	3.0%	0.0%	3.0%
Sixth form	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%



Although the proportion of all schools providing five or more hours a week to history students is higher overall for Year 13 (66%) than it is for Year 12 (61%), the distinction between the independent and selective schools on one hand, and the comprehensives, academies and free schools on the other, is even more pronounced for Year 13 students. The figures set out in Table 13 illustrate that while 88% of the independent schools and 82% of the grammar schools reported providing at least five hours of history teaching a week, only 58% of the comprehensives, academies and free schools did the same.

*Table 13: Time allocation in hours for students in Year 13 taking history*

Hours allocated	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
All schools	0.0%	1.2%	6.1%	26.7%	47.3%	9.7%	2.4%	1.2%	3.0%	1.8%	0.6%
Comp/Acad/Free	0.0%	1.7%	7.0%	33.0%	42.6%	6.1%	2.6%	0.0%	4.3%	1.7%	0.9%
Grammar	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	72.7%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Independent	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	9.1%	54.5%	21.2%	3.0%	6.1%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%
Sixth form	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Given the effects of budget cuts reported in the final section of this survey, it is important to acknowledge that almost 10% of schools reported an *increase* in the amount of teaching time that they had allocated to A-level history. Unfortunately, as Table 14 shows, a slightly higher proportion of schools (12%) reported that they had *reduced* the time allocated to history teaching at this level. Only among the independent schools and the very small sample of sixth-form colleges were more schools increasing time than were cutting it.

*Table 14: Reported changes in 2018 to the amount of time allocated to history*

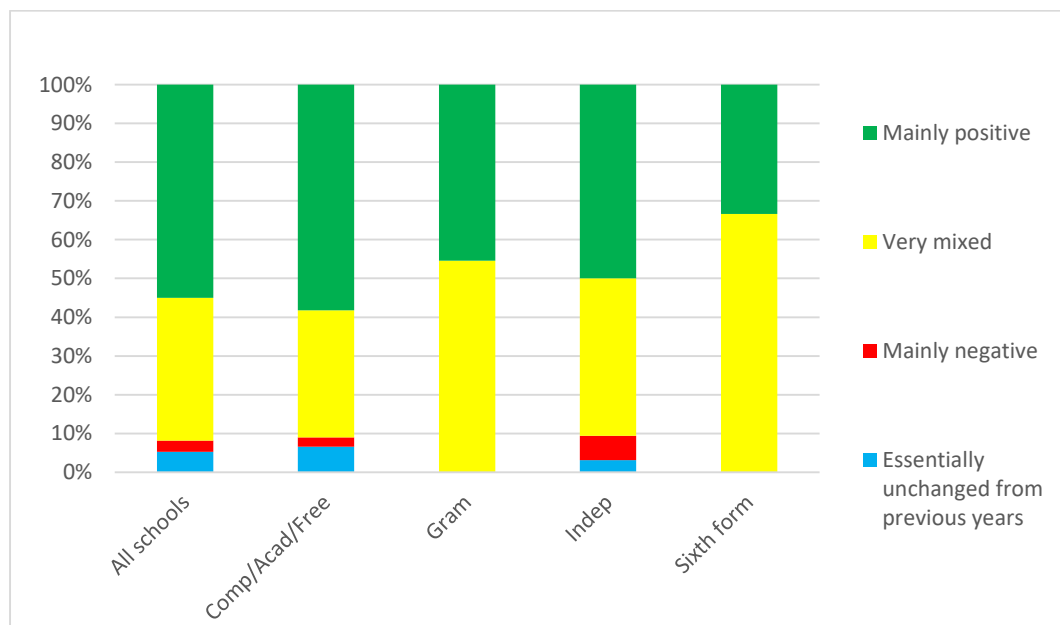
	Same	Increased	Decreased
All schools	78.4%	9.6%	12.0%
Comp/Acad/Free	78.8%	8.0%	13.3%
Grammar	72.7%	9.1%	18.2%
Independent	79.4%	14.7%	5.9%
Sixth form	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%

### 5.3 The experience of teaching the linear A-level history

As in previous years, the survey invited respondents to summarise their overall impressions of the current GCE specifications (in relation to the previous courses, which were examined for the last time in 2016). The most frequent response (given by 52% of respondents to the 2017 survey) has been to suggest that the experience has been a mixed one, while a significant minority of respondents (39% in 2017) report that their experience has been an essentially positive one. The

positive view is more pronounced in 2018, with the proportions essentially reversed: 55% regard their experience as mainly positive and only 37% suggest that it had been very mixed. The proportion of respondents expressing negative judgements on each occasion was less than 5% – despite the fact that negative comments tended to prevail when respondents were asked to explain their views.

Figure 11: Respondents' experience of teaching the current AS/A-level specifications



Sixty teachers chose to offer some explanation of their judgment but relatively few of these comments picked up on positive experiences. Those positive features that were identified by more than one respondent generally related to the gains in teaching time or lack of exam pressures in Year 12 that followed from decisions to drop AS-level; to growing familiarity with the exam format and what was seen as straightforward questions stems; or to the range and interest of the content offered within particular specifications.

