

Parentkind

Bringing together home & school

Parent Voice Report 2021



Contents

1.	Executive Summary	4
2.	Introduction	14
	A note on methodology and sample.....	15
3.	Detailed findings.....	16
	3.1 Parent perceptions of education and their child's school	16
	<i>Parent attitudes to education and their child's school.....</i>	16
	<i>Parent views on the role of education.....</i>	22
	<i>Key Insights Summary: Parent perceptions of education.....</i>	25
	3.2 Parent voice and engagement.....	27
	<i>Parent voice across levels of governance.....</i>	27
	<i>Raising issues and contributing ideas about education.....</i>	30
	<i>Effectiveness of school communications.....</i>	32
	<i>Awareness of parent groups.....</i>	34
	<i>Participation in school life and education (and barriers).....</i>	36
	<i>Parents' views of their own role supporting education.....</i>	39
	<i>Overall involvement in education.....</i>	40
	<i>Key Insights Summary: Parent voice and engagement.....</i>	42
	3.3 Donations, costs and spending.....	44
	<i>Perceptions of the cost of schooling.....</i>	47
	<i>Priorities for additional funding.....</i>	53
	<i>Key Insights Summary: Donations, costs and spending.....</i>	55
	3.4 Mental health and well-being.....	56
	<i>Parents' concerns about mental health.....</i>	56
	<i>Childhood experience of mental health and well-being issues.....</i>	57
	<i>Key Insights Summary: Mental health and well-being.....</i>	61
	3.5 Diversity and inclusion	63
	<i>Representation within school resources and topics</i>	63
	<i>Perceptions of equality in educational opportunity and outcome.....</i>	64
	<i>Preparing for the future and the role of schools and education in social mobility.....</i>	66
	<i>Key Insights Summary: Diversity and inclusion.....</i>	68
4.	Methodology and sample	70
	Demographics.....	70

About Parentkind

As a national charity, Parentkind give those with a parenting role a voice in education. We invest substantial resources in representing parent views on their child's learning to local, regional and national governments and agencies because evidence tells parental participation in education benefits all children in all schools and society as a whole. Parentkind is the network of PTA fundraisers in the UK. We bring specialist fundraising support and advice to parent volunteers so that every school can benefit from a successful PTA. Our 13,000 PTA members raise over £120+ million per year, placing us alongside some of the largest charities in the UK.

The Parentkind journey started in 1956 by a group of pioneer parents who were passionate about parent involvement in their child's learning but felt that they needed a voice at national as well as local level. Therefore, from PTAs on the ground forming regional federations, the National Association of PTAs was born.

Nicholas Gillet was the first chair of the National Council of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA), as it was then called, and his vision was that parents should not only have a local role and a voice in their child's school but also at a national level in education policy.

Today family life is very different to 65 years ago and so is the education system. We have many different types of family structures and circumstances (the nuclear family, single parents, or two working parents), much more disparate community support and a multitude of care arrangements for children around school. However, the vision remains the same; parents should not only have a local role and a voice in their child's school but also at a national level in education policy. As well as being the leading membership organisation for Parent Teacher Associations for over 60 years across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we are advocates for parent voice. Our role is to ensure that all parents can participate in education and have their voices heard so that education across the nations can benefit all children in all schools and society as a whole. This means we have a wealth of experience with schools of all sizes and types and the communities they serve.

Find out more at www.parentkind.org.uk

Contact Us

LinkedIn: @Parentkind

Facebook: @Parentkind / @PTAExpertbyParentkind

Twitter: @Parentkind

info@parentkind.org.uk

About The Hive

The Hive (formerly Preseli Partnerships) is a purpose-led change consultancy helping organisations around the world to shape thriving and sustainable working cultures and driving meaningful change while staying financially sustainable.

The Hive's research and insight arm helps organisations generate insight into issues that are strategically important to them and translate it into action. Over the years we have delivered research projects for a number of organisations in the private sector including DTN Weather, Meteogroup, STH Travel and Hospitality and Practice Plus Group as well as in the not-for-profit/social enterprise arena including the Federation of Small Businesses, The Corra Foundation, The Froebel Trust, Mind, Shelter and The Mercer Family Foundation.

The Hive has delivered Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey since 2016, managing the research process from questionnaire design through to data analysis and reporting. This year's research and report was prepared by The Hive's Research Associate Mhairi Guild.

1. Executive Summary

Introduction

Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey conducts research into parents' experiences and perceptions of their children's education and schooling on an annual basis. This is the seventh wave of the survey since it began in September 2015. The study continues to track perceptions of key aspects of schooling, education and parent voice from year to year and also asks parents their views on several new and rotating topics:

- Parents' attitudes to their child's school and schooling, including their views on: supporting their child's learning, how the school takes their views into account, and perceptions of the school environment.
- The extent to which parents want a say with – and believe their voice is heard by - education policymakers at all levels, local and national.
- Parents' levels of involvement in their child's school and education, including raising issues with staff and their participation within school life.
- Parental school fund donations, views on educational costs and how funding should be spent.
- How parents view the role of education and the ways it prepares children for the future.

In addition to tracking these core topics on a rotating basis, each wave explores some additional areas of topical importance. In 2021 these themes were:

- Parental concern and experience of issues related to their child's mental health and well-being at school, and their priorities for support within school.
- Parents' perceptions of diversity and inclusion efforts within schools and how far the education system supports social mobility.

Methodology

This Executive Summary highlights some of the key insights to emerge from this wave of research. Our Annual Parent Survey was carried out online with a nationally representative sample of 3,751 parents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland between 3rd June and 19th July 2021.¹ A detailed analysis of data from this year's survey can be found in part three of this report, including comparisons between demographics and previous years' results.

Parental participation in 2021

Parents feel more involved than ever in their child's education

Parents report higher levels of overall involvement in their child's school and education than in any year previously. This year the mean score rose to 7.13, as shown overleaf; up from 6.60 in 2020 and 5.91 in 2019. More than one in ten parents scored their involvement at the maximum level of 10.

Parents' overall sense of involvement with their child's school and education continues to be significantly higher among younger parents, those in London, primary parents, parents from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, those eligible for free school meals (FSM), and those with a child with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). It was also significantly higher among those in England and Northern Ireland, rather than Wales and those at local authority-maintained schools rather than academies.

¹ More details on methodology can be found in section four.

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Average score	6.44	5.91	6.60	7.13



This shows that overall, there is much to be optimistic about regarding the state of parental participation, in terms of both longer-term trends and the degree to which the pandemic has intensified parents' involvement with their children's education and schooling. We continue to see a high level of general support for schools, alongside a desire for even greater engagement and consultation.

Learning at home is generally well-supported by schools

70% of parents agree that their child's school **provides the help they need to support their child's learning at home**. While this figure could stand to improve in light of the importance of learning at home during the pandemic, it shows a strong foundation of approval for school's efforts to support parents in this role. Similarly, a slightly lower proportion of parents (65%) view school communications on suggestions about supporting home learning as effective.

There is some improvement on parent voice and consultation

Support for schools and the desire to be active in their child's education come across clearly in 2021. It is equally clear that there is space to improve on parent voice and consultation. 54% of parents say their child's school **takes action based on their views or feedback** and 51% feel they are able to **have a say on school decisions that affect their child's education**. Whilst both of these parent consultation measures have improved since 2019, progress remains slow and indicates more needs to be done to ensure parents feel that they have a voice on the decisions that matter to them and that schools are listening.

Despite high levels of support for schools and willingness to engage, 50% of parents still say their child's school **should be more accountable to parents than it currently is**. While last year's research showed a slight improvement in this measure, amidst the first national lockdown and school closures, this year shows a return to business as usual as half of parents call for greater accountability.

What schools are getting right – and where they need to do better

There is a consistently strong level of support for schools, with 80% of parents **describing themselves as supportive of their child's school**.

77% of respondents are **happy with the quality of education their child receives**, and 75% feel that **respect and courtesy are in evidence throughout the school**. This shows that even after eighteen months of disruption, parents continue to feel a high level of satisfaction with overall conditions in school life.

This foundation of belief in schools, which has held up throughout the pandemic, is most clearly evidenced in the fact that 82% of parents **agree their child feels safe at school** and 79% that **their child is happy at school**. While we have seen minor fluctuations, the trust that parents place in schools has proven stable and the 2021 data shows us that core aspects of school provision continue to instil parent confidence.

However there remain key areas of concern:

- **Secondary/post-primary school parents continue to show less confidence than primary school parents in their child's happiness and safety** at school, as well as in the quality of their education.
- **Parent approval of the range of after school clubs and extra-curricular activities has dropped** significantly (65% down from 71% in 2020) - unsurprising given social distancing requirements but important to watch.
- **51% of parents agree that the school offers good careers advice** – though it has improved from 43% in 2019, the quality of careers advice continues to remain a comparative area of concern.

There are also findings which show a reasonable foundation but which schools must certainly seek to improve:

- While most parents feel schools are communicating effectively on core issues, they report that schools are **better at communicating about news and events or their child's progress than in supporting learning at home/outside school**
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of parents agree that their child's school **engages with, and is an integral part of, its local community** – a strong baseline for a new involvement measure but one we hope to see improving in years to come.

Parent voice and participation

Parents report a wish for greater consultation in education and school decision-making and parents feel more involved in their child's education in 2021 than in past research.

Parents want a say in their child's education, but don't feel that their voices are always being heard.

85% of parents want to play an active role in their child's education. This figure has remained high across all past research and suggests parents' interest in meaningful participation with their child's schooling is near universal.

However, there continues to be a **gap between parents' desire to have a say in their child's education and the extent to which they feel listened to.**

	% of parents who want a say in their child's education at each level	% of parents who feel listened to at each level
School	72%	57%
Local Authority/ Education Authority or Multi-Academy Trust	58%	42%
Government	59%	35%

More than half (56%) of parents this year reported **raising issues and/or contributing feedback on their child's school** and education. Notably, London-based parents were overwhelmingly likelier to have raised issues, with just 28% reporting that they had not, compared with 40% or more in all other areas.

There is a clear need for improvement in parent consultation processes with **parents polarised on the extent to which they feel schools are listening, acting and offering accountability:**

- Only 54% of parents agree that their child's school acts on parent feedback
- Only 51% feel able to have a say on decisions that affect their child's education

- 50% feel their school should be more accountable to parents than it currently is.

Parent involvement rises across the board – but some barriers remain

When it comes to **the different ways of getting involved with their child's school**:

- 66% of parents have attended parent consultation/parent teacher meetings
- 42% of parents have taken part in parent surveys/focus groups
- 40% of parents have volunteered time and skills to their child's school
- 30% of parents are active in the PTA or Friends of the School group.

Overall, reported **parent participation in 2021 rose on the last three years**. There are promising signs of interest in more active involvement with school life and consultation processes among those who are not currently involved. **Over four in ten parents say they would consider Parent Action Groups or Parent Councils**, and there is ample further interest in PTA engagement or volunteering. Young parents, primary school parents and those living with a disability are particularly likely to consider getting involved in the future.

The top barrier to parents getting more involved in school life remains time (36%), followed by simply not being asked (28%) and being unsure what they have to offer (25%). This suggests a largely receptive parent community (however time-poor), and a need for schools to ensure that participation asks are clear, inclusive and flexible.

The role of education - above and beyond academic attainment

Overall, parents endorse the curriculum that schools are teaching - **77% of parents believe their child's school teaches a curriculum that meets their child's needs**. They also believe that education is not just about attainment, **with 88% of parents agreeing that a good education for their child goes beyond exam results**.

In more detailed terms parents tell us, in keeping with previous data, **almost nine in ten parents prioritise the following aspects of the curriculum**:

- Developing skills that are useful outside of school
- Supporting pupils' personal development by teaching life skills
- Preparing pupils to become responsible citizens
- Introducing a broad range of subjects.

It is also noteworthy to discover that developing good mental health and wellbeing scored higher on 'Very important' than any other area of the curriculum, with 60% of parents feeling this way. Parents were also likelier than in previous years to believe in the importance of lessons on relationships education and in supporting pupils' spiritual development and understanding.

Examining parent educational priorities from another angle, parents view it as **most important for young people to leave school with foundational personal development skills and a good knowledge base**. Parents also expressed a mix of similar and different priorities for the capabilities their children should have upon leaving primary and secondary/post-primary education:

Important skills and capabilities to leave

primary school with

Self-confidence	59%
Empathy and awareness of others	42%
Good knowledge of key subjects	39%
Problem solving	38%
Teamwork	35%

Important skills and capabilities to leave

secondary/post primary school with

Self-confidence	53%
Being prepared for further education/job market	41%
Resilience and the ability to cope with setbacks	40%
Problem solving	36%
Good knowledge of key subjects	36%

These findings suggest parent priorities for education rest firmly with equipping pupils to become well-rounded individuals, prepared to adapt and adjust to their future via transferable and varied personal and practical life skills, rather than adopting a narrow academic focus.

Mental health and well-being increasingly prioritised

The importance of child mental health has become more widely accepted than ever before, as the myriad impacts of the pandemic and public healthcare measures have continued to take a toll on children and young people. When it comes to their child's experience at school, many parents continue to be **concerned about a range of mental health and well-being-related issues**.

The top five concerns for parents are:

- Exam stress (55%)
- Anxiety (54%)
- Homework related stress (49%)
- Bullying (49%)
- The pressure to constantly engage with social media (48%).

Concerns about acute well-being issues such as self-harm, sexual harassment, substance abuse and eating disorders were also concerning for at least 30% of parents. Younger parents continue to report higher concern across the majority of issues, as do Londoners, parents who do not identify as heterosexual, those with a disability, those eligible for FSM and parents of a child with SEND.

There was a significant rise in the parent-reported incidence of mental health and well-being issues in 2021, compared with 2020, with results more closely resembling the 2018 results. This suggests that experience has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, after a temporary reduction while schools were closed. Mirroring parent concerns, with the exception of homework and exam stress, **the top five issues parents report their child to have experienced are:**

- Homework related stress (41%)
- Anxiety (38%)
- Exam stress (35%)
- Bullying (31%)
- The pressure to constantly engage with social media (20%)

In addition to greater experience of homework and exam stress, **parents of children at secondary/post-primary and post 16 phases are significantly likelier to report experience of anxiety, pressure to engage with social media, depression, and online abuse**. This is consistent with last year's research and highlights the additional weight of responsibility on schools at secondary/post-primary level and beyond to support young people's mental health at the stage they become most vulnerable to social, emotional and academic pressures.

Yet even at primary school level almost a third of parents say their child has experienced homework stress (30%) and anxiety issues (32%), while well over a quarter (29%) say their child has been bullied. More than one in ten primary parents, respectively, report that their child has experienced depression (13%), social media pressure (14%) and online abuse (13%).

Separately, we find that 60% of parents agree that bullying is dealt with fairly at their child’s school. This suggests the majority of parents support schools’ response to the problem but bullying remains a widespread area of concern.

Mental health support and knowledge within schools are therefore of clear importance – and we find that parents’ priorities for this are to see mental health support workers embedded to provide timely support and professional, age-appropriate counselling services.

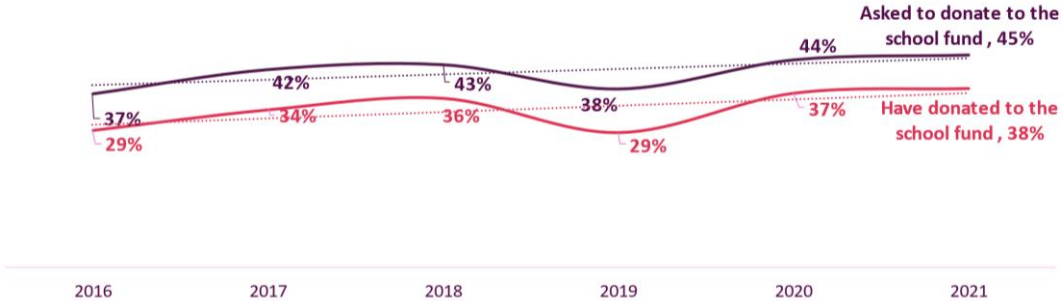
88% of parents deem mental health development as an important focus within the curriculum. Similarly, only one in ten parents reported not wanting to see any mental health options prioritised for in-school support - and when it comes to where parents would want to see any additional funding directed, child mental health services rose to second place priority in 2021, only sitting behind learning resources. This year’s research therefore shows that mental health and well-being have successfully gone mainstream in parent priorities for their child’s education and schooling.

The cost of schooling

Parents tell us that financial pressures on both schools and on households themselves continue.

Over a third of parents have donated to the school fund

Parents being asked to donate to the school fund continues to be common practice among schools and this year the proportion of parents held firm. As shown below, 45% of parents in 2021 have been asked to donate and well over a third (38%) have done so.



The mean donation given to the school fund rose this year to its highest level yet at £11.62 per month. This has increased from £10.00 in 2020 and £8.15 in 2019. Trends observed in previous years have continued, with younger parents likelier to report being asked to donate, as were those in Northern Ireland, those in London and parents from BAME backgrounds. Those with a disability, those eligible for FSM and those with a child with SEND were also likelier to have been asked to give.

The cost of technology is a rising concern for parents

Whilst uniforms (38%) and school trips (34%) still top the list of costs that parents are most concerned about, technology is the third most concerning cost in 2021, having risen significantly from 14% to 20%.

Top parent priority for extra funding is learning resources – but mental health close behind

If more funding was made available to their child's school, parents continue to prioritise learning resources, such as text books and science equipment, in first place at 47%. However, this was closely followed by child mental health at 41%, which rose from just fourth place in 2020 to second place this year.

Further down the list of priorities there were also rises in support for additional spending in:

- Pastoral services for pupils from disadvantaged families (25% up from 21%)
- Additional non-teaching staff (18% up from 15%)
- Teacher salaries (17% up from 12%)
- Teacher pensions (6% up from 3%)

Most parents think the cost of schooling is increasing

Almost three quarters of parents (73%) agree that the cost of sending children to school is increasing. Whilst almost half of parents (49%) believe this is acceptable, the same percentage (49%) are concerned about this cost. There has, however, been a significant rise in the proportion of parents who think the cost of schooling is acceptable, which has risen from 37% in 2019.

In 2021 over half of parents (55%) felt that the increasing pressure on school budgets in recent years has negatively impacted their child's education. The perception of negative impact is higher among men, younger parents, parents from BAME backgrounds, and those based in London. This perception of negative impact has also significantly increased over time, suggesting a more intense environment of increasing costs and budgetary pressures which are viewed by many as detrimental to their child's education.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In 2021, we added new questions around the theme of diversity and inclusion, focusing on the representation of different groups in school resources, topics and materials, and parents' confidence in equality of outcomes for all children regardless of background. We also looked closely into our data by demographic to continue growing our understanding of differences in the experiences of different parent communities.

Wide uncertainty for parents around how represented LGBT+ and non-binary identities are in school resources

While 50% or above parents view different genders, ethnicities and SEND needs as visible in school resources, fewer see differing levels of advantage represented. The least recognised identities in school topics and materials are LGBT+ and non-binary identities, which also show high levels of parent uncertainty.

Most parents believe the state education system better enables children from more privileged backgrounds to succeed

Encouraging parents to think about social mobility and equality of outcomes within the education system, we find that 58% of parents believe that the current state education system enables children from more privileged backgrounds to succeed more than others and that half (50%) feel that their child's personal background is reflected in what is taught in schools today.

Looking into parents' expectations for their child's future beyond school, 60% of parents in 2021 agree that the quality of education their child is receiving is better than the one they experienced at school and that their child's career prospects will be better than their own and 57% agree their child will have a better standard of living than them.

Towards a better understanding of different parent communities

Our research tracks opinions and experiences across many demographics, allowing us to explore findings across characteristics from region, age and social grade to ethnicity, eligibility for free school meals (FSM), and experience of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This year we also began tracking sexual orientation and experience of disability, to continue widening our understanding of different parent communities.

Most strikingly, we continue to find that parents with FSM eligibility, parents living with disability and those whose child has SEND tend to reply differently on the vast majority of questions posed in our research. They tend to rate their overall involvement with their child's school and education more highly than parents without these experiences and are also likelier to report:

- Higher levels of existing consultation and communication with schools
- More current involvement and openness to future involvement in school
- A greater desire to have a say on their child's education at all levels of governance and to believe parents are listened to
- Stronger satisfaction with existing school provision, such as careers advice or extra-curricular activities, and to believe communications are effective
- Donating to the school fund - and in larger average amounts
- More optimism and support regarding the school's efforts at social mobility
- Stronger belief in their child's future prospects, compared with their own

To select just a few specific examples among many, we find that:

Parents with a child eligible for FSM are significantly likelier than ineligible parents to **strongly agree**:

- Their child feels safe at school (46% vs 40%)
- Their child is happy at school (44% vs 38%)
- The curriculum meets their child's needs (39% vs 31%)
- They feel happy with the quality of education (41% vs 31%)
- To describe themselves as supportive of their child's school (42% vs 37%)

Parents whose child has SEND are significantly likelier than those whose child doesn't have SEND to **strongly agree**:

- Their child's school provides help with home learning (35% vs 26%)
- The school takes action based on their feedback (31% vs 16%)
- They feel able to have a say on school decisions (29% vs 16%)
- The school engages with the local community (32% vs 24%)
- Bullying is dealt with fairly by their child's school (31% vs 22%)

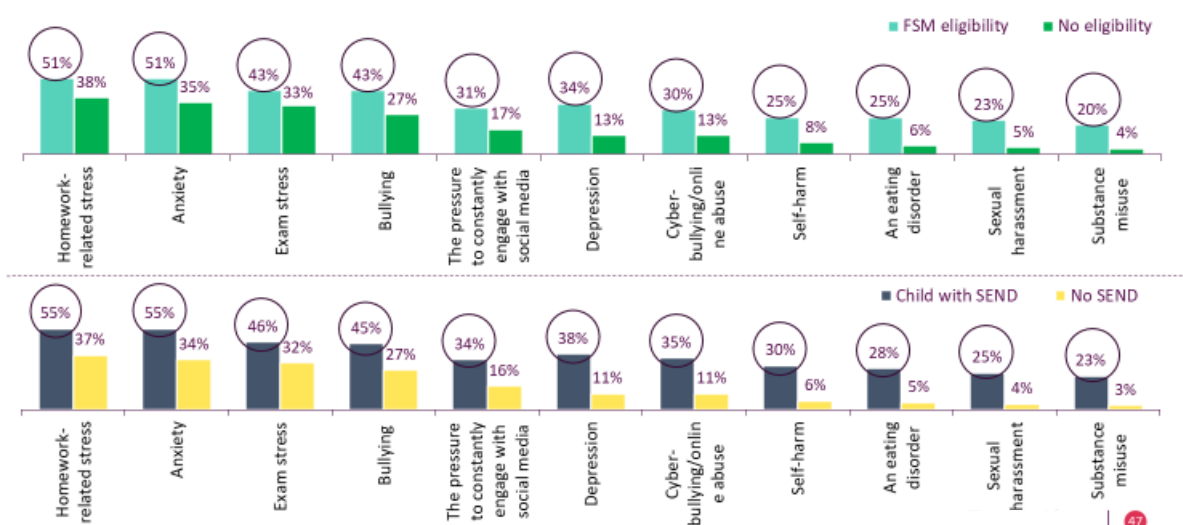
Parents living with a disability are significantly likelier to:

- Have raised issues or feedback on their child's education, across all channels
- View it as 'very important' for the curriculum to develop good mental health and wellbeing (68% vs 59%)
- Strongly agree the school does enough to provide all pupils with the chance to succeed (27% vs 20%)

Yet alongside the many positive findings, we find **many experiences and perspectives which raise cause for concern regarding the school experience for children affected by these experiences**:

- Parents whose child has SEND are less likely to say:
 - their child feels happy at school (74% vs 82%)
 - their child feels safe at school (77% vs 83%)
 - or that the curriculum meets their child’s needs (73% vs 80%)
- Parents with a disability, with a child eligible for FSM or a child with SEND are all likelier to:
 - Strongly agree their child’s school should be more accountable to parents
 - View budget pressures as negative impacting their child’s education
 - Report a much higher incidence of mental health and well-being issues among their children

More than half of parents eligible for FSM or with a child who has SEND report that their child has experienced homework stress or anxiety and more than two out of five have been bullied. Meanwhile across the range of less common (but often most serious) well-being issues, these parents report two to three times higher levels of incidence than other parents.



Differences are also evident across all key parent engagement and consultation measures, as shown, while on parent voice, **those living with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM and those with a child with SEND are all much likelier than other parents to both want a say and to feel that parents are listened to across different levels of governance.**

At a practical level these parent groups are communicating more often – and across a wider range of channels – on their child’s schooling. Meanwhile at the broadest level, they feel a higher level of general involvement with their child’s education.

Conclusion

There is much to be optimistic about regarding the state of parental participation. Parents tell us that their interest in being involved in their child’s education is high and that the level to which they feel that they are involved by schools has been rising over time. Parents have also demonstrated a consistently strong level of support for schools and a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of their children’s education.

There are also promising signs of interest amongst parents in playing a more active role in school life, decision-making and consultation processes, including from those who are not currently involved with their school in any formal capacity. Young parents, primary school parents and those living with a disability, are particularly likely to consider getting involved in the future.

However, despite parents wanting this more active role in their child’s education, there is a gap between their level of interest in wanting a say and the extent to which they feel that what they say is being listened to.

While there have been some improvements over the past few years amongst schools, multi academy trusts and from government in demonstrating that they are listening to parents since, progress remains slow and there is still more to be done to ensure parents feel that they have a voice on the decisions that matter to them. Parental engagement is a key ingredient for good school governance and for ensuring that parents' views and priorities are adequately taken into account and their views are taken into consideration in decisions that directly impact on their children's education.

When it comes to what is taught at school, parents broadly endorse the curriculum that schools are teaching, but indicate a clear preference for an education system which equips pupils to become well-rounded individuals, prepared to adapt and adjust to their future via transferable and varied personal and practical life skills, not just a narrow academic focus. There are clear indications a significant number of parents are not convinced that the current curriculum works equally well for all children, with a feeling that those from more privileged backgrounds are more likely to succeed.

Many parents expressed concerns about their children's mental health and well-being in a broad sense from exam stress to more serious, but thankfully less frequent issues, such as bullying and sexual harassment. This is seen by parents as an increasingly important area for schools and the curriculum to focus on. Notably, parents with a disability, or with children eligible for free school meals or with special educational needs were more likely to report challenges with mental health issues.

Parents continue to report being asked to make financial contributions to support schools with their core budgets, typically through donations to the school fund, and parents with a disability, with a child eligible for free school meals or special educational needs contributing more, on average, than other parents. These groups also expressed greater levels of concern about the overall cost of sending their child to school.

Over half of parents feel that the increasing pressure on school budgets in recent years has negatively impacted their child's education. Recognising the need for prioritising areas of expenditure in school budgets, it is clear that parents welcome schools focusing on what is needed for children to be able to engage in learning (e.g. learning resources, science and IT equipment). However, many parents also asked schools to increase or improve mental health services available to children.

With growing appetite for increased engagement among parent communities facing disadvantage, potential marginalisation or other additional challenges, Parentkind recognises it is important for all stakeholders in education to improve their understanding of the needs of diverse parent groups and to recognise that while at times parents will often agree with one another, there is no such thing as a homogenous parent community.

This is also crucial at the school level, where there is much untapped potential for parental participation in education beyond routine parent-teacher interactions. If parents are to become true participants in education, it is vital to ensure the barriers to their involvement with schools are mitigated wherever possible. Parentkind has published its Blueprint for Parent Friendly Schools which can help schools to understand what can be done to make improvements in this area and we will continue to follow up on this an important area over the coming years.

We feel this research has uncovered a lot of useful and valuable data regarding parents' views and their experiences and hopes for the education systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, we recognise that there is still much that we could benefit from understanding in greater detail both around the different experiences of parent groups, and topics of emerging importance such as children's mental health and ways that the school curriculum could be improved. Parentkind intends to explore topics in greater detail throughout 2022. In the meantime, we invite those involved in education both inside and outside of schools to review and reflect upon what parents are telling us, and to recognise the value and importance of encouraging and promoting parental participation in their children's education.

2. Introduction

Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey conducts research into parents' experiences and perceptions of their children's education and schooling on an annual basis. This is the seventh wave of the survey since it began in September 2015. The study continues to track perceptions of key aspects of schooling, education and parent voice from year to year and also asks parents their views on several new and rotating topics:

- Parents' attitudes to their child's school and schooling, including their views on: supporting their child's learning, how the school takes their views into account, and perceptions of the school environment.
- The extent to which parents want a say with – and believe their voice is heard by - education policymakers at all levels, local and national.
- Parents' levels of involvement in their child's school and education, including raising issues with staff and their participation within school life.
- Parental school fund donations, views on educational costs and how funding should be spent.
- How parents view the role of education and the ways it prepares children for the future.

In addition to tracking these core topics on a rotating basis, each wave explores some additional areas of topical importance. In 2021 these themes were:

- Parental concern and experience of issues related to their child's mental health and well-being at school, and their priorities for support within school.
- Parents' perceptions of diversity and inclusion efforts within schools and how far the education system supports social mobility.

The last eighteen months have been unprecedentedly challenging and unpredictable for education, with schools and parents alike struggling to ensure as much continuity as possible in children's education and broader social and emotional well-being, against a backdrop of global uncertainty. While the fieldwork for our 2020 Annual Parent Survey took place amidst the first UK lockdown, soon after schools were closed to the majority of children, the 2021 research took place against a backdrop of comparative normalcy. Yet while this year's exploration of parent opinion took place during a summer term when most children were back in school and a degree of stability had resumed, the overall context has remained one of changeability and challenge, with intermittent lockdowns, closures for school bubbles, social distancing on site and exams cancelled.

