

Parent Voice *Report 2022*

Giving parents a voice on schools and education



Written by



The Centre
for Education
& Youth

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, a 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 children in all schools and society as a whole. This means we have a wealth of experience with schools of all types and the communities they serve.

Find out more at www.parentkind.org.uk

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About Centre for Education and Youth

This report was written by The Centre for Education and Youth. CfEY is a 'think and action-tank'. We believe society should ensure all children and young people receive the support they need to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We provide the evidence and support policy makers and practitioners need to support young people. We use our timely and rigorous research to get under the skin of issues affecting young people in order to shape the public debate, advise the sector and campaign on topical issues. We have a particular interest in issues affecting marginalised young people.

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1. Introduction

a. Background

Parentkind's Parent Voice Survey tracks parents' experiences and perceptions of their children's education and schooling on an annual basis. It covers the views of parents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The 2022 edition marks its eighth year. The study tracks perceptions of key aspects of schooling, education, involvement with school life and parent voice from year to year, while making space to explore views on new and rotating topics. This year, the survey explores four additional areas:

- The importance of different dimensions of learning support outside school and how often parents undertake them
- Parental school fund donations, perceptions of specific educational costs and wider views on the cost of schooling
- Perceptions of exams and assessment priorities in education, in addition to the academic catch-up support their child may have needed due to lost learning during the pandemic
- Parental concern and experience of issues related to their child's mental health and wellbeing at school.

This short report presents some of the key findings from Parentkind's 2022 survey and provides a series of policy recommendations. Underlying all recommendations is a belief that parents are key stakeholders in their children's education and that policy should reflect this.

Recommendations are underpinned by Parentkind's [three policy asks](#):

1. **Parent consultation at Multi Academy Trust (MAT), Local Government and National Government levels:** Government should have a clear mandated responsibility for local government and national government organisations to ensure parents are consulted on matters affecting the education of their children, which is reflected in education policy, education guidance and is overseen by regulatory bodies.
2. **Parent participation in schools:** The measure of a school's success must put parent voice and engagement at the core rather than the fringe. The government should adopt parental participation approaches as set out in our [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly schools](#).
3. **Parent consultation at school:** Government should mandate responsibility to schools to consult with parents to ensure all parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on matters affecting the education of their children, and to ensure the potential impact of changes in school policies on families are understood.

b. Recommendations

Policy area	Recommendations
School funding and the cost of living crisis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The government should provide a cost of living top-up to measures such as the pupil premium enabling schools with more disadvantaged pupils to spend money on measures that ‘poverty proof’ the school day. Parent groups could be consulted to determine how this money could best be spent. 2. The government should expand FSM eligibility to ease the pressure on lower income families and review school submission timelines to ensure that the maximum number of eligible parents are able to apply.
Parental engagement in their children’s learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. To support schools to practise evidence-informed parental engagement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Oak National Academy (an online classroom and resource hub that was set-up during the pandemic) should build in opportunities for parental engagement into lesson plans. b. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) should fund randomised control trials of interventions that include parental engagement as a core component to address the weak evidence base in this area. 4. The government and all delivery partners involved in the National Tutoring Programme should seek to understand and improve how tutoring interventions can become levers to improve parental engagement in their children’s learning.
Connecting schools, parents and the wider community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To improve parental engagement in careers education: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ofsted should update the terms of reference for their thematic review of careers guidance to consider the views of parents and stakeholders and consider how schools can engage parents as partners in furthering children’s careers education. b. The ‘personal guidance’ Gatsby Benchmark¹ should be expanded to include parents as key stakeholders. 6. To improve parental and community engagement with MATs, the government should ensure that the new collaborative standard²: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provides a clear signal that MATs should support schools’ parental engagement work, with associated investment in CPD. b. Outlines ways in which MATs could engage with other MATs, LA-maintained schools and special schools to pool parental engagement resources/approaches through partnership. c. Promotes collaboration with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), civic universities and other actors, to help build a picture of how parents in a local area want schools to engage with their local community.
Mental health and wellbeing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The government should commit to additional funding for mental health services in schools, particularly in the context of a cost of living crisis that may well worsen existing challenges. These issues are discussed in Parentkind’s recent mental health report.

¹ The [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) is a commonly used framework used by schools to improve their careers provision

² The collaborative standard for MATs was set out as part of the 2022 [Schools White Paper](#), “requiring trusts to work constructively with all other partners”

	<p>8. As recommended in the COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities Study mental health briefing, LA services such as Integrated Care Partnerships “should support families where psychological distress is common and work with schools to ensure support offered is well coordinated. Services should be easy for families and young people to identify and access, recognising cultural and social differences in the families accessing them”.</p> <p>9. Schools should improve their engagement with parents when developing their policies around the issue of sexual harassment. They should also improve their communication with parents when incidents are reported. This should build on existing parent-focused relationships, sex and health education resources.</p>
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c. Methodology and sample

This survey data was collected between 19th July - 6th September 2022. The survey was conducted online by fieldwork agency Dynata. Respondents were recruited through Dynata’s UK panel (which includes more than 500,000 active panellists) and were given a small incentive to take part in the survey. The sample consists of 3,750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have at least one child aged 4-18 in state school, representative of the parent population by gender, age, region and social grade. Sub-samples in Wales and Northern Ireland were boosted to achieve a large enough base of respondents to compare findings across the nations. In 2021 the entire sample more than doubled, retaining the same proportional balance between nations, in order to ensure even more robust samples in NI and Wales³. Further insights concerning the demographic make-up of participants can be found in the appendix.

³ As the survey is not polling the entire population of parents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but rather a sample of the population, results are subject to a margin of error which is estimated to be between 0.5 and 2.5 percentage points for the whole sample. The exact margin of error varies with the proportion considered. This means that, if for instance, according to the survey 59% of respondents strongly agree that they would like to have a say on their children’s education, in reality the proportion is likely to be between 61.5% and 56.5% (i.e. the margin of error would be +/-2.5%).

2. School funding and the cost of living crisis

a. The cost of living crisis means schools face a ‘triple-whammy’

With double-digit inflation, increased housing costs and sky-rocketing energy bills, the ‘cost of living crisis’ is disproportionately affecting the poorest, most vulnerable households. Schools face a challenging ‘triple-whammy’, where:

- Inflation is eating into school budgets (e.g. energy bills, catering costs)
- Unfunded teacher salary increases will likely affect staffing costs
- Parents may be less able to financially support their children’s education

This means that many parents need additional increased support, but higher costs have left schools struggling to provide that support. The work of [Child Poverty Action Group \(CPAG\)](#) highlights multiple, often hidden, financial barriers that young people may face as part of the school day, whether it be uniform, equipment or school events. With higher costs, schools may find it harder to ‘poverty proof’ the school day, which could affect more vulnerable young people. According to the Parent Voice Survey 2022, disabled parents, those whose children are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), and those who have a child with an identified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have the most concerns about the costs of sending children to school. Over half of parents in these groups agreed⁴ that they ‘struggle to afford the costs associated with sending my child to school’.

In the 2022 autumn budget statement, the Chancellor announced an additional £2.3bn for schools for each of the next two years, amounting to a yearly rise of 4%. While this will restore real-terms per-pupil funding to 2010 levels, it is unlikely that this will reflect the pressures placed on schools to help the increasing number of parents who are struggling to financially support their children. Further, with the Energy Bill Relief Scheme coming to an end on 31st March 2023, it remains to be seen whether this increased funding will offset future energy costs.

b. The most vulnerable are more likely to contribute to school funds

The cost of living crisis is hurting vulnerable households the most and policymakers should therefore be targeting support towards these groups. However, the Parent Voice 2022 survey reveals that the very people who are most concerned about struggling with school-related costs are also the most likely to be asked to contribute to the school fund⁵. Whilst 45% of all parents had been asked to donate to school funds (consistent with 2021 and 2020 figures), the proportion of parents asked to donate was significantly higher for parents of children who were eligible for FSM (52%) and SEND (62%). There is a similar pattern when it comes to parents who actually donate to their child’s school fund. While just over a third of all parents donate, this figure is much higher for parents of children eligible for FSM (44%) and those with an identified SEND (54%).