*Enjoy the depth and increased range. Got rid of AS-levels, which allows for much better teaching of genuine history rather than constant exam focus in Year 12.*

*(Teacher 132, comprehensive/academy/free school)*

*I like the simplicity of the similar question stems and mark schemes.*

*(Teacher 146, comprehensive/academy/free school)*

*OCR has introduced a wider choice of content, including long-neglected areas such as Georgian Britain.*

*(Teacher 34, sixth-form college)*

A larger number of comments, however, reflected frustration about the ways in which the range of content from which teachers could choose had been narrowed or by the particular ways in which some topics had been defined and structured:

*Due to the 200-year guideline, we had to change from the content we previously taught. I feel this has led to a much narrower field of study for students. In the*

*past we offered all nineteenth–twentieth century, so it was all modern but they covered a greater range of areas (Churchill and WWII, China, Women and the Vote, Russia 1855–1964); now they only cover Germany and The Tudors. I think this is a real shame – I also loved teaching the old topics I taught.*

*(Teacher 81, independent)*

*I personally find the USA: Making of a Superpower 1865–1975 to be incredibly dissatisfying to teach. It seems to be poorly thought-out in terms of its internal coherence in narrative (women only appear in the 1920s and 1950s; Native Americans no longer exist after 1890).*

*(Teacher 181, independent)*

Concerns were also expressed, as last year, about the sheer amount of content that the students had to cover, which was said to prevent detailed analysis, and meant that a great deal of what the students had learned was never examined.

*Content not that interesting, not enough time to cover, just end up having to teach lectures in order to get through.*

*(Teacher 221, comprehensive/academy/free school)*

*The concepts are slightly simpler (and oddly, simpler at A2 than AS) but the courses contain so much breadth of content that we have to speed through the material. ‘More rigour’ seems to equate to more rote learning. Then exams require a depth, which means the students have to fill in the gaps through reading (which some do more successfully than others). Because of the breadth, exams focus on very little of the course, which has annoyed students who resent studying and then revising vast areas that go unexamined, and it makes exams more of a lottery as some make better, or luckier, decisions on what to focus on than others.*

*(Teacher 94, independent)*

*The specification is very broad and yet the two exam sessions have included extremely niche questions.*

*(Teacher 200, independent)*

Although there were some positive signs that early difficulties associated with the provision of guidance by the exam boards and the availability of appropriate textbooks had been resolved, several teachers reported continuing difficulties in this respect. Comparing marked papers from 2017 with some of the exemplar materials produced previously had created confusion for some teachers, and several respondents expressed frustration about what appeared to be inconsistent approaches to coursework moderation:

*The exam boards have been very vague as to what they mean by key words... for example, ‘synopticity’, and published guidance has not exactly mirrored the experience of colleagues who have done standardisation course to mark public exams.*

*(Teacher 94, independent)*

*Found teaching the interpretations element of AQA unit 1 tricky as I feel the exam board have been unclear.*

*(Teacher 72, grammar)*

*Disappointed with coursework moderation this year – seems to have been widespread reduction in marks – national scaling?*

*(Teacher 13, independent)*

*Coursework marking has been appalling. I've had my marks reduced for the last two years and I examine for AQA! And moderated with four other schools too. The questions for the paper are ridiculously narrow too, which does not allow students to showcase their skills or the learning they have undertaken.*

*(Teacher 100, comprehensive/academy/free school)*

## 6. Teachers' concerns

### 6.1 The nature of teachers' concerns

The data reported below reflects the views of all the teachers who responded to the survey, rather than presenting a single view from each school. Teachers were given a list of possible concerns and asked to identify whether and, if so, how seriously each of them was affecting their own experiences of teaching history. The only differences in the list compared with the one presented in 2017 was the removal of reference to the 'combination of curriculum changes', as all the necessary changes to A-level and GCSE, reflecting the introduction of new specifications, had been implemented before the end of the academic year 2017–18.

The responses in 2018 (shown in Figure 12) follow a very similar pattern to those given in 2017 (Figure 13), which indicates that the most prominent issues are an enduring matter of concern.

The most serious item of concern in both years (apart from the combination of curriculum change in 2017) relates to the lack of funding for new resources to implement the curriculum changes, although the results for 2018 do suggest that this had become less of a concern for some teachers; in 2017 over 70% of teachers identified this as a current or serious concern, compared to around 60% in 2018. Of the 150 teachers who identified this as a serious or current concern, 132 (88%) were from comprehensive, academy and free schools. Given the budget cuts facing many state-funded schools, this is unsurprising, although it has to be acknowledged that the level of concern has decreased for 2018, and may reflect the fact that some schools have now managed to resource some or all of their new curricula. Financial concerns are also reflected directly in the concern about the impact of budget cuts on students' experience of history in school; in both years the responses are virtually identical, with around 60% of all teachers (and 67% of those from comprehensives, academies and free schools) regarding this impact as a serious or current concern.

*Figure 12: The extent to which survey respondents in 2018 regarded a number of specific issues as a matter of concern*