The period has therefore continued to present a challenging time to conduct tracking research about parents' experiences with school and the education system. Many of the areas we benchmark year-on-year have necessarily seen some disruption over the last two waves, due to interruptions with the education system and schools themselves and parent attitudes have necessarily been influenced by many novel and evolving impacts on school life. Nonetheless, after the more anomalous context of last year's fieldwork, the 2021 data in many places indicates a return to 'business as usual', while in others it reveals shifts consistent with changes which have taken place since the pandemic began.

Children's experiences of education have varied enormously throughout this period and concerns have remained especially high for the well-being (physically, emotionally, and academically) of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and their families, for whom schools often provide a crucial pastoral support that goes far beyond the curriculum. Alongside standard demographics across region, age, social grade and ethnicity (among others), this report therefore continues to pay particular attention to identifying the views of parents in more challenging circumstances – those whose child is eligible for free school meals (FSM), those whose child has special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and those living with a disability. With these groups frequently expressing different priorities and levels of engagement than parents without their experiences, we hope to help build a more inclusive understanding of the parent community and ensure all parent voices are heard.

Alongside Parentkind’s ongoing focus on parent attitudes to education and schools, their participation and voice, and issues of cost and spending priorities, this year’s research shone a particular spotlight on two additional topics. We revisited parent opinion on mental health and well-being issues (levels of concern, incidence among school-age children and priorities for support in schools) to help inform discussions about young people’s well-being and how schools can continue to best support it. We also explored some newer areas of questioning around parent perceptions of diversity and inclusive efforts within schools – both the representation of different groups within school resources and how confident parents are in the education system to deliver the best outcomes for children, regardless of background – alongside a wider look at parent opinions regarding social mobility, school support and the outlook for their child’s future.

A note on methodology and sample

The Hive has delivered Parentkind’s Annual Parent Survey since 2016, managing the research process from questionnaire design through to data analysis and reporting, and fieldwork is conducted online by Dynata. Respondents were recruited through their UK panel, received a small incentive for their participation, and took part in the survey from 3rd June to 19th July 2021. The sample this year is made up of 3,751 parents from England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have at least one child aged 4-18 attending state school.

The sample is representative of the parent population by gender, age and social grade and is achieved through interlocking quotas. Sub-samples in Wales and Northern Ireland are boosted each year to achieve a large enough base of respondents to compare findings across regions. In 2021 the entire sample was more than doubled from a previous count of 1500 parents from England (1,200), Northern Ireland (100) and Wales (200), while retaining the same proportional balance between nations, in order to ensure even more robust samples in Northern Ireland and Wales.

As the survey is polling a representative sample, results are subject to a margin of error which varies with the proportion considered. Throughout this report, statistically significant differences across demographic groups or in trends over time have been marked on charts by using rectangles, circles or arrows. Where the report discusses pertinent differences between demographics or from wave to wave, these indicate differences with statistical significance.

Please note, all percentages within this report are presented rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. Total agreement scores may therefore occasionally add up to slightly more or less than their constituent scores (Strongly agree + Tend to agree), due to rounding in both instances.

For full details and breakdowns of key demographics in the sample please see section four.

3. Detailed findings

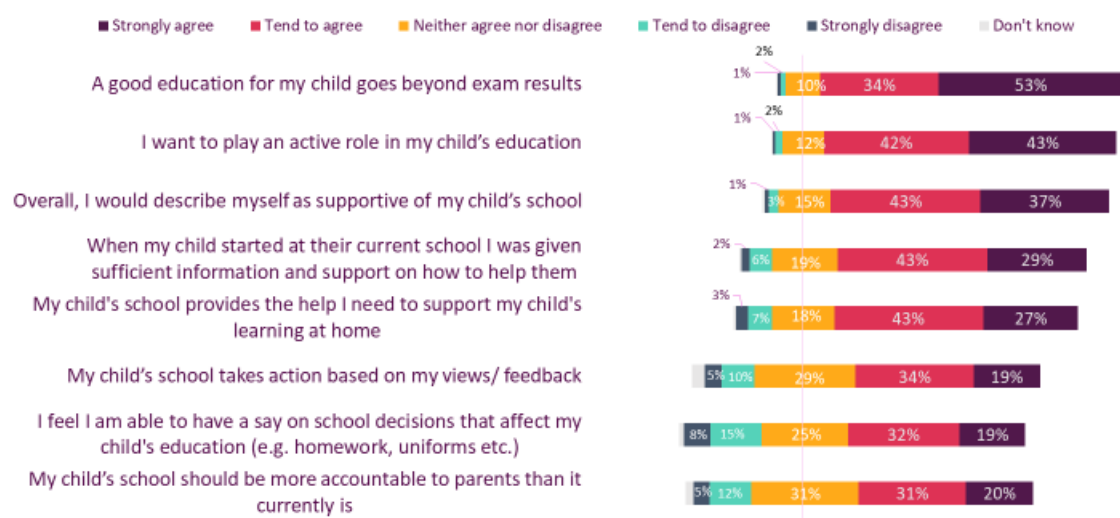
3.1 Parent perceptions of education and their child's school

Parent attitudes to education and their child's school

Annual monitoring of how parents perceive the education system in general, and their child's school environment in particular, is a core component of this research programme. The survey delves into different thematic priorities each year while returning to a consistent index of attitudinal statements that help to understand parental views on the role of education, provision and parent voice at their child's school, and a range of factors contributing to the schooling environment. These provide a crucial backdrop for understanding parent-school relationships as experienced in everyday life and allow for changes to be tracked over time.

Figure 1: Perceptions of education and schooling

High parent support for education and school provision - room to improve on parent voice and accountability



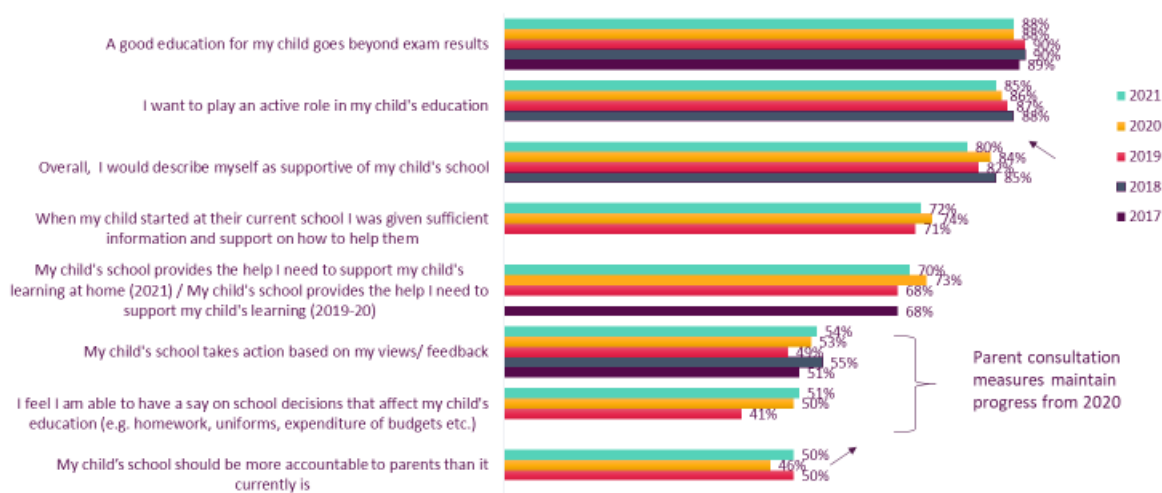
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Thinking about the school that your oldest child currently attends, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to their schooling?"



The core attitudinal statements on broad parent perceptions this year are ranked in the same order of priority found in previous years. The top four perceptions remained: **'A good education for my child goes beyond exam results'** (88%), **'I want to play an active role in my child's education'** (85%), **'I would describe myself as supportive of my child's school'** (80%) and **'When my child started at their current school I was given sufficient information and support'** (72%) – Figure 1. These saw only slight movement compared with last year and the top three measures continued to see strong agreement from well over a third of parents (Figure 2). There was a slight drop in overall support for the school (from 84% to 80%), though not out of range with previous findings and there have been minor fluctuations over previous years. Overall, this year's data continues to show strong overall levels of parental investment in children receiving a rounded education, in which they wish to play an active role and are broadly supportive of their child's school.

Figure 2: Perceptions of education and schooling (trends)

Parent consultation measures (action on feedback, say in decision-making) maintain improvement since 2019



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Thinking about the school that your oldest child currently attends, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to their schooling?"



The second half of statements, receiving lower overall scores, are those which focus more practically on the school's support and matters of parent voice/consultation in school decision-making. Overall agreement here drops to between half and just below three-quarters of the sample: with 70% agreement that **'My child's school provides the help I need to support my child's learning at home'**, 54% agreement that **'My child's school takes action based on my views'** and 51% agreement that **'I feel I am able to have a say on school decisions that affect my child's education'**.

On the first of these, an apparent decrease for help in supporting learning (from 73% to 70%) may be impacted by a clarification in wording to emphasise support for learning at home. Otherwise, these statements show little change, following a significant rise last year amidst the first school closures. It is with the parent consultation measures - that schools act based on parent feedback and that respondents feel able to have a say on decision's affecting their child's education - that respondent agreement most clearly drops to half of the sample, as neutral and disagreement scores rise. It is therefore encouraging that the 2020 boost in agreement on these measures, perhaps based on strong affinity for schools during closures, appears sustained this year rather than dropping back down once children returned to the classroom. In particular, half of parents continued to agree that they have a voice on decision-making this year, compared with just 41% in 2019.

Conversely, one statement posed to parents - **'My child's school should be more accountable to parents'** - saw levels of agreement this year rise back up to 50%, with a fifth (20%) in strong agreement, after a slight improvement last year. While this may be natural fluctuation, it is also possible that school closures tended to either improve parents' recollections of daily school life or occasionally improved communications with parents. Yet with such extensive disruption to the education system over the last 18 months and the high levels of demand on parents, pupils and school alike, it is a tribute to parent-school relationships that support for schools has remained so consistent over the last few years.

Turning to consider demographic differences in perception, the 2021 results show female respondents to be in significantly stronger agreement across many measures concerning support and involvement; in particular, 45% strongly agreed they want to play an active role in their child's education (compared with 40% of men) and 41% strongly agreed they are supportive of their child's school (compared with 34% of men). Well over half (57%) of female respondents strongly agreed that a good education goes beyond exam results, compared with 50% of men.

Male respondents were likelier to strongly agree on consultation measures – with 21% strongly agreeing that school takes action on feedback (18% of women), and 21% strongly agreeing they have a say on school decisions (17% of women). Consistent with last year, male respondents were also in stronger agreement that their child’s school should be more accountable to parents than it currently is at 22%, compared with 17% of women.

Younger parents (18-44) were in greater agreement on school support for home learning, as well as on sufficient information when starting school, and also had higher levels of agreement on consultation – for example, with 25% of 18-34s and 22% of 35-44s strongly agreeing school takes action based on feedback, compared with 15% of 45-55s and 14% of 55+. They were also likelier to believe their child’s school should be more accountable to parents than it currently is, showing higher approval for current practices often goes hand-in-hand with increased expectations for further accountability.

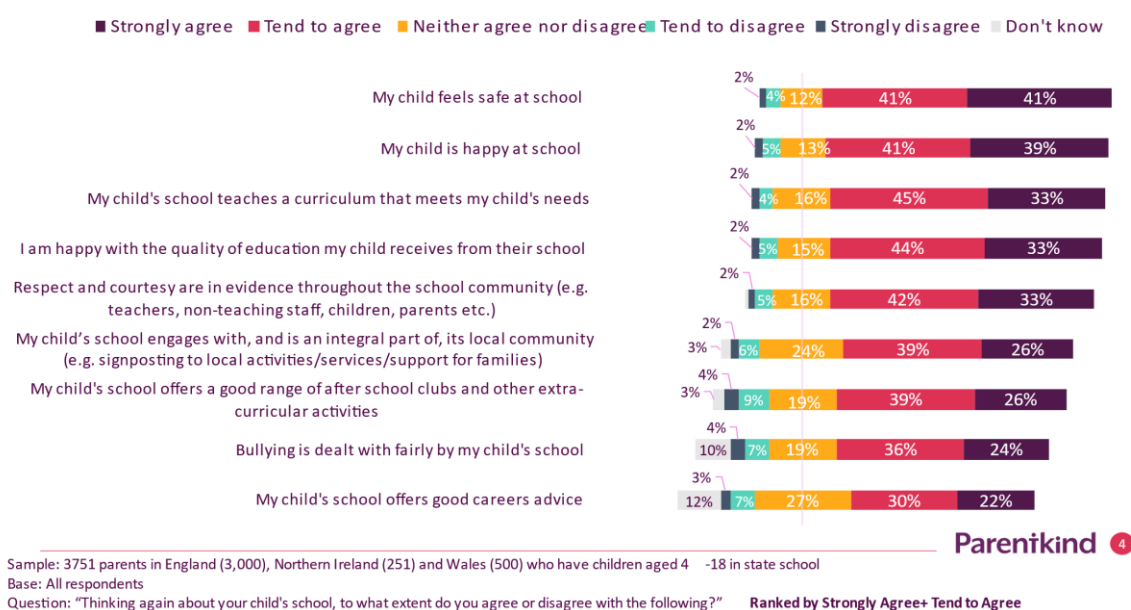
As shown extensively in last year’s data, there are significant demographic variations by both FSM eligibility and parenthood of a child with SEND, which suggest that both groups show higher levels of agreement on questions of engagement, involvement and support for schools than seen in the wider sample. Both groups of parents show consistently stronger agreement across six out of ten statements considered here; for example, 42% of parents with a child eligible for FSM strongly agree they are supportive of their child’s school, compared with 37% of ineligible parents. Both groups have also higher levels of strong agreement that the school provides various forms of help than do parents in the broader sample.

Meanwhile, both parents with a child eligible for FSM and those whose child has SEND continue to show significantly higher strong agreement on parent consultation measures. On taking action based on feedback, 30% of FSM eligible parents strongly agree (vs 16% of ineligible), while 31% of parents whose child has SEND strongly agree (vs 16% of other parents); while within both groups 29% strongly agree that they feel able to have a say on school decisions, compared with 16% of other parents. Both parents with a child eligible for FSM and those whose child has SEND are likelier to strongly agree that their school should be more accountable to parents than it currently is, with 29% of the former group and 31% of the latter strongly agreeing (both up from 26% in 2020), compared with 17% of parents’ ineligible for FSM and 16% of those whose child does not have SEND.

This suggests that both cases (the experience of parenting a child with SEND through school and that of being FSM eligible) as highly distinct and heterogeneous as they are, may entail higher levels of engagement with the school on a day-to-day basis and affirmation of its support than typically found among parents without these additional challenges. This may concurrently lead to a stronger demand for ongoing school accountability and action on parent feedback.

Figure 3: Perceptions of the school environment

Majority of parents are happy with child safety, happiness and quality of education at school



The second set of attitudinal statements focuses in more depth on the child's experience at school and the quality of school environment, as perceived by their parents. Respondents consider a range of metrics, from how safe and happy their child is at school, to the engagement of the school with its wider community, through to the quality of clubs and careers advice (Figure 3).

As in the previous index, the overall order of agreement remained consistent with last year's research, with a total of 82% agreeing **their child feels safe at school** and 79% agreeing that **their child is happy at school**. 78% agree that **'My child's school teaches a curriculum that meets my child's needs'** and 77% agree they are **happy with the quality of education their child is receiving from their school**. Three quarters (75%) agree **'Respect and courtesy are in evidence throughout the school'**. In these top five statements, respondents continue to show a high level of satisfaction with overall conditions in school life, where a third or more strongly agree and little disagreement.

There is a gradual decline in agreement with the next four statements, with 65% each agreeing that **'My child's school engages with, and is an integral part of, its local community'** and **'My child's school offers a good range of after school clubs and extra-curricular activities'** (65%). Six in ten (60%) agreed that **bullying is dealt with fairly by their child's school** while half (51%) agreed that **their child's school offers good careers advice**. At the same time, the proportion who strongly agree with these four propositions drops to 26% or less and we see increased levels of neutrality/don't know scores and slightly higher active disagreement, showing that parent perceptions are more ambivalent in these areas.

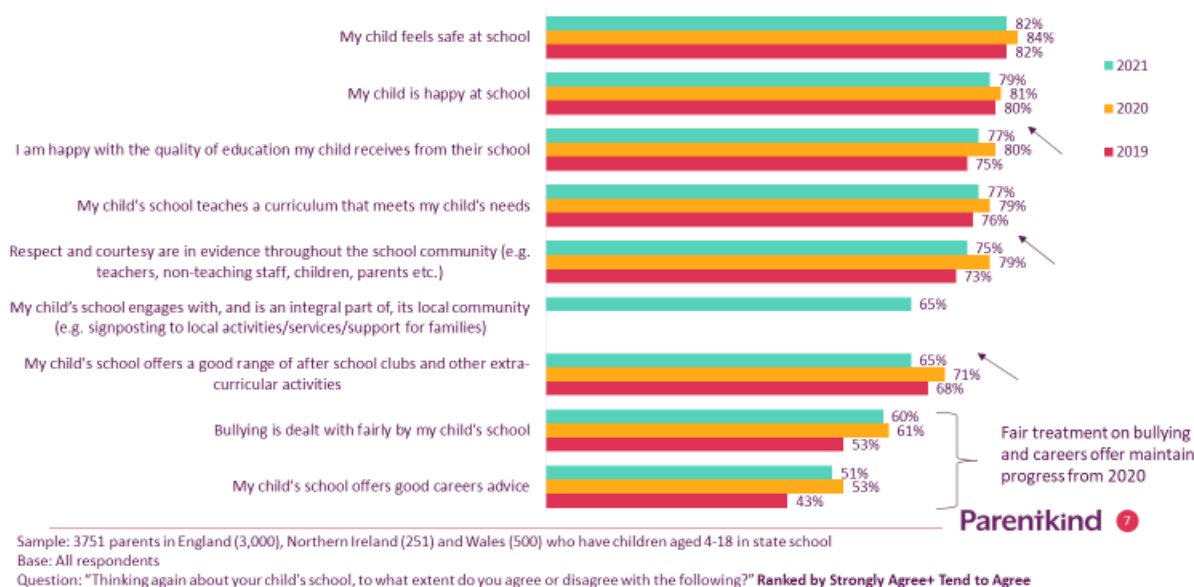
In 2021 there was a slight decrease across many overall agreement scores compared with last year (Figure 4), showing statistical significance for: happiness with the quality of education (77% from 80%), respect and courtesy evident in the school community (75% from 79%) and after-school/extra-curricular offer (65% from 71%). Yet on most of these measures, data simply falls back in line with results in 2019, suggesting a pandemic 'boost' for some perceptions of school life during the 2020 research, which has dropped away as routines return to normal. For the after-school/extra-curricular offer, data has dropped further - 65% this year, from 71% in 2020 and 68% in 2019 – but this is an area of school life that has remained compromised by social distancing requirements in many schools.

A noteworthy trend data is found on the last two statements concerning fair handling of bullying and the careers advice on offer, both of which saw strong progress last year that has fortunately been sustained in 2021; the former by 7 percentage points above 2019 and the latter 8 percentage points. While it is reassuring

that approval for careers advice maintains agreement from half the sample even in these unpredictable years, with the employment and further education environment more turbulent for school leavers than ever before, it nonetheless lays down a challenge for schools to ensure this vital area of provision does not fall off the agenda.

Figure 4: Perceptions of education and schooling (trends)

Pandemic 'boost' in 2020 falls away on most measures, but progress maintained on bullying & careers advice



Turning to demographics, younger parents aged 18-35 again tend towards stronger levels of agreement. Notably, a third (34%) strongly agreed their child's school engages with its local community, dropping to 26% and lower among older parents. Parents whose eldest child is at primary are meanwhile likelier to strongly agree that their child feels safe at school (48% vs 37% at secondary/post-primary and 41% within post 16) and is happy at school (48% vs 32% at secondary/post-primary and 38% in post 16); figures consistent with last year that reveal worryingly sharp drop-offs for the secondary/post-primary experience.

Primary parents were also likelier to strongly agree on the quality of education their child receives, respect and courtesy evident throughout school and the school's engagement with the community. The data also shows a wider gap on perceived safety (11 percentage points) than last year, when 46% at primary and 39% at secondary/post-primary (7 percentage points) strongly agreed their child felt safe at school. Without exploring in more depth, we can't determine the contributory factors, however it feels plausible to speculate that health concerns may have informed the increase, given the differentials in COVID-19 transmission by children's age and the wider public conversations about risk mitigation within schools. The only area where parents of later stage education are in stronger agreement is regarding good careers advice where, unsurprisingly, agreement increases with school phase (post 16 parents strongly agree at 26%, compared with 21% of secondary/post-primary and 19% of primary parents). However, with just 54% of secondary and 62% of post 16 parents in total agreement, the gap on confidence on careers provision remains stark.

Parents of children with FSM eligibility, as found above, responded differently to parents of children ineligible across the board. This year, eligible parents were likelier to strongly agree across almost all statements, for example: that their child feels safe at school (46% vs 40% of ineligible parents), that their child is happy at school (44% vs 38%), that the curriculum meets their child's needs (39% vs 31%) and to feel happy with the quality of education (41% vs 31%). They also agree more strongly across specific factors in the school environment, from respect and courtesy in evidence, to school community engagement and bullying being dealt with fairly. It is also noteworthy that both after-school/extra-curricular (34% vs 24%) and careers provision (31% vs 19%) are rated highly within households likely to be facing strong financial pressures. On

both bullying and careers advice, overall agreement levels are significantly higher among parents with a child eligible for FSM, at 67% vs 59% for the former measure and 61% vs 49% for the latter.

This suggests that while additional challenges experienced among households in this group may contribute to less positive experiences within some areas of school life (as section 3.4 explores) there are also many aspects of school life where stronger degrees of interaction, relationships and engagement are expressed. Eighteen months into a pandemic, where the extreme strain on households already under financial stress has been well documented (and in the area of free school provision in particular), it is highly encouraging to find four in ten parents with FSM eligibility strongly agree that they are happy with the quality of their child's education and that the curriculum meets their child's needs, compared with three in ten non-eligible parents. It is also useful to find that the newest statement, regarding school engagement with the local community (including signposting to services and support for families) receives strong agreement from a third (33%) of parents eligible for FSM, compared with 24% of ineligible parents, with overall agreement 69%, compared with 64%.

There were also noteworthy differences for parents with a child with SEND. These respondents were significantly less likely to strongly agree that their child felt safe at school (39% compared with 43% of parents of a child without SEND). They also had lower overall levels of agreement than other parents across several measures (with non-SEND experience parents often likelier to 'Tend to agree'): feeling safe at school (77% compared with 83%), happy at school (74% compared with 82%), curriculum meeting the child's needs (73% compared with 80%), happiness with quality of education (73% compared with 80%).

However, it is encouraging to note that consistent with last year, these parents were significantly *likelier* to strongly agree that bullying is dealt with fairly by their child's school (31% strongly agreed compared with 22% of parents without a SEND child). They were also likelier to strongly agree that the school engages with its community (32% compared with 24% of parents without a child with SEND), that there is a good after-school/extra-curricular offer (32% compared with 25%) and good careers provision (28% compared with 20%). As noted above, this tendency towards higher positivity may be informed by parents' higher general levels of interaction with their child's school and an increased need for support in some key pastoral areas where SEND needs apply.

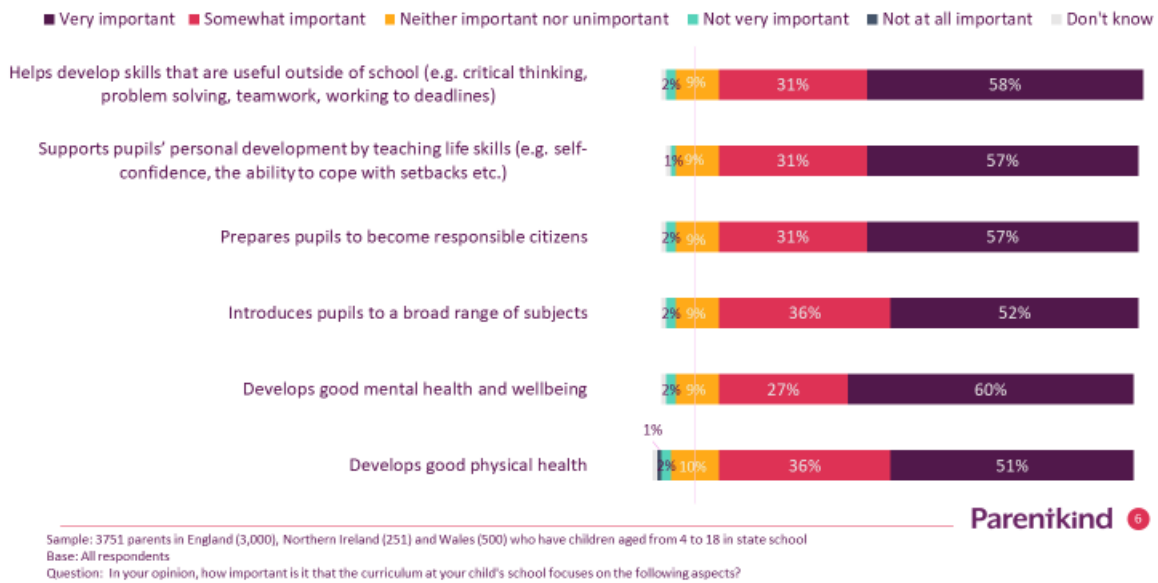
Finally, explored at a national level across the three countries surveyed, while many of these parent perception measures saw similar results from respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there was one clear theme. Respondents in Northern Ireland frequently reported higher levels of strong agreement (and an overall higher mean score) on statements regarding education and their child's school. In terms of practical support, parents in Northern Ireland were likelier to strongly agree that the school provides help for supporting their child's learning at home (35%) than in either England (27%) or Wales (28%), and also to strongly agree that they were given sufficient information when their child started school (38%, compared with England at 28% and Wales at 29%). More widely, they report stronger agreement than parents in either England or Wales that: their child is happy at school; the curriculum meets their child's need; they are happy with the quality of education; the school engages with the local community; respect and courtesy are evident; that the extra-curricular offer is good; and that bullying is treated fairly. Conversely, those in Northern Ireland were significantly less likely to think their school needed to be more accountable to parents than it currently is, at just 14% strongly agree, compared with 20% in England and 21% in Wales, suggesting an overall tendency to view their children's school environment and the offer from schools more highly than respondents in the other two nations.

There were also some key areas where both Wales and Northern Ireland-based respondents strongly agreed at a higher rate than those in England – for example in viewing a good education as going beyond exam results (NI at 60% and Wales at 61% strongly agree, compared with England at 52%) and describing themselves as overall supportive of their child's school (NI at 45% and Wales at 42% strongly agree, compared with England at 36%). Northern Ireland and Wales-based parents also both agreed more strongly that their child feels safe at school (51% and 46%, respectively) than did parents in England at 40%. At this headline level regarding perceptions of school and the educational offer, the data therefore suggests a higher level of satisfaction is in evidence from parents in Northern Ireland in particular.

Parent views on the role of education

At this critical juncture for the education system and after a period of great upheaval, we have revisited questions previously asked around the role of education in order to gain insight into future directions. In 2018 parents were asked a set of questions exploring areas of the curriculum parents felt were most important to focus on, and the skills and capabilities they wanted their child to leave primary and secondary/post-primary with. This year's data shows that parents' priorities have remained fairly consistent over time but with a sharper focus in 2021 on wider life and personal development skills that will prepare children for life beyond school.

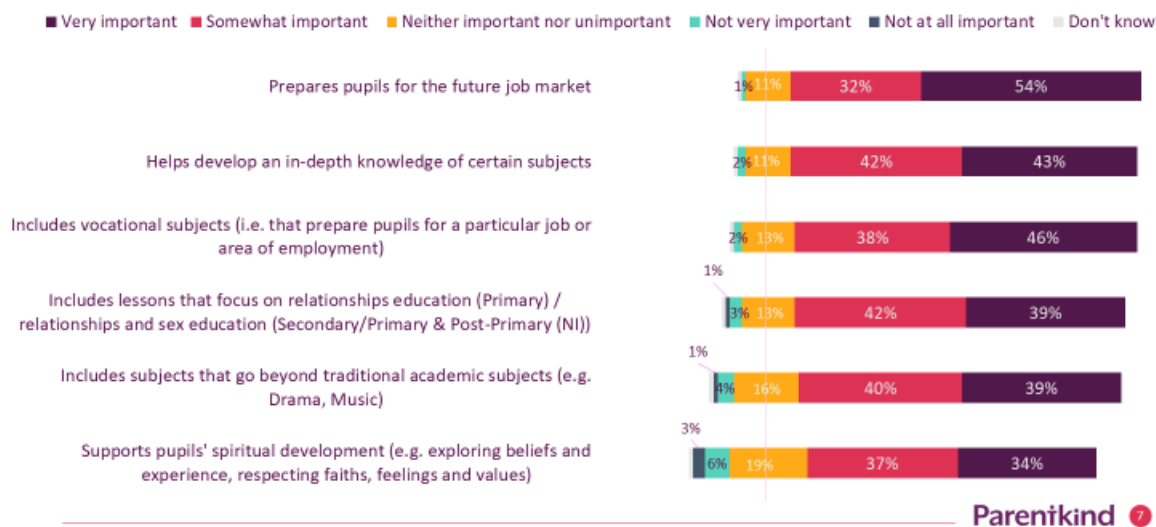
Figure 5: The role of education – important aspects of the curriculum (1 of 2)
Parents place highest value on developing wider life skills, responsible citizenship and health



When asked how important particular aspects of the curriculum are for schools to focus on (Figure 5), parents place highest value on developing skills that are useful outside school, supporting pupil's personal development by teaching life skills, preparing pupils to become responsible citizens, introducing a broad range of subjects and developing good mental health and well-being: all aspect supported by 88% of respondents and deemed 'very important' by over half of the sample. These were closely followed by good physical health (87%) and preparing pupils for the future jobs market (86%, Figure 6). Overall, it is clear how highly rated these areas are across the board, with very low levels of unimportance or neutrality. Yet it is striking to note that developing good mental health and well-being is now seen as 'very important' by 60% of the sample, the highest proportion in any area, and that this focus, followed by developing skills useful outside school (58% very important), supporting personal development by teaching life skills (57% very important) and preparing pupils to become responsible future citizens (57%) all place parent priorities firmly on equipping students to become well-rounded individuals prepared to adapt and adjust to their future via transferable and varied personal and practical life skills.