⁴ Strongly agree + tend to agree

⁵ 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”. This is different to a donation to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

c. School fund contributions also vary by country, region and other factors

The likelihood of contributions and size of those contributions varies by a range of other factors (Figure 1). 58% of parents in Northern Ireland donated to their child’s school fund, compared to just 33% in England and 27% in Wales. There was also variation within England. Parents in London were more likely to contribute to their school fund (52%) compared to parents in other regions (24-36%).

Figure 1: Average school fund donations by region



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: Those who were asked for a donation (1,672)
 Question: How much, on average, do you donate to your child’s school fund?

d. Recommendations:

Use existing funding mechanisms in the short-term, review schools’ response to economic disadvantage in the longer term

There is a clear inequity where state-funded schools in a supposedly ‘free at the point of use’ education system feel they must ask vulnerable parents for further financial support. While the return of per-pupil funding to 2010 levels, announced in the Autumn 2022 budget is welcome, more needs to be done to take account of the increased costs that schools and households are facing, while protecting the parents most concerned about schooling costs.

In the short-term, it is vital that policymakers draw on existing policies, such as FSM and pupil premium, which are designed to help schools support economically disadvantaged pupils. However, in the long-term, only an assessment of the wider economic conditions that produce economic disadvantage will relieve the pressures placed on parents and schools.

1. *The government should provide a cost of living top-up to pupil premium enabling schools with more disadvantaged pupils to spend money on measures that 'poverty proof' the school day. Parent groups, such as PTAs, could then be used to determine how this money could best be spent.*
2. *The government should expand [FSM eligibility](#) to ease the pressure on lower income families and review school submission timelines to ensure that the maximum number of eligible parents are able to apply.*

3. Parental engagement in their children’s learning

a. Levels of parental engagement

Parents report high levels of overall involvement in their child’s school and education in comparison to previous years, although this year the mean score declined slightly to 6.99 from a high point of 7.13 in 2021.

Parents’ overall sense of involvement with their child’s school and education continues to be significantly higher amongst primary schools, parents in London, parents from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with children eligible for free school meals and those with a child with special educational needs or disabilities (Figure 2). It is also higher amongst those living in England and Northern Ireland compared to Wales, and lower amongst parents whose children attend schools that are part of a multi-academy trust.

Figure 2: Level of parental involvement by demographics



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) 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'"

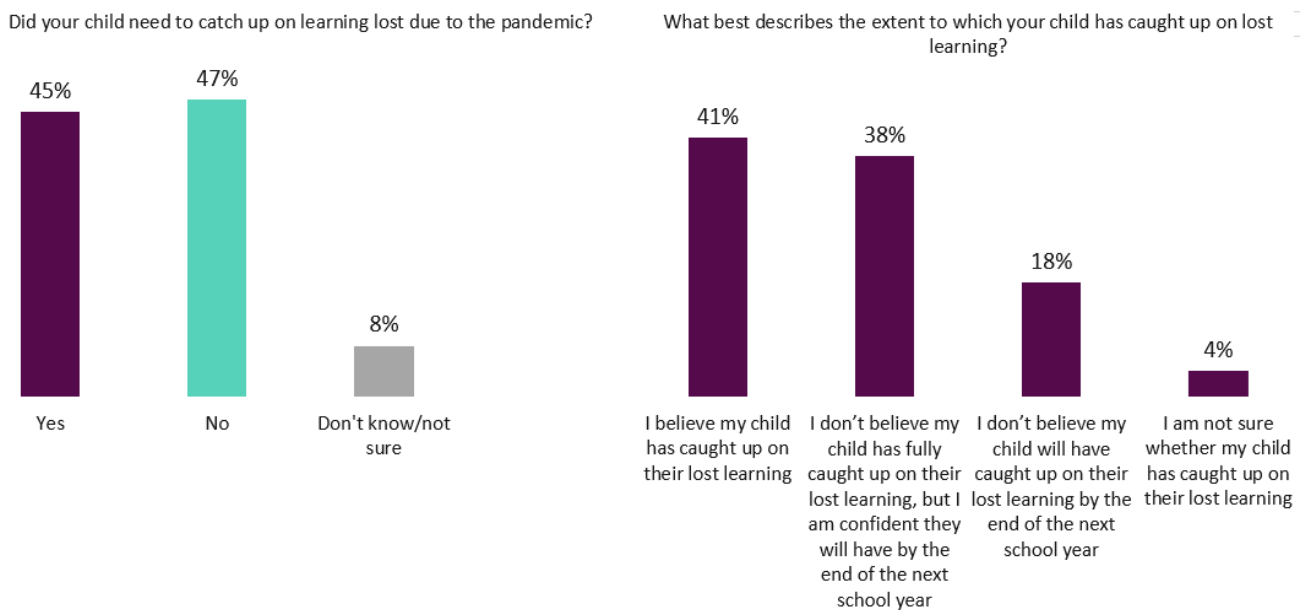
b. Covid ‘learning loss’ and catch-up support

The 2022 survey reveals that despite parents’ willingness to support their child’s learning, there is more to do for schools to communicate how parents might best play a role in learning at home. Almost all parents (85%) say they want to play an active role in their child’s education, which is broadly in line with previous surveys. However, survey responses suggest some parents feel they are not as prepared as they might be when it comes to supporting their children: just two-thirds of parents agree that their school provides the help they need to support their child’s learning at home. This knowledge gap might help explain why the proportion of parents reporting that they are happy with the quality of education their child receives fell from 80% in 2020 to 76% in 2022.

Pandemic-induced ‘learning loss’ is well-documented, with The Sutton Trust noting that parents with higher levels of qualifications felt more confident supporting their children during the pandemic (2020) and great disparities in access to digital devices (2021). In this context, attainment gaps at primary and GCSE are each at their highest levels since 2012 (FEA 2022). While schools have returned to ‘normal’, in-person teaching, children and parents are still feeling the educational consequences of multiple lockdowns.

The 2022 survey confirms that some parents still feel concerned about learning loss. 45% of parents said that the pandemic had left their child needing catch-up on learning loss (Figure 3). These figures were higher for parents from low-income backgrounds (60%), those whose child was identified with SEND (67%), and parents who themselves had a disability (61% compared with 41% of those without a disability).

Figure 3: Catch up due to the pandemic



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All respondents // All who answer 'Yes' their child needed to catch up (1676)

Question: "As far as you know, did your child need to catch up on any learning lost as a result of disruption due to the pandemic?" / "Which of the following statements best describes the extent to which your child has caught up on lost learning due to the pandemic?"

