

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Review of Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy Questionnaires

October 2015

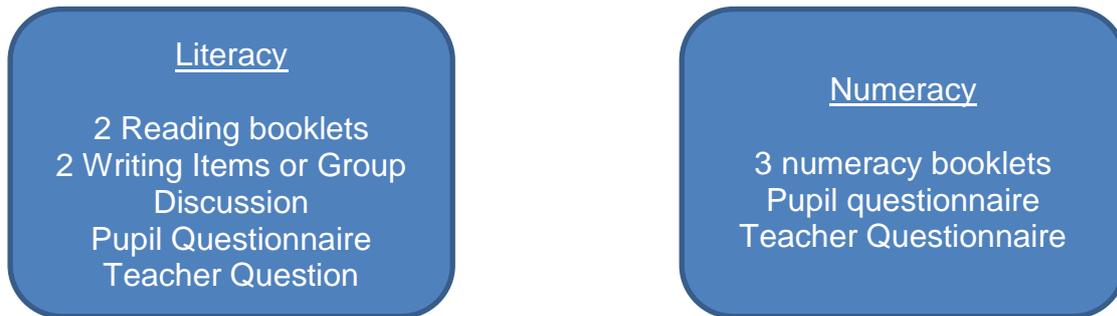
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1. Background

The Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) is an annual sample survey which monitors national performance in literacy and numeracy in alternate years, for school pupils at P4, P7 and S2. The survey consists of a set of written and practical assessments as well as pupil and teacher questionnaires. The Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) has been collecting information since 2011.

SSLN components:



Every year pupils and teachers fill in a questionnaire that relates to the curricular area (i.e. literacy or numeracy) being assessed. As of April 2015, there are two years' worth of data for both literacy and numeracy for pupil and teacher questionnaires.

2. Aim of this report

The aim of this report is to examine how the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaire results are being used and if it is fit for purpose.

On making any recommendations on the data that the Scottish Government collects from Scottish schools, there are a number of requirements that need to be taken into account:

- that any data is relevant to the National Outcomes¹
- the data meets the standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics²
- where possible, data collections are not duplicated and resource implications are proportionate.

3. Project approach

The pupil and teacher questionnaires have been in place for four years and therefore it was important to find out how our stakeholders were using the information and to see if there was any similar data already being collected. The project was split into two distinct areas of work:

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome>

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>

1. A review of other surveys that contain Scottish children's and teacher's opinions on education, literacy, numeracy and IT.
2. Conduct a stakeholder consultation on users' views of the pupil and teacher questionnaire statistics.

Step 1

To establish what is asked of Scottish children and teachers, a literature review was undertaken of existing information:

- a) A review of existing Scottish Government data collections on:
 - Teachers opinions on teaching and/or education
 - Children's opinions on education or IT
 - What children do in their spare time (outside school hours)
- b) An internet literature review of education surveys administered within Scottish schools.

Step 2

The next part of the project was to establish what use was made of the analysis and if there were any improvements that could be made to the questionnaires and information provided.

In order to achieve this, a stakeholder consultation was undertaken via the Scottish Government website. This was targeted to known key stakeholders, including Scottish Government, Education Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, teaching unions, Local Authorities, schools and ScotStat members. The summary of these findings are in Section 5 and the more detailed responses are in [Annex 2](#).

The conclusion of this work culminates in the recommendations in Section 7.

4. Literature Review

There are a number of surveys Scottish schools participate in that were listed by a Scottish Government Library Literature Search Request.

Some of these studies included questions similar to the SSLN pupil and teacher questions. These were split into two areas: continuous statistical survey and others. The majority of studies tended to fall in 'others' either by being a standalone report or not covering Scotland. In themselves the results are interesting and whilst they could supplement SSLN results, they could not necessarily replace them (see Table 1).

Table 1: Other studies on Scottish Schools

Name of study	Compared to SSLN
Net Children Go Mobile: final report	Coverage UK not Scotland
NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus -: research report in Social Mobility and Child Poverty	Coverage England only
Beyond the digital divide: you people and ICT – perspective paper	No Scottish only coverage
Taking part – adult and child reports	Coverage England only
What’s your right brilliant thing? What children and young people told us	Partial Scottish coverage 21 local authorities – standalone report (2012)
Being Young in Scotland 2009: a survey of hopes, fears and aspirations of over 2,000 young people aged 11-25	Coverage Scotland, last published in 2009
TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey)	International coverage does not include Scotland
EIS (Educational Institute of Scotland)	Various standalone surveys. EIS represents approx. 80% of the Scottish teaching profession

The main continuous surveys of children and teachers in Scotland are:

- Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA)
- Growing up in Scotland (GUS)
- National Literacy Trust
- Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS)
- Behaviour in Scottish schools (BiSS)
- Scottish Household Survey (SHS)

A review of these studies show, that:

- There is more information on pupils than teachers in these surveys.
- GUS has the most similar questions but is only on primary school age pupils. GUS is tied to particular cohorts and does not gain other pupils’ views at different stages like SSLN.
- There was more information for secondary pupils but this tends to be S4 cohort who has reached the level of national assessments.
- On examining these six surveys the questions asked within SSLN are not being duplicated as their main focus is on literacy and numeracy.

More detailed information on these surveys can be found in [Annex 1](#).

5. Stakeholder Consultation

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Principle 1, producers of official statistics should consult with data users on what information they believe to be of value. The stakeholder consultation was launched on the 14 November 2014 and ran to 16 January 2015.

As well as being available on a public website, over 3,000 stakeholders were emailed directly and it was also advertised in the Education News Digest (which has about 4,000 subscribers).

The questionnaire had three sections:

- background information of respondents
- main uses made of the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires
- specific questions about the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires.

Of the over 3,000 stakeholders emailed directly, 186 people responded, either as an individual or behalf of an organisation. Where people responded on behalf of an organisation these responses were presumed to be collective views of more than one individual. Responses to the consultation are in [Annex 2](#).

Section 1 – Background information supplied by respondents

Of the 186 people responding, 53 per cent responded as individuals, 45 per cent on behalf of organisation (2 per cent unknown). Of those responding on behalf of organisations, the largest response was from the school sector 86 per cent (72 schools).

Section 2 – Overview of the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires

Of the 186 responses, 57 completed this section.

- Two thirds of the respondents access pupil and teacher questionnaire results once or twice a year.
- The main uses of pupil and teacher questionnaire were:
 - For general awareness of issues/trends
 - Reporting about numeracy/literacy
 - To provide data on benchmarking/targets/key indicators
 - Reporting about teacher/pupils attitudes to numeracy/literacy

Section 3 – Specific questions about the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires

Pupil Questionnaire

Of the 186 responses, 116 supplied information about the use of pupil questionnaire commentary or tables.