A more academic understanding of education (in-depth knowledge of certain subjects) is ranked more than halfway down the list and, while still 85% in terms of overall importance, sees 'very important' scores drop below half the sample for the first time. Of lower importance in respondents' relative priorities are subjects and lesson content which might be viewed as sitting outside the core curriculum – from vocational subjects (84%) and relationships education (82%) to those beyond traditional academia such as Drama, Music (78%), and spiritual development (71%).

Figure 6: The role of education – important aspects of the curriculum (2 of 2)
Lowest importance attached to subject areas outside the core curriculum



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged from 4 to 18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: In your opinion, how important is it that the curriculum at your child's school focuses on the following aspects?

Parentkind 7

Compared with 2018 findings, the order of priority remains very similar. The most noteworthy trend changes concern the lowest ranked areas, with parents awarding significantly increased scores to the importance of lessons on relationships education (from 75% in 2018 to 82% in 2021) and in supporting pupils' spiritual development and understanding (from 64% in 2018 to 71% in 2021), in particular.

While respondents generally rated most of these themes highly across demographics, some details may be useful in thinking about parental responses to future curriculum shifts. Female respondents, for example, were much likelier than males to rate all aspects as 'very important' (e.g. Helps develop skills outside of school was 'very important' for 64% of women, against 51% of men; while mental health was 'very important' for 67% of women and 53% of men). Parents who identified themselves as having a disability were more likely to rate almost all areas as 'very important' than parents with no disability; with 68% of those with a disability, compared with 59% of those without, viewing the development of good mental health and well-being as 'very important', and 63% supporting personal development by teaching life skills as 'very important', compared with 56% without disability.

Parents of a child with FSM eligibility were likelier than those without to view good physical health, in-depth knowledge of subject areas, vocational subjects, relationships education, non-traditional subjects and spiritual development as 'very important'. Parents of a child with SEND, on the other hand, were significantly likelier to view as 'very important': a focus on vocational subjects (50% of parents with a child with SEND, compared with 46% of those without); relationships education (45% compared with 39%); and the support of spiritual development (40% compared with 33%). This suggests a slight difference in prioritisation, which may reflect wider challenges some children with SEND face with regards to their educational needs and future adult lives.

While national differences were less prevalent, this question illustrated some further divergences in parent perceptions across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Respondents in Northern Ireland (NI) again tended towards higher 'very important' scores on several statements, significantly higher than respondents in England on teaching vocational subjects (52%, compared with 45% in England) and physical health (59%, compared with 50% in England). Northern Ireland and Wales were both more likely to view as 'very important' skills useful outside school (64% and 63% respectively, compared with 56% in England); and supporting pupils' development with life skills (66% in NI and 64% in Wales, compared with 55% in England). Developing good mental health was 'very important' for 70% of NI parents and 66% of Welsh parents,

compared with 58% in England. Relationships education meanwhile mattered more strongly in Northern Ireland (46%) than in either England (39%) or in Wales (38%).

Figure 7: Important skills and capabilities to leave primary school with
Laying the foundations - self-confidence, empathy, good general knowledge and problem-solving come top



Parenikind 10

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "In your opinion, which of the following are the most important skills and capabilities a child should leave primary school with? Please select up to 5 that you think are most important"

Moving on to consider how parents prioritise the skillsets and capabilities with which a child should leave primary and secondary/post-primary school, respectively, a few key changes are evident. As shown in Figure 7, which illustrates expectations for leaving primary school, self-confidence continues to come out top – although at a lower level than in 2018 (59% down from 64%). Other capabilities showing a significant drop are a good knowledge of key subjects (39% down from 47% in 2018) and enthusiasm for lifelong learning (29% down from 34%). Meanwhile, there was a significant increase in expectations for empathy and awareness of others (42%, up from 38%, and moving from 4th place to 2nd place) and resilience and the ability to cope with setbacks (35% up from 32%). Parent priorities for primary therefore continue to focus on foundational personal development skills and a good knowledge base, while appearing to weight personal character traits more highly than they did three years ago.

Women were likelier than men to select some of these personal character development traits (confidence, empathy, resilience, enthusiasm for lifelong learning and a sense of personal achievement), while men showed a higher likelihood of selecting certain cerebral and practical capabilities (problem-solving, participating in discussion, preparation for the future). The data also showed a few key differences by social grade, with ABC1 respondents likelier to rate resilience, enthusiasm for lifelong learning, and relating to others as important, while C2DE respondents scored self-confidence and a sense of personal achievement more highly. At a national level, meanwhile, parents in England were significantly likelier to view a good knowledge of key subjects as important (40%), compared with those in Wales (35%) or Northern Ireland (34%).

Figure 8: Important skills and capabilities to leave secondary/post-primary school with
Preparing for next steps - self-confidence, prep for FE/employment and resilience top the list



Parenikind 13

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: In your opinion, which of the following are the most important skills and capabilities a child should leave secondary school/post-primary school with? Please select up to 5

When it comes to secondary/post-primary education (Figure 8), self-confidence continues to top the list (53%) but, as seen in the primary context, at a slightly reduced level (down from 57%). Also of decreasing importance from 2018 is the ability to work independently/manage deadlines and a sense of personal achievement. As seen in the primary list, empathy and awareness of others has slightly increased (35% up from 32%), suggesting children’s capability in this respect has become a higher priority for parents over the last three years, regardless of school phase. Yet while top skillsets in the primary list suggest a focus on personal foundations for education and socialisation, the secondary/post-primary skillsets continue to focus more closely on preparation for young people’s next steps: self-confidence, followed by being prepared for further education or the job market (41%) and resilience and the ability to cope with setbacks (40%).

Looking into the demographics, ABCI respondents rated a number of capabilities (including resilience and knowledge of key subjects) more highly than C2DE parents, but the latter continued to prioritise self-confidence and a sense of personal achievement more highly, as seen in the primary education context. Nationally, respondents from Wales ranked a good knowledge of key subjects as most important for secondary leavers at 40%, significantly above Northern Ireland at 30% and slightly above England at 36%.

Parents from a BAME background were meanwhile likelier than those of white ethnicity to rate the ability to participate in discussion as important (29% compared with 22% of white parents), and slightly likelier to value relating to others (24% compared with 21%). The only area parents with a child eligible for free school meals tended to rate more highly than those without eligibility was a sense of personal achievement (31% compared with 27%), while the sole capability parents of a SEND child emphasised more significantly than those without was the ability to participate in discussion (26% compared with 22%). In both demographic groups, parents without these circumstances were likelier to rate prompted areas highly, which may suggest that challenges these groups face may result in differing or a more select range of priorities than those noted by the majority of respondents.

Key Insights Summary: Parent perceptions of education

- The 2021 data continues to show strong overall levels of parental investment in children receiving a well-rounded education, in which they wish to play an active role (85%) and support (80%) their child’s school.

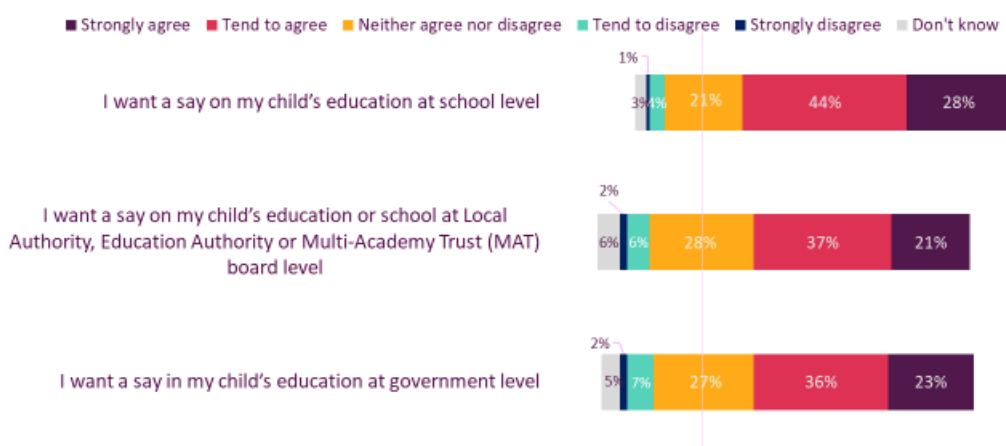
- While parents continue to report slightly lower overall levels of agreement with statements concerning practical school support and matters of parent voice/consultation, a 2020 boost in agreement for parent consultation measures - that schools act based on parent feedback (54%) and respondents feel able to have a say on decisions that affect their child's education (51%) – appears sustained this year rather than dropping with a return to the classroom. In particular, agreement on decision-making remains up from 41% in 2019.
- However, half of parents surveyed still feel their school should be more accountable to parents than it currently is. This represents a return to 2019 levels, again suggesting a pandemic 'boost' in 2020 for some measures which has slightly receded since.
- As shown in 2020, parents with a child eligible for FSM and those who have a child with SEND are likelier than others to show high levels of agreement on a range of questions around engagement, involvement and support. These parents are significantly likelier to strongly agree that they are supportive of their child's school, the school provides various forms of help and also allows a say in decisions. However, they are also likelier to strongly agree that their school should be more accountable to parents.
- Parents continue to show a high level of satisfaction with overall conditions in school life, even after eighteen months of disruption; with more than four in five agreeing their child feels safe at school (82%) and that their child is happy at school (79%).
- 60% of parents agree that bullying is dealt with fairly at their child's school and just 51% agree that the school offers good careers advice but it is encouraging that both these measures saw strong progress last year that has been sustained in 2021. However, with the employment and further education environment more turbulent for school leavers than ever before, a challenge is laid down for schools to ensure this vital area of provision does not fall off the agenda.
- Secondary/post-primary school parents continue to show less confidence than others in their child's happiness and safety at school, as well as in the quality of their education: 37% of secondary/post-primary parents strongly agree their child feels safe at school, compared with 48% of primary parents.
- Parents place high value on developing skills that are useful beyond school, supporting pupil's personal development by teaching life skills, preparing pupils to become responsible citizens, introducing a broad range of subjects and developing good mental health and well-being: all aspects supported by 88% of respondents.
- Parents in 2021 were likelier than in 2018 to value lessons on relationships education (82%, from 75%) and in supporting pupils' spiritual development and understanding (71%, from 64%).
- Parent priorities for primary school focus on foundational personal development skills and a good knowledge base, while valuing character development traits more highly than they did three years ago. There were significant increases for empathy and awareness of others (42%, up from 38%) and resilience and the ability to cope with setbacks (35%, up from 32%).
- Parent priorities for leaving secondary/post-primary school focus more closely on preparation for next steps: self-confidence, followed by being prepared for further education or the job market (41%) and resilience and the ability to cope with setbacks (40%).

3.2 Parent voice and engagement

Parent voice across levels of governance

Each year this research programme revisits a core monitoring question regarding the extent to which parents want a voice – and feel listened to – at different levels of educational governance. When it comes to matters that affect their child’s education, school unsurprisingly continues to be the level at which parents are most likely to want to have a say. In 2021, as Figure 9 shows, 72% of parents agree that they want to a say at school level, with over a quarter of these (28%) in strong agreement. Only 5% disagree that they want a say, while a fifth (21%) feel neutral (neither agree nor disagree).

Figure 9: Parent voice at governance level – wanting a say
Having a voice at school level still matters most to parents

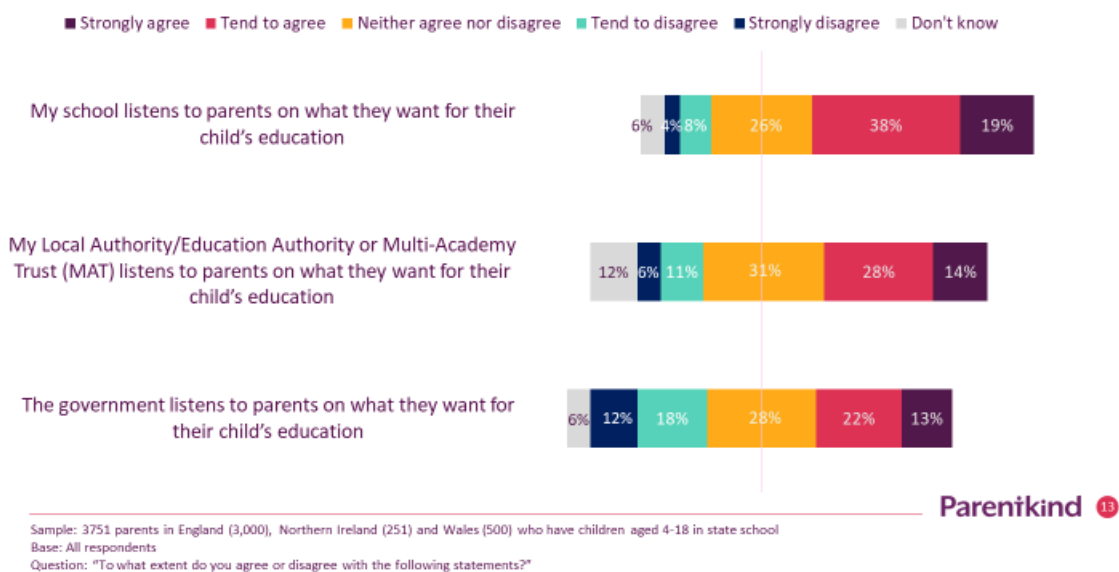


Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents
Question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"

Parentkind 12

Consistent with past findings, parents are less certain about how much say they want at government level or LA/EA/MAT level: altogether, 59% want a say at government level and 58% at LA/EA/MAT level, with strong agreement falling below a quarter of respondents in each case.

Figure 10: Parent voice at governance level – feeling heard
Parents feel most listened to at school level and least at government level



Turning to how heard parents feel (Figure 10), a persistent gap is revealed between how much say parents want and the extent to which they feel listened to. Over half of parents (57%) agree that their child's school listens (19% strongly agreeing, 38% tending to agree); yet, as noted above, almost three quarters of parents report wanting a say at this level. Beyond school level the perception of feeling heard drops to 42% who feel that their LA/EA/MAT listens to parents and just over a third (35%) feeling heard by government.

When it comes to the demographic data, the groups expressing strongest interest in having a say at governmental and LA/EA/MAT level include men, younger parents (aged 18-44), parents of BAME ethnicity, those with a disability, parents with a child eligible for FSM and those whose child has SEND. Parents from BAME backgrounds are likelier to strongly agree they want a say at both LA/EA/MAT level (29%, compared with 20% of White parents) and at government level (31% compared with 22% of White parents). Parents living with a disability are likelier to strongly agree that they want a say across all levels including: 38% at school level (compared with 26% of those no disability), 33% at government level (compared with 20% with no disability) and 30% at LA/EA/MAT level (compared with 19% with no disability).

Among parents whose children are eligible for FSM, the proportions who strongly agree that they want to have a say and who strongly agree that parents are listened to are consistently higher than among parents who aren't. FSM eligible parents strongly agree they want a say at school (38% compared with 26% of ineligible), government (35% compared with 20% of ineligible) and LA/EA/MAT (34% compared with 18% of ineligible). Parents whose child has SEND report have similar strong agreement scores across having a say at school (39%, compared with 25%), government (35% compared with 19%) and LA/EA/MAT (36% compared with 17%).

Those that feel most listened to across all levels include all the same demographics with men, younger parents (aged 18-44), parents of BAME ethnicity, those with a disability, those eligible for FSM and parents of a child with SEND standing out. In terms of age, the sense that parents are listened to tends to progressively diminish according to respondent age including school (from 27% of 18-34s, dropping to 13% of 55+), LA/EA/MAT (from 22% of 18-34s, to 9% of 55+) and government (from 21% of 18-34s, to just 6% of 55+).

Meanwhile, over half (57%) of BAME parents are in overall agreement (strongly agree and tend to agree) their LA/EA/MAT listens to parents, compared with 40% of White parents and 52% agree that government listens to parents, compared with just 34% of White parents. At school level too, where agreement is higher across all demographics, parents from BAME backgrounds are likelier to agree overall (65%) than White parents

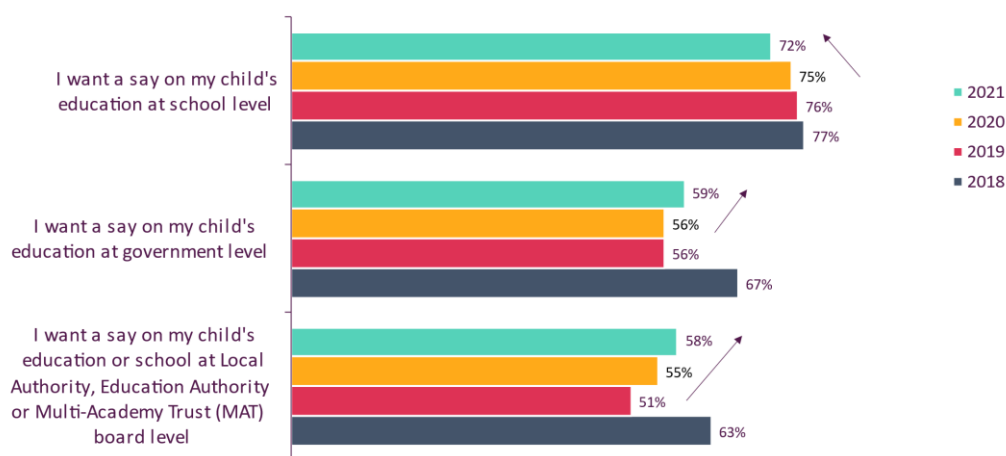
(56%) - and significantly likelier to strongly agree at 24% compared with 19%. Parents with a disability also feel more listened to at all levels of governance; with 19% feeling their LA/EA/MAT listens to parents (compared with 13% of those without disability) and 18% feeling government listens (compared with 12% without disability).

FSM eligibility reveals the same trend for strongly agree scores: with 31% (compared with 16% of parents with a child ineligible) strongly agreeing school listens to parents, 26% (compared with 10%) for LA/EA/MAT and 26% (compared with 10%) for government. Among SEND parents this is mirrored with 32% at school level (compared with 16% of parents whose child does not have SEND), 26% at LA/EA/MAT level (compared with 10% of parents whose child does not have SEND) and 26% at government level (compared with 9% of parents whose child does not have SEND). The consistently significant difference in response levels among these parent demographics suggest a much higher level of parent engagement from many in these groups; with both a strong demand for parent voice in evidence and, perhaps more noteworthy, a stronger perception of being heard.

A few differences emerge at national level, with Northern Ireland-based respondents the keenest to have a say at LA/LEA/MAT level (27% strongly agreeing, compared with 21% in England and 22% in Wales). However, those in England (14%) and Northern Ireland (18%) were both likelier to feel parents are listened to at LA/LEA/MAT level than those in Wales (10%). Finally, an interesting provisional finding this year is that cutting the data by respondents stated sexual orientation also suggests higher levels of interest in wanting a say and feeling that parents are listened to from parents who do not identify as heterosexual. Since this demographic question solely collects data on personal self-identification and the sub-sample remains small, we cannot draw firm conclusions from this finding at present. However, this may be a useful area to monitor in future as we gain wider insight into parent audiences and seek to enhance the inclusivity of parenting voice and engagement in education.

Last year, in the most trying of circumstances, parents actually reported feeling *more* listened to across all three levels, perhaps a reflection of the increased public focus on education, schools and parent opinion. In 2021 this stalled for school and LA/EA/MAT level but interestingly saw another incremental lift in the perception of feeling heard at government level – from 32% to 35% (Figure 11). For wanting a say at different governance levels, meanwhile, there was a slight increase in the desire to have a say at both government level (59% up from 56%) and LA/EA/MAT level (58% up from 55%), even as wanting a say at school level saw a slight drop (72% down from 75%).

Figure 11: Parent voice at governance level –having a say
A voice at school level matters most but increasing interest in a say at government and LA/EA/MAT level



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4 -18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" **Strongly Agree + Tend to Agree**

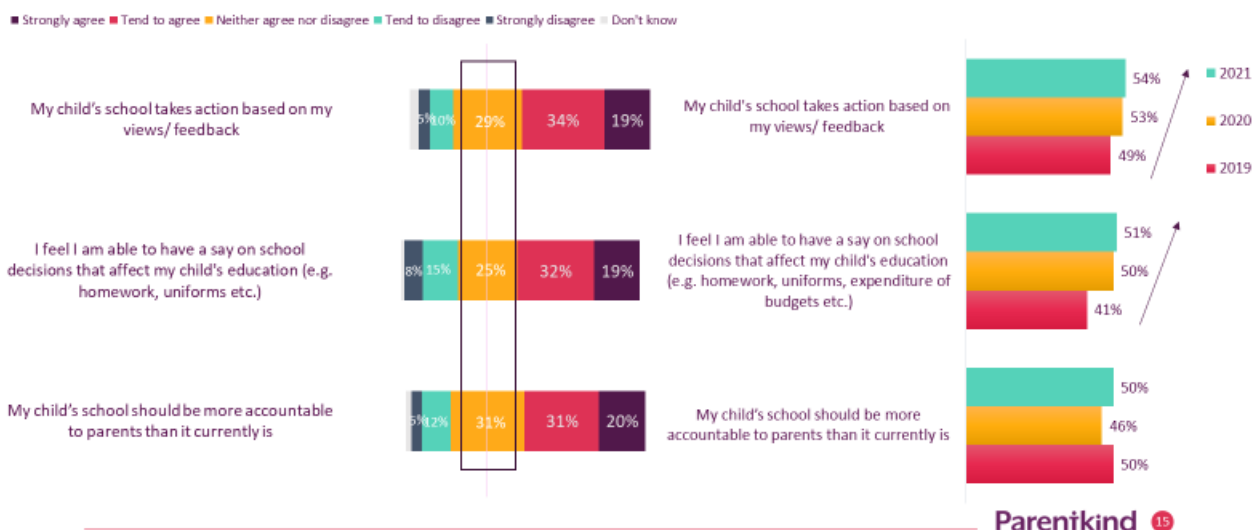
These measures may be sensitive to both media coverage and shifts in the policy landscape – both backdrops which have seen considerable turbulence in recent years. Yet it feels plausible that a greater focus on parent attitudes and opinions in the national conversation this year, together with increased involvement in education and learning, have supported a sustained lift in parents’ appetite for voice and sense of feeling heard. In particular, the data suggests an increased interest in consultation at regional and governmental level over the last few years that may signal a greater opportunity for parent voice beyond the school gate.

Raising issues and contributing ideas about education

Increasing the opportunities to consult and participate in their child’s education are key elements of schools’ accountability to parents and a vital aspect of Parentkind’s advocacy. Last year, parent perceptions paradoxically improved on some key voice and accountability metrics, as explored in section 3.1 above. As Figure 12 (below) shows more closely, any pandemic boost for accountability appears to have dropped away this year, with a return to 50% of parents saying their school should be more accountable. Ambivalence also remains high across the consultation and accountability statements, with a quarter or more of the sample opting for ‘neither agree nor disagree’. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see perceptions of being able to have a say on issues affecting education and feeling that the school takes action based on feedback have maintained the progress seen last year.

Figure 12: Having a say and accountability in educational decisions

Ability to have a say and see action holds slight improvement but accountability remains stalled after pandemic boost and ambivalence remains high



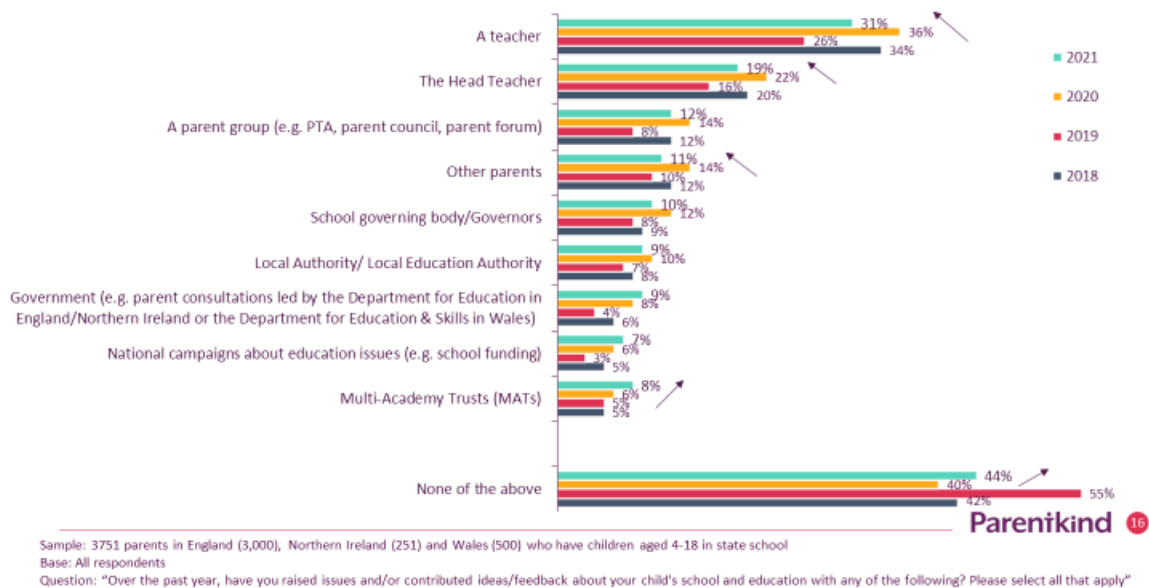
Sample: 1500 parents in England (1,200), Northern Ireland (100) and Wales (200) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All respondents

Question: "Thinking about the school that your oldest child currently attends, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements in relation to their schooling?" Ranked by agreement

Moving into the detail of parent feedback and engagement (Figure 13), last year’s rise in parent engagement dropped this year with a slight decline in raising issues, ideas, or feedback both in general and across most channels. In 2021, 44% of respondents said they had not shared any issues at all, down from 40% last year – although still improved on the 55% reported in 2019.

Figure 13: Raising issues and contributing ideas about education
Decline in parents raising issues and feedback across most channels in 2021



This overall decline is most in evidence across the most popular means of communication, likely influenced by social distancing measures and fewer daily opportunities for in-person discussion on site: raising issues with a teacher (31% from 35%), with a Head teacher (19% from 22%) and with other parents (11% from 14%). The decline was less evident among the less common means of sharing issues, such as LA/LEAs and Government (e.g. as part of consultations), both on almost one in 10 (9%). Another one in 10 had discussed issues with school governors, 7% had engaged with national campaigns and, encouragingly, there was a small but significant rise in raising issues with MATs from 6% to 8%. While there are still far fewer parents taking advantage of accountability mechanisms outside the school community, it is positive to see that current engagement has held firm and overall has risen since pre-pandemic research took place.

Divergences by demographic have meanwhile persisted and in many cases echo the themes discussed above, whereby parents experiencing more challenging circumstances at either personal or household level or with regard to their child's need appear more heavily invested in school communications. At a broad level, London-based parents are overwhelmingly likelier to have raised issues, with just 28% reporting that they had not, compared with 40% or more in all other areas. National differences were minor, with Northern Ireland and Wales likelier to have raised issues with a teacher and English respondents likelier than those in Wales to have raised issues with either school governors or Government consultations.

Younger parents also continue to be likelier than those aged 35 or over to have raised issues or feedback, further underlining the greater tendency of this group to engage with schools and seek out a voice across the board. They also remain significantly likelier than older parents to report having engaged with lower engagement feedback channels, such as Government communications, MATs and national campaigns, as well as parent groups.

Continuing to build on the overall findings on engagement, parents from BAME backgrounds, those with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM and those with a child with SEND were likelier across the board to have been actively raising issues and feedback regarding their child's school and education. Parents from a BAME background, for example, were likelier to have raised issues via most channels and significantly likelier to have used less popular channels – from a fifth or more engaging with parent groups (23% compared with 11% of White parents) and governors (19% compared with 9% of White parents), to 19% raising issues with Government (compared with 8% of white parents) and 13% engaging with national campaigns (compared with 7% of White parents). Overall, only 30% of BAME parents had not raised any issues, compared with 46% of White parents.

Similarly, only a third (32%) of parents with a disability had not consulted on any issues, compared with 47% of those without a disability. This group of parents were consistently likelier to have raised issues across all prompted communication channels, from teachers (36% compared with 30% of those without disability) and head teachers (24% compared with 18% of those without disability) to national campaigns (10% compared with 7% of those without disability). The divide was the same for parents of a child with FSM eligibility, with only a third reporting no issues to raise and a particularly noticeable likelihood of engaging with less used channels of communication such as LA/LEAs (16% compared with 7% of ineligible parents) and Government (17% compared with 7% of ineligible parents). They were also likelier to have talked with head teachers (23% compared with 17% of ineligible parents) and parent groups (18% compared with 11% of ineligible parents).

