Parentkind Report:

Learning at home throughout the pandemic

May 2022

Parentkind

BRINGING TOGETHER HOME & SCHOOL

Contents

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

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1. A message from Parentkind CEO, John Jolly:

"Throughout the pandemic, parents' role in education has been brought sharply into focus and a lot of pressure was put onto parents as they were required to support their children's learning at home. Parentkind was keen to understand how parents were feeling and coping with this new role.

The pandemic has highlighted the poverty and the social divide that already existed and Covid-19 has exacerbated these problems, particularly for children from poorer backgrounds. This report delves into parents' experiences and is crucial to understanding the differences in parental experiences of supporting home learning.

This report also brings forward some fascinating results – the most important ones being that parents from all backgrounds are more engaged than ever, and that parental confidence in supporting home learning continuously increased throughout the pandemic. The report also shows, however, that a lot of inequalities still exist for parents and children from more disadvantaged backgrounds and that there is still a lot more work to be done in ensuring that children from all backgrounds have access to the resources and support they need.

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to reimagine education and its role in the home. We know from research that parental engagement at home is one of the main drivers in helping to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do not fall further behind their peers. Parents have had a taste of what home learning entails and still feel more engaged and confident than ever. Let us work together on bringing home and school together and build on that new confidence.

Most of all, we must listen to parents. It is now more crucial than ever to give parents a strong voice, listen to them and recognise them as primary stakeholders in their child's education. By doing this, we can narrow the social divide and overcome inequalities that exist and have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Only together can we create an education system that is fair for all."

2. Executive Summary

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic period, Parentkind regularly polled and surveyed parents and carers to gather their views on the measures affecting their child. This report has collated all the information and data related to parents' views on supporting their child's learning at home and related topics. This section highlights some of the key findings across the core themes we took to parents.

Parents' experiences of supporting learning at home throughout the pandemic

- The impact of the pandemic on children's mental health and wellbeing, and motivating children to do their schoolwork increasingly became more of a concern for parents throughout the pandemic.
- Parents became less worried about their child missing out on face-to-face learning from teachers, and about juggling their work and supporting home learning compared to the start of the pandemic.
- State school parents were more worried about juggling their work and supporting home learning compared to independent school parents, who were more likely to be worried about their children not seeing their friends and socialising and the impact on their child's health and wellbeing.
- Parents of a child with SEND were more concerned about their child's health and wellbeing, their child's lack of motivation to complete the work set and their child missing out on face-to-face learning, compared to parents of children without SEND.
- There was positive parental support for a blended-learning model. However, it is clear it would benefit some children more than others, such as pupils who attend independent schools.
- A larger proportion of state school parents said they were able to work from home but would find it challenging to support their child's learning at the same time, compared to independent school parents.
- Parents' confidence in supporting home learning increased throughout the pandemic.
- Parents with three or more children, parents of children with SEND, parents with FSM eligibility and BAME parents reported feeling more confident at the start of the pandemic. However, parents with FSM eligibility and BAME parents' confidence declined after three months.
- Parental engagement in their child's education increased throughout the pandemic and is higher than ever before. However, C2DE parents were less likely to be involved in their child's education compared to ABC1 parents.
- There was a mixture of views on parental mental health, with some parents coping better than others when supporting learning at home throughout the pandemic.
- The majority of parents received the support they needed from schools. However, parents of a child with SEND and state-school parents were less positive about the support they had been offered from schools.
- The top three positives for parents with the remote learning arrangements in February 2021 was being more aware of what their child was learning, having alternative options to engage with their child's teacher (i.e. virtual parents evening) and being provided with learning resources that helped them engage with their child's learning.

The home learning environment

- In February 2021, 98% of parents said their child had a digital device with internet connection and this increased throughout the pandemic as we surveyed parents. The number of parents who said they had a printer also increased.
- There was still a large proportion of children who did not have an appropriate home learning environment or access to the technology and resources they needed.
- In November 2020, 18% of children did not have a quiet place to study. 2% of parents said their child did not have access to a device and 4% of children were still using a smartphone to access online learning. 31% of children were still sharing devices with another family member.
- Technology was one of the top three costs when parents were asked to identify costs which were a particular concern for them.

- Even with the technology and resources needed, there continues to be a social divide between the knowledge and experience middle-income parents have to support their children's home learning, compared to lower-income parents.