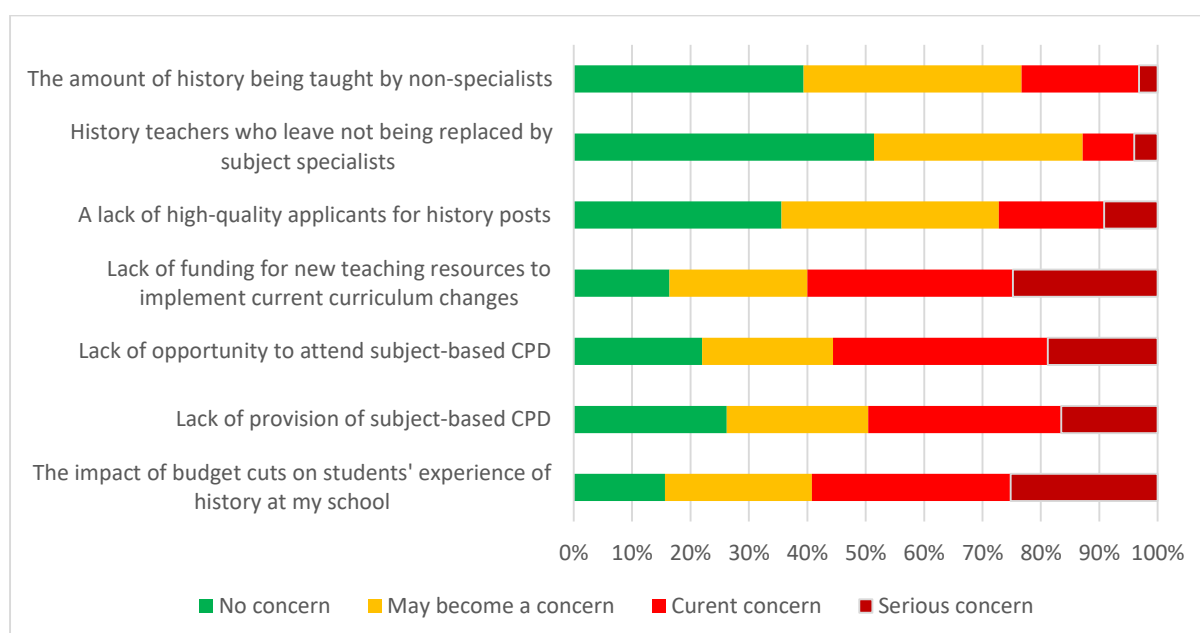
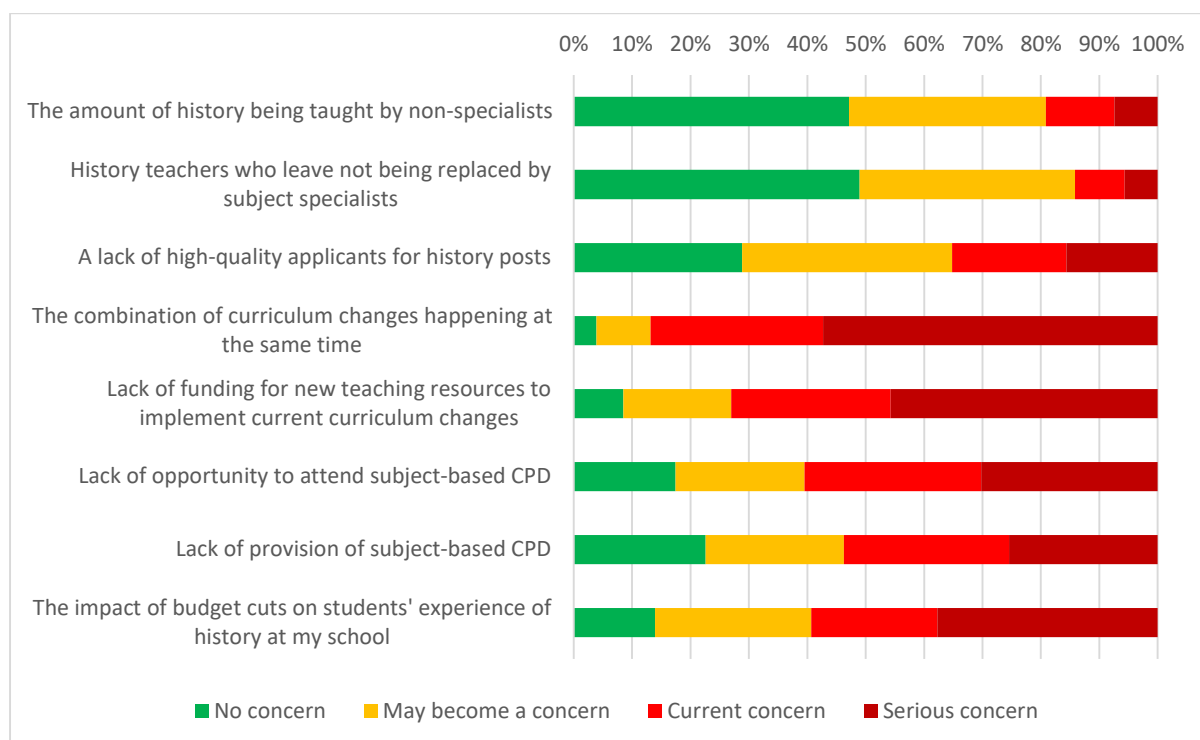


Figure 13: The extent to which survey respondents in 2017 regarded a number of specific issues as a matter of concern



Lack of appropriate subject-specific CPD and lack of access to such CPD, even when it is offered, is another recurring concern, with similar responses to those reported in 2017 (and in 2016) suggesting that little has improved in this respect. While the lack of opportunity to attend such CPD when it is provided may be due to the ongoing financial constraints that schools face, the lack of subject-specific CPD *per se* is a problem, particularly given the renewed emphasis that Ofsted have placed on the quality of the curriculum.