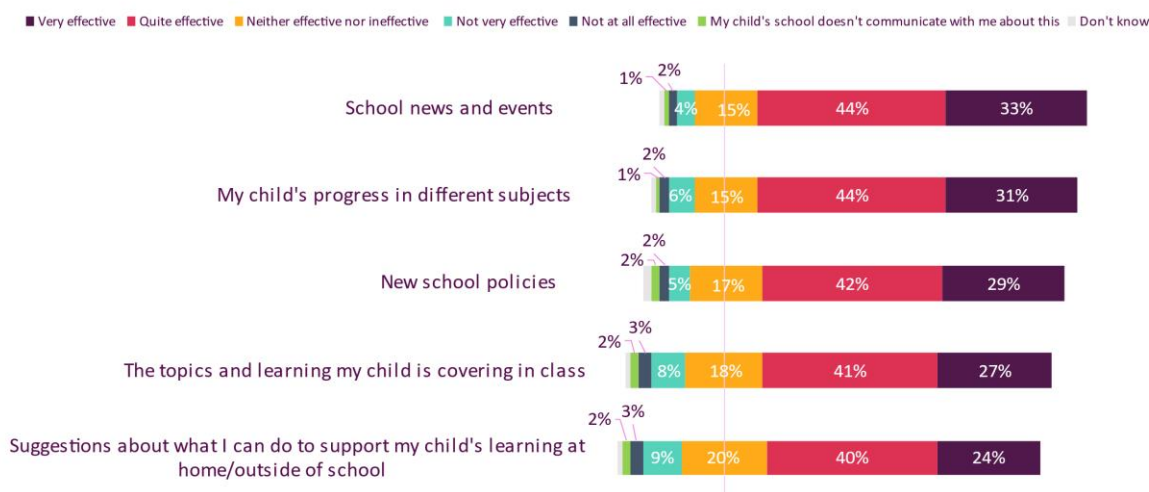
It is likely that for households facing particularly complex challenges, whether financially or in terms of health and educational needs, the context of school closures and social distancing impacts will have continued to elevate already higher levels of regular engagement with school and educational leaders. For parents of a child with SEND this is particularly marked and, in keeping with last year, less than a fifth (19%) raised no issues regarding school/education, in contrast with 52% of parents without a child with SEND. At four out of five parents, this is the highest level of interaction among any group and extends to significantly higher engagement across almost all channels. In particular, and likely reflecting the stronger impacts of the pandemic on some children and families affected by SEND, there were strong levels of interaction beyond the school gates at with Government consultations (22%), at LEA/LA level (19%), with MATs (19%) and with national campaigns (17%).

Effectiveness of school communications

Parents' feelings about the effectiveness of school communications were first explored in 2018 and revisited this year to monitor any changes. Overall, as Figure 14 shows, communications about school news and events are considered most effective at 77% overall, with a third (33%) viewing them as 'very effective.' The child's progress in difference subjects came second at 75%, with 31% viewing as 'very effective', followed by new school policies at 71%, with 29% viewing as 'very effective'. Dropping below the 70% level, topics and learning the child is covering in class came fourth at 68% (27% 'very effective') and suggestions about supporting the child's learning at home/outside school were ranked last at 65% (24% 'very effective').

Figure 14: Effectiveness of school communications

School comms strongest on news/events and child's progress, weakest on supporting learning at home



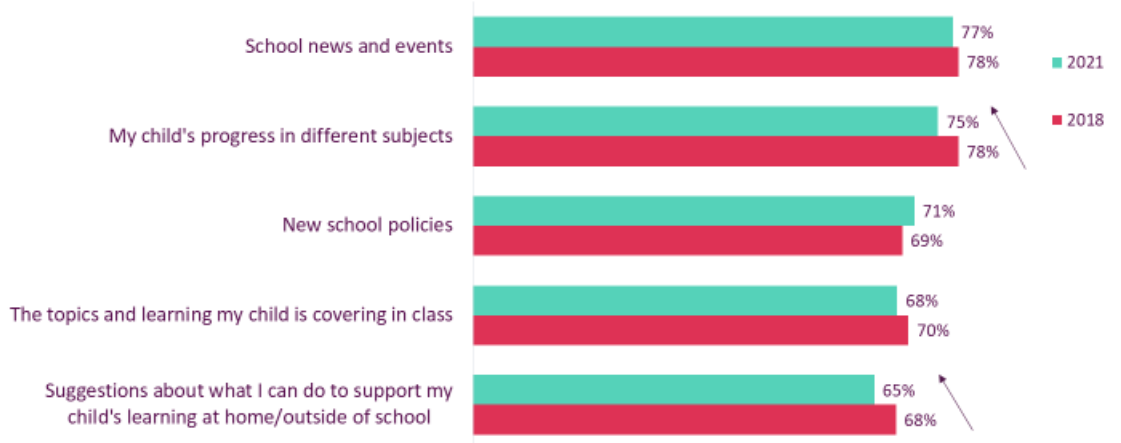
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4 -18 in state school

Base: All respondents

Question: "How effective is your child's school at communicating with you about the following?" **Ranked by Very effective + Quite effective**

A first observation is that these effectiveness scores are overall positive, with perceived effectiveness totalling at least two-thirds of parents surveyed across all areas. In the context of current pressures on schools and the unpredictability of both practical and educational news, these feel like strong results, although there is still progress to be made, especially in respect of suggestions to support home learning.

Figure 15: Effectiveness of school communications
Slight drop in perceived effectiveness of comms on child's progress and suggestions for home learning



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: How effective is your child's school at communicating with you about the following? Ranked by Very effective + Quite effective

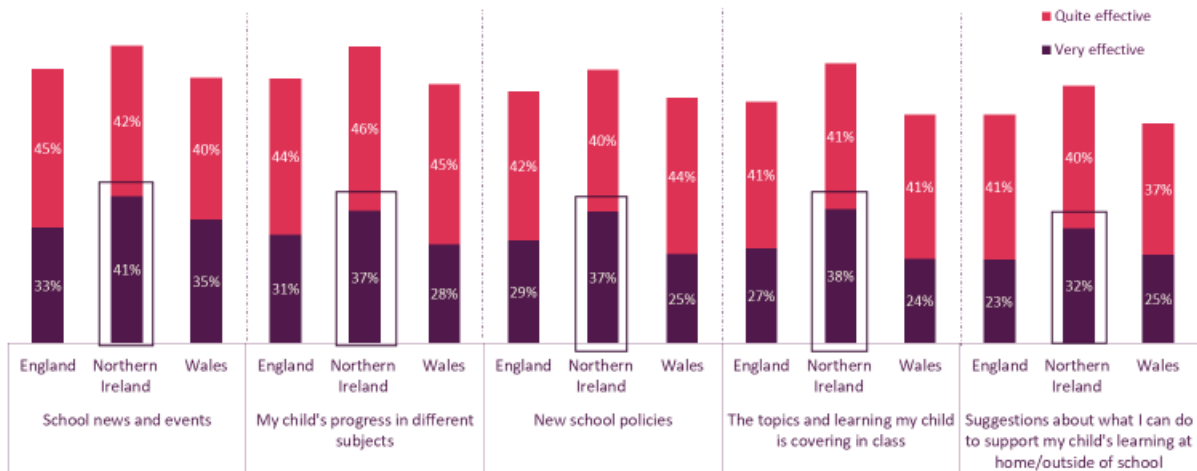
Parentkind 18

As Figure 15 shows, there was little change across most statements between 2018 and 2021, except a slight drop in the perceived effectiveness of communications on both the child's progress in different subjects and in suggestions for home learning. The latter presents an interesting change since it can be assumed that communications on supporting home learning will have vastly increased at most schools within the last 18 months; yet so too has the need for home learning support and parental expectations for receiving it.

There were a few notable national differences in terms of school communications, with Northern Ireland-based respondents consistently and significantly likelier to view communications as 'very effective' than those in England or Wales (Figure 16). This appears in keeping with the wider likelihood of engagement and approval seen elsewhere.

Figure 16: Effectiveness of school communications

Parents in Northern Ireland likelier to view communications as effective across all areas



Parentkind 19

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents by nation (as above)
 Question: "How effective is your child's school at communicating with you about the following?" Ranked by Very effective + Quite effective

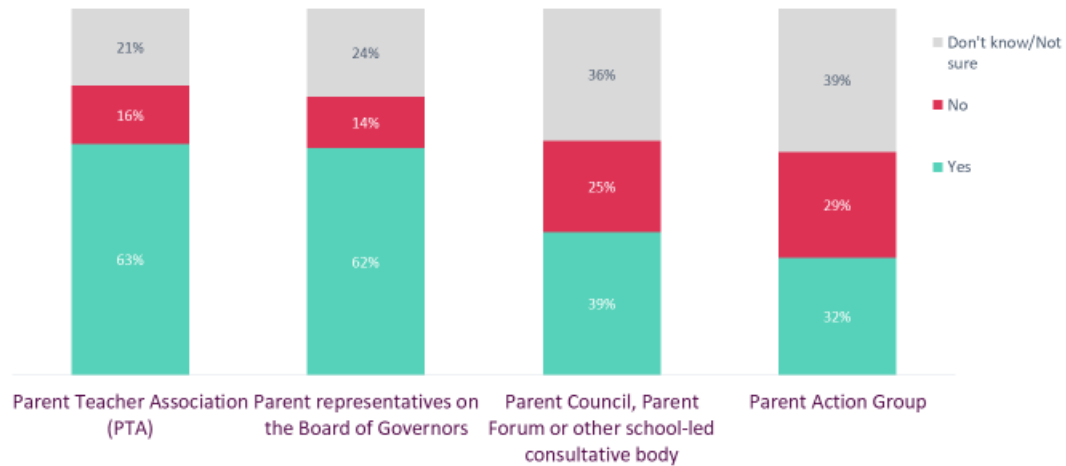
In a familiar trend to earlier engagement and parent voice questions, the data also shows a stronger likelihood of viewing communications as 'very effective' among parents with a disability, and those with a child with SEND. The strongest endorsement of effectiveness, however, was found among parents with a child eligible for FSM whose tendency to view each area as 'very effective' is significantly higher than ineligible parents. The results therefore continue to show a higher level of strong endorsement/engagement from groups with a more marginalised experience, which may be informed by higher levels of general interaction and/or a slightly different relationship with schools overall.

Awareness of parent groups

Moving on from parent voice and feedback into broader participation and forms of involvement in school life, the survey monitors ongoing awareness of parent groups within respondents' schools. Asked about whether their child's school has different types of parent groups, we find a steep drop off between awareness of a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (63%) and parent representatives on the Board of Governors (62%, a new prompt) and either a Parent Council or other school-led consultative body (39%) or a Parent Action Group (32%) – Figure 17. Correspondingly, while don't know scores are substantial even for PTAs and parent Governors at 21% and 24%, respectively, we see much higher uncertainty around different parent groups at 36% for Parent Council and other consultative bodies and 39% for Parent Action groups.

Figure 17: Awareness of parent groups at school

Majority of are aware of PTA and parent Governors - but high 'don't knows' scores for other parent groups



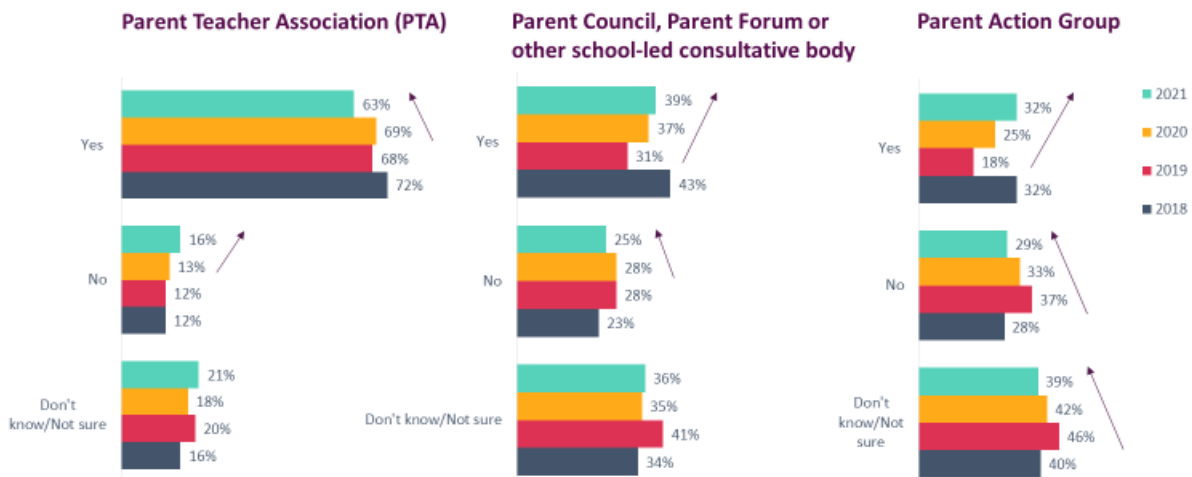
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "As far as you know, does your child's school have any of the following parent groups?"

Parenikind 20

Interestingly, 2021 saw a drop in awareness of a PTA at school (see Figure 18) – which may be informed by the disruption of school community events and extra-curricular activities, as well as in settling-in processes. From a high of 72% awareness in 2018, this declined to 69% in 2020 and 63% this year. At the same time a gradual rise has continued in awareness of Parent Councils, Forums or other school-led consultative bodies, from 31% in 2019 to 39% this year. This year's rise may have been assisted by a clarification in wording. Parent Action Groups' have also seen an incremental increase since 2019, rising from 18% that year to reach a third (32%) in 2021.

Figure 18: Awareness of parent groups at school

Awareness of PTA drops in 2021, while gradual rise in awareness for other groups continues



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "As far as you know, does your child's school have any of the following parent groups?"

Parenikind 21

While the question wording provides a description of groups in each prompt, to help capture different forms such groups may take from school to school, it should be noted that this figure reports *parent knowledge* of

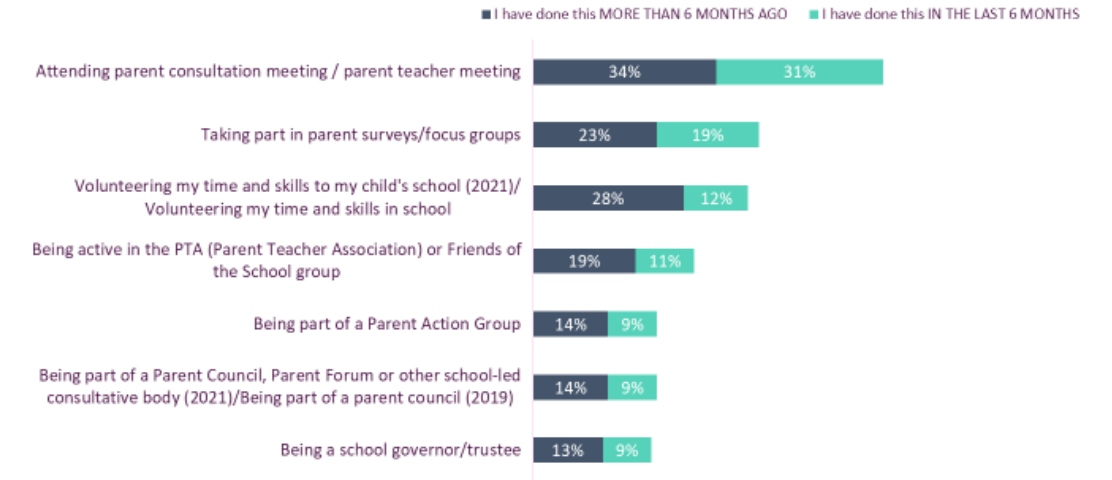
such a group at their child’s school, not verification that it exists. It is interesting to note the discrepancy between a drop in PTA awareness alongside tentative increases in lesser-known parent groups, which may indicate a slightly reduced visibility for more established groups (e.g. with fewer fundraising events possible), even as awareness of more consultative or campaign-based groups at school and neighbourhood-level may have risen during a time of community challenge.

Participation in school life and education (and barriers)

Moving on to explore the extent to which parents are participating in their child’s education, the survey revisited a regular topic last explored in 2019 to consider a range of potential forms of engagement and involvement, from attending parent-teacher consultations to becoming a parent governor. For each, parents indicated whether they have participated in the last 6 months, have done so more than 6 months ago, have not previously done so but would consider in future, or have never done so and would not consider it; offering an insight into parents’ receptivity to typical formats of participation with schools.

As Figure 19 shows, the most common ways of getting involved are attending parent/teacher meetings (65% have done this, 31% within the last six months) and taking part in parents surveys or focus groups (42% have done this, 19% within the last six months). Higher commitment forms of involvement such as being a parent governor or trustee, joining a Parent Action Group or a Parent Council are all rarer activities – although it is striking to note that one in 10 respondents still reported participation in these areas within the last six months. It is also very encouraging in the context of social distancing restrictions and intermittent school/school bubble closures to see that four in 10 (40%) of parents nevertheless say they have volunteered their time and skills to their child’s school - and a fifth of these (19%) have done so within the last six months. Similarly, three in 10 (30%) respondents say they have been active in the PTA, with 12% in the last six months.

Figure 19: Parent engagement and contribution
Parent-teacher consultations and surveys most prevalent – but four in 10 have volunteered and three in 10 have participated in the PTA

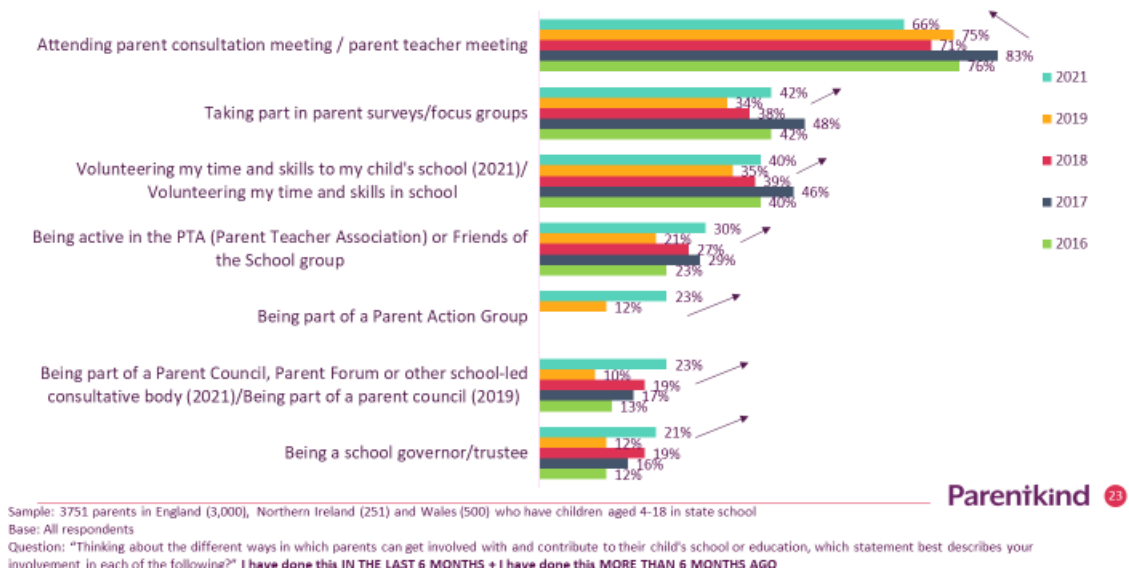


Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Thinking about the different ways in which parents can get involved with and contribute to their child's school or education, which statement best describes your involvement in each of the following?" I have done this IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS + I have done this MORE THAN 6 MONTHS AGO



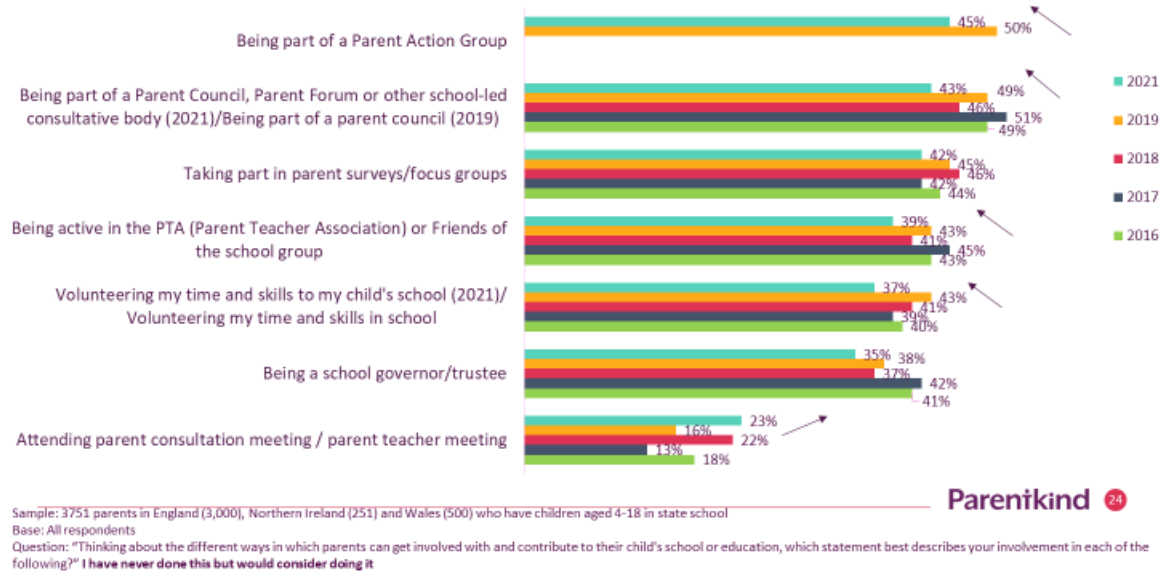
Viewing trends over time, parent involvement has had a very positive boost in 2021, with participation in all prompted areas rising on past years (Figure 20). The only exception is for parent-teacher consultations which (likely due to social distancing restrictions) decreased to 66%, from 75% in 2019.

Figure 20: Parent engagement and contribution – trend data for ‘Have done’
Parent participation rises across the board, with exception of parent/teacher meetings



All other forms of participation rose – for surveys and volunteering to their highest since 2017 and for the remaining activities to their highest levels yet. For the highest-commitment engagements (school governorships and Parent Councils), a fifth of respondents overall said they had taken part at some point.

Figure 21: Parent engagement and contribution – trend data for ‘Would consider’
Consideration drops with higher participation levels but over four in 10 open to Parent Action Groups and Parent Councils



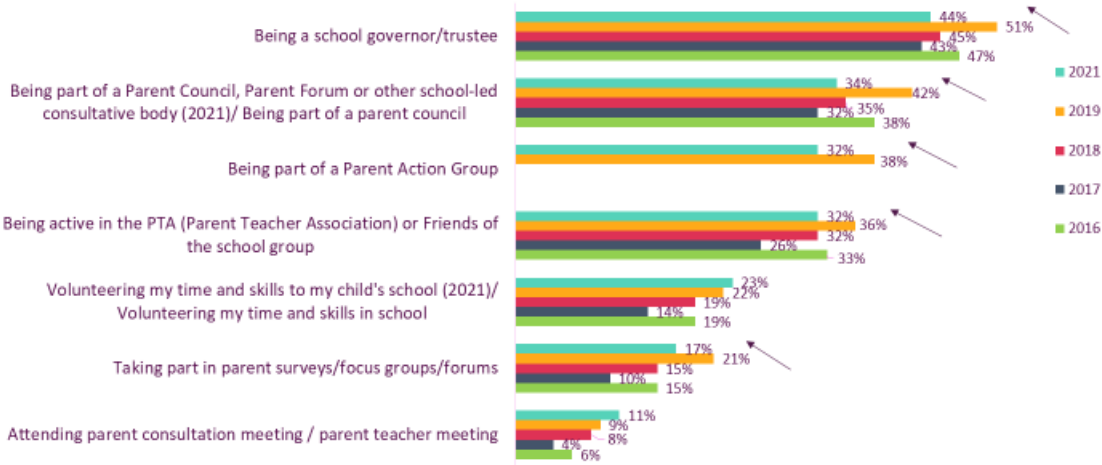
Looking into the proportion who have not yet participated but would consider it in future, scores have dropped across most activities (Figure 21), perhaps informed by increased participation elsewhere. However, it is interesting to note high levels of consideration for lower-awareness parent groups. Over four in 10, respectively would consider getting involved (45% for Parent Action Groups and 43% for Parent Councils), while 39% show consideration for the PTA. There is also over a third (37%) who express consideration for

volunteering, all suggesting a promising reservoir of untapped potential interest for more active involvement with school life and consultation processes.

Becoming a school governor or trustee is still the area of least interest, as Figure 22 shows, with 44% saying they would not consider it (albeit down from 51% last year). Continuing the theme above, there is further optimism for parent groups as non-consideration drops across Parent Councils, Parent Action Groups and PTAs. This suggests only a third of parents currently indicate an active unwillingness to take part in parent groups – and less than a quarter (23%) report that they would not volunteer.

Exploring the demographics, we see similar trends on involvement, with younger parents, primary school parents, those with a child eligible for FSM, those living with disability and those with a child who has SEND likelier to report they have participated in several activities. Young parents, primary school parents and those living with disability, as well as ABCIs on some measures, are particularly likely to indicate ‘Would consider in future’. Those likelier to report non-consideration meanwhile include women, older parents, and parents of secondary/post-primary/post 16 pupils - all of which may be useful insights to bear in mind as schools and parent groups craft their activities and communications to ensure inclusion is as wide as possible.

Figure 22: Parent engagement and contribution – trend data for ‘Would NOT consider’
School Board still area of least interest but non-consideration drops across parent groups



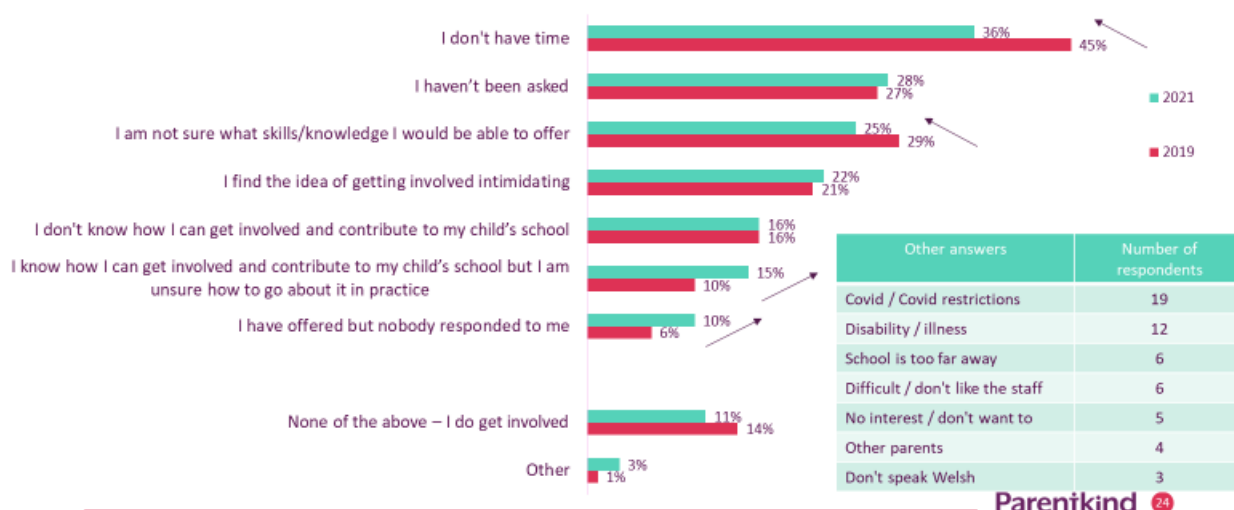
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4–18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Thinking about the different ways in which parents can get involved with and contribute to their child's school or education, which statement best describes your involvement in each of the following?" **I have never done this and would NOT consider doing this**



If parent participation is to continue growing and help to inform the direction of travel at both school level and beyond, it is important to monitor barriers to involvement to ensure they are mitigated wherever possible and allow a diverse range of parent experiences to be heard.

Figure 23: Barriers to engagement

Time is still the biggest obstacle but has diminished in importance - unsure how to go about it and non-responsiveness on the rise



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school?"

In 2021, the top barrier remained time, at over a third (36%), followed by not being asked (28%), being unsure what they have to offer (25%) and finding the idea intimidating (22%). However, it is interesting to note that time has dropped in importance, down from 45% in 2019, perhaps due to changes in working patterns, including furlough and working from home. While this may be a temporary state, it is a positive note for now, since it is the main factor that schools have no ability to influence. Not knowing what they have to offer has also dropped slightly (from 29% to 25%). While several barriers remain consistent with 2019 (not being asked, finding it intimidating, not knowing how to get involved) and open to schools and parent groups to mitigate, two show a significant rise: knowing how to get involved but unsure how to go about it in practice (15% up from 10%) and having offered but no one responded (10% up from 6%).