Parent approaches to empower and improve outcomes using home-learning

- The top barrier for parents in getting involved in their child's education and school was lack of time, although it dropped in importance since 2019. Knowing how to get involved but being unsure about how to go about it, and offering support but having no one respond were the two barriers which increased since 2019.
- C2DE parents were more likely to answer that they do not how to get involved and contribute to their child's schools, and that they were not sure what skills/knowledge they would have to offer, compared to ABC1 parents.
- FSM-eligible, SEND parents and White parents were more likely to find the idea of getting involved intimidating.
- BAME, FSM-eligible and C2DE parents were all more likely to respond that they 'have offered to get involved in their child's school but no one has responded to me'. Lack of time was the biggest barrier for these groups.
- To support home learning, parents would find more feedback from teachers on their child's work, more instruction/teaching from teachers, live online classes and recorded video-clips helpful. State schools were less likely to be offering live online lessons to their children compared to private schools.
- Around a third of parents would like to see information about useful learning resources online, video clips to explain subject matter and their child's school using online communication tools, such as MS Teams, more widely.
- 'Discussing books or relevant current affair topics' became more of a priority for the future for parents, compared to 2018. Other priorities included homework support, a positive attitude towards education and the child's school, and supporting the child during tests.
- Middle-income parents and White parents were more likely to want more information on curriculum topics and how to support home learning. Middle-income parents also wanted their child's school to use more online communication tools such as MS teams.
- More video-clips explaining subject matter was a high priority for BAME parents and C2DE parents. This may be a result of the correlation that exists between BAME parents and lower-incomes and having less knowledge about the curriculum and subject matters.
- When asked about knowledge priorities for the future, parents were most keen to know more about how they can best support their child's learning at home, guidance about useful learning resources, tools and tech and more information around the curriculum.
- One third of parents expected greater involvement than before and only one in ten parents expected less than before. Almost half of parents from BAME backgrounds, parents who are eligible for free school meals and ABC1 parents want greater involvement in their child's education.
- Parents from BAME backgrounds, those with children eligible for FSM and those parenting a child with SEND were also likelier to expect to have less involvement with their child's education.

Community support

- Technology courses to help parents make better use of technology, workshops based on the UK curriculum and other workshops including lessons or courses which teach parents about different subjects would be highly beneficial for parents.
- Support groups for parents which discuss a range of topics, such as mental health or advice on supporting learning at home would help parents feel more positive about supporting their child's learning and feeding back to schools and teachers.
- Community support must be inclusive, involving faith leaders and different cultural groups to help parents feel more integrated and get more involved in supporting their child's learning.
- More funding is needed to fund community events and to relieve the burden off schools.

Conclusions

- Innovative technological opportunities must be accessible for all parents to help improve digital inequalities. Better guidance or training courses for parents who struggle with technological literacy is essential.
- All children must have an appropriate home learning environment and support must be given to parents who cannot afford the technology or resources needed.
- Parent-school communication and building relationships based on an understanding of family circumstances is essential, particularly as parents continue to live with the financial impacts of the pandemic and as the cost of living increases.
- Extra support and conversations around parental mental health are necessary.
- Schools must act on the barriers mentioned by parents which all share an element of uncertainty or intimidation around getting involved in their child's education, particularly for parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Further research on various aspects, such as the decrease and lack of confidence in some parents and why some parents expect to have less involvement in their child's education post-pandemic would be beneficial to understand barriers to home-learning.
- Funding and support for parents, schools and communities is needed to help increase parental involvement in education, in order to help improve social mobility.
- Further research around whether parents continue to support home-learning and whether parents have the capacity to do so is essential, given the financial impacts of the pandemic and the increase in the cost of living.
- Parentkind's three policy solutions are essential to improving the experience of parents when supporting their child's home learning: high-quality parent participation in schools, schools to consulting more effectively with parents and for the Department for Education and the devolved assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland to formally establish processes for consulting with parents on their child's education.

3. Introduction

The pandemic has significantly changed the way we all live our lives. It presented many challenges and we have all seen and felt the impacts that it has had. Throughout the pandemic and as a result of school closures, parents have had to adapt to help support their children while they were learning at home.

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in education systems and in society for those who are most disadvantaged. The Social Mobility Commission (2021) argued that the poorest families and children have suffered most during the last 18 months. The pandemic has shone a light on the experiences of families in lower-income households, making the case for change stronger than ever.

When teachers were asked how lockdown had changed their perception of their school's community in a study by University College London's (UCL) Institute of Education, teachers said that the pandemic made them much more aware of the issues surrounding poverty, and the impact poverty had on pupils' lives and their ability to learn at home (Moss et al., 2021). Before ensuring their children were learning at home, teachers prioritised getting food and basic necessities to the most vulnerable. The pandemic saw teachers themselves deliver meals to children from the poorest households because their parents relied on free school meals at school and could not afford to provide for them. The pandemic laid bare the poverty that already pre-existed and made it difficult to turn a blind eye.

Many innovations did emerge, however, such as remote working and remote learning, which can help us to reimagine education differently and to help support those disadvantaged pupils to ensure they have the education, support and resources they need. In particular, it has helped us to reimagine the role parents can have in their children's education, such as further supporting their child's learning at home which in turn can help ameliorate the gaps in achievement that existed before the coronavirus pandemic and that have since worsened. Even before the pandemic, poorer pupils were already 11 months behind their more affluent peers before they even started school (Montacute, 2022). Disadvantaged pupils were twice as likely to have fallen behind during the pandemic, due to many factors including unequal access to resources (Teach First, 2021). Now that the early stages of the pandemic are over, we must be more holistic about how we view the pandemic, learn from it and take advantage of the opportunities it has presented us with, particularly around parental engagement and remote learning.

Parentkind conducted various surveys and polls throughout the pandemic to understand parents' experience of supporting learning at home. This report has analysed all results, including those of our Annual Parent Survey conducted each year. This report collates what parents have told Parentkind and considers what policy-makers and leaders can learn.