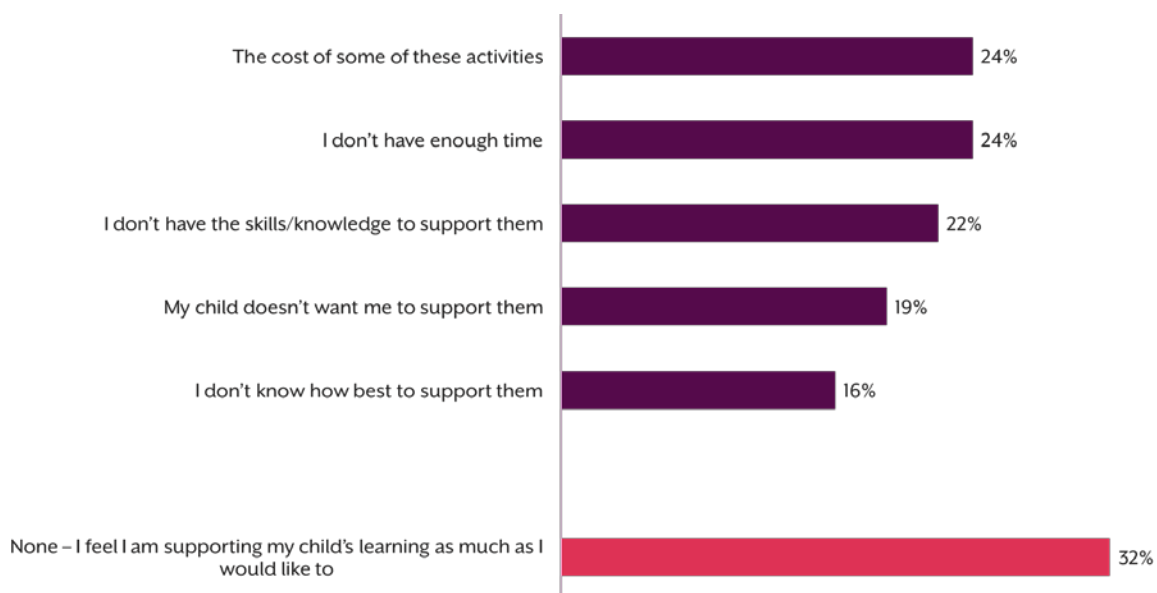
Amongst parents who believed their child had fallen behind during the pandemic, there were mixed views on how far their child still had to catch-up. 41% of parents who felt their child had lost learning during the pandemic believed their child had already caught up. 38% felt that they had not yet caught up but would do so by the end of the school year. 18% of parents who felt their child had needed to catch-up on lost learning felt that they would not have done so by the end of this academic year. Parents of children eligible for FSM were more likely to state that their child had already caught up on lost learning (51% compared to 37%).

Overall, around two-thirds of parents were happy with catch-up provision, while a similar proportion felt their school had informed them about lost learning and how it was being tackled. Just under two-thirds wanted to be more involved in helping compensate for lost learning. Here, there was a particular appetite for catch-up involvement among parents of FSM-eligible children and parents of those with an identified SEND. In this context, the next section turns to parents’ views on the academic support they can provide to their children.

c. Supporting their children’s learning

Most parents want further involvement in their child’s learning. Just one-third of parents felt they were supporting their child’s learning as much as they wanted to (Figure 4). Parents reported a number of barriers to greater involvement, most notably pressures on their own time and finances, especially for parents of children eligible for FSM, parents of children with an identified SEND, and parents who themselves had disabilities. For instance, of parents of pupils eligible for FSM, 35% reported costs being a barrier to supporting their child’s learning activities, versus 21% of those whose child was not eligible for FSM.

Figure 4: Barriers to supporting learning outside school



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Thinking about some of the practical actions from the previous question, what barriers (if any) limit your ability to support your child's learning as much as you would like to?"

In terms of the further information on how to support their child's learning there was a particular appetite for the following:

- Practical tips and advice (39% of parents)
- 'How to' guides (38%)
- Resources, toolkits, workbooks (33%)
- Written information, articles and blogs (33%)
- Parent groups and forums (30%).

These findings chime with Parentkind's [three policy asks](#) and the [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly schools](#), which emphasises the well-evidenced link between parental participation in their child's education and academic attainment. The 'parent pledge' outlined in the recent Schools White Paper could also prove useful here, with a commitment to keep parents informed on available support and children's progress, as well as advice on how to support learning at home.

Parents would like more information and guidance on how to support their children during and following their transition into a new school or school phase. There has been a slight decline in the proportion of parents who feel that they were given sufficient information and support to enable them to help their child (74% felt they had sufficient information in 2020 compared to 70% 2022), moving closer to pre-pandemic data (71% in 2019). Parents of children with SEND were less likely (66%) to feel they had been given sufficient support when they started at their current school.

d. Assessment and learner profiles

According to the 2022 survey, many parents are unconvinced by the merits of the current assessment system.

Just over half (53%) of parents in England think SATs provide useful information about their child's achievement/progress, with responses slightly higher for those whose child is FSM-eligible (58%) or have an identified SEND (57%). Similarly, about half of all parents feel that GCSEs are a meaningful measure of young people's skills, knowledge and capabilities. Most parents also think there is too much focus on academic rather than vocational qualifications (59% at primary, 64% at secondary, 65% at post-16). In addition, the survey reveals that three-quarters of parents would support a continuous learner profile, which would record their child's skills, qualifications and achievements throughout their education.

While evidence of parental scepticism alone is not sufficient to call for large-scale policy change, it highlights the need for parents to be consulted in any changes to assessment.

e. Recommendations:

Improve the parental engagement evidence base, supporting effective strategies

3. *To support schools to practise evidence-informed parental engagement:*
 - a. *Oak National Academy (an online classroom and resource hub that was set-up during the pandemic) should build in opportunities for parental engagement into lesson plans.*
 - b. *The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) should fund randomised control trials of interventions that include parental engagement as a core component to address the weak evidence base in this area.*
4. *The government and all delivery partners involved in the National Tutoring Programme should seek to understand and improve how tutoring interventions can become levers to improve parental engagement in their children's learning.*

4. Connecting schools, parents and the wider community

a. Parents' relationship with their child's school has never been more important

Chapter 3 explored parents' views on engagement in their child's learning. This chapter outlines how parents currently feel about their role in their child's school community more broadly. The 2022 survey shows that parents want to play more of an active role in their children's school but that too often there are barriers to doing so. The survey also shows that different groups of parents face different challenges when trying to engage with their children's education at the school, local/MAT or national level. This analysis focuses on participation in governing bodies and other avenues for parent voice. Finally, the section turns to schools' engagement with the wider community.

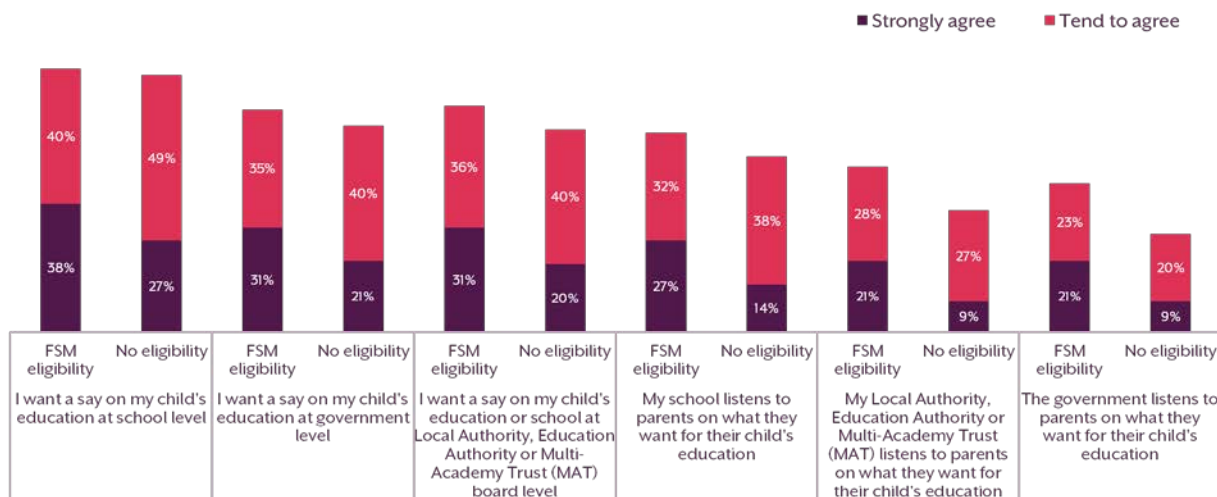
b. Parents want to play a greater role in their children's school

Many parents feel distanced from school, including decision-making affecting their children: Only half of parents agree that their child's school takes actions based on their views and only 48% feel they are able to have a say on school decisions that affect their child's education. 64% of parents said they were aware of a PTA or friends of the school group, down from 72% in 2018.