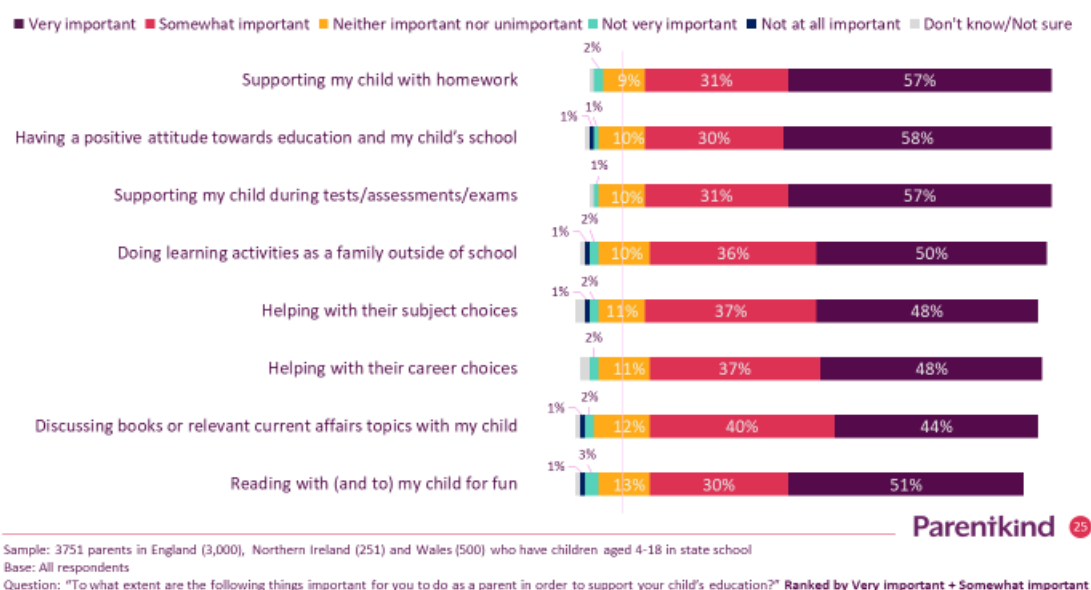
All these factors share an element of uncertainty or intimidation, whether in theory or practice, and obstacles around inviting and maintaining participant interest. With only one in 10 (11%) currently describing themselves as experiencing no barriers to getting involved and contributing, there is clearly a lot of untapped potential. It may therefore be useful for school communities to bear common barriers in mind and to consider the ways in which they can be minimised to ensure an inclusive and transparent offer for parents.

Parents' views of their own role supporting education

Most parents have been more involved than ever in their child's day-to-day schooling in recent years, yet the extent to which they view key areas of parental support as important saw no real change since 2018 (Figure 23). All the prompted areas shown below had overall importance scores of over 80%.

Figure 24: Parental support for their child's education

Parents view homework support, support during tests and a positive attitude to education as most important



The top three priorities for supporting their child's education continued to be homework support, a positive attitude towards education and the child's school, and supporting the child during tests, all with 'very important' scores of well over half the sample and overall importance of 87-88%. Learning activities together, helping with subject choices, helping with careers choices and discussing relevant books/current affairs continue to be prioritised at 84-86% overall importance, with 'very important' scores of 44% or more. Even the area of lowest overall importance – reading to and with my child for fun – was viewed by parents at 81% importance overall and was seen as 'very important' by half of respondents (51%).

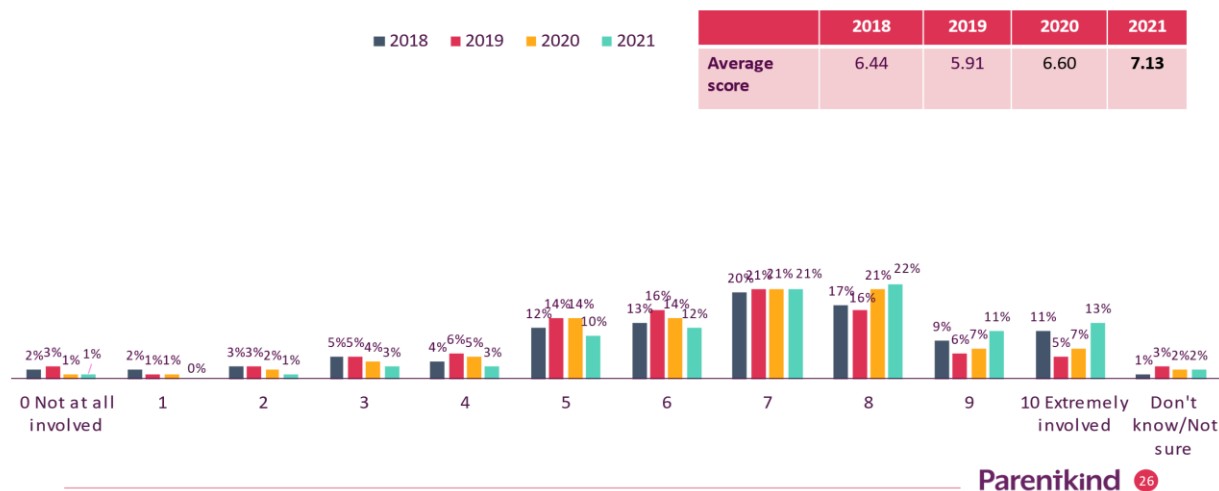
At a national level, there were three key areas of practical support which respondents in Northern Ireland and Wales were likelier to deem 'very important' than those in England: supporting with homework (55% in England, compared with 62% in NI and 63% in Wales); helping with subject choices (47% in England, compared with 55% in NI and 54% in Wales); and helping with career choices (47% in England, compared with 55% in NI and 54% in Wales).

Overall involvement in education

Finally, when we asked parents how involved they felt, overall, in their child's school and education, this year saw the mean score rise to 7.13, from last year's 6.60 and from 5.91 in 2019. This is the highest mean score seen yet and, continuing the uplift seen last year, tends to consolidate what we know about the way the pandemic has necessarily increased parental engagement in their children's learning. As Figure 25 shows, there were lower proportions of respondents scoring their involvement at 6 or less, while the proportion placing their involvement at 9 or more increased this year. In 2021, for example, 13% (up from 7%) scored their involvement at the maximum 10 – extremely involved.

Figure 25: Overall sense of involvement in education

Substantial rise in parents' sense of involvement in school and education in 2021



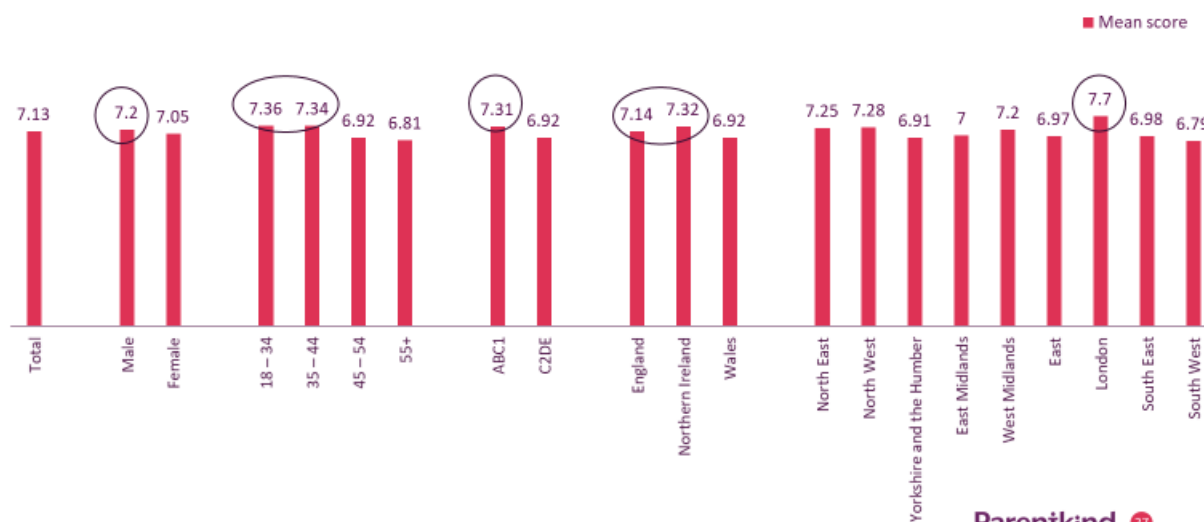
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents

Question: "Overall, how involved do you feel in your child's school and education? Please answer on a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 is 'Extremely involved' and 0 is 'Not at all involved'"

As found last year, parents' overall sense of involvement with their child's school and education was significantly higher among younger parents, ABC1s, and among those based in London (Figure 26). Nationally, parents in England and Northern Ireland rated their involvement significantly higher than those in Wales.

Figure 26: Overall sense of involvement in education – by demographic

Stronger involvement from younger parents, men, ABC1s, Londoners (and in England or NI rather than Wales)



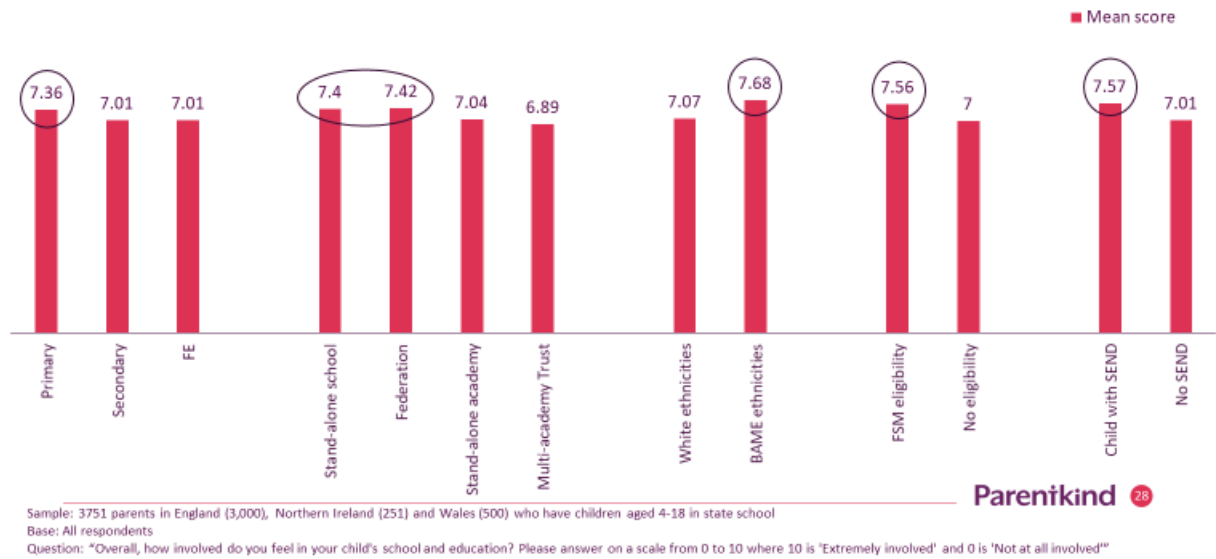
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents

Question: "Overall, how involved do you feel in your child's school and education? Please answer on a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 is 'Extremely involved' and 0 is 'Not at all involved'"

Further in keeping with last year's trends, primary parents rated their involvement more highly than parents of older school phases did, while those whose child was at a local authority-maintained school reported a higher sense of involvement compared with those at academies (Figure 27). Parents from BAME backgrounds, those with a child eligible for FSM and those with a child with SEND also reported higher mean scores than the rest of the sample.

Figure 27: Overall sense of involvement in education – by demographic

Stronger involvement among Primary and local authority maintained school parents, parents of BAME ethnicity, those eligible for FSM and parents of a child with SEND



It is important to note that this is a score of perception, capturing how involved parents *feel* in their child's education and school, rather than a clear representation of their daily engagement.

Key Insights Summary: Parent voice and engagement

- School continues to be the institutional level at which more parents want to have a say on issues that affect their child's education at almost three quarters of parents (72%).
- There was a slight increase in the desire to have a say at both government level (59% up from 56%) and LA/EA/MAT level (58% up from 55%), suggesting an increased interest in consultation beyond school level, perhaps encouraged by recent parental involvement in education and learning.
- There remains a gap between parents' desire to have a say and how far they feel heard, with 57% agreeing that their school listens to parents, 42% feeling heard at LA/EA/MAT level, and just over a third (35%) feeling heard by government. While the first two measures stalled this year, the perception of feeling heard by government continued an ongoing rise in recent years.
- Parents from BAME backgrounds, parents living with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM and those with a child with SEND are much likelier than other parents to both want a say and to feel parents are listened to, reinforcing the higher engagement seen in section 3.1.
- There was a slight decline in raising issues, ideas or feedback this year, with 44% of respondents saying they had not shared any issues at all, down from 40% last year. Raising issues with a teacher dropped to 31% (from 35%), with a Head teacher to 19% (from 22%) and with other parents down to 11% (from 14%), likely influenced by social distancing measures.
- Younger parents, parents from BAME backgrounds, those with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM and those with a child with SEND were likelier to have raised issues regarding their child's education, and many of the same groups reported higher approval for the effectiveness of school communications.

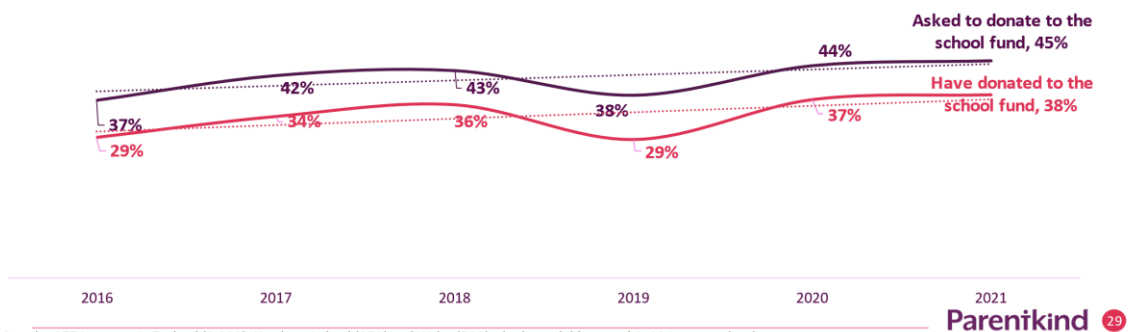
- While 2021 saw decreased awareness of a PTA at respondents' child's school (from 69% to 63%), a welcome rise continued in awareness of Parent Councils (from 31% in 2019 to 39% this year) and Parent Action Groups (from 18% in 2019 to 32% this year).
- Encouragingly, in the context of social distancing, four in 10 (40%) of parents say they have volunteered their time and skills to their child's school - and a fifth of these (19%) have done so within the last six months. Three in 10 (30%) have been active in the PTA, with 12% in the last six months.
- The top barrier to involvement in school life remains time (36%), followed by not being asked (28%), being unsure what they have to offer (25%) and finding the idea intimidating (22%). However, the time barrier is an issue for fewer parents than in 2019, perhaps due to changing work patterns.
- Parents report higher levels of overall involvement in their child's school and education in 2021 than in any previous year. The mean rose to 7.13 this year, up from 6.60 in 2020, consolidating what we know about the role of parents in education during the pandemic.

3.3 Donations, costs and spending

Being asked to donate to the school fund continues to be a common and necessary practice amongst schools. This year the proportion of parents who report being asked to make a donation has held firm at 45% (Figure 28). This is the highest proportion since we started tracking this measure in 2016. Those who report having donated follows a similar trajectory and means this year well over a third (38%) of all parents report giving to their child's school fund.

Figure 28: Parental financial contributions

Donation requests and donations given hold steady from 2020; over a third gave to the school fund in 2021



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents

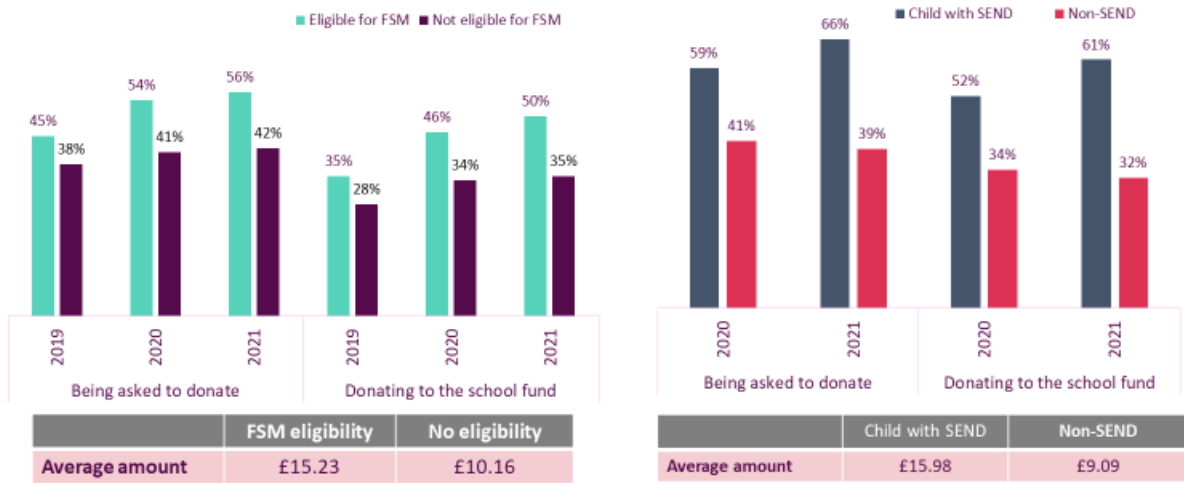
Question: Some schools ask parents and guardians for a regular voluntary financial contribution to the cost of running the school, which is often known as a 'donation to the school fund' (different to a donation to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fund). Have you ever been asked by your child's school to donate to the school fund?

Parentkind 28

For the third year in a row the data shows that parents with a child eligible for FSM are likelier to be asked to give, likelier to do so as a result, and also report giving more on average (Figure 29). In 2021 and in keeping with the broader increase in donor amounts discussed below, this has climbed to 56% being asked to donate and 50% reporting that they have done so. This pattern appears evident to an even stronger degree among parents whose child has SEND (66% asked to donate this year and 61% reporting that they have), suggesting the higher levels of engagement evident within both groups across survey questions also correlates with their likelihood of being approached for donation, choosing to do so, and of contributing more when they do.

Figure 29: Parental financial contributions (by FSM eligibility and SEND experience)

Parents eligible for FSM and parents of a child with SEND likelier to donate – and to give more when they do



Parentkind 33

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

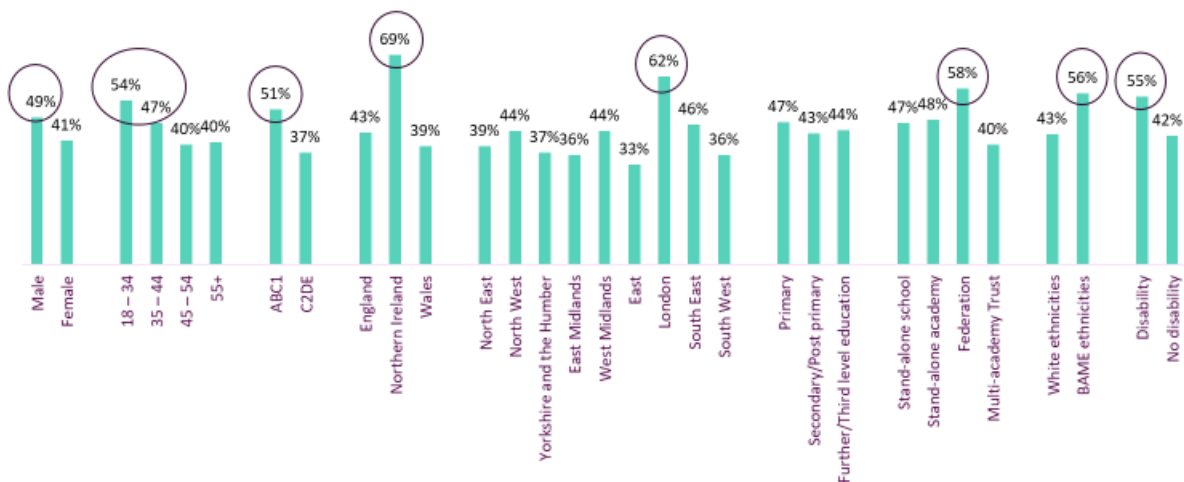
Base: All respondents

Question: "How much, on average, do you donate to your child's school fund?" Those that have donated (based on those who have not selected "I don't donate to the school fund")

Many other school fund trends observed in previous waves continued, with younger parents and parents from ABC1 households likelier to be asked to donate (Figure 30), as were those in Northern Ireland and London. Parents whose school is part of a federation also appear likelier to be asked, as do parents of BAME ethnicity and those living with disability. All these groups show a correspondingly higher likelihood of having donated.

Figure 30: Parental financial contributions – being asked to donate to the school fund

Younger parents, ABC1s, parents of BAME ethnicity, those with a disability and those in NI or London likeliest to be asked



Parentkind 34

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All respondents

Question: Some schools ask parents and guardians for a regular voluntary financial contribution to the cost of running the school, which is often known as a 'donation to the school fund' (different to a donation to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fund). Have you ever been asked by your child's school to donate to the school fund?

Figure 31: Parental financial contributions – mean amount contributed to the school fund
Average monthly donation rises to highest yet – up £3.47 on pre-pandemic levels

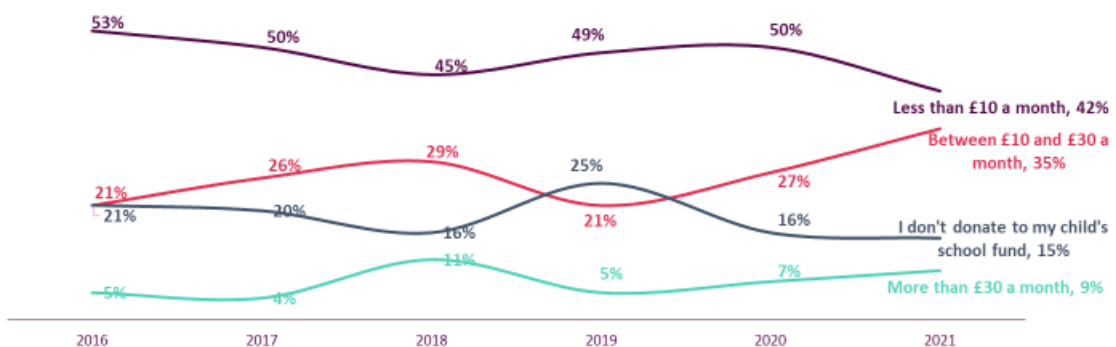


Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: Those who were asked for a donation (1,676)
 Question: How much, on average, do you donate to your child's school fund?

Parentikind 32

Parents who make a donation report giving, on average, £11.62 a month in 2021 (Figure 31). This shows a substantial rise from £10.00 in 2020 and £8.15 in 2019 – taking the average donation to its highest level since we began measuring it and up £3.47 on pre-pandemic levels. While on one level this may be unsurprising in the context of the crisis faced by schools (including, for example, the shortfall that may have resulted from fewer school fundraising events), it nonetheless appears remarkable in light of the financial insecurity that many families have faced in the same time period. As Figure 32 shows, the increase is driven by a significant increase in those giving more than £10 per month, particularly those giving between £10 and £30 which has risen to over a third (35%).

Figure 32: Parental financial contributions – amount contributed to the school fund
Significant increase in parents giving £10 and over per month, drop in those giving less than £10



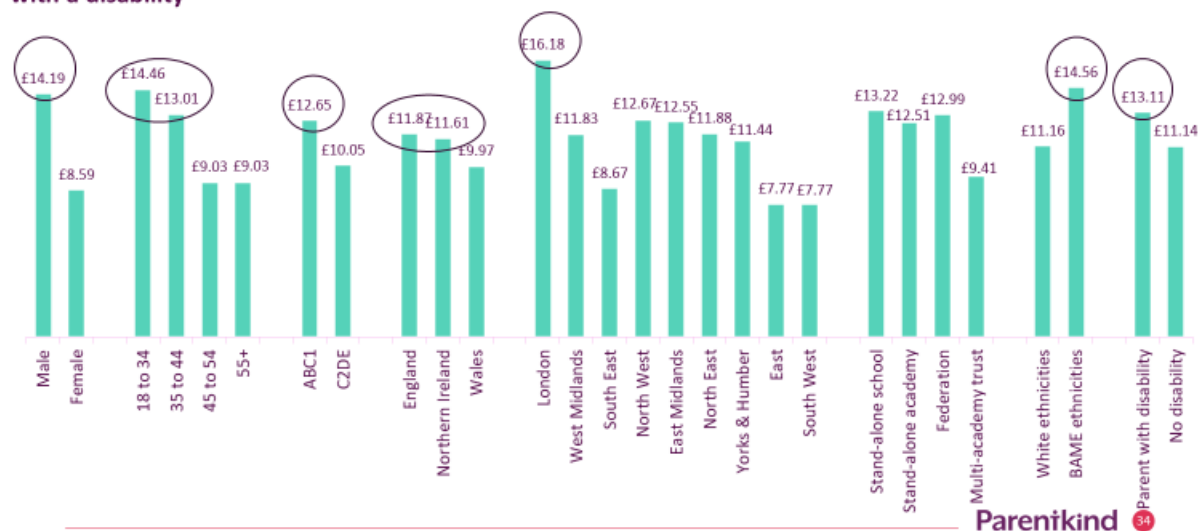
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: Those who were asked for a donation (1,676)
 Question: How much, on average, do you donate to your child's school fund?

Parentikind 33

The demographic groups likeliest to report giving a higher sum per month often reflect the parents who are likeliest to report being asked to donate and to do so in the first place. In addition to parents with a child eligible for FSM and parents of a child with SEND, as highlighted above (Figure 29), we see that those who report higher average donations include men, younger parents, ABC1s, those of BAME ethnicity and those living with a disability (Figure 33). Parents in England and Northern Ireland also report a higher average sum than those in Wales. The highest mean donation among any group is reported by parents in London, at £16.18 per month, closely followed by those parents with a child with SEND (£15.98 per month).

Figure 33: Parental financial contributions – mean donation by demographic

Higher amounts reported by men, younger parents, ABC1s, Londoners, parents of BAME ethnicity and those with a disability



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: Those who were asked for a donation (1,676)
 Question: How much, on average, do you donate to your child's school fund?

Parentkind 34

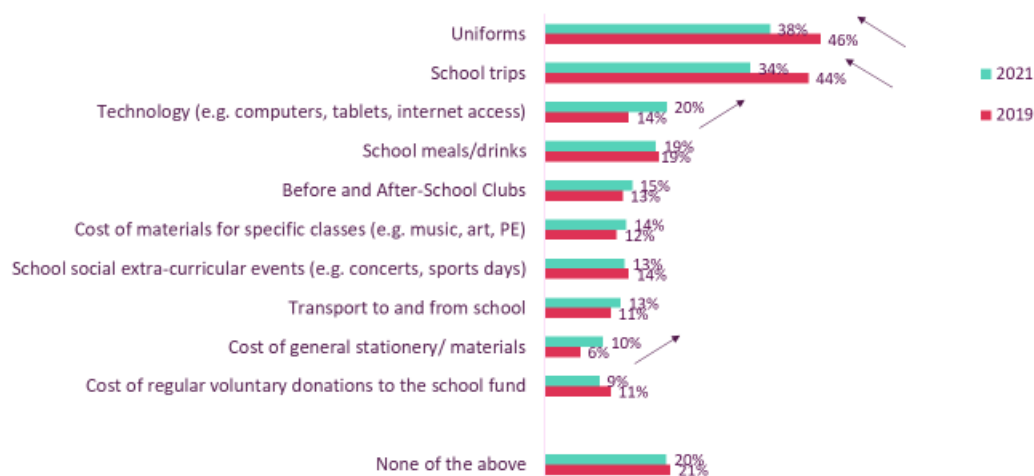
Over half of parents (55%, up slightly from 53% last year) report that they are aware of where these parental donations to the school fund are being spent this year. This measure has shown some volatility in the past, having moved from lower levels up to 51% in 2018 before dipping back down to 36% in 2019. It is therefore encouraging to see a trend towards greater transparency on school fund spending persist in 2021, with less than a third (31%) unaware of how donations are spent and 13% not sure (both scores at their lowest level yet). A strong role for parental donations shows no signs of retreating in the future so it is crucial that parents continue to feel a clear sense of where these contributions are spent.

Perceptions of the cost of schooling

Moving from donation trends towards how parents are currently feeling about the various costs associated with sending a child to school, we returned to a question last posed in 2019, to gauge which of the most common expenses are most concerning; defined as in a respondent's top three. In 2021, uniforms (38%) and school trips (34%) still top the list but have declined noticeably since 2019, when they were a concern for 46% and 44% of parents respectively (Figure 34). However, the third most concerning cost associated with sending a child to school this year was technology, replacing school meals/drinks and up from joint-fourth place, this concern has risen significantly from 14% to 20%, unsurprisingly in an era of frequent home learning. School meals/drinks came fourth (19%), followed by before and after-school clubs in fifth place at 15%. A fifth of parents reported that none of these areas were of particular concern.

Figure 34: Concern for the cost of schooling

Concern for the cost of technology goes up in 2021 - uniform and trips still top the list but declined since 2019



Parentkind 38

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: Thinking about the financial cost of your child going to school, which (if any) of the following costs are of particular concern to you? Please select up to 3*.

Looking at the demographic picture, there were differences by social grade, with C2DE parents likelier to indicate concern for core costs, such as uniform (46% compared with 31% of ABC1 parents) and school trips (38% compared with 31% of ABC1s). ABC1 parents were meanwhile likelier to report concern for more supplementary costs such as technology (22% compared with 19% of C2DEs), materials for specific classes (15% compared with 11% of C2DEs), and social extra-curricular events (15% compared with 11%). They were also likelier not to be concerned about any area.