The main aim of this report is to shine a light on parents' experiences of home learning and to use these to understand whether parents could continue to support home learning in the future. It is well known that there are social class differences in the home learning environments of children from different socio-economic groups from as early as three years of age (Goodman and Greg, 2010) and the earlier the intervention, the better (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). Research shows that parents fostering and supporting home learning helps to improve children's achievement (Niklas and Scheneider, 2017) and that parental engagement in the home has a greater effect on their achievement than parental involvement in school-based activities (Goodall, 2013). This highlights the importance of capitalising on the opportunity that the pandemic has given us to increase and further support parental engagement in the home, particularly for those children who are most disadvantaged.

The report focuses on parents' experiences of supporting home learning, the home learning environment and how parent approaches can play a role in supporting home learning, with the main goal of improving children's education and attainment. Parentkind has used the terms 'Free School Meal Eligible' parents and 'C2DE parents' throughout their research. This report has used the term 'lower-income' parents/families to encompass both of these terms.

The report refers to 'ABC1' and 'C2DE' parents throughout – 'ABC1 parents' refers to parents who fall into the middle-class category (from upper to lower middle class), whereas 'C2DE parents' refers to parents who fall into the working class category (from skilled to the lowest level of working class).

4. Parents' experience of supporting learning at home throughout the pandemic

Parentkind was keen to understand parents' experiences of supporting learning at home throughout the pandemic. It asked parents various questions around parents' experience, including their concerns, their worries and what they thought the positives of remote learning were. Delving into some of the key topics parents raised has helped us to get a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges of parents' experiences of supporting learning at home throughout the pandemic.

Parents' top concerns

Figure 1: What, if anything, are you most concerned about as a parent with schools being closed to your child? (Tick up to 3):
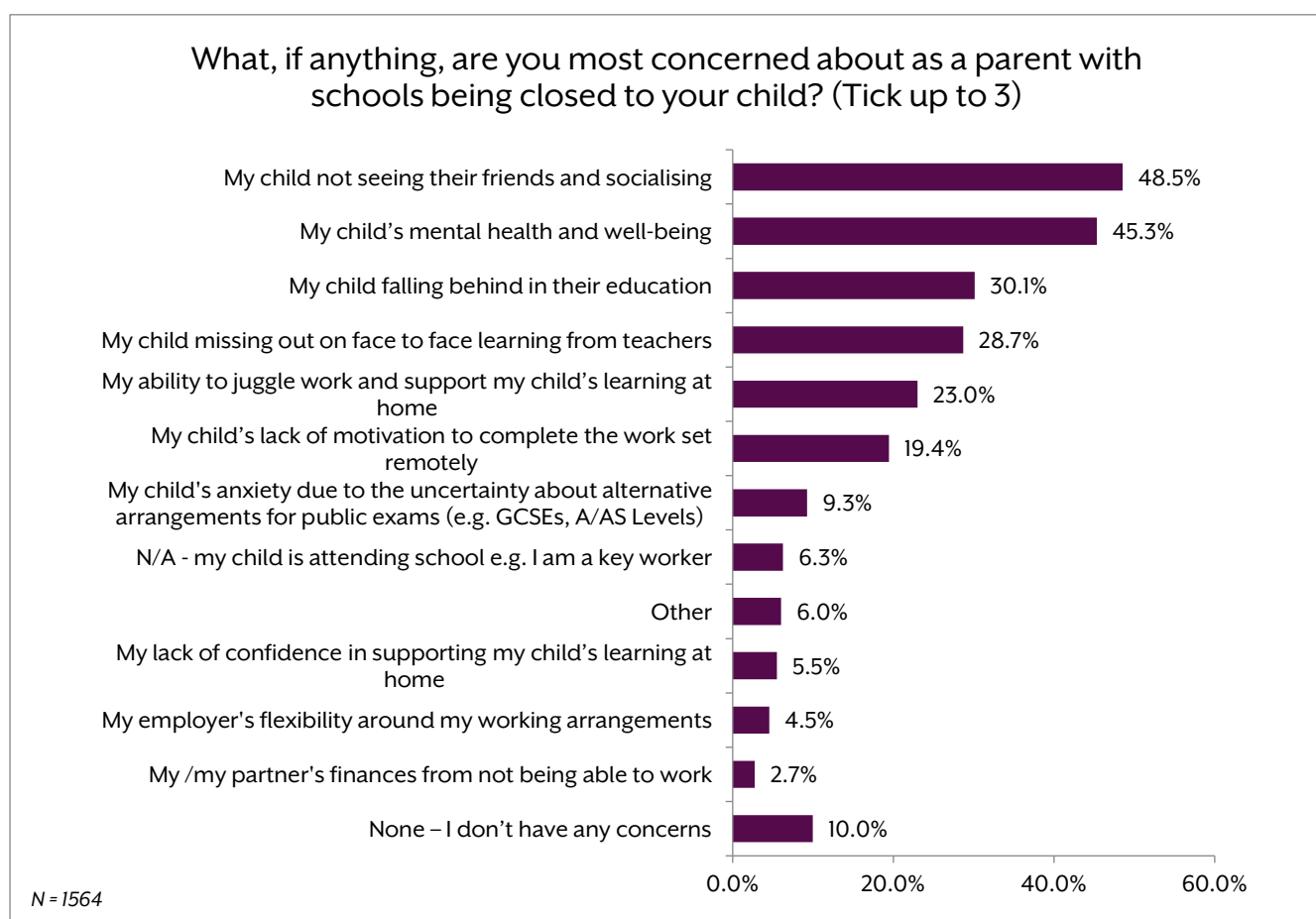
Figure 1: Parent Poll: School Closures England Only Results - January 2021