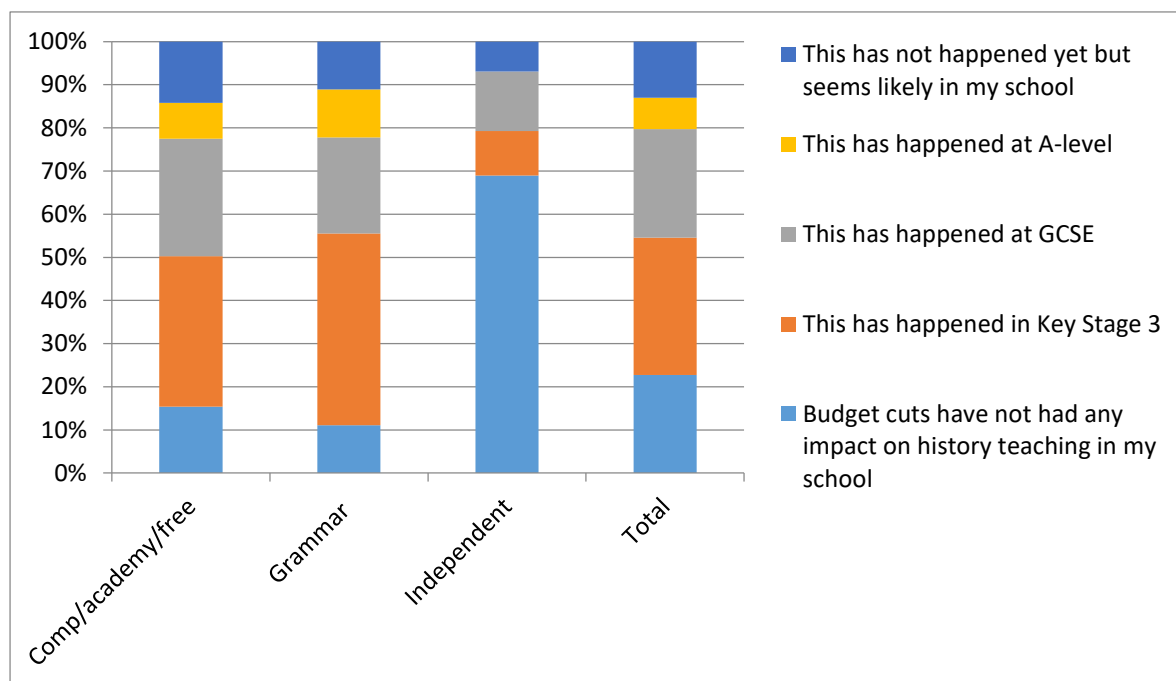
Although concerns about history teachers not being replaced by subject specialists have been expressed by relatively few respondents over the past two years, there are ongoing concerns about the amount of history being taught by non-specialists. The extent of these concerns has increased slightly in 2018, with nearly a quarter of teachers highlighting the issue as a concern compared to a fifth in 2017. On a more positive note, concerns about the low quality of some teaching applicants appear to be receding. However, there is no room for complacency, as a quarter of respondents identified it as a concern in 2018, reflecting a range of wider issues related to teacher recruitment and retention, and perhaps increasing difficulties in recruiting high-quality candidates for initial teacher education.

## 6.2 The reported effects of budget cuts

Given the current financial climate, teachers were asked to respond to a series of questions about the impact or possible future impact of budget cuts relating to: increases in class size; the withdrawal of the subject from the curriculum; a cut in teaching time; and a reduction in support from teaching assistants.

The figures for 2018 show that budget cuts appear to be having a larger impact on schools than previously. In 2017, for example, just under 30% of comprehensive, academy and free schools reported the need to increase class sizes at Key Stage 3, whereas the proportion reporting such a need in 2018 was 35%, as shown in Figure 14. With reference to GCSE, the proportions of respondents referring to increased class sizes due to budget cuts were 23% in 2017 and 27% in 2018. Such increases can also be seen in grammar and independent schools.

Figure 14: The reported effects in 2018 of budget cuts on increases in class sizes at different key stages<sup>6</sup>



In 2017, 27% of schools that responded to the survey reported no impact at all in terms of budget cuts affecting class sizes, but the proportion reporting no impact at all in this respect was slightly lower – just under 23% – in 2018, which again suggests that the problem is becoming more widespread.

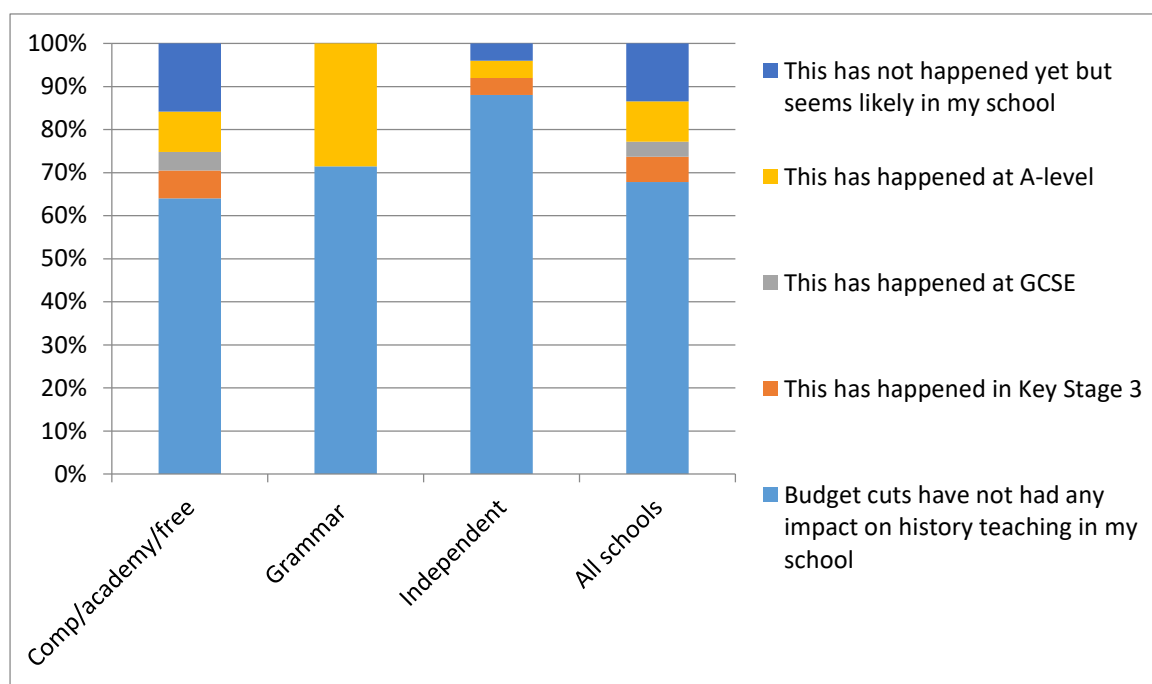
In 2017, the number of schools reporting a need to withdraw history as a subject was very small, with six comprehensives saying that this decision had been made regarding A-level history. In 2018, the overall number reporting the withdrawal of history as a subject is still only six schools (just under 4% of all the schools that responded to this question), but in one comprehensive school this was reported as having happened at Key Stage 3, while one comprehensive and one grammar school