- Over 90 per cent found the pupil commentary clear and concise
- About a third of respondents read the pupils commentary only and did not access the tables
- Of those using the SSLN 2013 (numeracy) pupil questionnaire tables, at least 70 per cent of the respondents made use of all the tables
- Of those using the SSLN 2012 (literacy) pupil questionnaire tables, at least two thirds of the respondents made use of all the tables

Teacher Questionnaire

Of the 186 responses, 108 supplied information about the use of teacher questionnaire commentary or tables.

- Over 95 per cent found the teachers commentary clear and concise.
- About a third of respondents read the teachers commentary only and did not access the tables.
- Of those using the SSLN 2013 (numeracy) teacher questionnaire tables, at least 70 per cent of the respondents were using all the tables.
- Of those using the SSLN 2012 (literacy) teacher questionnaire tables, at least 70 per cent of the respondents were using all the tables.

Possible questions to include in the future and comments in general

The questionnaire asked all 186 respondents 'Is there any information you would like to include in the future SSLN pupil and teacher questions'. The seven requests submitted would need to be examined in more detail to see if they fall within the SSLN remit by the relevant SSLN groups before being pre-tested.

There were also a number of further comments on the following areas:

- data breakdowns
- accessing the data
- sharing with staff
- timing of the survey

A summary of these comments are available in [Annex 2](#).

Notification of SSLN Results

About 40 per cent of respondents stated that they received an email alert that SSLN results had been published, with approximately the same percentage saying that they would like to be contacted by email in future.

6. Analysis of Evidence

From the literature review, it was evident that the SSLN pupil questionnaire covered a wider age range of children compared to other surveys, particularly in the primary sector.

There was less survey information on teachers from our literature search. Information on teachers tended to be standalone analysis rather than on a regular cycle.

From the stakeholder consultation, there were no requests to exclude data, in fact there were some requests for more questions. These requests will be examined more thoroughly as any new questions would need to fall under the SSLN remit.

Respondents that use the publication tended to refer to it at least once or twice a year. The commentary was preferred by respondents over tables, and the majority of respondents were satisfied that the commentary was clear and concise. Responses indicate more can be done to raise awareness of the publication of SSLN statistics, and this is an area that can be improved.

There were some queries as to the timing of SSLN overall within schools. The timing was carefully considered before the implementation of the SSLN survey.

There were a number of requests asking for further breakdowns of the data to local authority and school level. The SSLN sample was designed to present results at a national level and minimise burden on schools, therefore we are unable to fulfil this request.

Data users reported that they are disseminating the information further in schools and using this analysis to help create discussions around good practice within schools.

7. Recommendations

From the consultation and the literacy review the following recommendations are proposed and will be discussed within the relevant SSLN groups:

- 1. All additional requests for questions to be reviewed**
- 2. More focus on commentary and to improve this area where possible**
- 3. Improve distribution of results to data users especially within schools.**

Annex 1 - Surveys of Scottish Schools

	Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA).
Timing	A triennial study, next scheduled for fieldwork in 2015.
Coverage	International (including Scotland). In 2012, 70 countries and economies took part.
Source	A sample of Scottish secondary pupils, 15 year olds. (In 2012 approx. 3,000 pupils to provide national level results).
Data Availability	<p>PISA assessment items were rotated throughout 13 papers of which students each attempted one. Around half of the items assessed main domain (in 2012 – maths), while the rest were divided between two other domains (science and reading). In addition the student questionnaire had three booklets, with one core section and two out of three rotated sections.</p> <p>The pupil questionnaire in 2012 had questions on the following topics: you, family and home, school, mathematics experience, learning mathematics, problem solving experiences.</p> <p>The headteacher completes the school questionnaire. In 2012 this consisted of topics: structure and organisation of school, student and teacher body, school resources, school instruction, curriculum and assessment, school climate, school policies and practices.</p>
Disaggregation	Country, gender, socio-economic status
Timeliness of data	Survey is run every three years with results being published 21 months after fieldwork in schools.
Relevance to SSLN Questionnaires	There are some similar questions in SSLN 2012 pupil questionnaire on enjoyment of mathematics and how pupils feel they tackle certain mathematical processes. The PISA school questionnaire is very different from the SSLN teacher questionnaire.
Comparability to SSLN Questionnaires	<p>Though there are similar questions on mathematics that could be used for numeracy SSLN, there is nothing that we can use instead of SSLN questionnaires for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PISA coverage is S4 (senior phase), whilst SSLN is Primary (P4 and P7) and S2 (all broad general education) • Questionnaire only focuses on mathematics when it is the main domain (every 9 years)

	Growing Up in Scotland (GUS)
Timing	Varies
Coverage	Scotland only
Source	Cohort study of families with young children from every local authority in Scotland. There are two current cohorts in GUS as of 2015, children born between June 2004 and May 2005 and between March 2010 and 2011.
Data Availability	Numerous data collections of different aspects of childhood: household, parental relationship, pregnancy and birth, parental support, parenting, parental health, pre-school, primary school, childcare, out of school care, child health, food and eating, child development, activities, TV computers and other media, social networks, siblings relationships, neighbourhood and community, social attitudes, employment income and education, demographics, housing, assessments and measurements, child questionnaires, P6 teacher survey.
Disaggregation	Urban/rural, deprivation, income, gender, mother education, ethnic group, religion, language spoken at home, country of birth. Disaggregation is dependent on questions being asked as disaggregation is not universal across the study.
Timeliness of data	Analysis is staggered throughout the year depending on what cohort has supplied data.
Relevance to SSLN Questionnaires	There are areas that are similar to SSLN in topic: activities, TV, computers and other medias and Primary school. There is a standalone P6 teacher questionnaire.
Comparability to SSLN Questionnaires	There is small overlap but not sufficient to replace any questions within SSLN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The present GUS cohort is in primary school, there is no coverage of S2. • One-off P6 teacher questionnaire relating to cohort rather than any annual cycle.