Our May 2020 survey found that the top concerns for parents (out of a list of 13 options) around remote learning were: their child not seeing their friends or socialising (48%), their child missing out on learning from teachers (38%), their child's mental health (35%) and their own ability to juggle working and supporting their child's learning (31%).

Similar responses were given eight months later in our January 2021 survey (Figure 1):

- Almost half of parents were concerned about their child not seeing their friends and socialising (49%).
- 45% were concerned about their child's health and wellbeing.
- 30% were concerned about their child falling behind in their education.
- 29% were concerned about their child missing out on face to face learning from teachers.

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- 23% were concerned about their ability to juggle work and support their child's learning at home.
- 19% were worried about their child's lack of motivation to complete the work set remotely.

**Figure 2: What, if anything, are you most concerned about as a parent with schools being closed to your child (tick up to 3)? (State school vs Independent school results)**

Q4. What, if anything, are you most concerned about as a parent with schools being closed to your child (tick up to 3)?		
% in top 3	**State**	**Independent**
My child not seeing their friends and socialising	50%	67%
My child's mental health and well-being	45%	57%
My child falling behind in their education	31%	27%
My child missing out on face to face learning from teachers	29%	29%
My child's anxiety due to the uncertainty about alternative arrangements for public exams (e.g. GCSEs, AS and A Levels)	9%	13%
My ability to juggle work and support my child's learning at home	24%	14%
My /my partner's finances from not being able to work	3%	5%
My employer's flexibility around my working arrangements	5%	2%
My lack of confidence in supporting my child's learning at home	6%	4%
My child's lack of motivation to complete the work set remotely	20%	19%
None – I don't have any concerns	10%	4%
N/A - my child is attending school e.g. I am a key worker	6%	6%
N =	*1429*	*100*

Figure 2: Parent Poll: School Closures England Only Results - January 2021

There were particular differences in the worries of independent school parents and state school parents. Parents with children in independent schools were particularly concerned about their children not seeing their friends and socialising (67% citing it in their top three concerns vs. 48% of state school parents) and the impact on their child's mental health and well-being (57% putting this in their top three concerns vs. 45% of state school parents). Parents' ability to juggle work and support home learning was a concern to more state school parents than independent school parents (24% vs. 14%).

Independent school parents were also more likely to be more worried about the impact of the pandemic on their child's education compared to state school parents (63% of independent school parents vs. 47% state school parents).

Parentkind also found some stark differences in the parents of children with SEND compared to those without. For example, the impact of school closures on their child's mental health and wellbeing was a huge concern for over half of parents of children with SEND (53%) compared to those without (44%).

Parents of children with SEND were also more concerned about their child's lack of motivation to complete the work set (23%) compared to those without (19%), and more concerned about their child missing out on face-to-face learning (31%) compared to those without (18%). They were also much more concerned about juggling work whilst supporting their child's learning at home (25%) compared to those without (16%).

In February 2021, Parentkind once again asked parents what their biggest challenges were with the current learning arrangements and it found the following (Figure 3):

Figure 3: What are the biggest challenges you are facing as a parent with the current learning arrangements for your child's education? (Tick up to 3 – if you are not facing any challenges please tick that option)

	What are the biggest challenges you are facing as a parent with the current learning arrangements for your child's education? (Tick up to 3 – if you are not facing any challenges please tick that option)		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Motivating my child to do their school work		36%	201
3	Managing my child's mental health and well-being due to lockdown restrictions		32%	181
2	Juggling work and schooling		30%	172
4	Looking after other family members and household chores in addition to home schooling		30%	169
5	Managing my own mental health and well-being due to lockdown restrictions		20%	114
6	Keeping a routine		13%	72
7	Sharing devices and/or internet connectivity		11%	62
8	Managing my relationship with my child		10%	55
9	Lack of support from employer in terms of flexible working		3%	17
10	Other (please specify):		8%	46
11	I do not have any challenges		20%	112
			answered	565

Figure 3: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

The top 3 challenges for parents in February 2021 were motivating their child to do their school work (36%), managing their child's mental health and well-being due to lockdown restrictions (32%) and juggling work and schooling (30%). 11% of parents also said sharing devices and/or internet connectivity was a concern.

One parent highlighted the issue of their child's physical health:

"Managing his physical health. He's sat in front of his computer all day, every day".