Certain groups of parents face particular barriers to school engagement: Parents of children eligible for FSM were less likely to report time as a barrier to participation but more likely to raise issues around confidence and financial cost.

Parents of children eligible for FSM and those with an identified SEND were more likely to want to feel closer to the decision-making process. For instance, the chart below (Figure 5) shows that parents of children eligible for FSM were more likely to report wanting a say at across all governance levels.

Figure 5: Parent voice at governance level by FSM eligibility



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents by FSM eligible (807); not eligible (2775)
 Question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" Strongly Agree, Tend to Agree

c. Parents are often unaware about how to play a role in their child's school

Parents clearly want greater recognition and input as stakeholders in their children's school. However, the 2022 survey suggests that many parents are unaware of the existing avenues they have to get their voices heard. Under two-thirds of parents believe their child's school has parent representatives on its governing body, despite this being a legal requirement. This suggests that an awareness campaign, building, for example, on the National Governance Association's '[Visible Governance](#)' work, is needed to ensure parents know about this avenue of engagement.

The proportion of parents who were aware of their school having a PTA has fallen from 69% in 2020, to 64% in 2022. While there will doubtless be parents who are not aware of existing opportunities in their schools, there may also be many schools that still do not have such groups.

d. Parents want a say at all governance levels, but schools are most important

The 2022 survey suggests parents want to be heard at MAT, local government and national government levels. The proportion of parents who want a say at government level is up on pre-pandemic levels (from 56% in 2019 to 61% in 2022). The same is true at local authority and MAT level (from 51% in 2019 to 61% in 2022). This has coincided with a slight drop in parents feeling listened to across all levels since the height of the pandemic, with under a third feeling heard by the government in 2022. These figures demonstrate the need to have clear systems in place to consult with parents, as outlined in Parentkind's [policy asks](#).

However, the school remains the most important point of contact and consultation for parents. 76% of parents want a say at school level. More than half of parents (58%) have raised issues and/or contributed feedback on their child's school in the previous year. Of these, 37% of parents have raised issues and/or contributed feedback to a teacher; 21% with a head teacher; 12% with a parent group and 9% with the school governing body⁶.

e. Overcoming barriers to parental engagement with their children's school

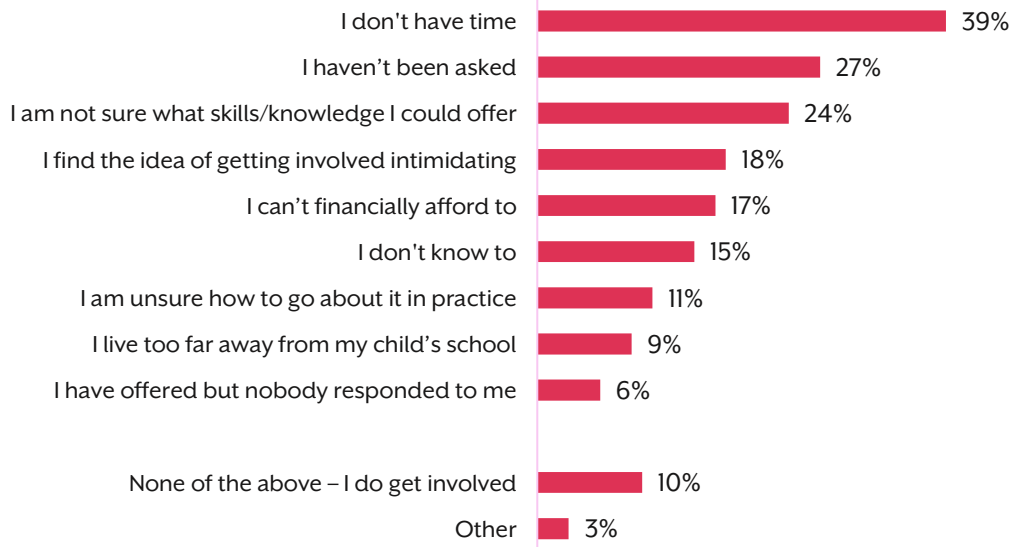
The 2022 survey revealed a range of barriers to participation, as outlined in Figure 6 overleaf. Several of these barriers, such as parents not being asked to participate (27%), being unsure what skills/knowledge they could offer (24%) or not knowing how to get involved (15%), may be addressed through improved information, advice and guidance to parents, aligning with Parentkind's [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools](#).

These barriers varied between different groups of parents. Parents of children eligible for FSM were less likely to cite time as a barrier to engagement with their school (25% versus 43%). However, they were, unsurprisingly, more likely to cite money as a barrier to involvement (22%, versus 15%). These differences are outlined in Figure 7. Elsewhere, parents of children with SEND were more likely than parents of children without SEND to cite being unsure about the skills/knowledge they could offer, how to go about getting involved and feeling intimidated (Figure 8).

Parents who themselves had disabilities were also more likely to cite particular barriers to school involvement (Figure 9). These included, but were not limited to, not being sure what skills/knowledge they would be able to offer (32% compared to 22% of parents with no reported disabilities), finding the idea of involvement intimidating (26% to 16%) and financial challenges.

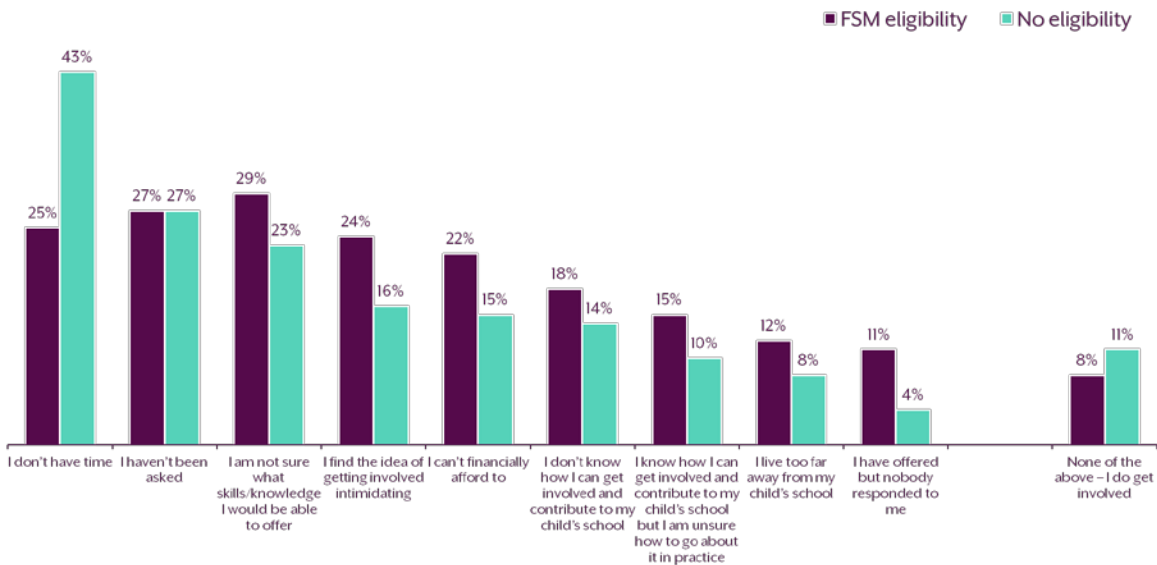
⁶ Though higher for SEND and FSM, as discussed in the next section.