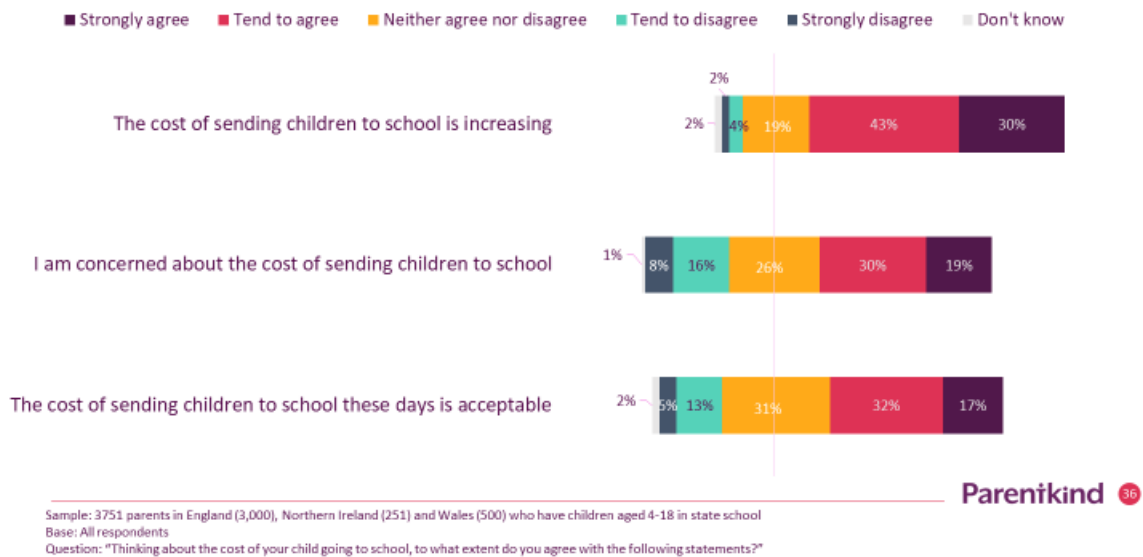
Parents with a child eligible for FSM were likelier to report concern for uniform costs (41% compared with 36%), as well as a range of other areas including: technology (26%, compared with 19% of ineligible parents), materials for specific classes (18% compared with 12% of ineligible parents), social extra-curricular activities (18% compared with 12%), transport to and from school, costs of stationery and costs of school fund donations. The latter is note-worthy in light of the higher donation ask, higher propensity to donate and higher sums given by this group, as noted above: 13% of FSM eligible parents compared with 8% of ineligible parents report this cost to be among their top three. Parents without a child eligible for FSM were likelier to say they were not concerned about any costs at 23%, compared to just 10% of FSM eligible parents.

Those with three or more children were, unsurprisingly, likelier than those with fewer children to be concerned about uniforms and school trips, while smaller households were likelier to be unconcerned about any costs. In terms of school phase, those with primary age children showed greater concern about before and after-school clubs, while children of secondary/post-primary or post 16 age were likelier to be concerned about the cost of school trips, technology and transport. Parents with a disability noted higher concern in a number of areas: uniforms, technology, specific materials, extra-curricular activities, transport and cost of donations. Only one in 10 (10%) were unconcerned, compared with 23% of parents without a disability.

Finally, as often seen, there were differences by parenting of a child with SEND. Parents whose child did not have SEND were likelier to indicate concern for uniforms and trips, while those whose child has SEND had significantly higher levels of concern for costs across almost all other areas, including: technology (24% compared with 19%), school meals/drinks (23% compared with 17%), extra-curricular activities (22% compared with 11%) and transport (17% compared with 11%).

Figure 35: Attitudes towards the cost of schooling

Majority of parents believe the cost is increasing – half are concerned and half think the cost is acceptable



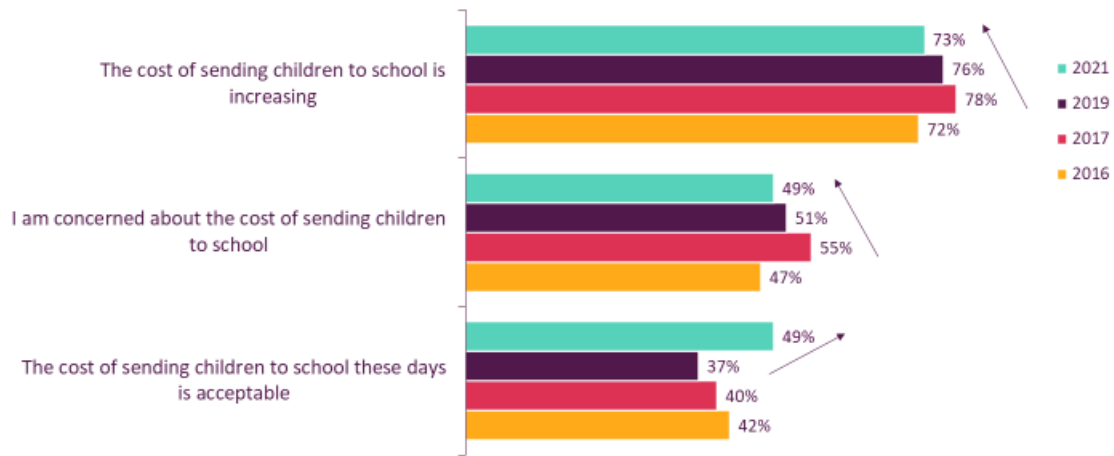
With clear trends across levels of concern for particular aspects of schooling costs, the research turned to explore parents’ overall perceptions of cost. Over three previous waves of research, we have monitored how far parents believe the cost to be increasing, whether they are concerned about it and how far they think the cost is acceptable and returned to the theme in 2021 (Figure 35, above).

Almost three quarters of parents (73%) continue to believe the cost of sending children to school is increasing, with almost a third (30%) strongly agreeing, a fifth (9%) neutral and only a small number (6%) disagreeing. Almost half (49%) agree that they are concerned about the cost, with a fifth (19%) strongly agreeing, a quarter (26%) neutral and another quarter (24%) disagreeing. Meanwhile, half (49%) agree that the cost of sending children to school these days is acceptable, with 17% strongly agreeing, almost a third (31%) neutral and 18% disagreeing.

This suggests a relatively settled consensus that costs are increasing but a more polarised picture when it comes to concern and acceptability of this cost. Indeed, concern about the expense and belief in its acceptability may coincide, since respondents are not asked to make a binary choice between them, and with scores distributed widely on both measures, a nuanced picture of parent attitudes to the expense of education emerges. With half actively agreeing that they are concerned and half agreeing that costs are acceptable, we also find a substantial proportion who are neutral/undecided, and almost a fifth in disagreement with each premise.

Figure 36: Attitudes towards the cost of schooling (trend data)

Significant rise in the proportion of parents who think the cost of schooling is acceptable



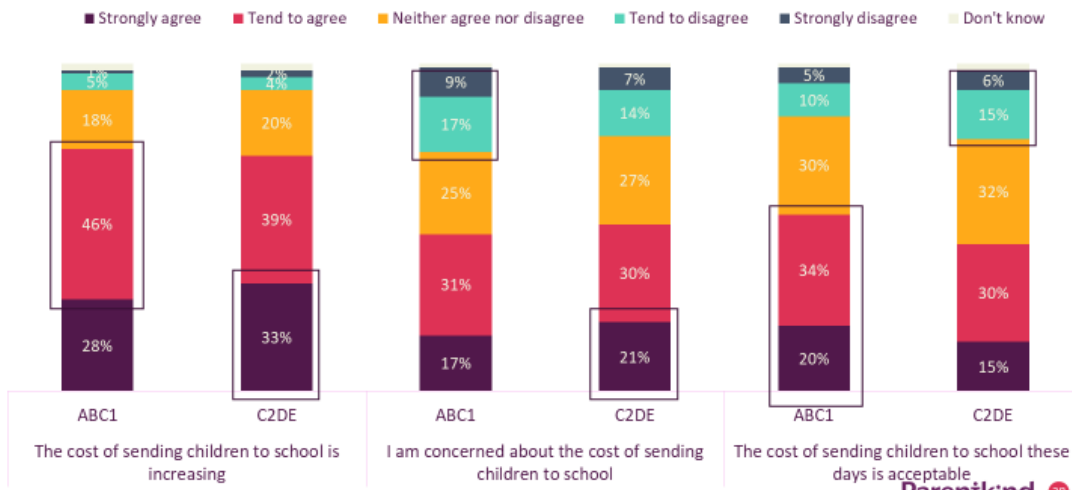
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Thinking about the cost of your child going to school, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?"

Parentkind 40

The most significant trend on this measure is a significant rise in the proportion who view the cost of schooling as acceptable – up from 37% in 2019 to almost half of parents surveyed in 2021. While many factors may be at play, it is tempting to conclude that the impact of the pandemic on children’s education for significant periods of time may have contributed to a wider perception of school costs as acceptable (particularly in contrast with the alternatives). Meanwhile the proportion who view the cost as increasing, and those who feel concern about the cost, have both seen incremental declines since 2017. While the majority think the expense is going up, this figure has nonetheless dropped five percentage points over the last four years, while the proportion expressing concern has reduced by six percentage points.

Figure 37: Attitudes towards the cost of schooling (by social grade)

C2DE parents likelier to strongly agree cost is increasing and less likely to view as acceptable



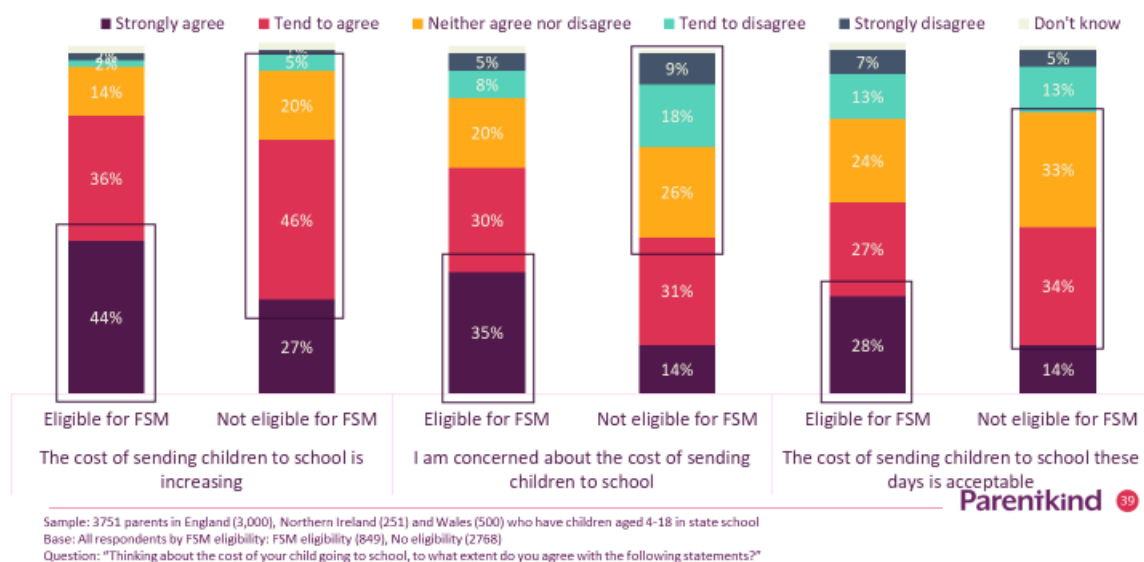
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents by social grade: ABC1 (2211), C2DE (1540)
 Question: "Thinking about the cost of your child going to school, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?"

Parentkind 38

Looking into perceptions of cost by the parent audiences who may experience the expense more acutely, we find that C2DE parents are likelier to strongly agree that the cost of sending children to school is increasing

(Figure 37, above). They are also significantly likelier to strongly agree that they are concerned about this, while ABC1 parents report significantly higher levels of disagreement on concern. ABC1 parents are much likelier to agree that the cost is acceptable, with 54% in agreement, compared with 45% of C2DEs. The latter are meanwhile much likelier to actively disagree on acceptability, at 21% of C2DEs, compared with just 15% of ABC1s. Social grade therefore tends to influence parents' propensity towards concern about school costs as well as views on their acceptability, as we would expect.

Figure 38: Attitudes towards the cost of schooling (by FSM eligibility)
Parents eligible for FSM likelier to think cost is increasing and more concerned – but over half still view as acceptable



For families eligible for FSM, who are most likely to be under financial pressure, we find higher levels of agreement that the cost is rising (80% compared with 73% of ineligible parents) and significantly higher levels of strong agreement (44% compared with 27%). FSM eligible parents are also more likely to agree that they are concerned about the cost (65% compared with 45% of ineligible parents) and more than twice as likely to strongly agree (35% compared with 14%). Yet despite this apparently strong divide, it is interesting to note that over half of FSM eligible parents (55%, compared with 48% of ineligible parents) still view the cost as acceptable, with double the levels of strong agreement (28% compared with 14%).

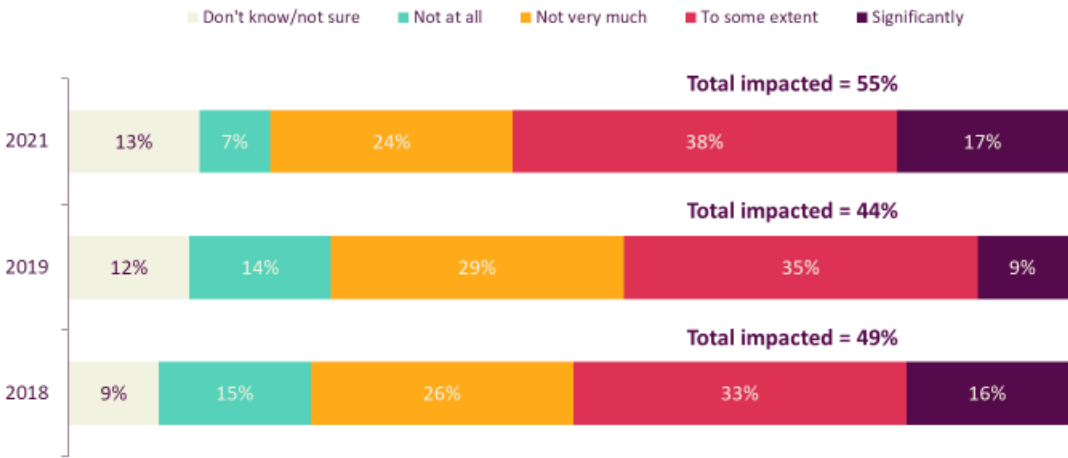
So while the costs of sending children to school are unsurprisingly more noticeable and concerning among parents with FSM eligibility, with typically lower levels of ambivalence, this group are also likelier to view the expense as acceptable. This may be informed by greater support with costs in some areas (specifically meals/drinks, although eligibility for support such as a clothing grant may apply in some cases) but also perhaps by differing perspectives from some within this group on the role of the school and therefore its value; a supposition which tends to be supported by the way this demographic responds on other attitudinal statements regarding school support and the desire for engagement.

Strong differences are also evident by parental disability and whether a respondent has a child with SEND. Parents living with disability are also much likelier to view the cost as increasing (82% compared with 72% of those without a disability) and to report concern (63% compared with 46% of those without a disability). While total agreement on acceptability of costs is similar, parents with a disability are both likelier to strongly agree it is acceptable and to actively disagree (24% compared with 17%). For parents of a child with SEND, the perception of increasing costs is also higher at 79% compared with 72% (42% strongly agreeing, compared with just 27% of those without a child with SEND), while two thirds are concerned overall (67%, compared with 45% of those without a child with SEND). Despite this, a significantly higher proportion of those whose child has SEND view costs as acceptable, at 61% overall (30% strongly agreeing) compared with 46% (13% strongly agreeing) of parents without. Through all demographics we see that concern about costs (and the

view that these are increasing) are in no way incompatible with viewing the cost as acceptable, with a complex range of factors likely in play around relative costs, financial support and the perceived value of schooling.

Looking at finances from a different perspective, parents were asked if they felt that the increasing pressure on school budgets in recent years had negatively impacted their child’s education. In 2021 over half of parents (55%) felt that it had, with 17% viewing the negative impact as significant. Almost a third (31%) did not think that it had, while over one in 10 were unsure (Figure 39, below). This overall perception of negative impact has significantly increased since 2019, when it was well under half of the sample, and also since 2018 when perceptions of impact reached 49%. The change since the latter wave of research shows a marked increase in the overall proportion who perceive a significant negative impact, as well as a significant drop in those who say that it has not impacted their child, from 43% in 2019 to 31%.

Figure 39: Negative impact on child’s education of budgets under pressure
Significant rise in parents feeling their child’s education has been impacted



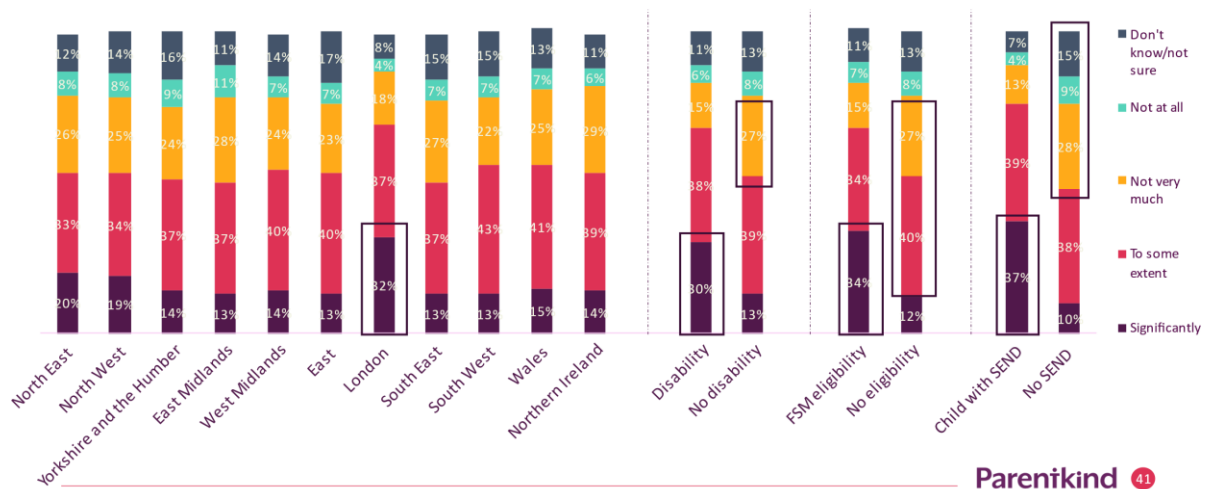
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "School budgets have been under increasing pressure in recent years. Overall, in your opinion, to what extent have pressures on school budgets negatively impacted on your child's education?"

The perception of negative impact is higher among men than women, among younger parents (18-44) than older parents (who are likelier to select 'Not very much'), and also among parents from BAME backgrounds; 62% of whom perceive a negative impact (22% a significant impact) compared with 54% (16% significant impact) of parents from White backgrounds.

The demographics perceiving the strongest negative impact on their child’s impact – with 30% or more selecting 'significantly' – were those with a child who has SEND, those with a child eligible for FSM, those based in London and those living with a disability (Figure 40, below). The highest perception of negative impact due to budget pressures was reported by parents with a SEND child, with three quarters (76%) indicating an impact compared with less than half (48%) of parents whose child does not have SEND. Overall, this suggests the educational impact has been most keenly felt among parent constituencies who are already facing some of the most intense challenges. This may relate to both actual impact and parent perception in light of wider challenges, in either case presenting a difficult landscape for children and parents navigating either SEND, financial disadvantage and/or parental disability at home.

Figure 40: Negative impact on child's education of budgets under pressure

Perceived impact is highest among parents with a child with SEND, FSM eligibility, a disability, or those living in London



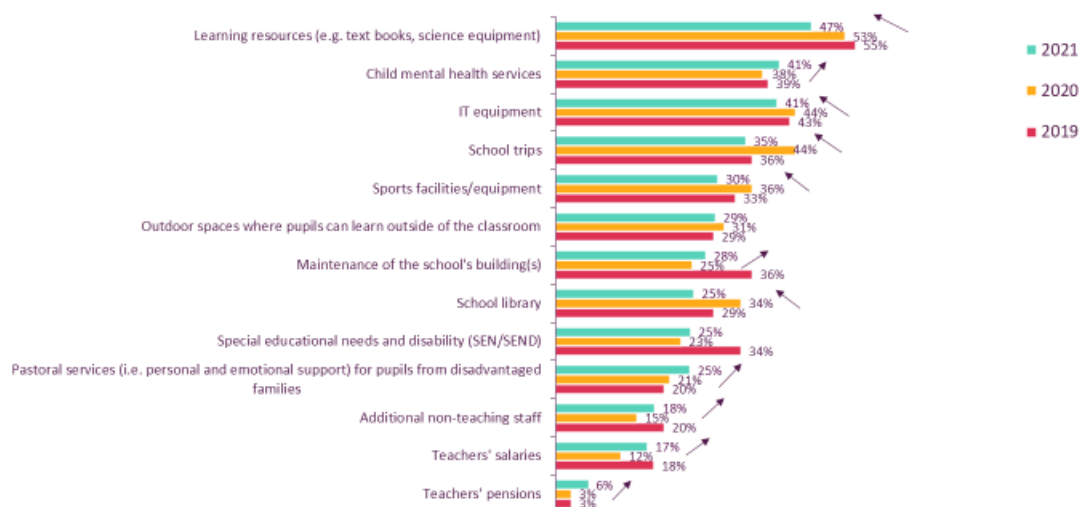
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: North East (165), North West (435), Yorkshire and the Humber (323), East Midlands (248), West Midlands (357), East (254), London (475), South East (473), South West (270), Wales (500), Northern Ireland (251); Disability (746), No disability (2919); FSM eligibility (849), No eligibility (2768); Child with SEND (888), No SEND (2690)

Parentkind 41

Priorities for additional funding

Finally, parents were asked where they would prioritise any additional funding if it were available (Figure 41). While the top five choices remain the same as in previous years and the top priority remains learning resources such as text books and science equipment, scores dropped across four of these with learning resources selected by 47% of parents, IT equipment 41%, school trips 35% and sports facilities/equipment 30%. Child mental health services, however, rose to second place this year at 41% (up from 38% and fourth place in 2020). This puts parental prioritisation of child mental health second only to learning resources in 2021, with only six percentage points between them, compared with a gap of 15 percentage points last year. Other areas to see a significant rise this year were pastoral services for pupils from disadvantaged families, additional non-teaching staff, teacher salaries and teacher pensions.

Figure 41: Parental priorities for additional spending
Support for spending on child mental health services rises to second place



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: If more funding was made available to your child's school in your opinion how should it be spent? From the list below please select up to 5 things you would like to see the money being spent on

Parentkind 45

Looking at priorities held by different demographics, many gender trends from previous waves continue; with women likelier than men to prioritise child mental health services (52% vs 31%), outdoor spaces (36% vs 23%), SEND services (29% vs 21%) and pastoral care (29% vs 21%). Men meanwhile remain likelier than women to value IT equipment (48% vs 34%) and sports facilities (32% vs 28%), as well as the maintenance of school buildings.

Social grade also continues to be predictive of spending priorities, with ABC1 parents likelier to choose IT equipment (46% compared with 35%) and sports facilities (32% compared with 27%), as well as building maintenance, libraries, additional staff and teacher salaries. C2DE parents, as seen last year, were significantly likelier to prioritise child mental health services at 46%, compared with 36%. They were also likelier to value school trips (39% compared with 31%) and SEND support (28% compared with 22%). Nationally, there were few significant differences but notably, parents in Wales were much likelier than those in England or Northern Ireland to prioritise spending on learning resources (52%, compared with 47% in England and 43% in NI) and on outdoor spaces for learning (37% compared with 28% in England and 27% in NI).

Unsurprisingly there are more evident differences when it comes to households facing additional challenges. Consistent with last year, parents with a child eligible for FSM place child mental health services as their top priority for extra spending at 42% - although interestingly the same proportion of ineligible parents prioritise it this year, where previously a relatively wide gap in interest existed. FSM eligible families continue to be likelier than others to value SEND support (33% compared with 22%) and pastoral services (32% compared with 22%), as well as teachers' pensions (10% compared with 5%). They are less likely to prioritise the top choices for non-eligible families, which continue to be learning resources and IT equipment. This highlights the importance of strong pastoral services and support for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds and shows the high value their parents place on this non-academic support in school settings.

Parents of a child with SEND continue to prioritise this area for additional spending above all else (44% compared with 19%) and rank child mental health in second place (39% compared with 42% of other parents - as seen above now a more widely shared concern). They are also likelier than parents of children without SEND to value pastoral services (30% vs 23%) and to place a higher value on teacher salaries and pensions, perhaps due to higher levels of interaction and support from teaching staff for many in this group. Parents whose child has additional needs at school, like those eligible for FSM, continue to be much less likely than parents in the wider sample to prioritise spending on more 'traditional' areas such as learning resources, IT or maintenance. Taken together with the discussion above regarding the perceived negative impact of

budget pressures (as well as perceptions of increasing costs), this demonstrates the ongoing need for commitment to SEND services. It may also, given the negligible increase in parental prioritisation, flag a need for its importance to be communicated ever more effectively at school level and beyond.

Finally, with this year the first to explore parent disability and its influence on perceptions around schooling and education, it is striking to note the different priorities this parent group indicates and the degree to which it shares priorities with the other marginalised parent experiences discussed above. For those living with disability, the top area for additional spending is also child mental health, supported by 48% compared with 39% of those without. These parents are also likelier to support SEND services (35% compared with 22%) and pastoral care (33% compared with 23%), like those whose child is eligible for FSM or whose child has SEND.

Key Insights Summary: Donations, costs and spending

- Being asked to donate to the school fund continues to be common practice and has increased from 38% in 2019 to 45% in 2021 – with well over a third (38%) now reporting that they give to their child’s school fund.
- Parents with a child eligible for FSM and parents with a child with SEND are likelier to be asked to donate, likelier to do so, and report giving higher amounts to the fund on average, as in previous years. This suggests the higher levels of engagement evident within both groups across the research also correlates with their likelihood of being approached for donations and a willingness to do so.
- The mean donation has risen this year to its highest level yet at £11.62 per month, up from £10.00 in 2020 and equal to a rise of £3.47 on pre-pandemic levels.
- In 2021, uniforms (38%) and school trips (34%) still top the list of costs parents are most concerned about - but have declined significantly since 2019. The third most concerning cost was technology in 2021, up to 20% from 14%, unsurprisingly in an era of home learning.
- Almost three quarters of parents (73%) believe the cost of sending children to school is increasing, consistent with 2019 data. Almost half (49%) are concerned about this cost, and half again (49%) say that the cost of sending children to school these days is acceptable. This suggests a relatively settled consensus that costs are increasing - but a more polarised picture when it comes to concern and acceptability around the expense.
- However, there was a significant rise in the proportion who view the cost of schooling as acceptable – up from 37% in 2019 to almost half of parents surveyed in 2021.
- Over half of parents (55%) feel that the increasing pressure on school budgets in recent years has negatively impacted their child’s education. The perception of impact has significantly increased over time, from 44% in 2019 and 49% in 2018.
- The perception of negative impact is higher among men, younger parents, parents from BAME backgrounds, those in London, those with a child who has SEND, with FSM eligibility, or living with a disability. Many of the same groups were likelier to view costs as both increasing and concerning.
- When it comes to how any additional funding should be spent, child mental health services reached second place in parent priorities in 2021, rising from 38% (and fourth place) last year to 41%.
- There were significant rises this year in spending prioritisation of: pastoral services for pupils from disadvantaged families (25% up from 21%), additional non-teaching staff (18% up from 15%), at teacher salaries (17% up from 12%) and teacher pensions (6% up from 3%).

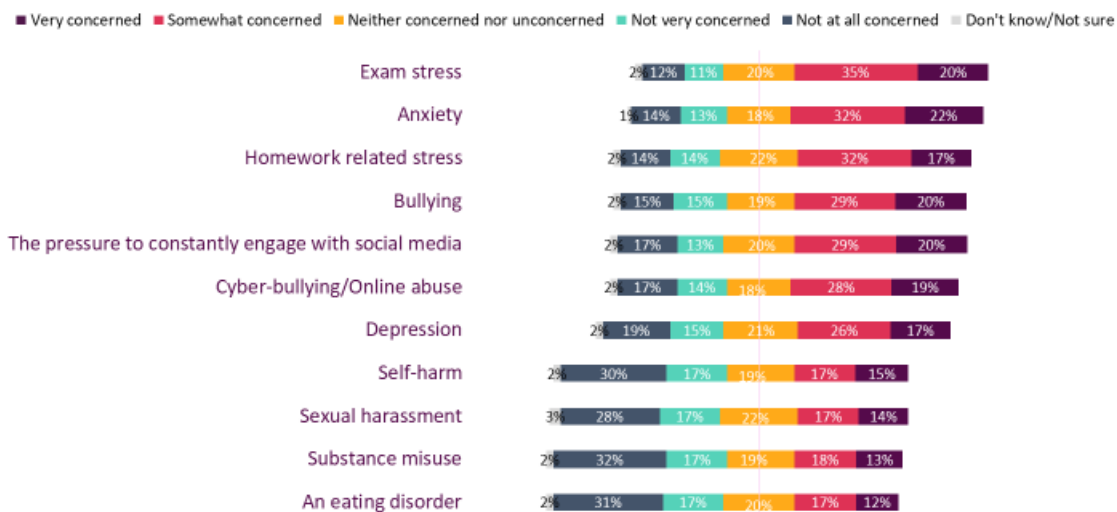
3.4 Mental health and well-being

In the wake of lockdown school closures, intermittent closures for school bubbles, social distancing and ongoing unpredictability around testing and exams, the issue of child mental health has become more prominent than ever before. As the school year 2020-21 began, many schools prioritised pupil well-being from the outset but intense public debate has continued around both mental health and socialisation on the one hand and academic catch up from interrupted schooling on the other. Meanwhile, protracted periods of isolation from peers, academic stress and general unpredictability have continued to take their toll on children and young people throughout the pandemic. In this wave of research, which took place as public health restrictions eased, we returned to core questions asked last year around parents' concern about different mental health and well-being issues, their child's experience of different issues, and their priorities for school support services in this area.