Although the options were slightly different in Parentkind's school closures poll, when comparing these results to January 2021 and May 2020, children's wellbeing and mental health became more of a concern for parents, as well as motivating their child to do their school work. It may be that after a year, remote learning took a toll on children's mental health and affected their motivation. Parents' worries about their children not seeing their friends remained a concern across all surveys. Parents did however become less worried about their child missing out on face-to-face learning from teachers in January 2021, compared to May 2020.

Working and juggling home learning

At the beginning of the pandemic, the ability to juggle work and home learning was one of the top concerns for parents across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In Parentkind's first coronavirus poll, nearly half of parents mentioned work (49%) and needing to juggle priorities. Parents said:

"Will make it harder to deliver on work and as a parent – both are going to get compromised…"

"Very stressful as I have to work too and don't want them to miss out so it's going to be a real juggling act"

"A lot [of impact]. I am required to work to help the key workers. My son is ASD and is really struggling to accept I have to work. Then I need to help him to do his school work also."

Parents also mentioned the impact of school closures and supporting home learning on their finances:

"As a single, self-employed parent, I am no longer able to work and this will severely affect my ability to financially support us".

"I won't be able to go to work whilst looking after the kids".

"Money issues as we won't be able to work".

Parents in Northern Ireland were the most worried about their ability to juggle work and home learning (19%) compared to 15% of parents in Wales and only 8% in England in July 2020.

Parentkind did, however, see a decrease in parents' concern around juggling their work and supporting their child's learning at home as they continued to be surveyed. For example, in May 2020, this was a concern for 31% of parents and in January and February 2021 this decreased by over 10%. In January only 23% of parents were concerned about this and in February only 24% were concerned.

This decrease in concern may have been a result of employers being more flexible about working patterns as parents needed to adapt. In a world learning to live with Covid-19, and with a return to office-working, for example, this may become a worry for parents again if they were expected to continue to support learning at home.

A blended-learning approach

Figure 4: When schools do reopen to all pupils school leaders have stated that pupils will need to attend on a part time basis if social distancing measures have to be adhered to, meaning that pupils will follow a 'blended' learning approach involving a combination of face-to-face teaching and at-home learning. Would this blended learning approach be possible for your family?
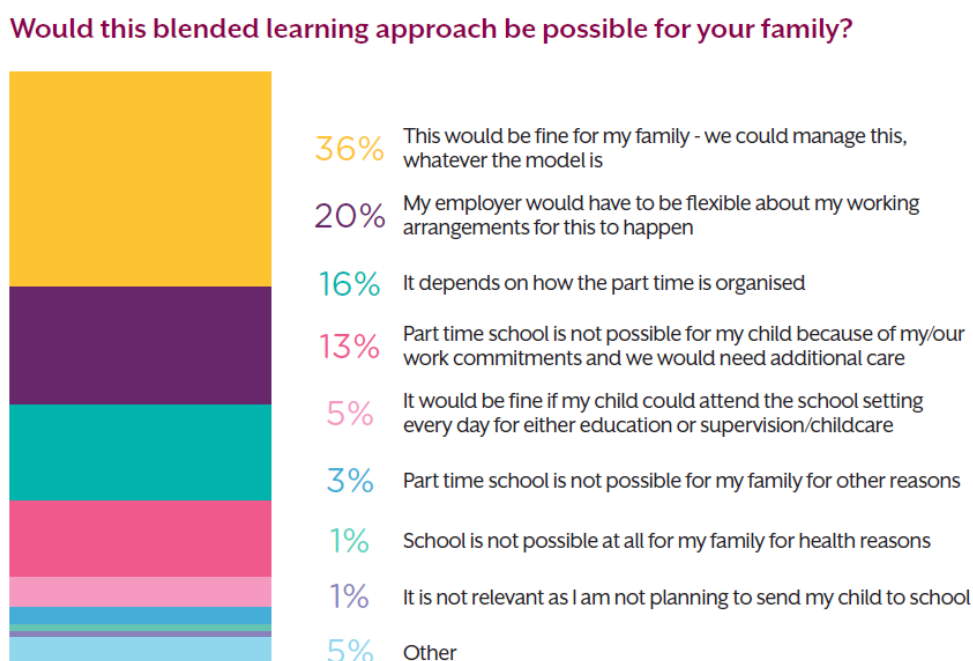

Figure 4: Parentkind Coronavirus Parent Survey 3 – July 2020

In July 2020, Parentkind asked parents:

'When schools do reopen to all pupils, school leaders have stated that pupils will need to attend on a part-time basis if social distancing measures have to be adhered to meaning that pupils will follow a 'blended' learning approach involving a combination of face-to-face teaching and at home learning – would this blended learning approach be possible for your family?'

Figure 4 shows Parentkind's findings. Only 36% of parents believed a blended learning approach would be possible for their family and could manage it regardless of the model.

- 20% of parents said their employer would need to be flexible about their working arrangements for this to happen.
- 18% of parents said this would not be possible at all for either health, work or other reasons.
- 13% said part-time school would not be possible for their child because of their work commitments and that they would need additional care.
- 5% said it would be fine only if their child could attend the school setting every day for either education or supervision/childcare.
- 3% said part time school was not possible for their family.