<sup>6</sup> The format in which this question was asked forced respondents to choose *between* key stages in reporting the effects of budget cuts rather than being able to give an answer in relation to *each* key stage. These percentages therefore either indicate that there has been no effect at all on class sizes or reflect the key stage about which respondents felt it was most important to report. It is possible (and indeed quite likely) that schools have experienced increases in class sizes in two or more key stages – but the question format did not allow them to report this.

claimed that the subject had been dropped as a GCSE option.<sup>7</sup> Three further comprehensive schools reported that they were no longer offering the subject at A-level. A further 15% of schools anticipate that history may be withdrawn at some level at some point in the future. Although only a small number of schools have so far had to take this action, it is still very alarming that some schools are in a position where cutting history from the curriculum is seen as an option.

Figure 15 shows the number of schools that have reduced teaching time as part of an attempt to deal with the financial constraints. In total, around a fifth of schools have cut teaching time, with a further 13% anticipating that this is likely to happen. In most cases the cuts have been to time at A-level and, unlike last year, when independent schools were immune to any cuts in teaching time, reductions can be seen in all types of schools.<sup>8</sup> It is a concern that in the state-maintained sector, over a third of schools have experienced or anticipate reductions in teaching time due to financial constraints.

Figure 15: The reported effects in 2018 of budget cuts on reductions in time allocation at different key stages<sup>8</sup>



In asking about budget cuts, a specific question was included focusing on their impact on the provision of teaching assistants (TAs) in history lessons. The figures here, shown in Figure 16, are alarming, particularly for comprehensive, academy and free schools, with over three quarters of schools reporting that support from TAs has been cut, especially at Key Stage 3 (a reduction reported

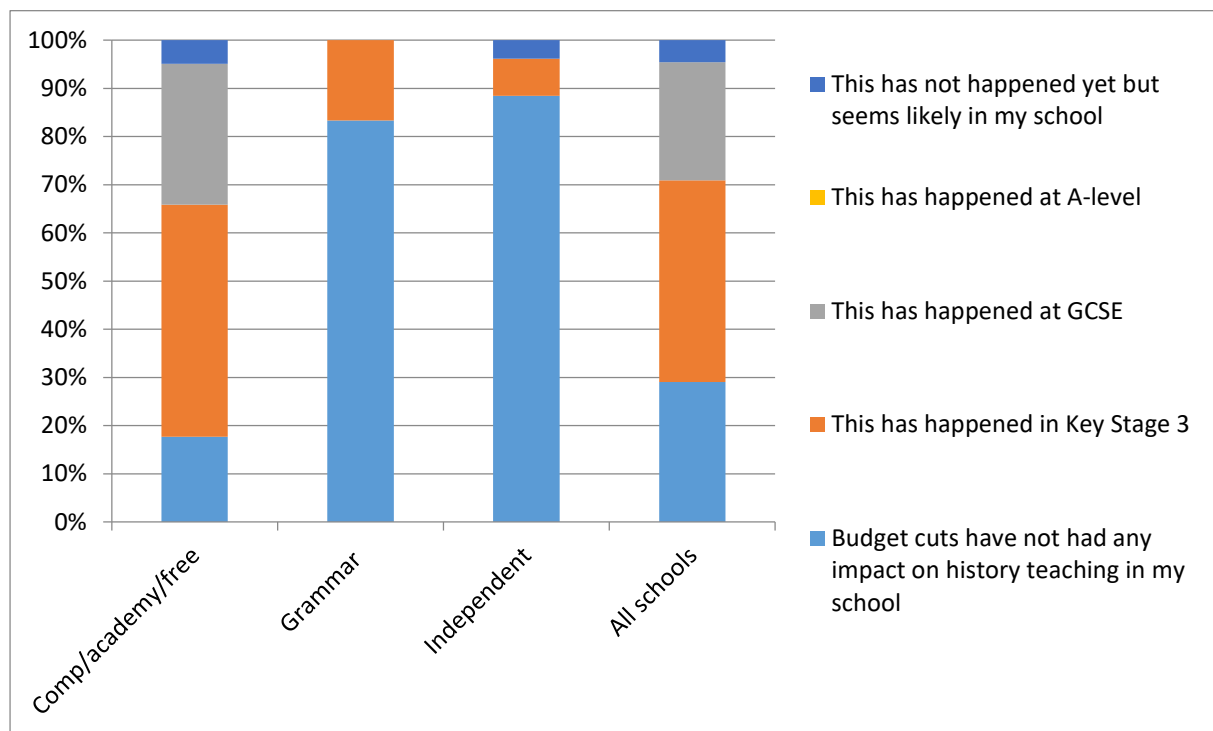
<sup>7</sup> The respondents did not provide further details about these decisions so we cannot be entirely sure that this response was not selected by mistake. A decision to drop history at Key Stage 3 seems very unlikely indeed, but it is possible, for example, that history may have been replaced by some kind of humanities approach.