	National Literacy Trust – Children’s and Young People’s Reading and Children’s and Young People’s Writing
Timing	Annual literacy – online 11 November - 13 December (2013), published approximately a year later
Coverage	UK including Scotland
Source	Reading 2014 - Scotland coverage 2,153 pupils from 11 schools – covering age range 8-18 Writing 2013 – Scotland coverage from 7 schools – covering age range 8-18
Data Availability	Two main reports supplied – Children’s and Young People’s Reading and Writing. There is Scotland only results for two questions ‘how much do you enjoy reading?’ and ‘how often do you read out of class?’ There were no Scotland only questions for writing. There was one standalone study for Scotland available: The Reading Lives of 8 to 11-year-olds in Scotland: 2005 - 2013
Disaggregation	Gender, age (by key stage band), Free School Meals, ethnicity
Timeliness of data	Annual survey on voluntary basis. Reports published approximately a year after field work.
Relevance to SSLN Questionnaires	For the pupil questionnaire there is a lot of similar questions for literacy.
Comparability to SSLN Questionnaires	There was a large overlap with SSLN questions however: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sample for Scotland is small and voluntary so not a nationally representative sample • The sample is too small to disaggregate by stage • Only covers literacy

	Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey
Timing	SALSUS was undertaken in Autumn 2013 (for local and national outputs). The next survey will take place in Autumn 2015 (national output only) and Autumn 2017 (local and national outputs).
Coverage	Scotland
Source	In 2013, 419 schools with an estimated 123,000 S2 and S4 pupils
Data Availability	Numerous topics including tobacco, general health, alcohol, family and where you live, drugs, leisure activities, relations with friends, school, strengths and difficulties. Includes questions on reading for pleasure, use made of local library and enjoyment of school.
Disaggregation	Gender, Age (S2, S4), ethnicity, income, health boards, some local authorities.
Timeliness of data	Surveys are every two years, fieldwork September to December and report published approximately a year later.
Relevance to SSLN Questionnaires	Some similar questions to SSLN on reading.
Comparability to SSLN Questionnaires	There was small overlap with SSLN questions but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only covers S2 and S4 pupils – no primary coverage • Only covers reading

Behaviour in Scottish Schools compared with SSLN

	Behaviour in Scottish Schools
Timing	A triennial study, next scheduled for fieldwork in 2016.
Coverage	Scotland
Source	In 2013, 177 secondary schools (1,700 teachers, 250 headteachers and 800 secondary support staff). In 280 primary schools, (650 primary teachers, 280 head teachers, 482 primary support staff).
Data Availability	Numerous topics on: positive and negative behaviour in classroom, positive and negative behaviour around the school, serious indiscipline and violence towards school staff, managing behaviour, policies and approaches on behaviour management in school, training and confidence, time spent, overall assessment of school and disciplinary climate, policies and approaches on behaviour management in school In positive section, 'how much do you enjoy school at the moment?'
Disaggregation	School sector, staffing type
Timeliness of data	Normally survey is every three years, fieldwork February-March and report published approximately at the end of the year
Relevance to SSLN Questionnaires	Limited relevance to SSLN teacher questionnaires
Comparability to SSLN Questionnaires	Does not cover aspects of teaching literacy or numeracy

Scottish Household Survey compared with SSLN

	Scottish Household Survey
Timing	An annual study – published by Scottish Government in August.
Coverage	Scotland
Source	Randomly selected school age children from Scottish households. In 2014 sample was approx. 1,400 children aged 6-12
Data Availability	Travelling to school, activities outside of school, opportunities to play
Disaggregation	Gender, banded age, economic activity of household, local authority, urban/rural, deprivation
Timeliness of data	Survey is annual with modular aspects, field work is throughout the year and report published annually in August
Relevance to SSLN Questionnaires	Limited relevance to SSLN primary questionnaire
Comparability to SSLN Questionnaires	Does not cover aspects of literacy or numeracy for children

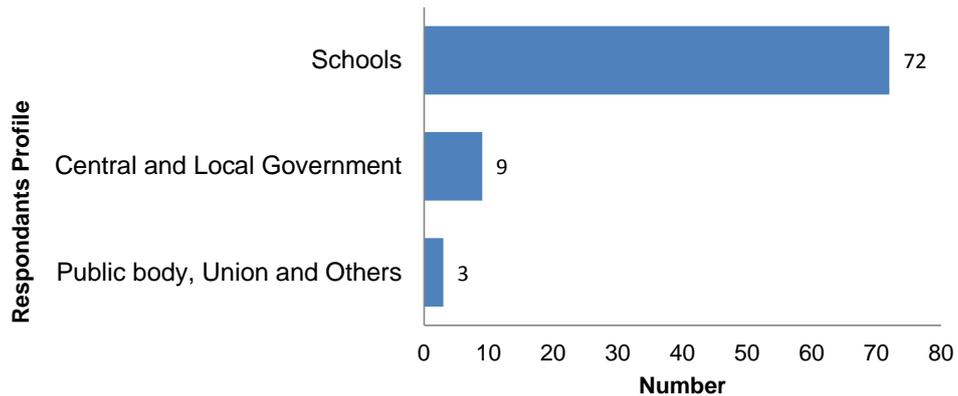
Annex 2 - Stakeholders Consultation Results

Section 1 – Background information supplied by respondents

Responder's profile

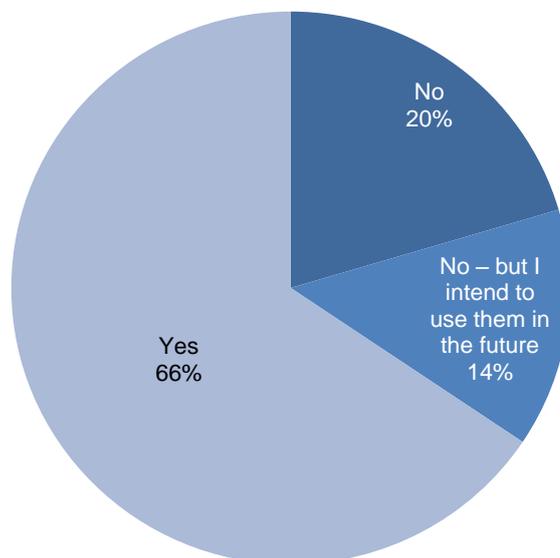
There was 186 responses, 98 as individuals, 84 on behalf of an organisation and 4 unknown.