Parents' concerns about mental health

In previous waves, we prompted a different range of potential school-based issues that parents may be concerned about, which in 2020 showed almost half of parents (47%) were concerned about emotional well-being and mental health issues, with 17% very concerned and a further 30% somewhat concerned. In 2021 this list was replaced with a more specific range of mental health and well-being concerns, in order to better understand parent worries and compare against their reported experience in a subsequent question. As Figure 42 shows, the top two areas, with over half of respondents reporting concern, are exam stress (55% overall, 20% 'very concerned') and anxiety (54% overall, 22% 'very concerned'). These are closely followed by just under half of parents concerned about homework related stress and bullying (both at 49% overall) and the pressure to engage with social media and online abuse (both at 48% overall); all with 17-20% of parents indicating they are 'very concerned'.

Figure 42: Parental concern for mental health and wellbeing
More than half of parents are concerned about exam stress and anxiety



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents

Question: Thinking about your child's experience at school, to what extent are you concerned about the following issues? **Ranked by Very concerned + somewhat concerned**

Depression is a concern for 43% of parents (17% 'very concerned'), while lower levels of concern are expressed regarding self-harm and sexual harassment (both at 32% overall), substance abuse at 31% and an eating disorder at 30%. Overall, the order of concern for parents tends towards more universal school challenges, such as work stress and peer group problems, first; followed by online stressors; with more specific mental health and acute well-being problems of concern among a smaller proportion. It is significant to note, however, that even more acute well-being crises remain elicit concern from around one in three

parents, while a significant mental health condition such as depression is a present concern for four in ten parents.

Clear trends emerge in the demographics, with younger parents typically more concerned across the majority of issues, potentially reflecting both greater apprehension among those in the earlier years of parenthood as well as changing generational awareness and prioritisation of mental health issues. Respondents from London also tended to show higher levels of concern across most issues, which may reflect additional metropolitan pressures and anxieties. Many areas are of greatest concern for parents whose child is at secondary/post-primary level, notably online abuse, social media, exam stress, anxiety and depression, as well as acute issues such as self-harm and substance abuse. Bullying concern is higher among primary parents, while both primary and secondary/post primary parents have higher concern about eating disorders than do parents of young people in post 16 education, showing this concern starts early. Parents of one child also indicate higher concern across many issues, than parents with larger families.

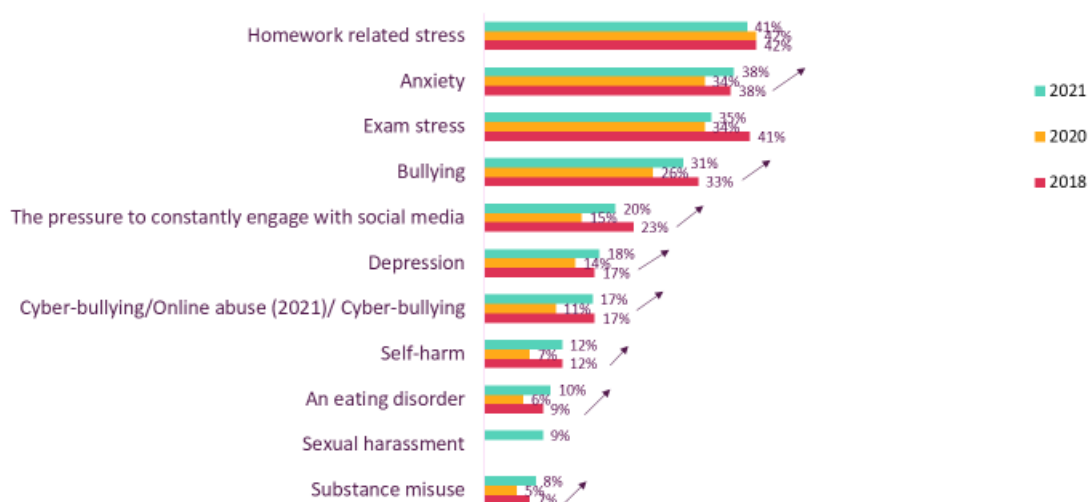
Parents from BAME backgrounds, parents who do not identify as heterosexual, those with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM and parents of a child with SEND consistently report higher concern across all prompted issues. While parents' experiences and wider circumstances are varied and unique, with no single unifying thread, the data nonetheless supports an emerging picture of both greater overall engagement with schools within these demographics and more intense pressure felt within households in the latter three groups particularly. The findings also illustrate the heightened parental concern across a range of academic, social and mental health issues which may underpin the greater support these constituencies indicated for additional spending in mental health, pastoral care and SEND support in section 3.3.

Childhood experience of mental health and well-being issues

Turning to childhood experience of specific mental health and well-being related conditions, as reported by their parents, experience of most mental health conditions has increased from the levels seen in 2020 (Figure 43). However, it should be noted that the 2020 research took place while schools were shut to the majority of pupils during the first national UK lockdown, and the question wording asks parents to report any experience their child has of these conditions, *either at school or directly as a result of something that happened there*. While parents were requested to answer, as best they could, for the period prior to March 2020, the decreased scores that year – particularly in light of the uptick seen this year – suggest that the insulation from school led to a lower reported experience in 2020 than might otherwise have been expected.

Figure 43: Experience of mental health and wellbeing issues

Experience of most issues rises back to 2018 levels, after dropping during 2020 lockdown



Parentkind 44

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: Has your child ever experienced any of the following, either at school or directly as a result of something that happened at school?

Notably, the top concern – homework stress – has remained remarkably steady across the 2018, 2020 and 2021 waves, while exam stress also remains consistent with last year. In all other areas, except sexual harassment which was a new prompt this year, we see a significant rise from 2020 but a close resemblance to the 2018 results. This suggests that parent-reported experience has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, with the same order of prevalence reported across each survey.

Looking at the results by demographic, it is no surprise that homework related stress and exam stress are more widely reported among parents of children in secondary/post-primary and post 16 education. Consistent with last year’s results, they are also significantly likelier to report incidence of anxiety (41% of secondary/post primary parents and 44% of post 16 parents, compared with 32% of primary parents), pressure to engage with social media (24% of secondary/post primary parents and 22% of post 16 parents, compared with 14% of primary parents), depression (19% of secondary/post primary parents and 22% of post 16 parents, compared with 13% of primary parents) and online abuse (19% of secondary/post primary parents and 18% of post 16 parents), reflecting both life stage, as social and academic pressures increase from adolescence, and the greater likelihood that a child may encounter any given issue over time.

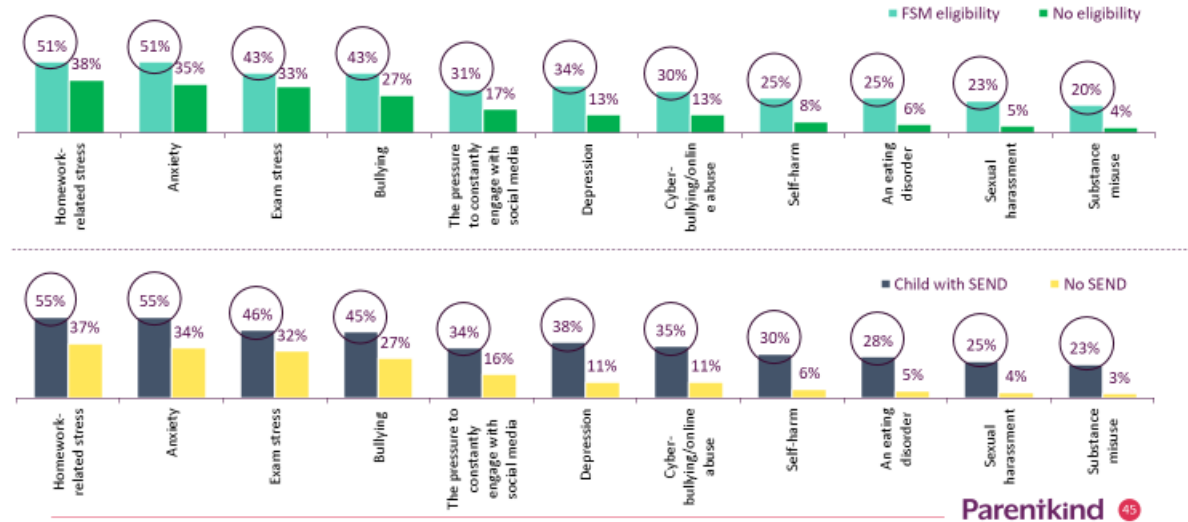
Bullying continues to be reported at a similar level regardless of school stage - and concerningly, so do serious issues such as self-harm, eating disorders, sexual harassment and substance misuse. Overall, it is worrying to note that even at primary school age, almost a third of parents continue to say their child has experienced homework stress (30%) and anxiety issues (32%), while well over a quarter (29%) say their child has been bullied and 18% report exam stress. More than one in ten primary parents report that their child has experienced depression (13%), social media pressure (14%) and online abuse (13%).

A few key divergences also emerge by ethnicity, with parents from BAME backgrounds significantly likelier to report their child has experienced pressure to engage with social media (25%, compared with 20% of White parents), self-harm (18%, compared with 11% of White parents), an eating disorder (18% compared with 9% of White ethnicities), sexual harassment (13%, compared with 9% of White parents) and substance misuse (14%, compared with 7% of White parents).

Even more pronounced differences emerge when breaking the data down by parent disability, free school meal eligibility and parenting a child with SEND, which reveal a dramatically higher incidence of all mental health conditions and pressures among the children affected, from universal experiences such as homework or exam stress through to clinical conditions such as depression and eating disorders. As Figure 44 shows,

more than half of parents with a child eligible for FSM or with a child who has SEND report their child has experienced homework stress or anxiety and more than two out of five have been bullied. Meanwhile across the range of less common – and often most serious – well-being issues, these parents report two to three times higher levels of incidence.

Figure 44: Experience of mental health and wellbeing issues by FSM and SEND experience
Dramatically higher incidence of all mental health issues reported by parents



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents by: FSM eligibility (849), No eligibility (2768); Child with SEND (888), No SEND (2690)
 Question: Has your child ever experienced any of the following, either at school or directly as a result of something that happened at school?



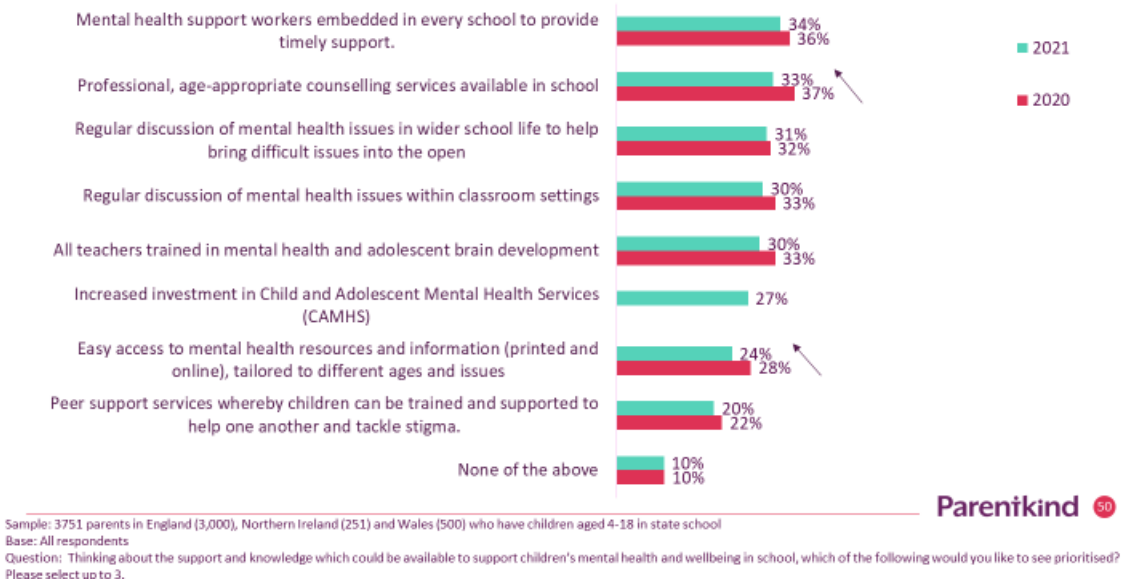
When it comes to the most acute issues, the gap is particularly wide, with 23% of parents with a child eligible for FSM indicating their child has been sexually harassed, compared with 5% of parents without a child eligible, and a quarter of parents with a child eligible for FSM, respectively, reporting experience of self-harm and eating disorders, compared with less than one in 10 parents without. Those whose child has SEND meanwhile report the highest overall incidence of mental health and well-being issues across the board, with 38% reporting depression (compared with 11% of parents whose child does not have SEND), 30% reporting self-harm (versus 6% of those whose child does not have SEND) and 28% reporting eating disorders (compared with 5% of those whose child does not have SEND). These figures underscore the much greater vulnerability of children from less advantaged backgrounds or with additional needs or disabilities to mental health impacts, social challenges within their peer group, and a higher overall risk of more harmful conditions and patterns of behaviour.

These correlations and heightened challenges are well documented in social research and in light of the wider pressures on these children and their families, it is unsurprising that academic pressures are also experienced more acutely. The inextricably linked nature of these impacts has been particularly illuminated during the pandemic, as lockdowns, disrupted classes and exams, and social distancing measures have shown just how unevenly experienced the costs of lost schooling and reduced school-based pastoral support have been by levels of affluence and wider healthcare or educational needs. The data also shows that the same overall trends applied to parents living with a disability, who reported their child’s experience of all conditions at a significantly higher rate than parents without a disability.

Last year’s research revealed that the overall age of onset for the prompted mental health issues, as estimated by parents, tends to fall in adolescence between ten and 14 years old (or across the last year or two of primary school through to the first three years of secondary/post-primary). Yet with bullying showing a median age of ten and anxiety and eating disorders presenting from a median of 11 onwards, the findings underline the need for appropriate mental health training and support to be in place from primary school onwards, in preparation for the stages children become most vulnerable. It also illustrates the importance of

the pastoral support available to less advantaged pupils and those with SEND, in particular, in light of their greater vulnerability to well-being challenges.

Figure 45: Priorities for children’s mental health and wellbeing in school
Mental health support workers embedded in school and professional counselling are parents’ top priorities



Thinking about this need for support, for the second year we asked parents what their priorities would be for any support or knowledge that could be made available to support children’s mental health and wellbeing in school, asking that they select up to three potential supports or practices (Figure 45). With a new prompt added in 2021 – increased investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – scores have decreased slightly across the board due to respondents being offered a more expansive list. The top two choices, chosen by a third of parents respectively, continue to be mental health support workers embedded in every school to provide timely support (34%) and professional, age-appropriate counselling services available in school (33%), with the former replacing the latter at the top of the list this year. This offers an endorsement of a professionalised support offer within school settings. Next, chosen by 30% or more of parents, were regular discussion of mental health in wider school life, regular discussion in the classroom and all teachers trained in mental health and adolescent brain development, suggesting the acceptance of school-wide mental health literacy and open dialogue. Just over a quarter (27%) would prioritise increased investment in CAMHS, while provision of mental health resources and peer support schemes were marginally less popular and with just one in ten parents not wanting to see any options prioritised, the findings suggest the successful mainstreaming of mental health issues – as further evidenced by the 88% deeming mental health development as important within the curriculum (section 3.1) and the rise of child mental health services to second on the list of areas prioritised for additional spending, only behind learning resources (section 3.3).

On demographics, mothers were significantly likelier than fathers to prioritise many areas: embedded mental health workers, professional counselling services, regular discussion in both the classroom and wider school life, and increased investment in CAMHS. Men were likelier than women to support access to resources, as well as to choose none of the above. A few key divergences also emerged by ethnicity, with parents from BAME backgrounds likelier than those from White ethnicities to back peer support services for children to help one another for the second year running (30% of BAME parents, putting this in joint third place for this demographic, compared with 19% of White parents).

For parents with a disability, the data suggests the highest level of support for mental health workers embedded in school at 40%, compared with 33% of parents with no disability, and higher support for increased investment in CAMHS (34% compared with 26% of parents with no disability). This suggests an

increased familiarity with mental health issues may be at play, leading to a stronger focus on both investment and additional staffing within schools. Parents with a child eligible for FSM also indicated higher support for increased investment for CAMHS (33% compared with 26%), as well as peer support services (23% compared with 19%). Both of these options were supported by similarly higher rates among parents whose child has SEND; increased investment at 37% (compared with 25%) and peer support at 26% (compared with 19%). Across all three parent groups, respondents were significantly less likely to choose none of the above than were parents within the wider sample, further evidencing the stronger experience of mental health challenges and backing for its prioritisation within schools.

The overall findings continue to show the highest level of parent approval for dedicated and professionalised mental health support staff and services within school, while less intensive measures to be further integrated in everyday school life (e.g. increased discussion and additional teacher training) are more moderately popular. In light of the increasing prioritisation of mental health and well-being concerns among parents in general this suggests a mainstream remit from parents for schools to develop more specialised support to address emerging mental health issues.

Key Insights Summary: Mental health and well-being

- The top two areas of mental health and well-being concern for parents are exam stress (55% overall, 20% 'very concerned') and anxiety (54% overall, 22% 'very concerned').
- Depression is a concern for 43% of parents while lower levels of concern are expressed regarding self-harm and sexual harassment (both at 32% overall), substance abuse at 31% and eating disorders at 30%.
- In terms of parent-reported child experience of well-being issues, homework stress is the most prevalent (41%), followed by anxiety (38%), exam stress (35%) and bullying (31%).
- Reported mental health issues saw a significant rise from 2020 to resemble the 2018 results more closely. This suggests that parent-reported experience has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, after a reduction seen last year due to fieldwork taking place while schools were closed.
- In addition to greater experience of homework and exam stress, parents of children at secondary/post-primary phase and above continue to report greater experience of anxiety, pressure to engage with social media, depression, and online abuse.
- However, even at primary school level almost a third of parents say their child has experienced homework stress (30%) and anxiety (32%), while well over a quarter (29%) say their child has been bullied. More than one in 10 report that their child has experienced depression (13%), social media pressure (14%) and online abuse (13%).
- The data also continues to show the particular vulnerability of children with SEND or less advantaged backgrounds to mental health impacts, with dramatically higher reported incidence of all mental health conditions and pressures, from universal challenges such as homework or exam stress through to clinical conditions such as depression and eating disorders. The trend was also evident this year among parents with a disability.
- Those whose child has SEND report the highest overall incidence of mental health issues, with 38% reporting depression, 30% reporting self-harm and 28% reporting eating disorders.
- Parents from BAME backgrounds are significantly likelier to report their child has experienced social media pressure, self-harm, an eating disorder, sexual harassment and substance misuse.

- Parents' key priorities for mental health support within schools are mental health support workers to provide timely support (34%) and professional, age-appropriate counselling (33%). Just over a quarter (27%) prioritise increased investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Only one in ten parents would not prioritise any issues, suggesting the successful mainstreaming of mental health, as reflected in the rise of child mental health services among the areas parents prioritise for spending (section 3.3) and the importance attached to it in the curriculum (section 3.1).

3.5 Diversity and inclusion

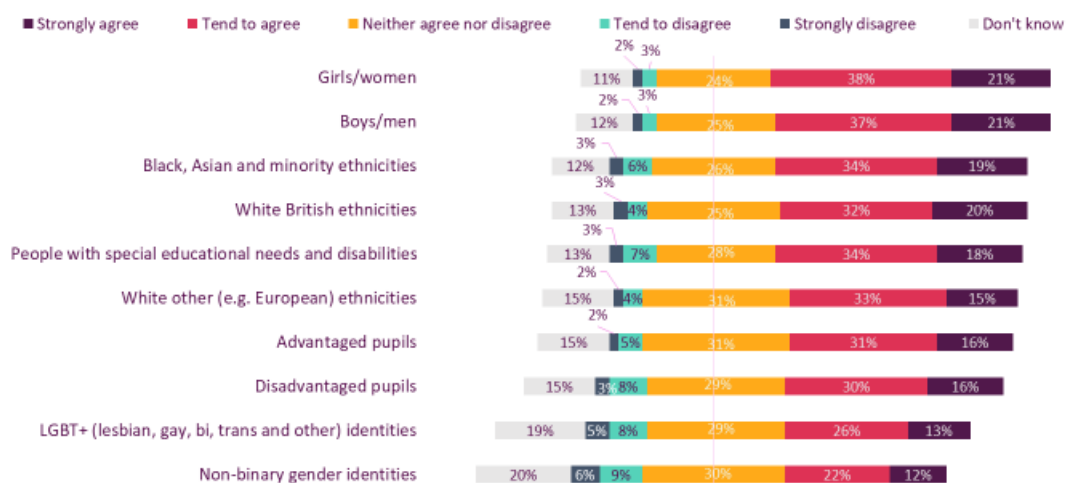
This year Parentkind explored new topics to gain further insight into parent perspectives on diversity and inclusion within schools and the education system more broadly. In particular, the survey considered how far parents felt different groups were represented within resources and topics taught in schools today, and their perceptions of equality of outcomes possible within the current state education system. We also revisited a previously explored topic to examine parents’ attitudes on a range of issues around optimism for their child’s future and the role and success of schools in supporting social mobility, particular for less advantaged pupils.

Representation within school resources and topics

To better understand parent awareness and perceptions of how different groups – across sex, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation and gender identities – are represented today in schools, we drew inspiration from the 2020 Pearson report *Diversity and inclusion in schools*², which posed similar questions to teachers. We refined a list of ten categories, acknowledging these to be broad brushstroke, and asked how far parents agreed each was represented in resources, topics and materials taught in their child’s school today.

Figure 46: Representation in school resources and topics

Widest agreement that resources represent different sexes, ethnicities and SEND – most uncertainty around representation of LGBT+ and non-binary identities



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: To what extent do you agree the following groups are represented in resources, topics and materials that are taught in your child’s school today? Ranked by Strongly agree + Agree

Parentkind 49

As Figure 46 shows, levels of neutrality and uncertainty concerning representation were high across all areas, with over a third of respondents opting against clear agree/disagree responses even for the most familiar groups. This likely reflects the fact that parents – particular beyond primary level – may have limited knowledge of all resources or topics used at school; however, the overall ranking and relative agreement scores still offer a starting insight into the visibility of different characteristics and identities within educational materials.

Overall, we see that the most recognised groups were girls/women (59% overall agreement) and boys/men (57% overall agreement), while over half of parents also agree that BAME ethnicities (53%) and White British ethnicities (52%) are represented, alongside people with SEND (52%). Scores drop below half thereafter, with White other ethnicities at 48%, advantaged pupils at 47% and disadvantaged pupils at 46%. Less recognised

² See <https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/uk/documents/educator/schools/issues/inclusion/diversity-and-inclusion-in-schools-report.pdf>

for representation within educational resources and topics were LGBT+ and non-binary identities, with higher uncertainty expressed (around half of all respondents) and more than one in ten disagreeing that they are represented.

While these findings cannot illuminate the nature or depth of representation – which might range from one-off mentions or acknowledgement through to more regular in-depth study or literature – they do offer a snapshot of the diversity parents recognise within their child’s education today. As such, they suggest stronger general visibility by sex, ethnicity and SEND criteria, but a greater distance to go on representation around relative advantage and disadvantage, sexual orientation and gender identities.

Demographically, there were some general trends, with men regularly reporting higher mean scores on perceived representation than women and respondents in London often scoring higher than other regions. Across all measures, parents with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM, those whose child has SEND and those who do not identify as heterosexual reported higher levels of agreement that each group was represented. This may indicate a greater overall attention and sensitivity to representation or indeed stem from the increased engagement a proportion within these groups report in other areas of school life. More specifically – and aside from the parent demographics mentioned above - the data suggests that representation of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities were likelier to be perceived by parents in England than in Wales or Northern Ireland, by those in London and also parents whose child is at secondary/post-primary or post 16 level. Yet while school phase or parent age was occasionally a factor, neither these nor social grade or ethnicity tended to predict perceptions of representation.

The exception regarding ethnicity was for categories relating to ethnicity itself, where parents from BAME backgrounds reported higher levels of perceived representation than parents from White backgrounds. For ‘Black, Asian and minority ethnicity’ representation, 24% of BAME parents strongly agreed, compared with 18% of White parents, while for ‘White British’ representation, 25% of BAME parents strongly agreed, compared with 19% of White parents. It was also noteworthy that for ‘LGBT+’ and ‘Non-binary gender identities’ representation, parents who do not identify as heterosexual reported 27% and 25% strong agreement, respectively, compared with 12% of heterosexual parents in both cases. Parents not identifying as heterosexual were also significantly likelier to disagree that LGBT+ identities were represented at 19%, compared with 13% of heterosexual parents, revealing polarised views.

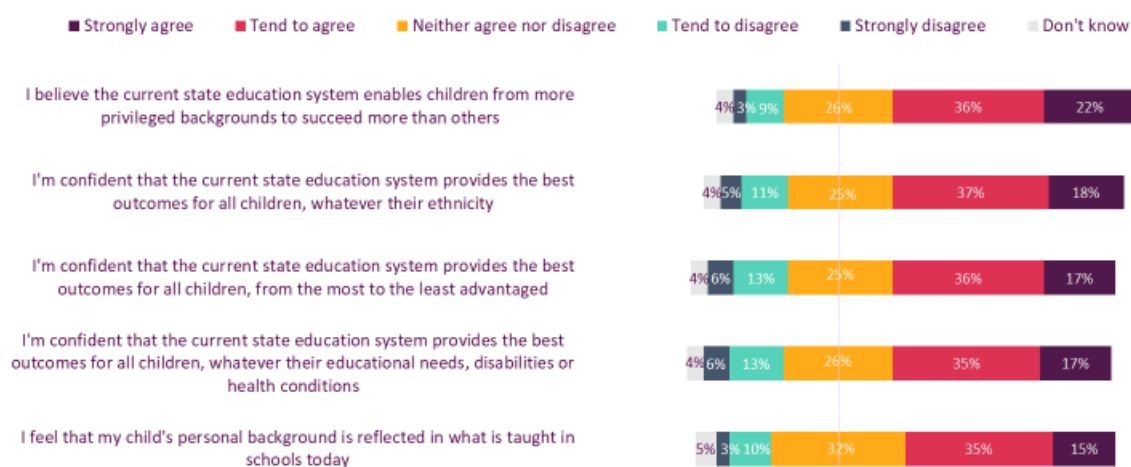
It is important to note that all the parent groups discussed above contain diverse experiences and identities, rather than speaking for homogeneous audiences or communities. Nonetheless, with the large sample size collected in our 2021 research, the substantial differences flagged throughout this report do reflect statistically significant divergences in parent responses by a range of important demographics. They therefore offer a starting point for understanding the diversity of parent perspectives, which often exists even on issues which might at first glance appear universal (e.g. the desire to have a say in education or the efficiency of communications). In this way they underscore the importance of inclusive parent consultation and participation, in order to ensure the full range of experiences are taken into account in educational decision-making.

Perceptions of equality in educational opportunity and outcome

This year the survey also explored the wider question of how far parents feel the current state education system is providing the best outcomes for all children, regardless of background. A set of five attitudinal statements explored the question across ethnicity, advantage and needs/ability, together with how far respondents felt their child’s personal background is reflected in what is taught today.

Figure 47: Perceived equality of opportunity and outcome

Almost three in five believe the current state education system enables children from more privileged backgrounds to succeed more than others



Parentkind 50

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Ranked by Strongly agree + Agree**

The results show much ambivalence about equality of outcomes within the current state education system, with between a quarter and a third of parents neither agreeing nor disagreeing across each statement. Overall, while more than half of parents agree that the system provides the best outcomes for all children, regardless of ethnicity (55%), from the most to the least advantaged (52%) and whatever their educational needs, disabilities or health conditions (52%), almost three in five (58%) believe that the current system enables children from more privileged backgrounds to succeed more than others, with over a fifth (22%) strongly agreeing. Furthermore, only half feel that their child’s personal background is reflected in what is taught in schools today, with only 15% strongly agreeing. Disagreement scores are not remarkably high. However, the overall picture is one of only muted confidence in the current state education to deliver the best outcomes for children regardless of their background, while the strongest support is seen for the belief that the system enables greater success for the more privileged – with only one in ten (12%) actively disagreeing.

Considered by age, younger parents (18-44) are significantly likelier than older parents to show optimism that the system provides the best outcomes across each measure, while older parents report higher disagreement. Those under 45 are also likelier to agree that their child’s personal background is reflected in what is taught. Interestingly, ABC1 parents are likelier to agree that the system enables children from privilege backgrounds to succeed than those in C2DE social grades (at 61% compared with 55%), while the latter have higher levels of neutrality. ABC1s are also likelier to agree that their child’s background is reflected in teaching (55% compared with 44%), while C2DE parents have higher neutrality, don’t know scores, and strong disagreement. There were also differences by ethnicity across all statements, most evident in significantly higher levels of strong agreement among parents from BAME backgrounds that the system provides the best outcomes regardless of ethnicity, advantage or needs/disabilities. BAME parents were also likelier to strongly agree that their child’s personal background is reflected in what is taught, at 20% compared with 15% of White parents.

In a familiar pattern, parents with a disability, those with a child eligible for FSM and those whose child has SEND were significantly likelier to strongly agree across all statements, while parents outside the groups were likelier to be neutral and also to ‘Tend to agree’ and/or actively disagree. Parents whose child has SEND were likelier to agree that the best outcomes were delivered regardless of educational needs, disability or health conditions (61% overall and 28% strongly agree, compared with 49% overall and 13% strongly agree among parents whose child does not have SEND) but also likelier to strongly disagree at 8% compared with 5%.