<sup>8</sup> Again, the format of the question accidentally forced respondents to choose between key stages in reporting the effect of any cuts on teaching time and thus did not allow them to note whether such cuts affected teaching within two or more key stages. The figure therefore only captures whether or not respondents' schools have reduced teaching time at some level and which key stage has been most obviously affected.



by nearly half of such schools).<sup>9</sup> Grammar and independent schools are significantly less likely to report cuts in this area, but this may be a reflection on the school intake, since it is likely that such schools will have a smaller number and range of students with additional needs that require support.

Figure 16: The reported effects in 2018 of budget cuts on reductions in the provision of teaching assistants in the classroom at different key stages<sup>9</sup>



### 6.3 The use of teaching assistants in history lessons

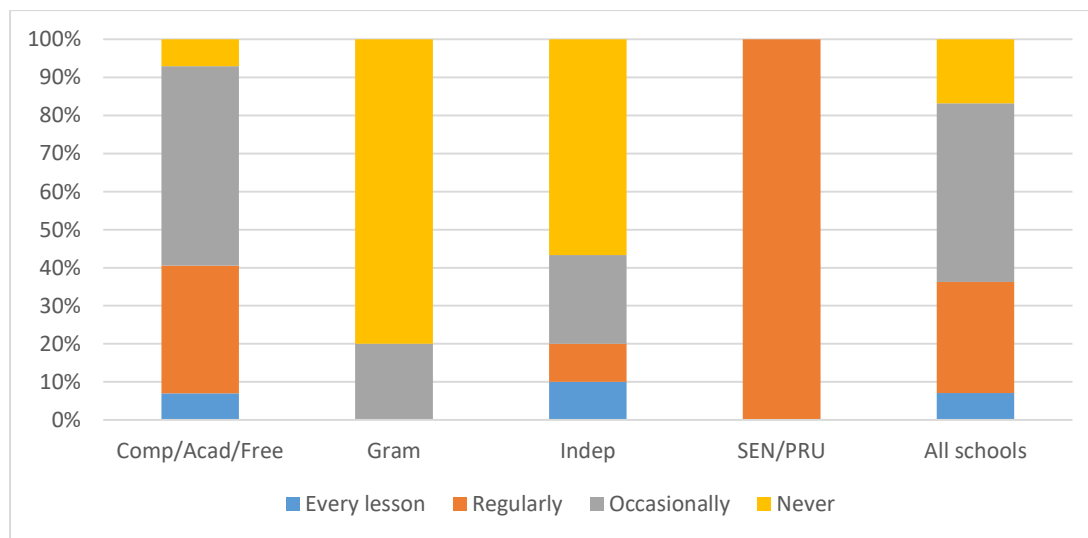
In light of these reports about the effect of budget cuts, as well as the concerns expressed about the inaccessible nature of the GCSE (9–1) history curriculum for many young people, respondents were asked directly about the extent to which students with special educational needs were supported by TAs in history lessons.

The responses related to Key Stage 3 history teaching (set out in Figures 17 and 18) make it clear that very few schools provide TA support in every history lesson, even for students that have a formal statement of special educational need – now known as an education and health care (EHC) plan. TA support in every history lesson for such students is offered by only 7% of comprehensives, academies and free schools, and by only 10% of independent schools. While most students with an EHC plan in all school contexts are offered some kind of support, more than half (52%) of those in non-selective, state-funded schools receive only ‘occasional’ support in history lessons, while 7%

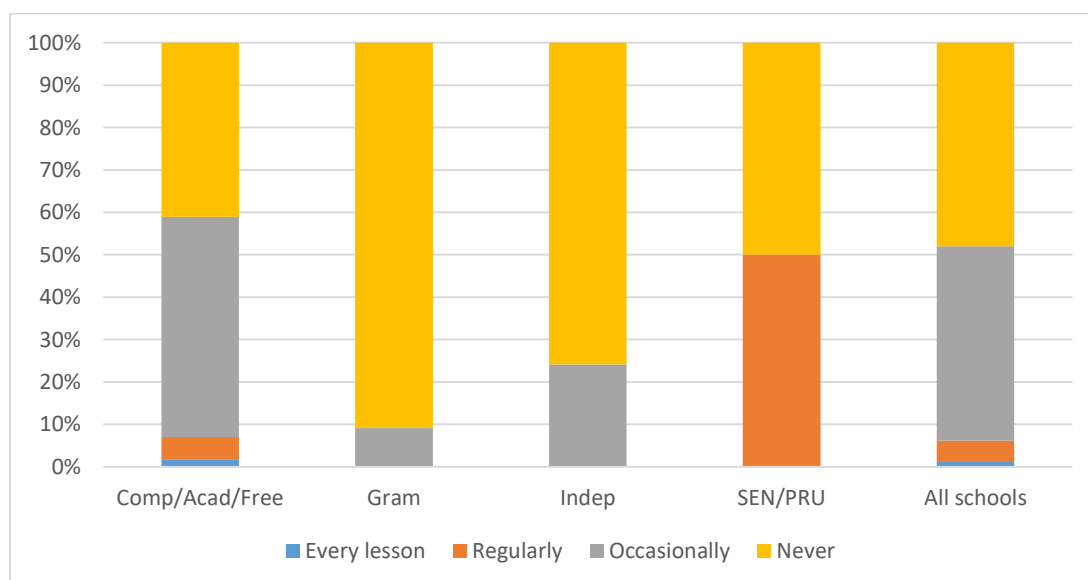
<sup>9</sup> Again, the format of the question forced respondents to choose *between* key stages in reporting the effect of any budget cuts on the provision of TAs and did not allow them to note whether such cuts affected teaching within two or more key stages. The figure therefore only captures whether or not respondents’ schools have reduced teaching time at some level and which key stage has been most obviously affected.

never receive any TA support. The proportion of schools offering TA support in history to students thought to have some kind of special educational need or learning disability but *without* an EHC plan is, unsurprisingly, even smaller. Just 2% of comprehensives, academies and free schools provide TA support in every history lesson to such students, while 41% provide no help at all. A small majority (52%) receive occasional TA support.