Of the 84 responses on behalf of a group or an organisation the profile was:



Section 2 – Overview of the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires

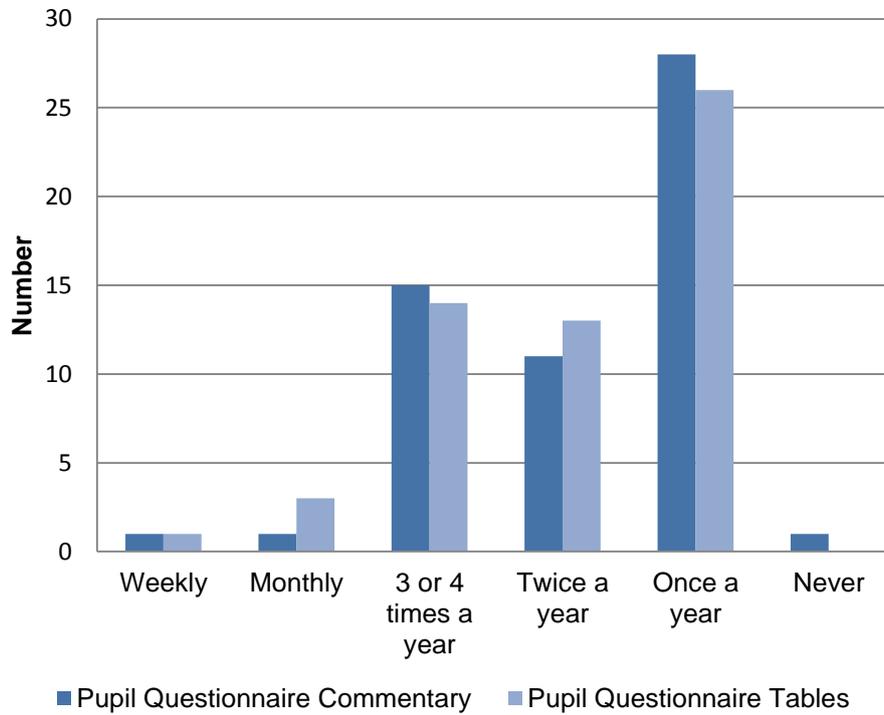
1. Do you currently use the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaire results?



N=186

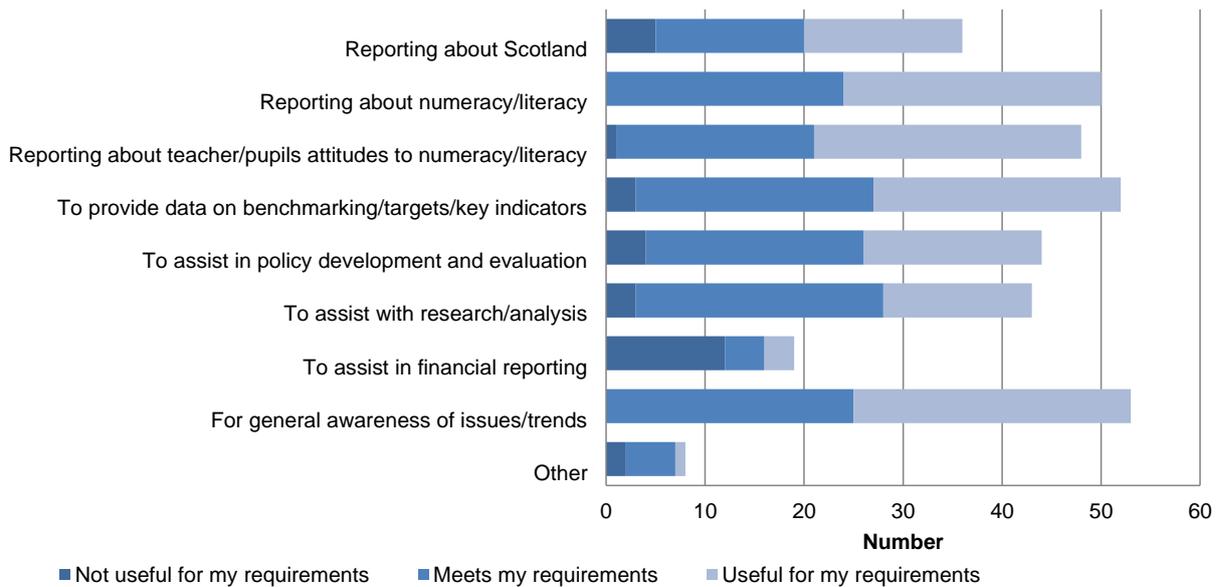
(58 respondents answered “yes” to this question, however the results have been adjusted to reflect the number of respondents who later stated they had read the pupil/teacher questionnaire commentary/tables).

2. In general, how often do you currently refer to the following information/tables on the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires?



N=57

3. How do you currently use the information from the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires in your work and how useful is it?

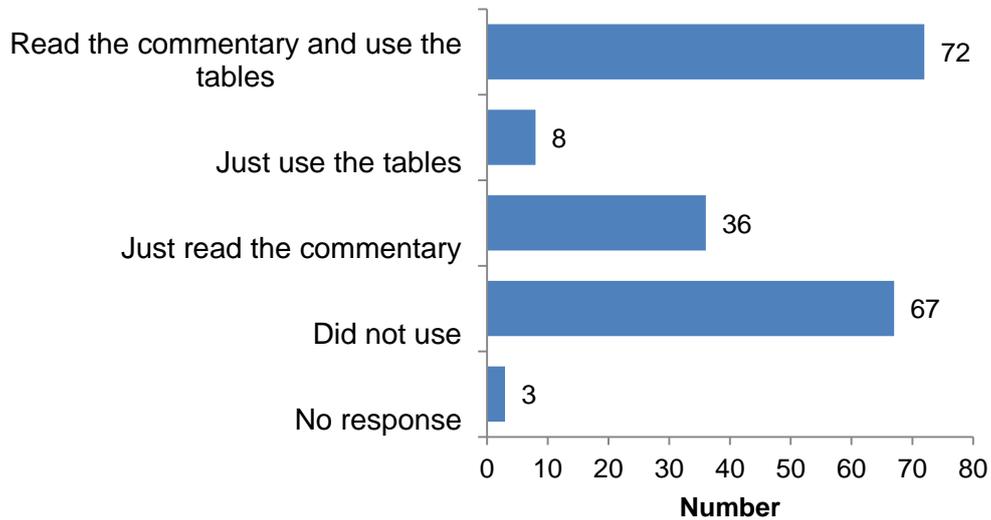


N= 58 (multiple responses permitted)