Figure 6: Barriers to parental involvement in school life



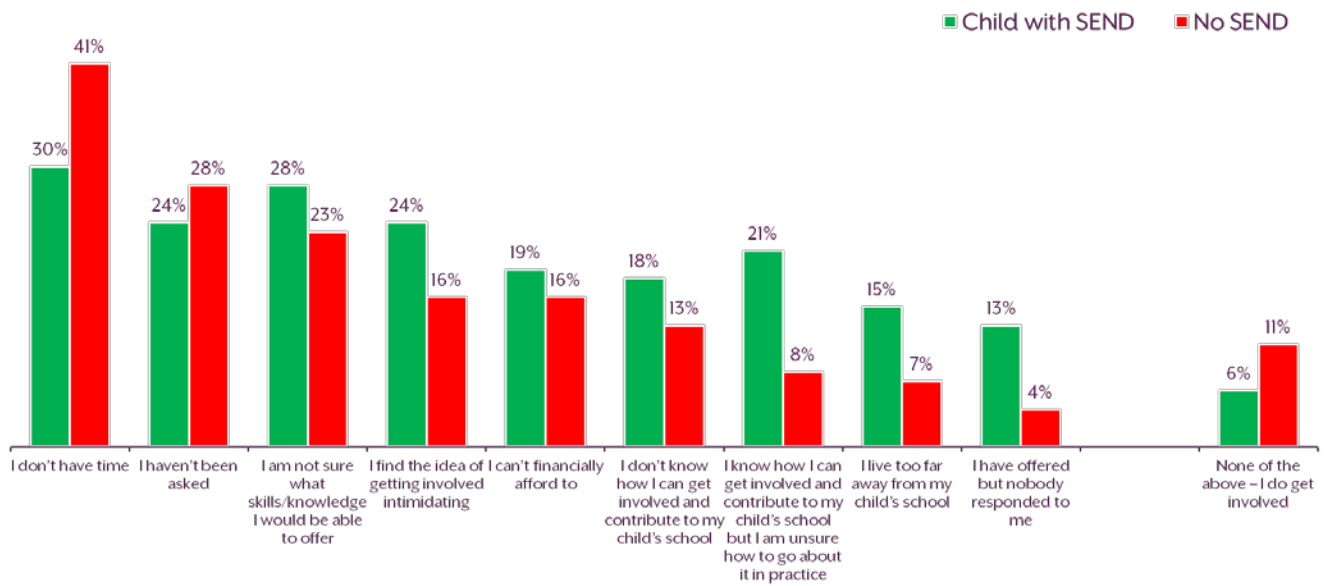
Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school?"

Figure 7: Barriers to parental involvement in school life by FSM eligibility



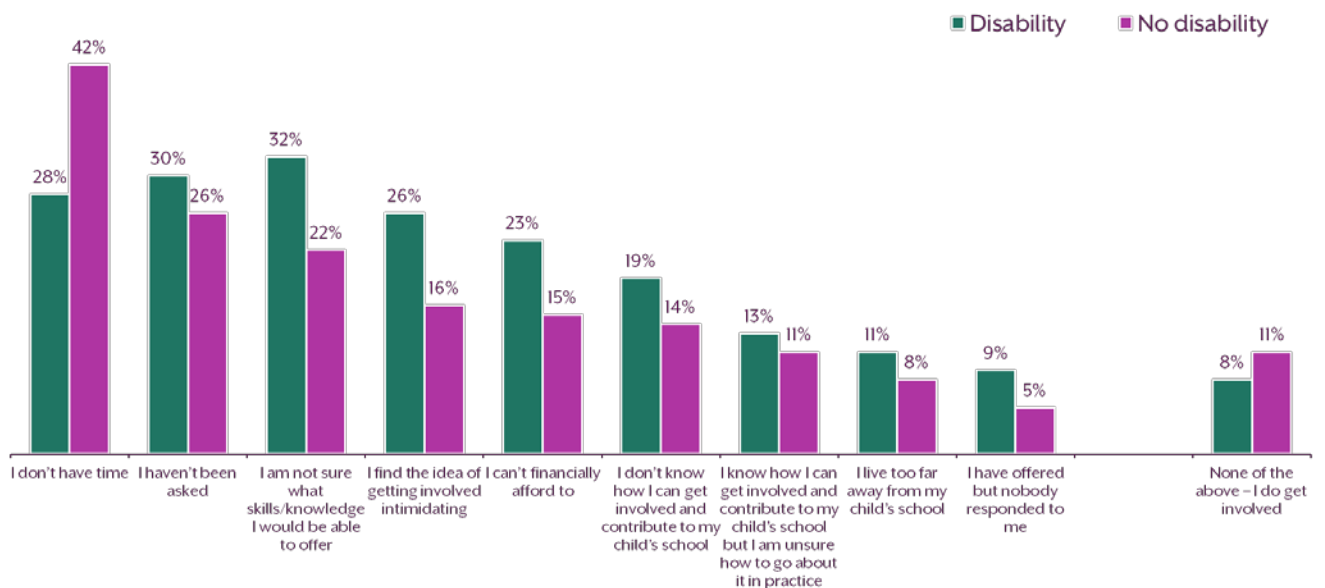
Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents: FSM (807), No FSM (2775)
 Question: "Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school?"

Figure 8: Barriers to parental involvement in school life by SEND



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents: Child with SEND (769), No SEND (2779)
 Question: "Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school?"

Figure 9: Barriers to parental involvement in school life by parental disability



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents: Disability (733), No disability (2821)
 Question: "Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school?"

The 'Involvement in School Life' driver in Parentkind's [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools](#) could prove a useful starting point for schools, helping them ensure that volunteering activities "reflect the diversity of the community ensuring every parent is encouraged and able to become involved" (p14). Indeed, over 40% of parents said they had not yet participated but would consider participating in parent action groups (45%), a parent council/forum (44%) or parent surveys/focus groups (43%).

While removing these barriers may go some way to improving parental participation, it is also worth noting that a high proportion of parents are not currently involved and would *not* consider participating as school governors/trustees (47%), parent councils/forums (37%) and parent action groups (35%). Parent forums and similar bodies should be set-up in a way that allows parents who are not members to get their voices heard.

f. Engaging with the wider community

Another key tenet of Parentkind's [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly schools](#) is community engagement. 64% of parents agreed that their child's school 'engages with, and is an integral part of, its local community'. Given the growing societal interest in viewing schools as part of a wider place-based network that includes a strong Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), local employers, civic universities and other actors, there is a clear rationale for wider community engagement.

An example of this wider community engagement is careers education. Currently, only half of parents agree that their child's school offers good careers advice. These figures vary by phase (42% at primary, 52% at secondary, 63% at post-16). This is despite the fact that there has been a strong drive towards careers education, with the Gatsby Benchmarks offering a framework for schools and organisations like Teach First offering training explicitly for careers leaders in schools. There may be opportunities to build on local infrastructure, such as former Opportunity Areas and the forthcoming Education Investment Areas scheme.

g. Recommendations:

Providing opportunities, addressing barriers, engaging the wider community

5. *To improve parental engagement in careers education:*
 - a. *Ofsted should update the terms of reference for their thematic review of careers guidance to consider the views of parents and stakeholders and consider how schools can engage parents as partners in furthering children's careers education.*
 - b. *The 'personal guidance' Gatsby Benchmark⁷ should be expanded to include parents as key stakeholders.*
6. *To improve parental and community engagement with MATs, the government should ensure that the new collaborative standard⁸:*
 - c. *Provides a clear signal that MATs should support schools' parental engagement work, with associated investment in CPD*
 - d. *Outlines ways in which MATs could engage with other MATs, LA-maintained schools and special schools to pool parental engagement resources/approaches through partnership.*
 - e. *Promotes collaboration with VCS, civic universities and other actors, to help build a picture of how parents in a local area want schools to engage with their local community.*

⁷ The [Gatsby Benchmarks](#) is a commonly used framework used by schools to improve their careers provision