Overall, these results suggest more definitive positions on the statements than found within the overall sample, with stronger opinions, lower ambivalence and a more net positive outlook. It is noteworthy, however, that despite higher confidence regarding the system's ability to deliver (and to reflect their child's personal background) the gaps in belief that children from more privileged backgrounds are more enabled to succeed are stark: 67% of parents with a disability, compared with 56% of parents without; 69% of parents eligible for FSM, compared with 55% of ineligible parents; and 70% of parents whose child has SEND, compared with 54% of parents whose child does not.

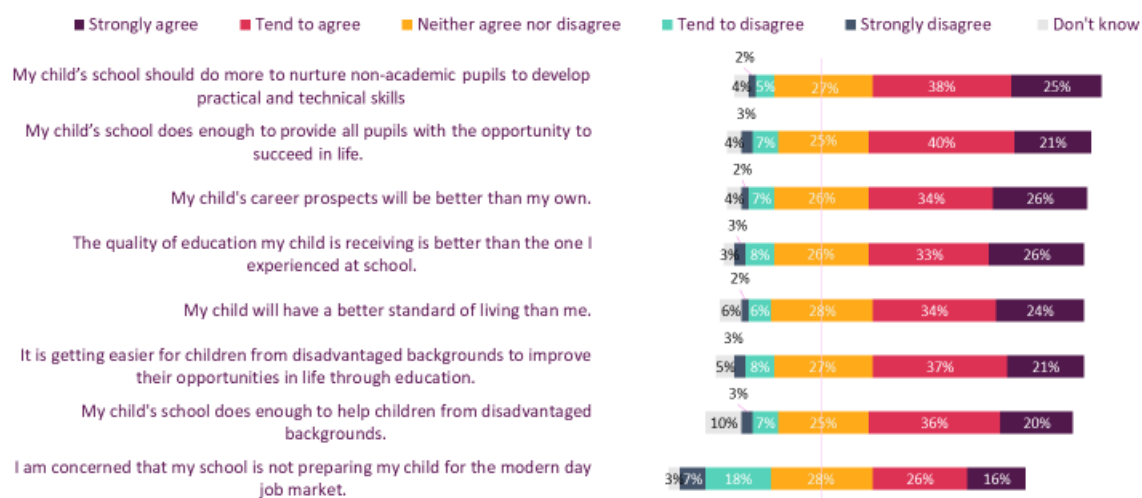
Preparing for the future and the role of schools and education in social mobility

Finally, the 2021 survey revisited a question last explored in 2017 to consider parents' broader views on how far schools are preparing children for the future, their perspectives on their own child's social mobility and the extent to which children from less advantaged backgrounds are supported with opportunities. Notably, all scores increased from 2017, perhaps surprising against the backdrop of the pandemic, but the same overall ranking of agreement was evident across the statements.

Almost two thirds (63%) agreed that their child's school should do more to nurture non-academic pupils to develop practical and technical skills, while a similar proportion (62%) nevertheless felt their child's school does enough to provide all pupils with the opportunity to succeed in life (Figure 48, overleaf). At first glance, these findings may suggest contradictory viewpoints on schools' ability to cater across academic abilities. Yet is important to note, first, that the two groups will not be composed of the same respondents – there is instead an overlapping group of parents who agree with both statements. Secondly, while a respondent may broadly agree that their school is doing enough to provide opportunities for all to succeed, they may nevertheless feel that the school could be going further in this - particularly regarding opportunities to develop more technical and/or vocational skills.

There was moderately strong confidence from parents in their own child's advancement beyond their own experience, with 60% each agreeing their child's career prospects would be better than their own and that the quality of their education was better than their own had been, and only slightly fewer (57%) agreeing their child would have a better standard of living. On disadvantage, while there was stronger support for the proposition noted above - that school provides all pupils with the chance to succeed - confidence dropped slightly when disadvantage was mentioned explicitly. For these statements, 57% felt it was getting easier for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their opportunities while 56% agreed their child's school does enough to help. Notably, the three measures concerning equality of opportunity saw strong agreement levels of a fifth respectively, while those concerning the respondent's own child's prospects saw strong agreement rise to a quarter. Disagreement was relatively low at 7-11% across all statements but combined neutral and don't know scores again approached a third of all respondents, showing ongoing uncertainty around schools and social mobility.

Figure 48: Preparing for the future and social mobility
Majority believe their child's prospects will be better than their own but four in ten concerned that schools are not preparing their child for the job market



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: Thinking about your expectations for your child's future beyond school, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Ranked by Strongly agree + Agree



Overall, 43% reported that they were concerned their school was not preparing their child for the modern job market, with 16% strongly agreeing. While a quarter actively disagreed, almost a third were neutral or unsure, which is concerning in light of the findings shown in Figure 6 (section 3.1), that 86% of parents think it important for the curriculum to prepare pupils for the future job market. Similarly, we saw earlier that 52% of parents agreed their child's school offers good careers advice (Figure 3, section 3.1), further corroborating the evidence that while preparation is deemed important by the vast majority of parents, little over a half consider their school to be performing well on this metric.

Younger parents are likelier to report strong agreement in many measures, including those concerning their own child's prospects and those on improving prospects for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are also significantly likelier than older parents to agree that they are concerned school is not preparing their child for the job market, with strong agreement of 13% among those in older age groups rising to 19% of 35-44s, and 21% of 18-34-year-olds. Primary parents were much likelier to agree that their child's school does enough to provide all pupils with the chance to succeed, with 24% strong agreement, compared to 20% of secondary parents and 19% of post 16 parents. They were also likelier to strongly agree on other measures regarding support for less advantaged children – and the belief their child would have a better standard of living.

Parents of BAME ethnicity reported higher strong agreement for all eight statements, across both family and wider social mobility. They were particularly likelier to strongly agree their child's career prospects would be better than their own at 71% overall (38% strongly agree), compared with 59% overall (25% strongly agree). Nonetheless, they were also likelier to express overall concern regarding preparation for the job market at 55% overall (21% strongly agree), compared with 42% overall (16% strongly agree). Parents with a disability were also likelier to strongly agree across all statements, including concern for job preparation, and those with a child eligible for FSM did so at even higher levels across the board with 72% agreeing (39% strongly agree) their child's career prospects would be better than their own, compared with 57% of parents without a child eligible for FSM (22% strongly agree). They were also positive regarding the general picture of schools' support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, with 65% overall (30% strongly agree) feeling their school does enough to help disadvantaged children, compared with 54% of ineligible families (17% strongly agree). Concern for the job market was again high, at 52% overall, compared with 41% among ineligible families.

For parents of a child with SEND, a similar pattern is shown with high strong agreement across all measures including, encouragingly, confidence in their child's career prospects (66% overall, 34% strong agreement) and future standard of living (65% overall, 31% overall). However, concern that school is not preparing their child for the modern job market is higher than found among any other tracked demographic at 61% overall (28% strongly agree), compared with just 37% overall (12% strongly agree) of parents whose child does not have SEND. While it is highly positive that parents express strong confidence in their child's ultimate career prospects and standard of living, the level of concern regarding their preparation for work should be keenly noted when considering not only SEND provision after primary education in general but in terms of parent consultation and participation in the process.

Key Insights Summary: Diversity and inclusion

- The most recognised groups in school resources and topics were girls/women (59%) and boys/men (57%), while over half of parents also agree that BAME ethnicities (53%) and White British ethnicities (52%) are represented, alongside people with SEND (52%).
- Advantaged pupils were thought to be represented by 47% of parents and disadvantaged pupils by 46%, while LGBT+ (39%) and non-binary (35%) identities were the least recognised, with high neutral/don't know scores and more than one in ten disagreeing that they are represented.
- Parents in England – particularly those in London - were likeliest to consider that diverse sexual orientations and gender identities were represented in school materials than those in Wales or Northern Ireland. There was also higher agreement among parents of a child at secondary/post primary or post 16 level.
- Almost three in five (58%) parents believe that the state education system enables children from more privileged backgrounds to succeed more than others, with one in five (22%) strongly agreeing. Only half (50%) feel that their child's personal background is reflected in what is taught in schools today.
- More than half of parents agree that the system provides the best outcomes for all children, regardless of ethnicity (55%), from the most to the least advantaged (52%) and whatever their educational needs, disabilities or health conditions (52%).
- ABC1 parents are likelier than C2DE parents to agree that the system enables children from privileged backgrounds to succeed, and also to agree that their child's background is reflected in teaching.
- Parents with a disability, with a child eligible for FSM or whose child has SEND report higher confidence regarding the system's ability to deliver but are also much likelier to believe that children from more privileged backgrounds are more enabled to succeed.
- Almost two thirds (63%) of parents agree their child's school should do more to nurture non-academic pupils to develop practical and technical skills, while a similar proportion (62%) nevertheless feel their child's school does enough to provide all pupils with the opportunity to succeed in life.
- There is relatively strong confidence from parents in their own child's future advancement, with 60% agreeing their child's career prospects will be better than their own. However, on disadvantage, confidence is more muted, with 57% saying it is getting easier for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their opportunities while 56% agree their child's school does enough to help.
- Just under half (43%) report that they are concerned their school is not preparing their child for the modern job market, with 16% strongly agreeing.

- Younger parents, parents from BAME backgrounds, those with a disability and those with a child eligible for FSM are particularly concerned their school is not preparing their children for the job market. Concern is highest among parents whose child has SEND at 61% compared with just 37% of parents whose child does not have SEND.

4. Methodology and sample

Fieldwork for Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey is conducted online by Dynata. Respondents were recruited through their UK panel as in previous years, received a small incentive for their participation, and took part in the survey from 3rd June to 19th July 2021.

The sample this year is made up of 3,751 parents from England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have at least one child aged 4-18 attending state school. In 2021 the entire sample was more than doubled from a previous count of 1500 parents from England (1,200), Northern Ireland (100) and Wales (200), while retaining the same proportional balance between nations, in order to ensure even more robust samples in Northern Ireland and Wales.

The sample is representative of the parent population by gender, age and social grade and is achieved through interlocking quotas. Sub-samples in Wales and Northern Ireland are boosted each year to achieve a large enough base of respondents to compare findings across regions.

As the survey is polling a representative sample, rather than the entire population of parents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, results are subject to a margin of error which varies with the proportion considered. This means that if, for instance, 59% of survey respondents were to strongly agree that they would like a say on their child's education, the proportion in reality is likely to be between 61.5% and 56.5% (i.e. the margin of error would be +/-2.5%). Throughout the report, therefore, statistically significant differences across demographic groups or in trends over time have been marked on charts by using rectangles, circles and arrows. Where the report discusses pertinent differences between demographics or from wave to wave, these indicate differences with statistical significance.³

Demographics

To ensure the survey reflects parents' views as accurately as possible, its gender, age and social grade composition mirrors that of the parent population in England, Northern Ireland and Wales with children of school age (see chart below). This means that respondents are equally split between male and female parents and that the majority (69%) are between the ages of 35 and 54. The sample is also made up of slightly more parents belonging to high social grades ABC1 (that is, in managerial, administrative or professional occupations) than those belonging to lower social grades C2DE (manual, casual workers, pensioners, retired and full-time students).⁴

³ Please note that, in general, calculating margins of error and statistically significant differences would require a (probability) random sample rather than a quota sample. Although our survey is based on a quota sample, in this report we use these calculations to give a sense of where the differences are largest and therefore most likely to be significant.

⁴ The NRS social grades are a system of demographic classification originally developed by the National Readership Survey to classify readers but are now used by many organisations and have become a standard market research classification tool. It is based on the occupation of the head of the household and the categories are as follows:

A – Higher managerial, administrative or professional

B – Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional

C1 – Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial administrative or professional

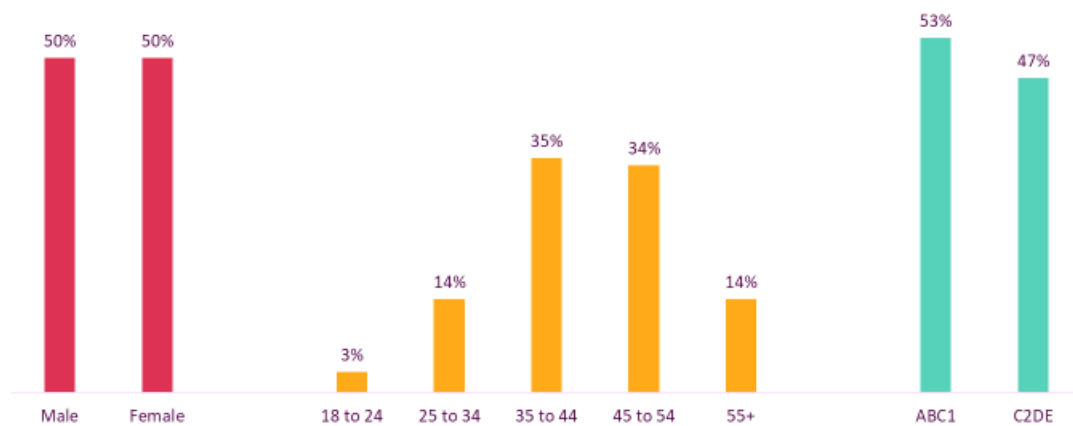
C2 – Skilled manual workers

D – Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers

E – Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the welfare state for income

Demographics

Age, gender, social grade



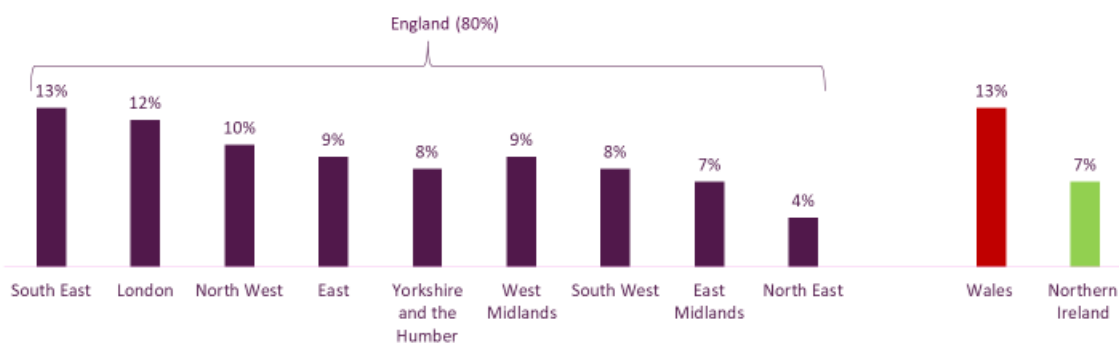
Parenikind 4

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 NB. The survey gender question ensures space for respondents to select 'Prefer to self-describe' or 'Prefer not to answer'. Responses numbered 3 and 2, respectively, (less than 1%)

The majority of the sample (80%) is comprised of parents from England, as in previous years, and is also representative of the parent population by English regions. Subsamples for Wales and Northern Ireland have been boosted over and above the natural fall-out of respondents to ensure each sample base is large enough to allow cross-regional comparisons. With the larger sample size in 2021 these national subsamples have been made even more robust, while keeping their relative proportions.

Demographics

Region



Parenikind 5

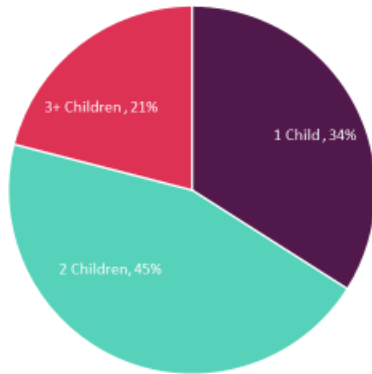
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: North East (165), North West (435), Yorkshire and the Humber (323), East Midlands (248), West Midlands (357), East (254), London (475), South East (473), South West (270), Wales (500), Northern Ireland (251)

In terms of household size, 45% of parents in the 2021 sample have two children, while a third (34%) have one and a fifth (21%) have three or more children. These proportions are roughly in keeping with the last year of research. The largest school phase represented is secondary/post-primary (46%), followed by primary (35%) and further/third level education (19%), which is also consistent with the 2020 sample. The further/third level

education level includes post-16 education in secondary/post-primary schools and in Further Education Colleges.

Demographics

Children in the household



School phase of the oldest child

Phase	2019	2020	2021
Primary	39%	36%	35%
Secondary/Post-primary	44%	46%	46%
Further/Third Level Education	17%	18%	19%
Don't know	0%	-	0%

Parenikind 13

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents

To capture ethnicity within the sample we use the 18 classification ethnicity question as used in the ONS census outputs. This question prompts a range of ethnic backgrounds within a set of broader categories. In 2021 82% of parents identified themselves as White British, with 7% from other white ethnicities. A further 5% of parents were from Asian/Asian British backgrounds, 3% from Mixed/Multiple ethnic backgrounds and 2% from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British backgrounds (further detail below).

Demographics

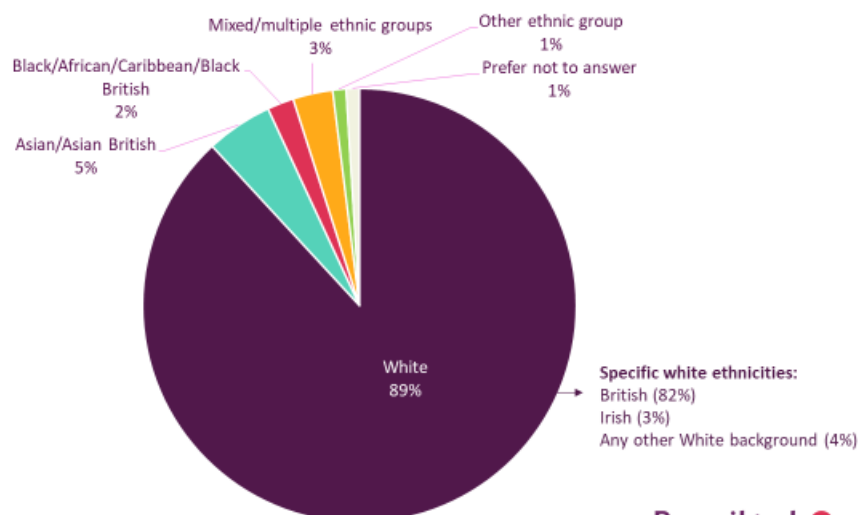
Ethnicity

Specific ethnicities between 1%-2%

- Indian (2%)
- Pakistani (2%)
- Bangladeshi (1%)
- African (1%)
- Caribbean (1%)
- White and Asian (1%)

Below 1% (number of respondents in brackets):

- White and Black Caribbean (31)
- Chinese (16)
- Any other Asian background (16)
- Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background (14)
- Arab (12)
- White and Black African (8)
- Any other ethnic group (6)
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (3)



Parenikind 6

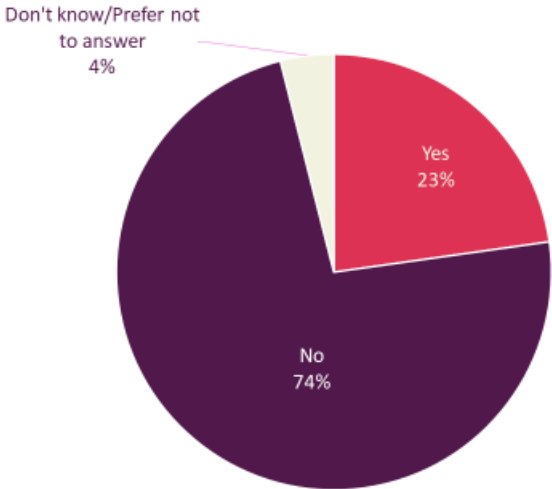
Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents. Full ethnicity question (as used by the ONS) prompts a range of specific ethnicities within a set of broad categories. Broad categories are shown here in pie chart form, with detailed breakdown by specific ethnicity shown in text boxes.

To gain insight into the influence of disadvantage on parental involvement with school and perceptions of education and schooling, we monitor free school meal (FSM) eligibility as a demographic question within the survey. With universal infant entitlement to FSM now in place (covering Reception and Years 1 and 2), the question is worded to capture wider household eligibility and therefore asks parents to indicate whether they receive any benefits which mean their child is eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

This year over a fifth of parents (23%) answered yes, up five percentage points from 18% within last year’s sample and a further increase from just 15% in 2019. Three quarters (74%) answered no and 4% didn’t know or preferred not to answer. For reference, government figures from the school year 2020/21 found the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals had increased across all schools to 20.8% - representing 1.74 million pupils – from 17.3% in 2020 and 15.4% in 2019.⁵

Demographics

Free School Meals entitlement



Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents
Question: "Are you claiming any benefits which mean that your child is eligible for free school meals?"

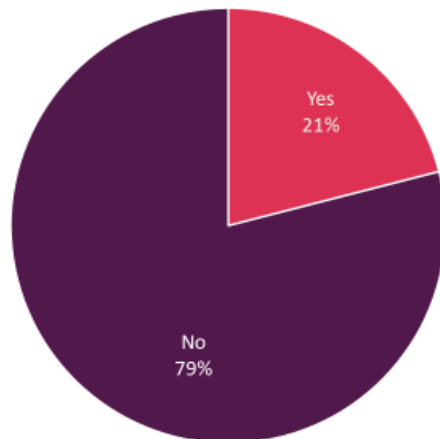
Parenikind 9

The survey also explored disability within the parent community in 2021, via two questions borrowed from the ONS 2021 Census: "Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?" and "Do any of your illnesses or conditions reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?" Within the report, in keeping with ONS usage, we have defined respondents who answer Yes to both questions as living with disability: 21% of the sample. This has enabled the data to be broken by parent disability for the first time.

⁵ 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2020/21', GOV.UK, 17 June 2021 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

Demographics

Disability



Following ONS 2021 Census definitions, we asked these questions for the first time in 2021:

1. "Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?"
2. "Do any of your illnesses or conditions reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?"

In this report, we have defined respondents who answer Yes to both questions as living with disability.

Parentkind 8

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

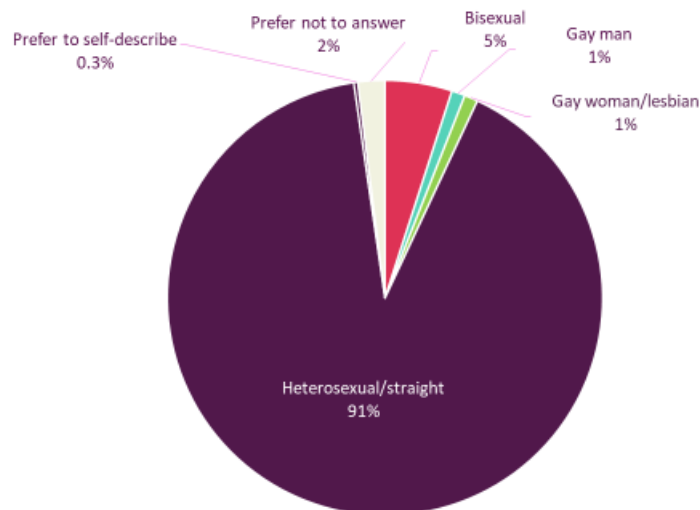
Base: All respondents

Question: "Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?" / "Do any of your illnesses or conditions reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?"

Another new question was introduced in 2021 to understand our parent audience further and asked respondents how they would describe their sexual orientation: 91% identified as heterosexual/straight, 5% as bisexual and a further 1%, respectively, as a gay man or gay woman/lesbian. Space was also offered for self-identification or prefer not to answer. In the report we have occasionally broken the data by the demographic of parents not identifying as heterosexual; tentatively due to its small size but in order to understand any ways in which parent experiences or attitudes appear to differ within this audience.

Demographics

Sexual orientation



Parentkind 1

Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All respondents

Question: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

In order to better understand the different experiences and perceptions of parents whose child has special education needs or disabilities (SEND), in 2020 we began to include a demographic question on and continued to track it this year.

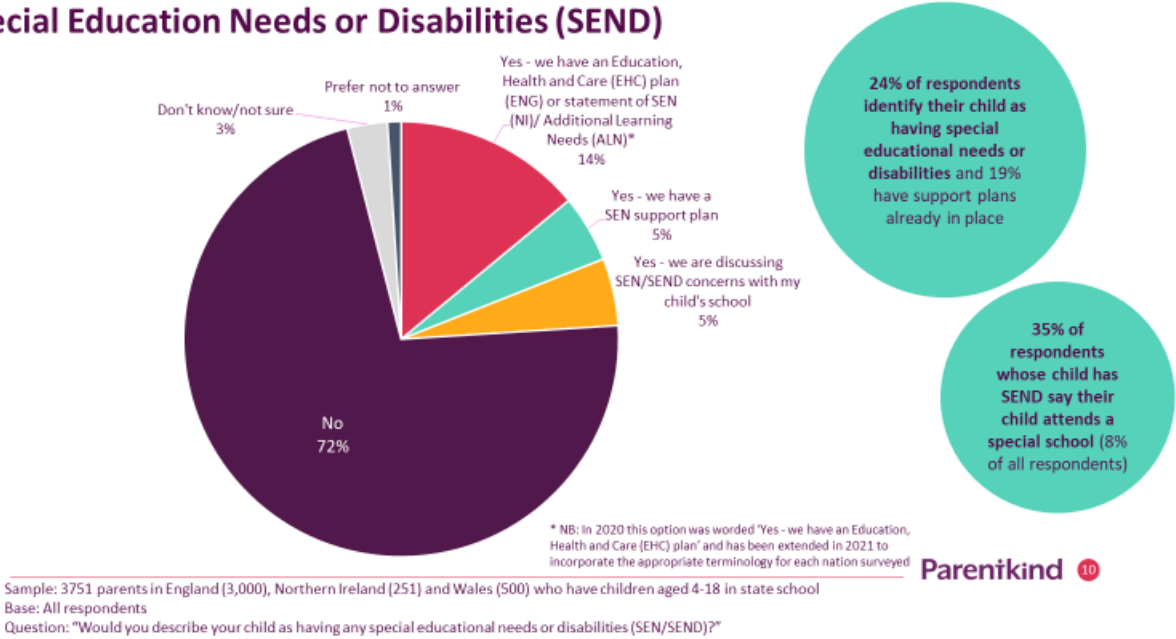
We found that almost a quarter of parents (24%) in the sample described their child as having special education needs or disabilities up from 18% last year. Of these 14% (up from 9%) reported ‘Yes - we have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan (ENG) or statement of SEN (NI)/ Additional Learning Needs (ALN)’⁶ 5% agreed ‘Yes – we have a SEN support plan’, and a further 5% said ‘Yes – we are discussing SEN/SEND concerns with my child’s school’. A further 4% didn’t know or preferred not to answer.

In this way we were able to capture both parents with a support plan already in place (19%, up from 14% last year) and those who are earlier in the process of identifying a potential SEND assessment (5%) for their child. Both of these groups are included within the demographic break for parents with a child with SEND, as used in the analysis throughout this report.

As an addition to the parent audience data within this group, we also asked parents whether their child attends a special school, with 35% of parents with a SEND child saying they did (8% of parents overall).

Demographics

Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

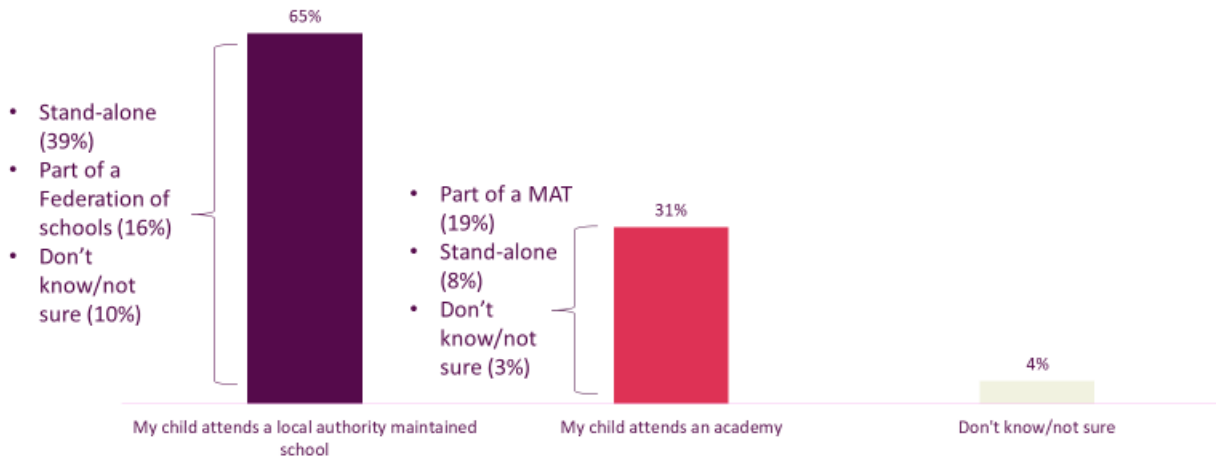


More broadly, the survey asks parents which type of school their child is attending to capture the breakdown of school governance model. The majority of parents continue to report that their child is in a local authority-maintained school (65%), whilst a third (31%) report that they attend an academy; in keeping with our last survey. Within the England sample as a whole, 39% attend a stand-alone local-authority maintained school and 16% attend to a local-authority maintained school belonging to a federation. A further 16% are in a school which is part of a Multi-Academy Trust, 7% are in a stand-alone academy, and 4% don’t know/aren’t sure.

⁶ This wording was altered from the 2020 phrasing: ‘Yes – we have an Education Health or Care (EHC) plan’

Demographics

School governance model in England



Parentkind 12

Sample: Sample: 3751 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (251) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All parents living in England (3,000)

Question: "Thinking about where your OLDEST child aged between 4 and 18 goes to school which of the following statements best apply?"/" Is your child's local authority maintained school/academy..."