Section 3– Specific questions about the SSLN pupil and teacher questionnaires

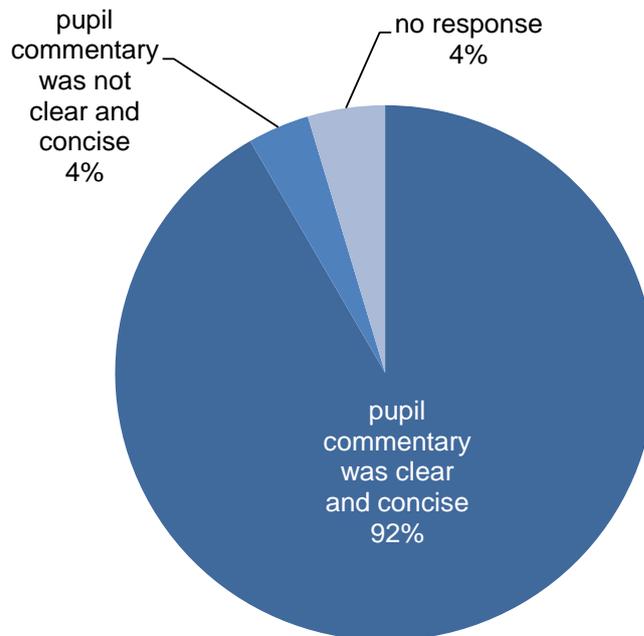
Pupil Questionnaire

4. With regards to the SSLN pupil questionnaire results, did you



N=186

5. Did you find the 2012 (Literacy) and 2013 (Numeracy) SSLN Pupil Questionnaire commentary clear and concise

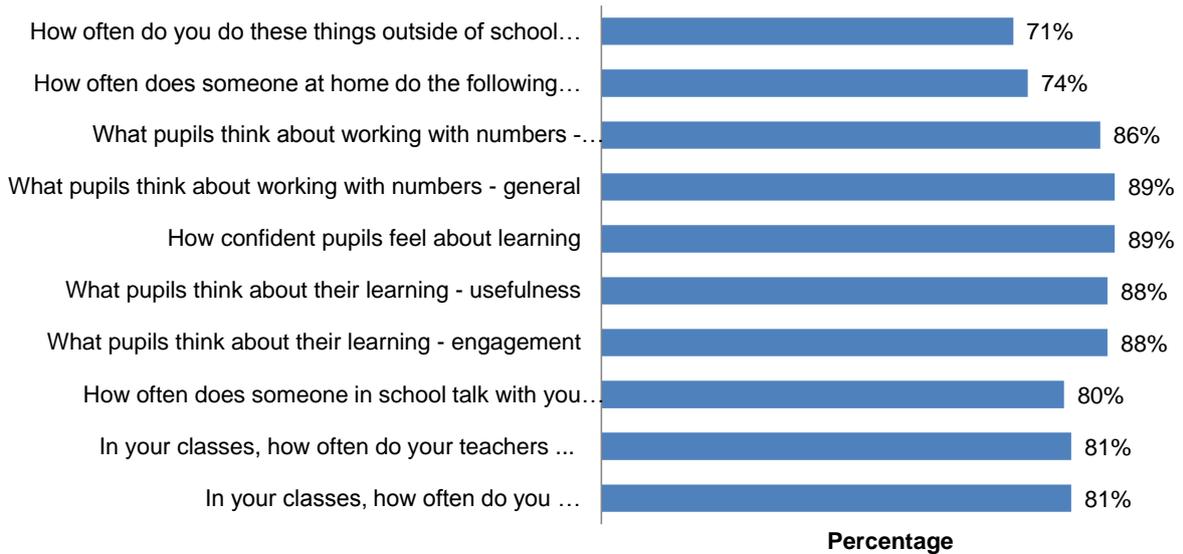


N=108

Where the answer was no, we asked respondents to specify what areas of the pupil commentary was unclear

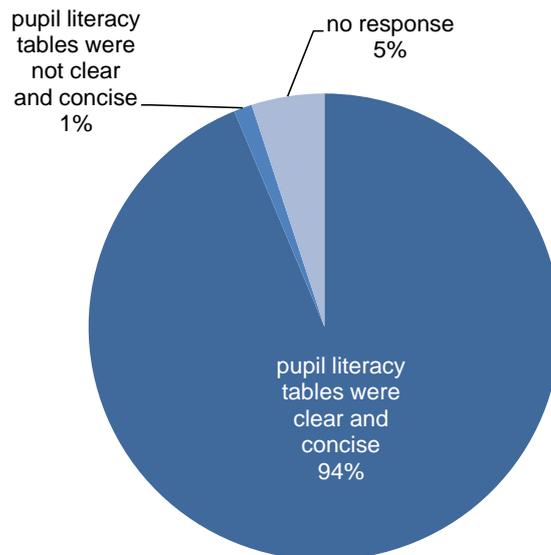
- “Commentary was clear, but not concise.”
- “Found it very detailed. Something which as a mathematician I would thoroughly have enjoyed getting into but as a Manager just don't have time to go through in detail. I have passed reports on to Maths & English”

6. Which of the SSLN 2013 (Numeracy) Pupil questionnaire tables did you refer to?



N range = (72 to 77)

7. Did you find the 2013 (Numeracy) SSLN Pupil Questionnaire tables clear and concise?

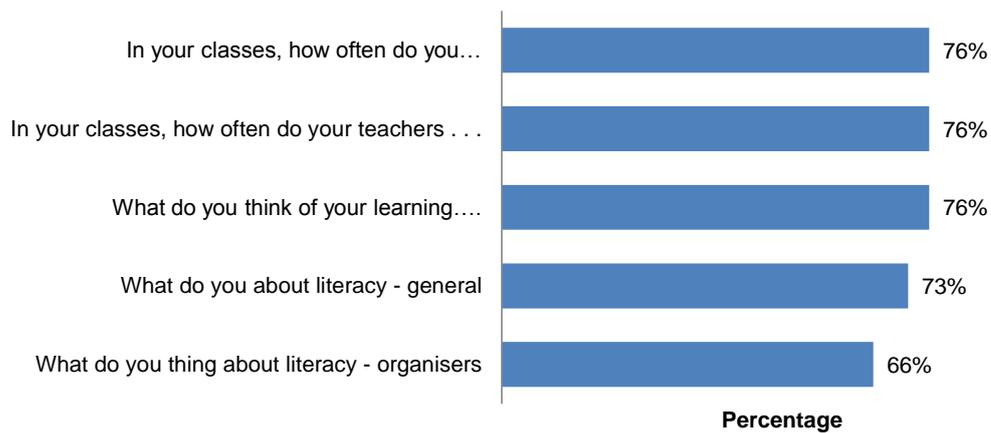


N=108

Where the answer was no, we asked respondents to specify what areas of the pupil numeracy tables was unclear::