In November 2020, Parentkind asked parents a similar question:

'With increasing numbers of children being sent home due to COVID-19 outbreaks, what impact does this have on your household if/when your child is sent home?'

54% of parents said this was manageable for their family, compared to only 36% of parents in July of the same year. Similar results were seen when parents were asked how they felt about juggling work and home learning priorities. Only 14% of parents said they could not work when their child is not able to go to school compared to 18% of parents in July.

More parents however said that their employer would need to be more flexible compared to July. 26% of parents said their employer would have to be flexible about their working arrangements in November, but in July only 20% of parents said that they would require this support.

Although these are encouraging results compared to those in July and support a blended learning model, parents may have assumed this way of working would be only for a short period of time whilst their children were sent home due to COVID-19 outbreaks. In July 2020, Parentkind asked parents about a part-time blended learning approach, which may have caused the difference in results.

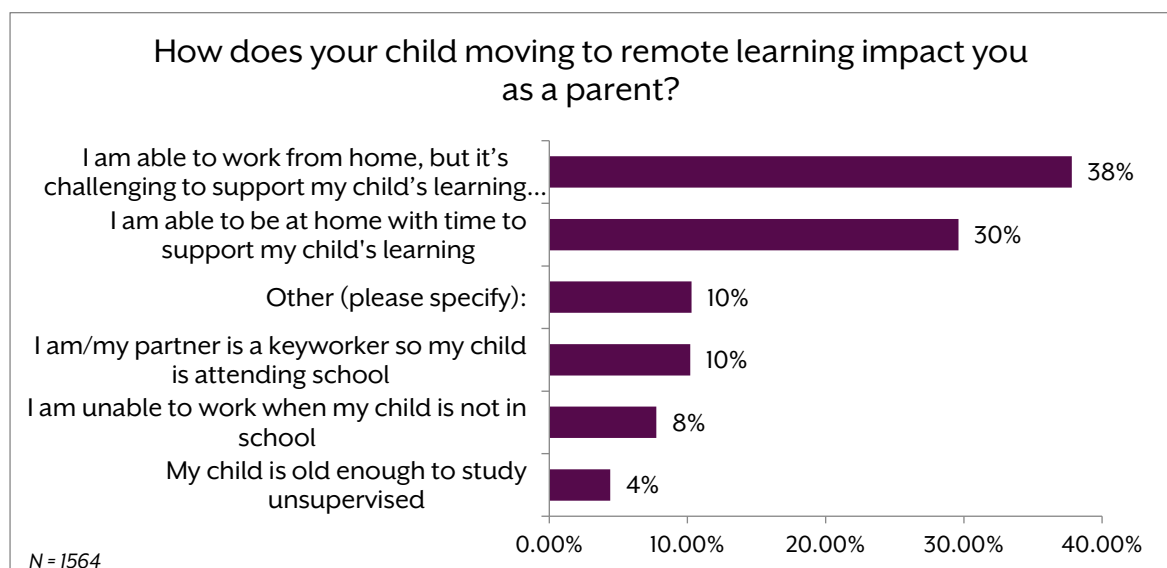**Figure 5: How does your child moving to remote learning impact you as a parent?**

Figure 5: Parent Poll: School Closures England Only Results - January 2021

In its' January 2021 school closures poll, Parentkind asked a slightly different question:

'How does your child moving to remote learning impact you as a parent?'

More than a third (38%) of parents responded that they are able to work from home, but find supporting their child's learning at home at the same time challenging. A third of parents (30%) said that they were able to be at home with time to support their child's learning and just under a tenth (8%) of parents said that they were unable to work when their child was not in school (Figure 5).

Figure 6: How does your child moving to remote learning impact you as a parent?

Q3. How does your child moving to remote learning impact you as a parent?		
	State	**Independent**
I am able to be at home with time to support my child's learning	29%	31%
I am able to work from home, but it's challenging to support my child's learning at the same time	38%	31%
I am unable to work when my child is not in school	8%	12%
I am/my partner is a keyworker so my child is attending school	10%	10%
My child is old enough to study unsupervised	4%	7%
Other	10%	9%
N =	*1429*	*100*

Figure 6: Parent Poll: School Closures England Only Results - January 2021

Independent school parents were more likely to say they were able to be at home with time to support their child's learning (31%) compared to state school parents (29%), although the difference was relatively muted.

More state school parents (38%) said they were able to work from home, but would find it challenging to support their child's learning at the same time, compared to independent school parents (31%).

Interestingly, Parentkind also found that independent school parents were more likely to say they are unable to work when their child is not in school (12%) compared to 8% of state school parents.

Parents with a child with SEND were more likely to say they were unable to work when their child is not in school (10.6%) compared to non-SEND parents (7.6%). 25% also said they were able to work from home, but that it would be challenging to support their child's learning at the same time (although 40% of non-SEND parents also selected this response).

Whilst there were some positive and encouraging results for a blending learning model, it is clear from the research that this would benefit some children and parents over others. It would be more challenging for state school parents, for example, to support their children with learning at home while working or working from home. It would be helpful to understand whether this blended learning model would work in our 'new normal' and whether it would still be possible for parents to juggle their working life and their ability to support their child.