**Figure 17: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in history at Key Stage 3 for students with a formal statement of special educational needs (EHC plan)**



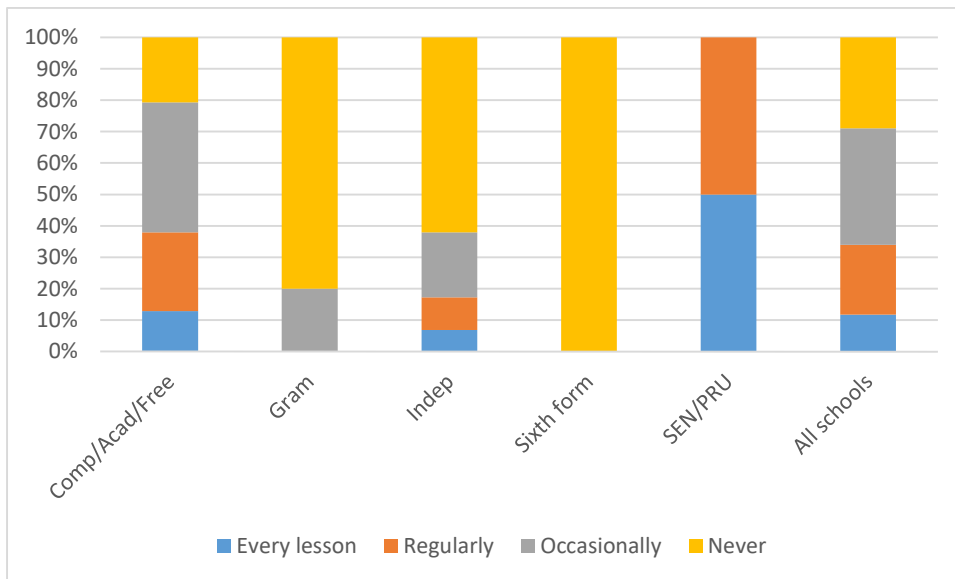
**Figure 18: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in history at Key Stage 3 for students identified as having some kind of special educational need but without an EHC plan**



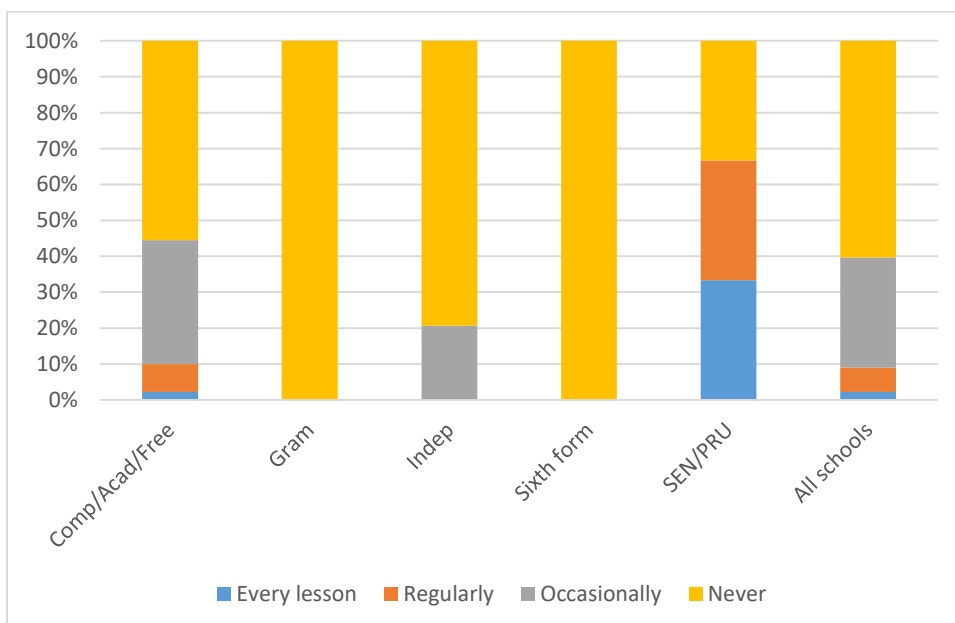
In some respects, Figures 19 and 20 indicate that schools have generally sought to provide more help in history for students studying the subject at GCSE. Support in every lesson for those with an EHC plan is provided by 12% of schools, while a further 22% receive ‘regular’ help. No TA assistance is ever provided for such students in 29% of schools, while 37% can only provide ‘occasional’ TA support in history. The high proportion of schools able to offer so little TA support to GCSE history students formally identified as having a special need that merits a personal EHC plan provides

further evidence of the pressures that teachers face in teaching the new GCSE (9–1) qualifications, and emphasises the urgent need for appropriate teaching materials for those whose special needs have resulted in low levels of literacy. TA provision is, of course, even more limited when GCSE history students’ needs are not sufficiently severe to merit a formal EHC plan. For these students, most schools (60%) provide no TA support at all. ‘Occasional’ TA support is provided by 30% of schools, but only 9% of schools can provide help ‘regularly’ or within every history lesson.