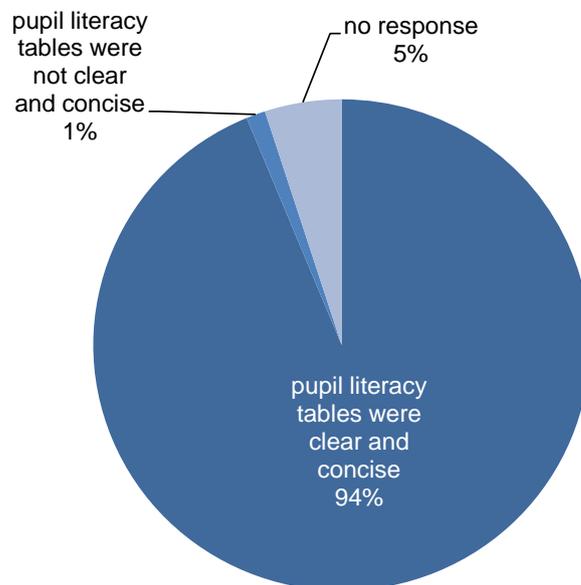
- “Clear but not concise”

8. Which of the SSLN 2012 (Literacy) Pupil Questionnaire tables did you refer to?



N Range = (70 to 75)

9. Did you find the 2012 (Literacy) SSLN Pupil Questionnaire tables clear and concise?



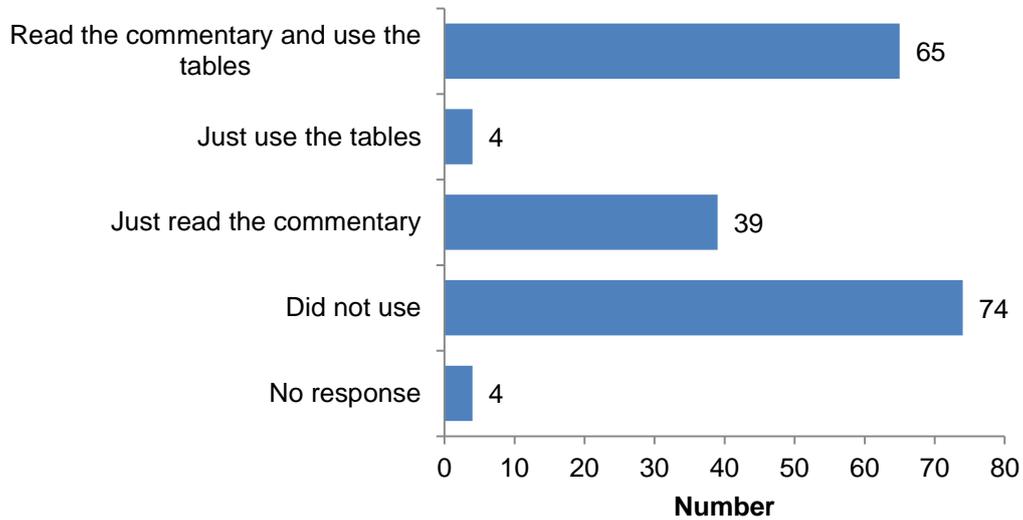
N=80

Where the answer was no, we asked respondents to specify what areas of the pupil literacy tables was unclear

- “Clear but not concise”

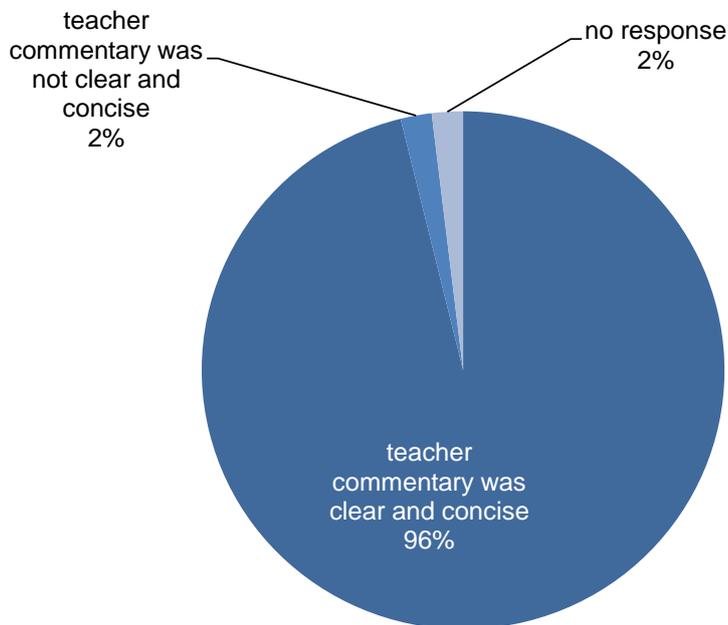
Teacher Questionnaire only

10. With regards to the SSLN teacher questionnaire results, did you



N=186

11. Did you find the 2012 (Literacy) and 2013 (Numeracy) SSLN Teacher Questionnaire commentary clear and concise?

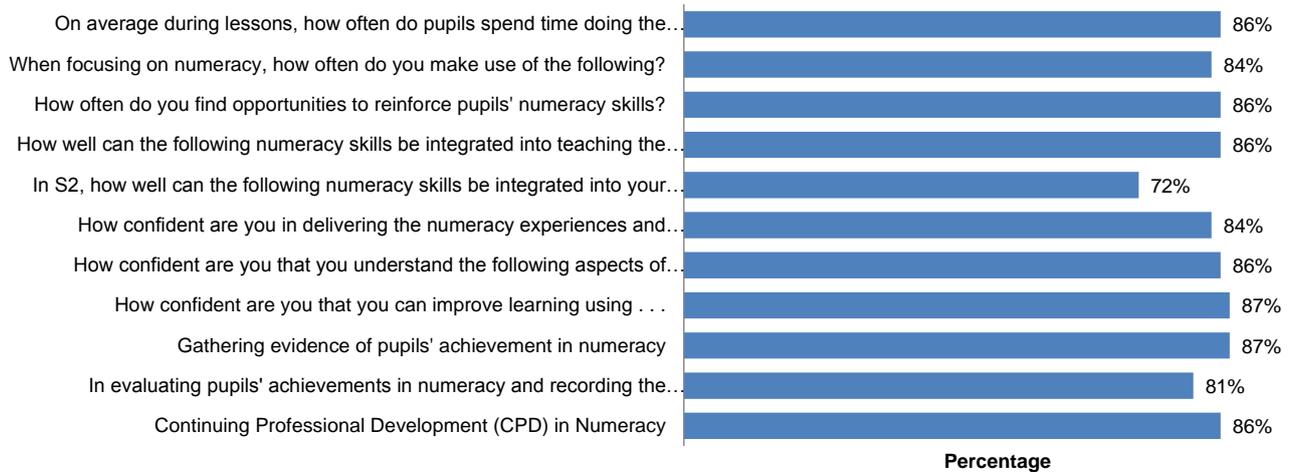


N=108

Where the answer was no, we asked respondents to specify what areas of the teacher's commentary was unclear?