⁸ The collaborative standard for MATs was set out as part of the 2022 [Schools White Paper](#), "requiring trusts to work constructively with all other partners"

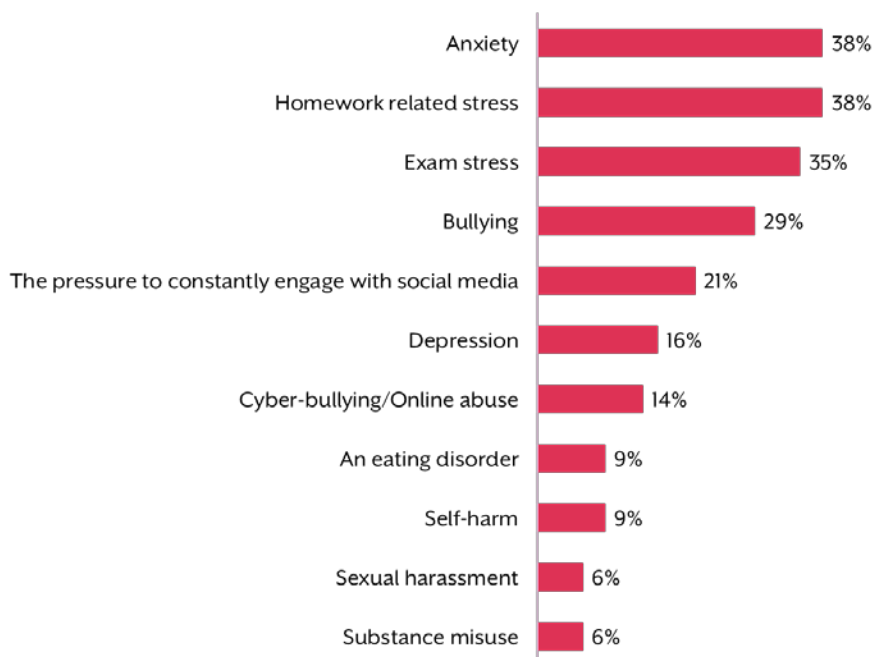
5. Mental health and wellbeing

a. The crisis in youth mental health

Youth mental health and wellbeing is an issue of great concern, particularly in light of pandemic-induced school closures and lockdowns ([Viner et al. 2022](#)) and associated pressure on already stretched child and adolescent mental health services ([Commission on Young Lives 2022](#)). More recently, the Covid Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) [mental health and wellbeing briefing](#) notes that 44% of 16/17 year-olds in England were above the threshold 'probable mental ill health'. This is significantly higher than previous study cohorts over the last 15 years. The study also found that young people with a parent who had high psychological distress were more likely to themselves report high distress (44%) than those who did not (30%). With mental health in the spotlight, and the government's commitment to training mental health leads, there has been a lot of discussion about how schools can play an appropriate role in supporting young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Whilst Parentkind's 2022 survey reports a decrease in parental concern about their child encountering various mental health issues compared with 2021 in all categories, the proportion of parents reporting that their child had encountered various mental health issues, either at school or as a result of something that happened at school, was similar to the previous year and pre-pandemic levels (Figure 10). Notably, parents of children who were eligible for FSM or SEND were more likely to report that their child had faced such challenges (Figure 11). For instance, 55% of parents with a child identified as having a SEND reported their child suffering from anxiety as a result of something that happened at school, versus 33% for other parents. More broadly, the proportion of parents reporting their child feeling safe at school has fallen from 84% in 2020, to 81% in 2022, while figures on parents' report of children's happiness remained fairly stable across the last four years of data.

Figure 10: Experience of mental health and wellbeing issues

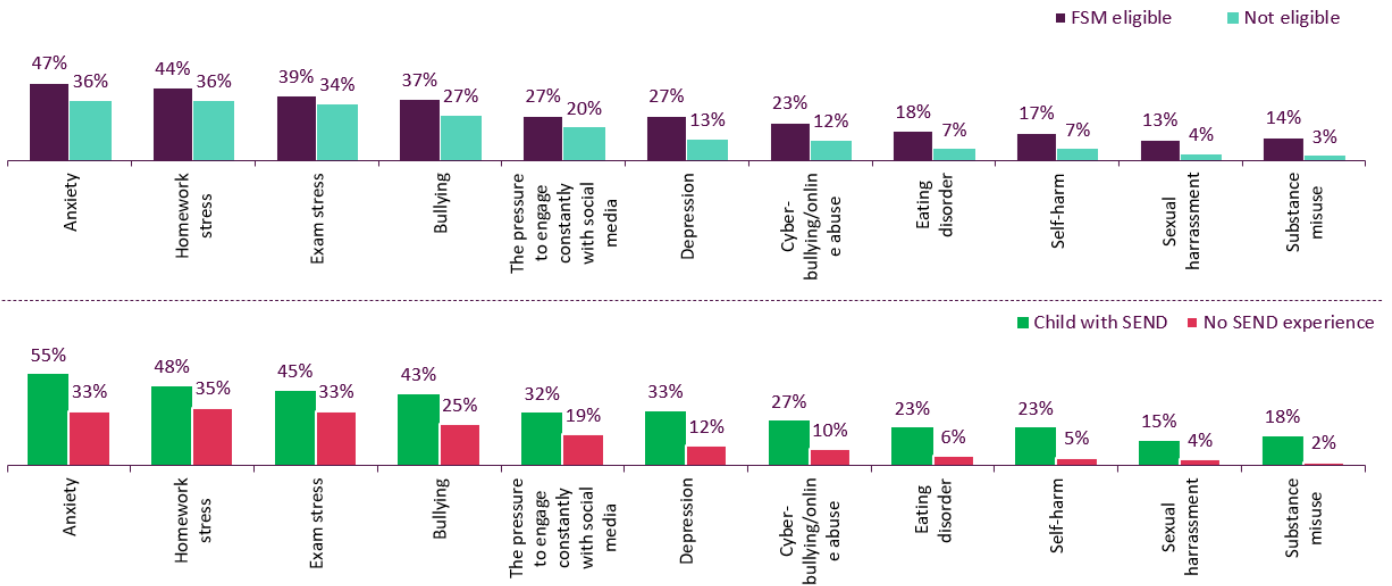


Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

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?

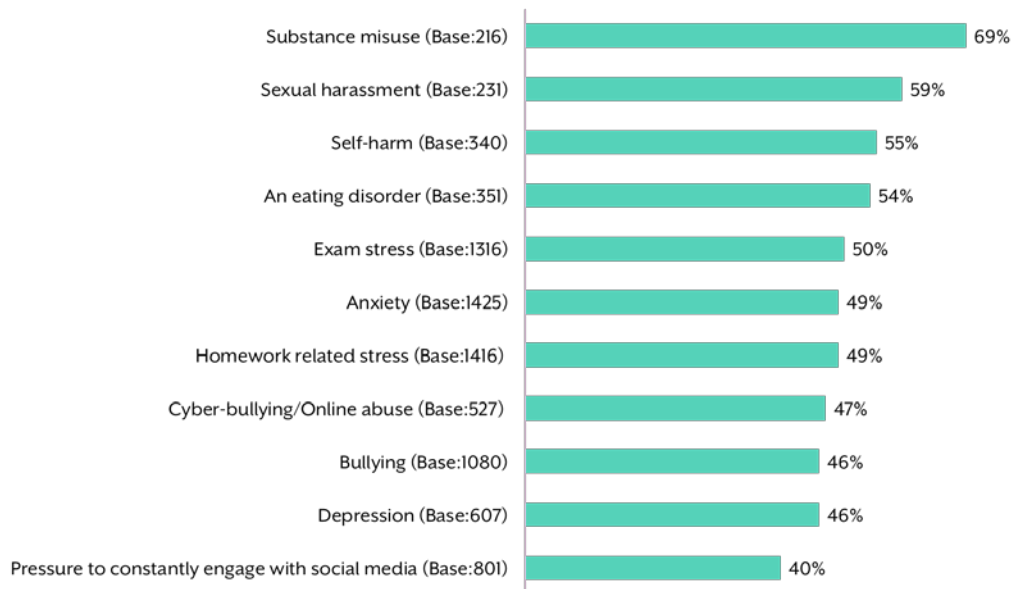
Figure 11: Experience of mental health and wellbeing issues by FSM eligibility and SEND experience



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents by: FSM eligibility (807), No eligibility (2775); Child with SEND (769), No SEND (2779)
 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 asked what they wanted in terms of children’s mental health and wellbeing support in school, parents prioritised mental health workers embedded in schools (22%), all teachers being trained in mental health and adolescent brain development (20%) and regular discussion of mental health issues in school (19%).