*Figure 19: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in **GCSE history** (or other Key Stage 4 history course) for students **with a formal statement** of special educational needs (an EHC plan)*



*Figure 20: The frequency with which schools provide TA support in **GCSE history** (or any other Key Stage 4 history course) for students identified as having some kind of special educational need but **without** an EHC plan*

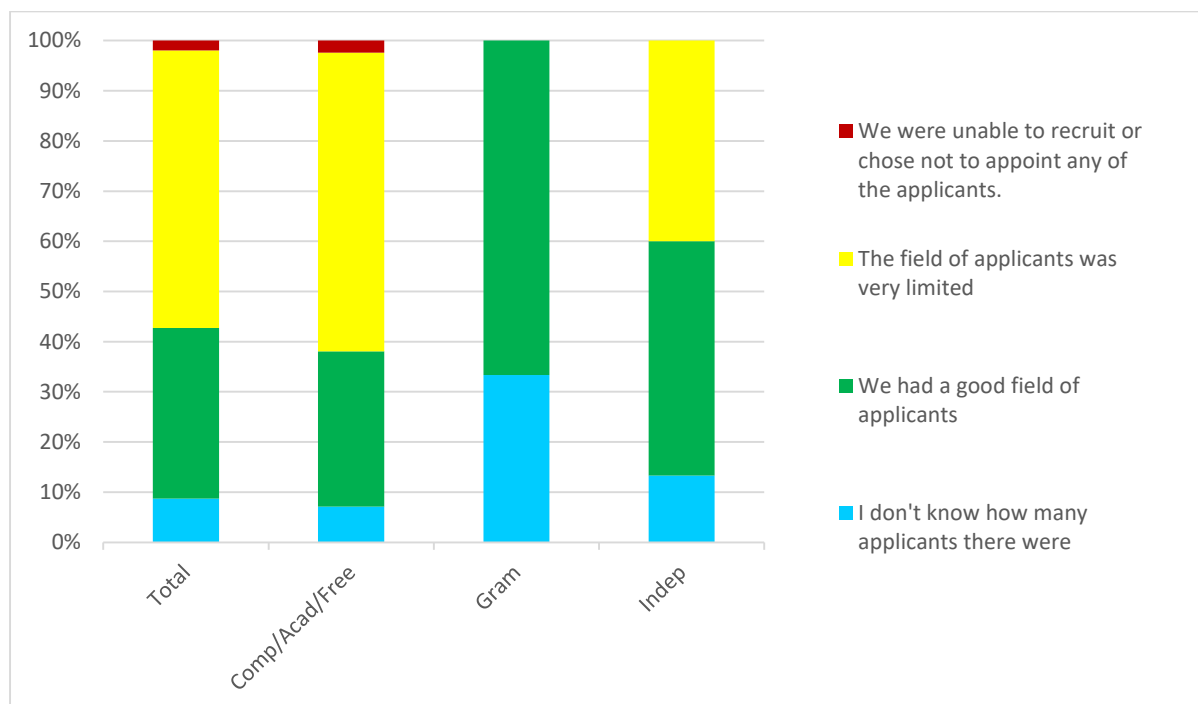


## 6.4 History teacher qualifications and recruitment

As in 2017, the survey asked whether schools employed teachers who did not have qualified teacher status (QTS). The figures for 2018 suggest a decrease in the number of teachers recruited without QTS. Whereas in 2017 around 10% of comprehensive, academy and free schools reported employing such teachers, the more recent figure was just below 7%, representing 12 schools. Independent schools have traditionally had greater freedom to recruit staff without QTS, which was reflected in the 2017 results, where over a third of independent schools reported having done this. Among the 2018 respondents, the proportion was lower – with only a quarter of independent schools having recruited history teachers without QTS – although it is unclear why there has been this change.

We were also interested in finding out whether schools were able to choose from a good field of applicants during any recruitment process, given current concerns about the numbers of people coming into the teaching profession. In total, 103 schools reported that they had advertised a history vacancy during the year, and 55% reported that the field of applicants had been limited. As can be seen in Figure 21, grammar schools were the most successful in attracting a good field of applicants, with all posts attracting more than ten candidates, and half of them generating at least 20 applications. In contrast, comprehensive, academy and free schools had to draw from a smaller pool of candidates; in two thirds of cases, such schools received five or fewer applications per post.

Figure 21: The range of applicants for advertised history vacancies, as reported in 2018



The findings from these questions would suggest that although history is not officially recognised as a shortage subject, many state-funded, non-selective schools are experiencing difficulties in recruiting history teachers.

## 6.5 Curriculum decision-making

As the proportion of schools that are part of multi-academy trusts (MATs) has grown, and as more of the larger academy trusts have appointed their own subject leads, so the HA has become aware that curricular decision-making has become more centralised. Decisions about the format and structure of the Key Stage 3 curriculum or the choice of exam specifications are now in some cases taken by senior leaders or subject specialists within MATs rather than being the responsibility of heads of department or faculty within individual schools. The survey therefore included a question for the first time about the level at which such decisions are taken. Only 124 state-funded schools (selective *and* non-selective) answered this particular question, but it is clear that in the vast majority of cases decisions about the history curriculum are taken at department or faculty level. This was true at *all* key stages in 92 of the schools (74%) and true for *some* key stages, but not others, in a further 27 schools. Within these 27 schools, decisions were as likely to be made by the school's own senior leadership team as they were by the trust. Only 14 respondents (11%) reported that at least some decisions were made at the level of the whole trust, but in only one case was the trust reported to make the decision for every key stage.