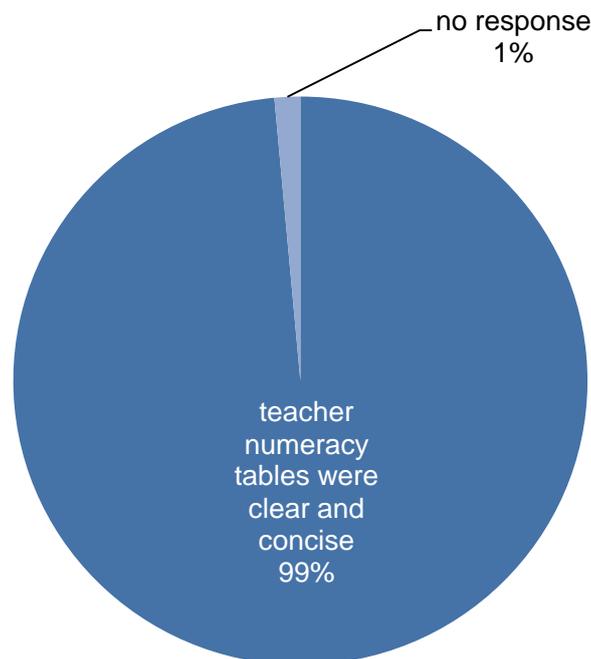
- As with all elements related to SSLN, it is over complicated

12. Which of the SSLN 2013 (Numeracy) Teacher Questionnaire tables did you refer to?



N= range (62 to 65)

13. Did you find the 2013 (Numeracy) SSLN Teacher Questionnaire tables clear and concise?

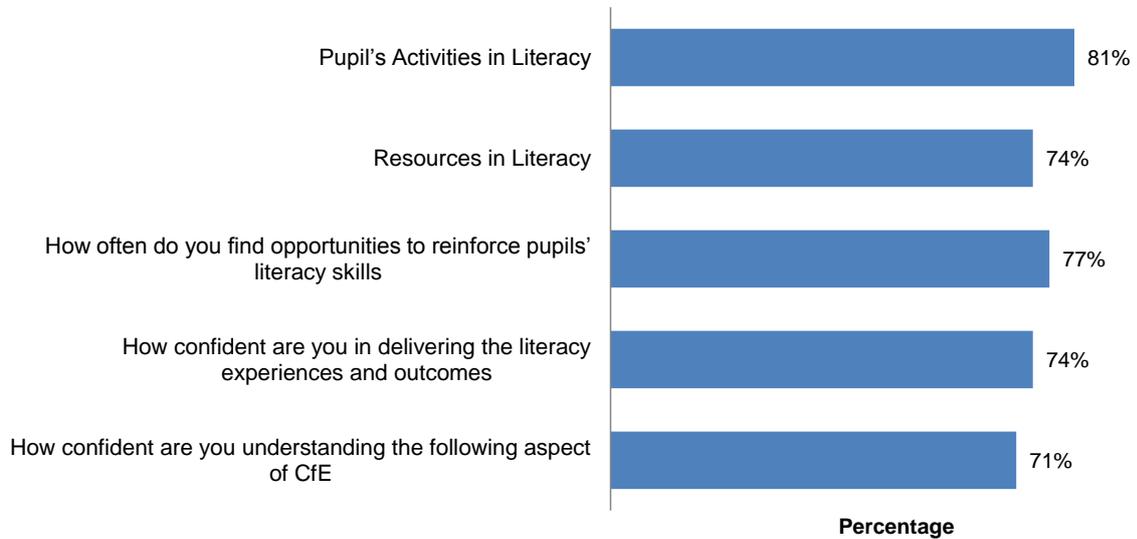


N= 69

Where the answer was no, we asked respondents to specify what areas of the teacher numeracy tables was unclear:

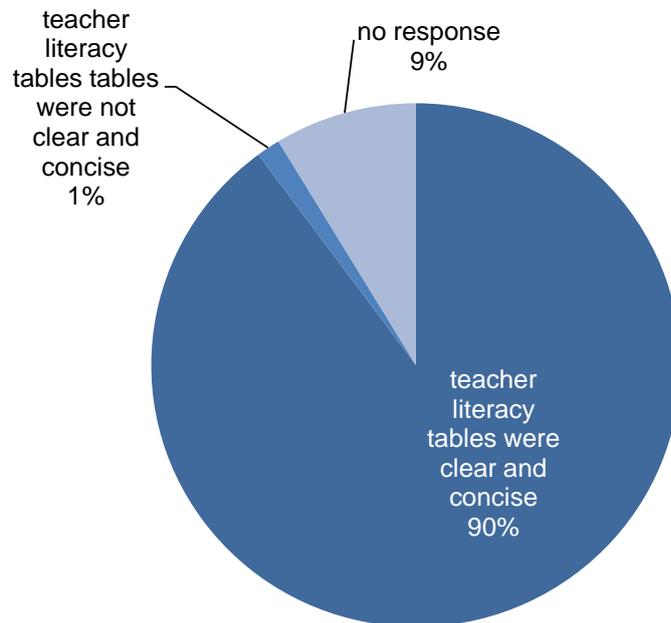
Nil response

14. Which of the SSLN 2012 (Literacy) Teacher Questionnaire tables did you refer to?



N= range (62 to 65)

15. Did you find the 2012 (Literacy) Teacher Questionnaire tables clear and concise?



N=69

Where the answer was no, we asked respondents to specify what areas of the teacher numeracy tables was unclear:

Nil response

16. Is there any information you would like included in future SSLN pupil or teacher questionnaires?

What would you like included and how would you use this evidence?

There were seven responses to these questions with suggestions but only one respondent explain how they would use this evidence. The suggestions have been summarised below:

Teacher Questionnaires

- More questions on engagement of standards for the progression of learning
- More questions on teaching on numeracy throughout the curriculum
- More questions on how CLPL had improved teacher practise
- More questions on how are reduce resources in schools impacting on teacher's ability to deliver the curriculum

Pupil Questionnaire

- Suggested question - How often does your teacher read to you?
- Suggested question - How often do you have the opportunity to write a story of your own choosing?
- New breakdowns by other pupil characteristics for example ethnicity

17. Do you have any other comments on the commentary or tables published on the SSLN Pupil and Teacher questionnaires that has not been covered in this survey?