Figure 12: Satisfaction with school support for mental health and wellbeing issues



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All whose child had experience of the prompted mental health issue (figures shown above)
 Question: How satisfied were you with the support offered by your child’s school in relation to each of these issues? **Very satisfied + Quite satisfied**

b. Need to improve support, particularly concerning sexual harassment

Parents were unhappy with schools' responses to instances of sexual harassment. Less than two-thirds (59%) of parents whose child had experienced sexual harassment were satisfied with their school's response (Figure 12, on previous page). The findings of this survey support the recent suggestion by Ofsted that there is more to do to support young people on sexual harassment and work supportively and constructively with parents/carers when doing so.

c. Recommendations:

Better funding for mental health services in and out of schools

7. *The government should commit to additional funding for mental health services in schools, particularly in the context of a cost of living crisis that may well worsen existing challenges. These issues are discussed in Parentkind's recent [mental health report](#).*
8. *As recommended in the COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities Study [mental health briefing](#), LA services such as Integrated Care Partnerships "should support families where psychological distress is common and work with schools to ensure support offered is well coordinated. Services should be easy for families and young people to identify and access, recognising cultural and social differences in the families accessing them."*
9. *Schools should improve their engagement with parents when developing their policies around the issue of sexual harassment. They should also improve their communication with parents when incidents are reported. This should build on the DfE's existing parent-focused relationships, sex and health education [resources](#).*

6. Conclusion

This report has presented key findings from Parentkind's Parent Voice Survey 2022, covering school funding and the cost of living, parents' engagement in their children's learning, schools' connection with parents and the wider community, and mental health and wellbeing.

As with Parent Voice Surveys in previous years, much of the outlook here is positive. Parents are generally satisfied with their children's education and keen to play their part, whether it be supporting their child's learning at home or having their voice heard at school, local/MAT or government level. However, they face many barriers to involvement, including lack of time, finances, and not knowing what they can offer, among others. These differ among groups of parents (e.g. those whose children are eligible for FSM, those whose children have an identified SEND, parents who themselves have a disability). It is vitally important that schools continue to provide opportunities for parental engagement (e.g. helping set up PTAs) and advertise existing avenues (e.g. parent governor positions), drawing on resources such as the [Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools](#). In addition, this report outlines recommendations for government that will promote evidence-informed parental engagement and strengthen ties between schools, parents, and the wider community.

In the context of a cost of living crisis, schools' relationships with parents have never been more important. While households struggle with soaring energy bills, housing costs and other expenses, schools face a 'triple-whammy', where:

- Inflation is eating into school budgets (e.g. energy bills, catering costs)
- Unfunded teacher salary increases will likely affect staffing costs
- Parents may be less able to financially support their children's education

This is deeply worrying for schools given the uncertainty surrounding the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and ongoing budget challenges, despite the return to 2010 real-terms per-pupil funding levels. That school leaders are being put in the position of asking for contributions towards a 'free at point of use' education system reflects historical underfunding of schools and wider children's services. In response, we recommend a cost of living top to pupil premium, expanded FSM eligibility, and the development of 'poverty proofing' tools for schools.

Given their place in the local community, schools can play a supportive and signposting role during challenging times. However, it is vital that policymakers recognise that: a) schools cannot do this alone, and b) this role relies on a range of wider services being available to parents and their children. With this in mind, the government should commit to additional mental health services in schools and improve coordination of LA mental health services so that families get the support they need.

Overall, the 2022 Parent Voice survey presents a clear picture of parents as an engaged but under-supported part of the education system. The survey points towards some tangible ways in which policy makers can support schools to work more closely with parents, both in supporting learning at home and bringing parents into the school community. The survey also highlights the implications of a challenging and inequitable economic environment in which lower-income and vulnerable parents require more support. Ultimately, it is vital that policymakers put parents at the heart of decisions that affect their child's future.

Appendix

Demographics

Age, gender, region



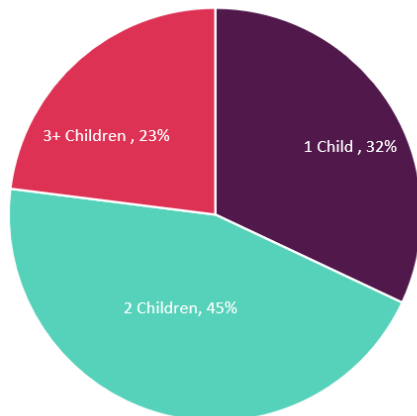
Parenikind

Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) 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 'Other' or 'Prefer not to answer'. Responses each numbered 1 (less than 1%)

Children in the household



School phase of the oldest child

Phase	2019	2020	2021	2022
Primary (Reception-Y6)	39%	36%	35%	33%
Secondary/Post-primary (Y7-11)	44%	46%	46%	44%
Post 16/FE (college or Y12-13)	17%	18%	19%	23%
Don't know	0%	-	0%	1%

Parenikind

Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All respondents

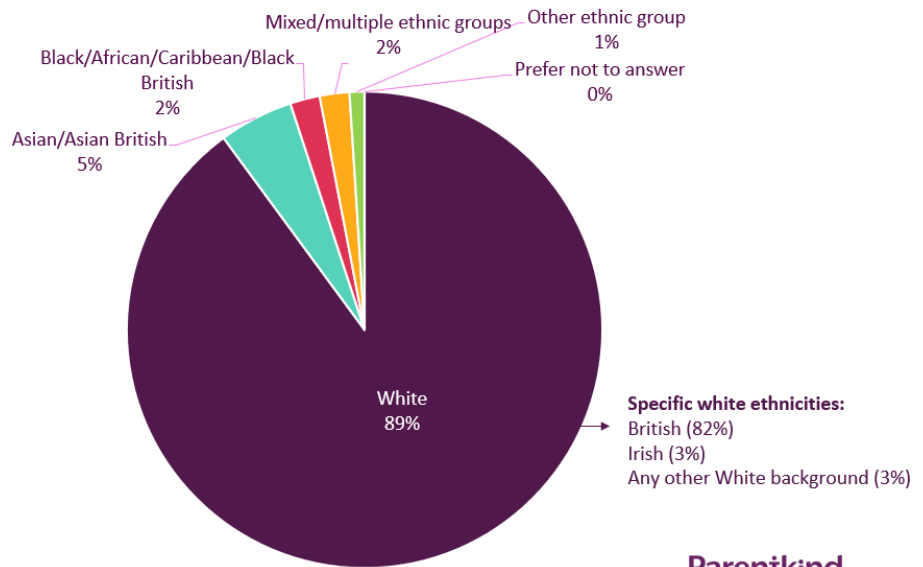
Ethnicity

Specific ethnicities between 1%-2%

- Pakistani (2%)
- African (2%)
- Indian (2%)
- White and Black Caribbean (1%)
- Bangladeshi (1%)
- White and Asian (1%)
- Caribbean (1%)
- Any other Asian background (1%)
- Chinese (1%)
- Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background (1%)

Below 1% (number of respondents in brackets):