Time spent overseeing work

Figure 7: Approximately what percentage of this time are you or your partner overseeing your child's school work?

Approximately what percentage of this time are you or your partner overseeing your child's school work?

None	Less than 25%	Between 25%-50%
8%	21%	13%

Between 51% - 75%	More than 75%	Don't know/not sure
12%	45%	1%

Figure 7: Parentkind Coronavirus Parent Survey 3 – July 2020

Parentkind asked parents how much time they spent overseeing their child's work.

In July 2020, the majority of parents (57%) spent more than half of their time overseeing their child's school work, with 45% of parents spending more than 75% of their time overseeing their child's work. 34% spent between 25%-50% of their time and only 8% spent none of their time overseeing their child's work.

Results were fairly similar across the different regions, although parents in Northern Ireland spent more time overseeing their child's work (49%) compared to parents in Wales (44%) and England (45%). Only 6% of parents in Northern Ireland answered 'none', compared to 8% in England and 10% in Wales.

Figure 8: How much time are you spending overseeing your child's schoolwork compared to the first lockdown?

	How much time are you spending overseeing your child's schoolwork compared to the first lockdown?		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I'm spending more time now compared to the first lockdown		37%	208
2	I'm spending the same amount of time now compared to the first lockdown		36%	201
3	I'm spending less time now compared to the first lockdown		24%	135
4	Don't know		0.3%	2
5	N/A		3%	19
			answered	565

Figure 8: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

In February 2021 a similar question was asked. In response to this question, a third of parents were either spending more time (37%) or the same amount of time (36%) overseeing their child's work compared to March 2020.

These results show that parental engagement increased throughout the pandemic – a huge benefit and opportunity recognised by Parentkind as a side-effect of the pandemic and its effect on work-life balance. However, home learning in a 'normal' post-COVID world may look different for different groups of parents. For example, parents from lower-income families may not have the time they had in the

pandemic (where some parents were furloughed or lost their job, for example) and it may be more difficult for these parents to oversee their child's work in a new normal. Research on this found that 21% of low-income families were affected by loss of hours compared to 23% of those with household incomes above £40,000 and 13% of parents on lower incomes lost jobs compared to 9% of those on higher incomes. A higher proportion of BAME parents (37%) also reported loss of hours compared to 26% of White parents (The Fawcett Society et al., 2018). They may also be playing 'catch-up' in terms of their finances (Howes et al., 2020) as we move on from the pandemic and with the increasing cost of living. These are all things that need to be taken into consideration when expecting parents, particularly those on lower incomes, to continue supporting their child's learning.

In contrast, the increase in remote working may help some parents support their child at home. Many lower-income parents, however, may not have the privilege of working from home (Karpman et al., 2020), and as was clear earlier, parents with children in state schools (and parents of child with SEND) who are more likely to be lower-income, are more likely to find it difficult to juggle home learning and working from home.

Further research, split by different demographics, would be needed to determine whether parents now have the time to further support home learning and to oversee their child's work post the emergency state of the pandemic.

Parents' confidence in supporting their child's learning

Another area that Parentkind asked parents about was how confident they felt in supporting their child's learning.

Figure 9: How confident do you feel supporting your child's learning and how does this compare to the start of March?

How confident do you feel supporting your child's learning?

19% are very confident

46% are quite confident

26% are not very confident

8% are not at all confident

How does this compare to the start of the school closures in March?

31% are more confident

52% feel about the same

16% are less confident

Figure 9: Coronavirus: Second Parent Survey Results – May 2020

In May 2020, 19% of parents said they were very confident and 46% said they were quite confident (3% more than in March). 26% said they were not very confident and 8% said they were not at all confident. Less parents answered 'not at all' confident in May (8%) than in March (15%), showing that in three months parents' confidence seemed to improve.

Despite this rise in confidence, parents' still had some worries in May:

"Enormous worry and pressure as to whether you're doing things correctly and enough!"

"Will I be able to support my child and can I educate her in the right way?"

Parentkind's May 2020 results also found that parents in Northern Ireland felt less confident than their counterparts in England and Wales – only 45% of parents in Northern Ireland felt confident compared to 64% of parents in England and 57% of parents in Wales. A study on public attitudes to social mobility in the UK by the government found that respondents from Northern Ireland were more likely to say they had suffered in education throughout the pandemic compared to other parts of the country, second to

respondents from the North (Social Mobility Commission, 2021). The study also found that in Northern Ireland, people are more likely to see regional differences in the opportunities available across Britain today which may help provide some context to this lack of confidence in parents from Northern Ireland.

Figure 10: How confident do you feel supporting your child's learning at home during this current lockdown?

How confident do you feel supporting your child's learning at home during this current lockdown?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very confident		41%	230
2	Quite confident		38%	214
3	Not very confident		14%	80
4	Not at all confident		6%	31
5	Don't know		0.4%	2
6	N/A		1%	8
			answered	565

Figure 10: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

In February 2021, Parentkind found that most parents felt very confident (41%) or quite confident (38%). Only 19% of parents felt not very confident or not at all confident. There was a significant increase in parental confidence compared to May, supporting the view that parents' confidence increased throughout the pandemic. For example, in May only 19% of parents felt 'very confident' compared to 41% in February 2021.