Overall there were 27 comments supplied by the respondents. These have been grouped and summarised into the following categories:

Comments on accessing the data

Seven schools had comments on accessing the data. Five commented that they were not aware that the SSLN results had been published, one asked if the publication could be moved to the beginning of the academic year and the other asked if Excel documents be attached to the publication so it could be printed off altogether.

Comments on improving report

There were three comments that suggested improvement to the publication. They ranged from: even more commentary on each component, changing the third level assessment in SSLN to S3 pupils and asking more in-depth questions in the teacher questionnaire.

Comments on data breakdowns

There were three requests asking for further breakdowns of data to local authority and/or school level.

Comments on sharing with staff

There was seven comments on how the SSLN results were used within schools to initiate staff discussion on the national results and how to achieve improvement in literacy and numeracy within the school.

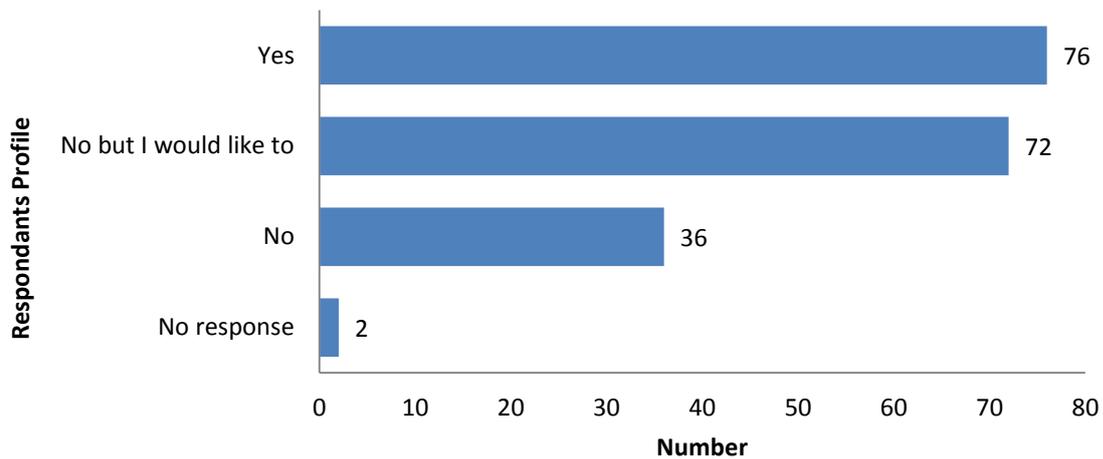
Comments on timing of survey

There were four comments on how the timing of SSLN field work in schools was onerous due to it being scheduled near the end of the school year.

Other comments

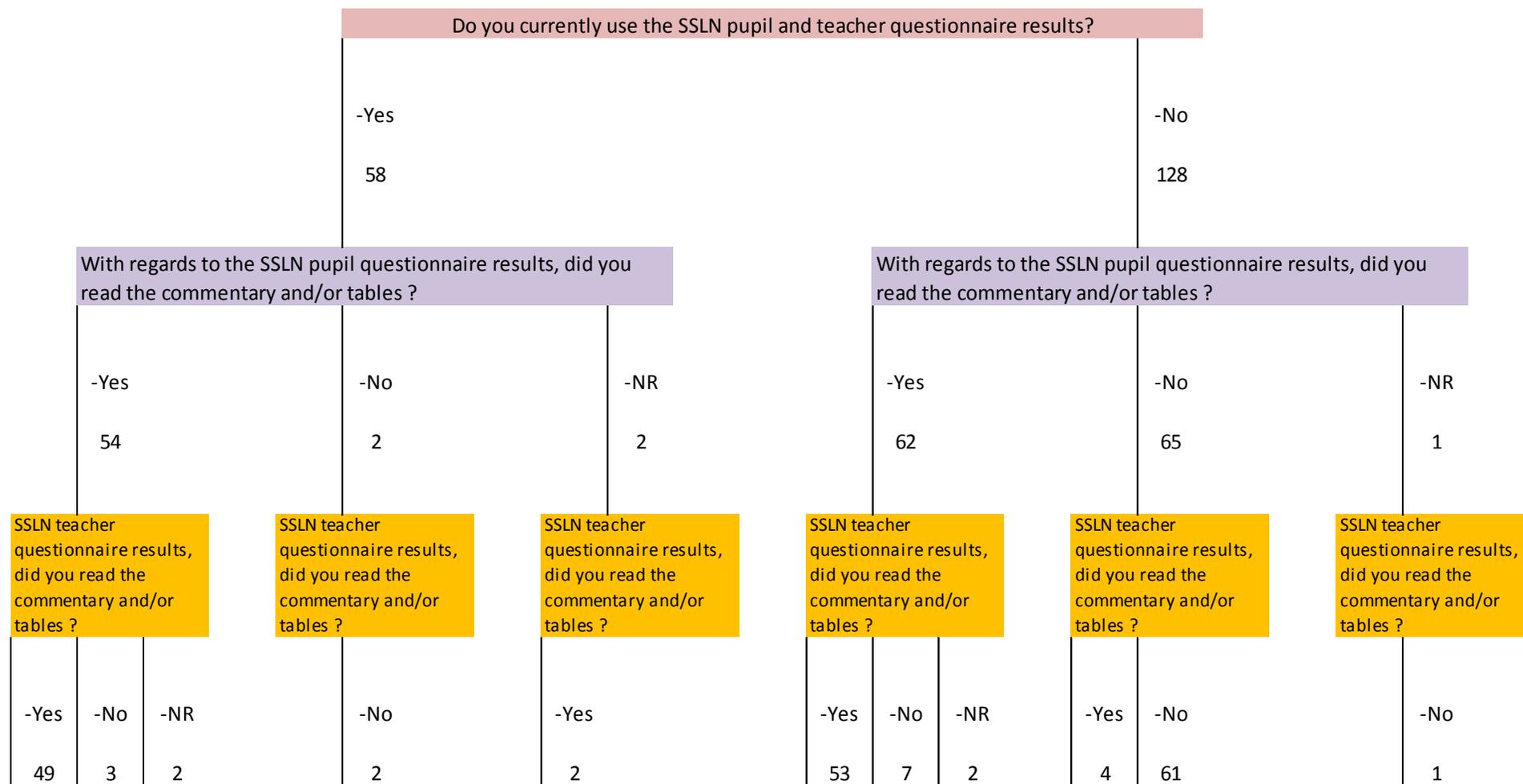
There were three comments that could not be grouped in the above. Two general comments stating they felt that the survey was useful and well done, and one raising concern about the difference in results between P7 and S2 pupils.

18. Do you currently receive email notification that SSLN results have been published?



N=186

Map of responses



NR – No response