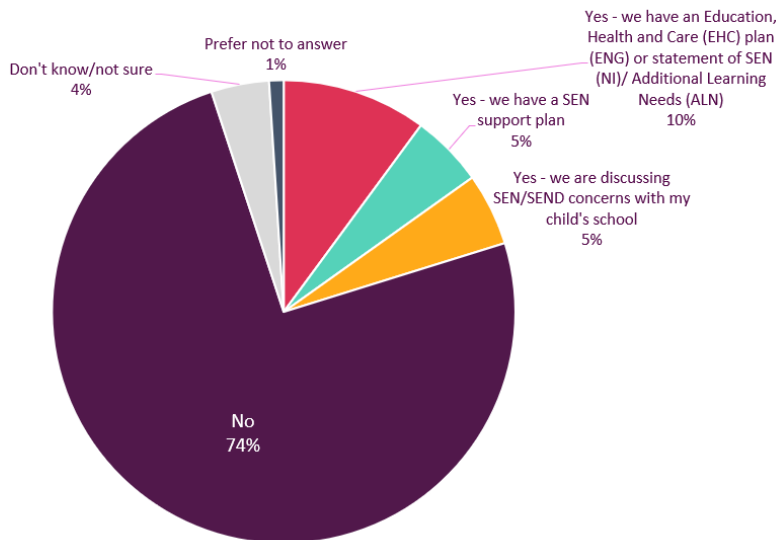
- White and Black Caribbean (30)
- Arab (16)
- Any other ethnic group (14)
- White and Black African (12)
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (2)



Parentkind

Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) 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.

Special Education Needs or Disabilities (SEND)



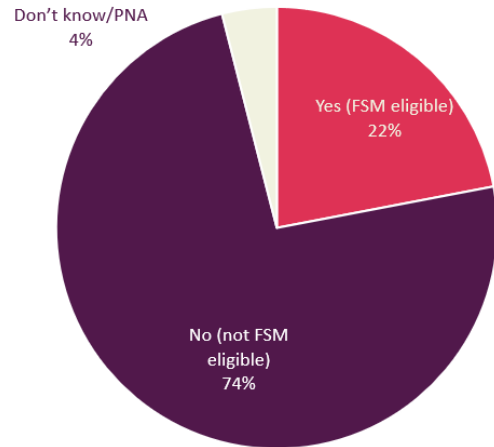
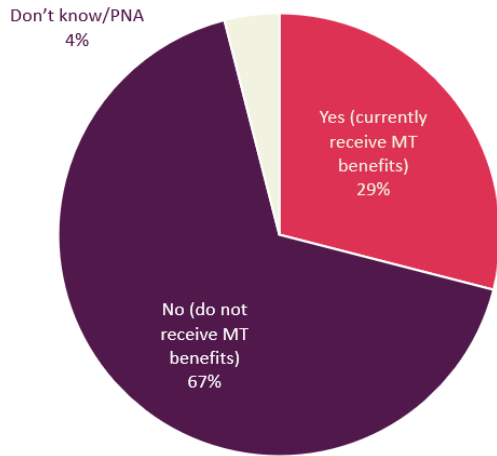
20% of respondents identify their child as having special educational needs or disabilities and 15% have support plans already in place

25% of respondents whose child has SEND say their child attends a special school (5% of all respondents)

Parentkind

Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
 Base: All respondents
 Question: "Would you describe your child as having any special educational needs or disabilities (SEN/SEND)?"

Means-Tested Benefits take-up and Free School Meals entitlement



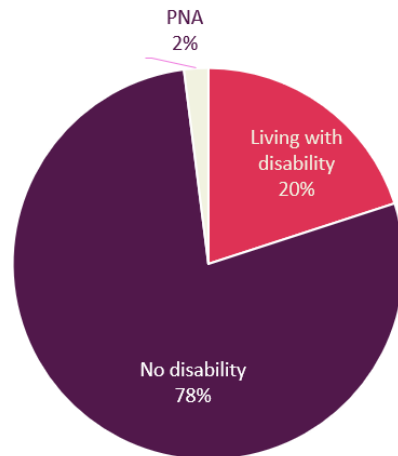
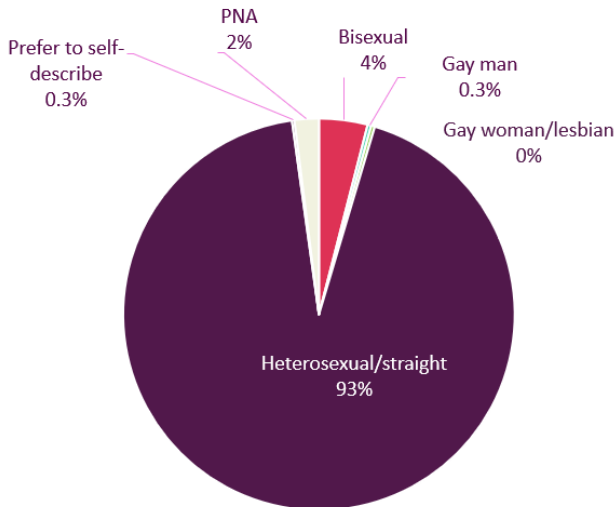
Parentkind

Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) and Wales (500) who have children aged 4-18 in state school

Base: All respondents

Question: "Are you claiming any means-tested benefits at the moment?" // "Are you claiming any benefits which mean that your child is eligible for free school meals?"

Sexual orientation and Disability



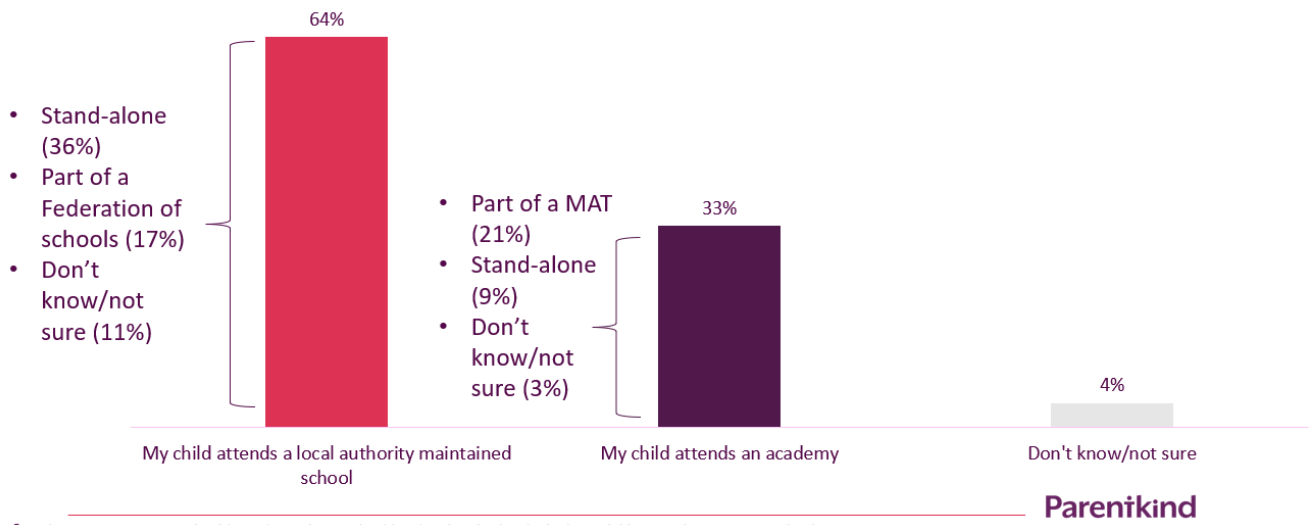
Parentkind

Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) 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? // "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?" Defining Yes to both questions as living with disability (ONS Census criteria)

School governance model in England



Sample: 3750 parents in England (3,000), Northern Ireland (250) 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..."