This trend was also seen when parents were asked how this compared to the start of the school closures in March. 31% said they were more confident, 52% felt about the same and 16% were less confident (Figure 10).

Levels of confidence by parent demographic

In its 2020 Annual Parent Survey, Parentkind was able to look at levels of confidence in different parental groups more closely.

Figure 11: How confident have you felt about supporting your child's learning whilst schools have been closed to the majority of pupils?

Six in ten parents felt confident about supporting their child's learning during closures

■ Very confident ■ Fairly confident ■ Neither confident nor unconfident ■ Not very confident ■ Not at all confident ■ Don't know

Now [late May – early June], after 2-3 months of closures: 1% | 7% | 13% | 20% | 40% | 18%

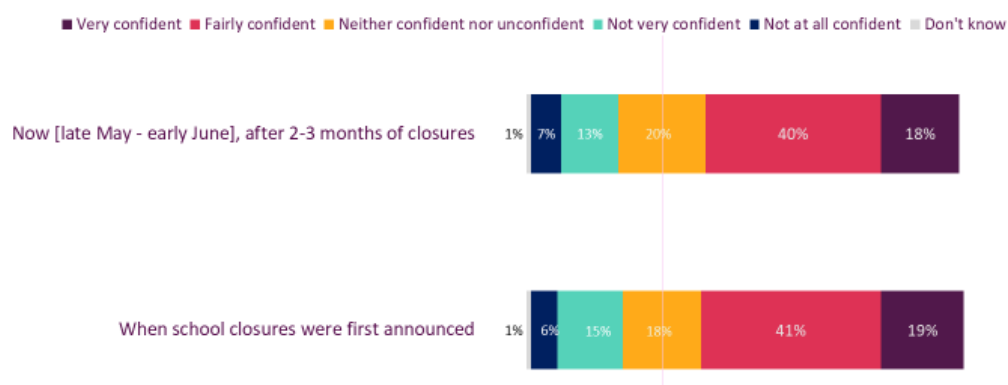When school closures were first announced: 1% | 6% | 15% | 18% | 41% | 19%

Figure 11: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Parents were asked how confident they felt supporting their child's learning during school closures, both when closures were first announced and after 2-3 months of closures (Figure 11).

Parents with three or more children were more likely to report being very confident about supporting learning at 24%, compared to 16-18% of parenting smaller households. Parents of children with SEND also felt more confident. Both of these groups of parents may be more accustomed to supporting their children at home and dealing with higher levels of demands on a daily basis which may explain these findings.

Figure 12: How confident have you felt about supporting your child's learning whilst schools have been closed to the majority of pupils? (By FSM eligibility)
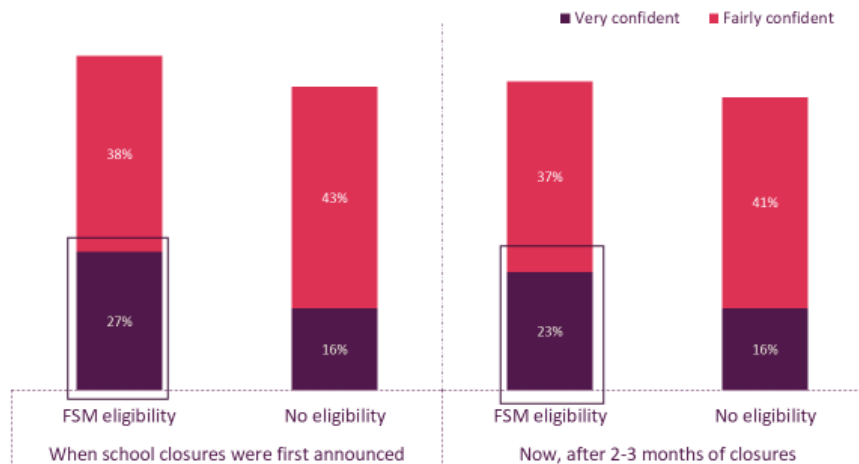

Figure 12: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Interestingly, parents with FSM-eligibility were also likelier to report feeling very confident at the start of lockdown (27%), and at later stages of lockdown (23%) than those without eligibility (16% at both stages). This may be because parents of children eligible for free school meals are also used to worrying about other issues, such as financial pressures.

FSM-eligible parents' confidence did decline, however, after three months – from 27% of parents feeling very confident to only 23% three months later. FSM-eligible parents may have had a different idea of what supporting learning meant. For example, they may have thought it involved generally supporting their child and motivating them to do their work, as opposed to helping them with actual learning and school lessons, which many may not feel confident doing. For instance, a poll conducted by the Sutton Trust and Public First (2021) found that throughout the pandemic only 37% of C2DE parents felt confident teaching their children and explaining subject matter at home, compared to 47% of ABC1 parents (Montacute and Cullinane, 2021).

Figure 13: How confident have you felt about supporting your child's learning whilst schools have been closed to the majority of pupils? (By ethnicity)

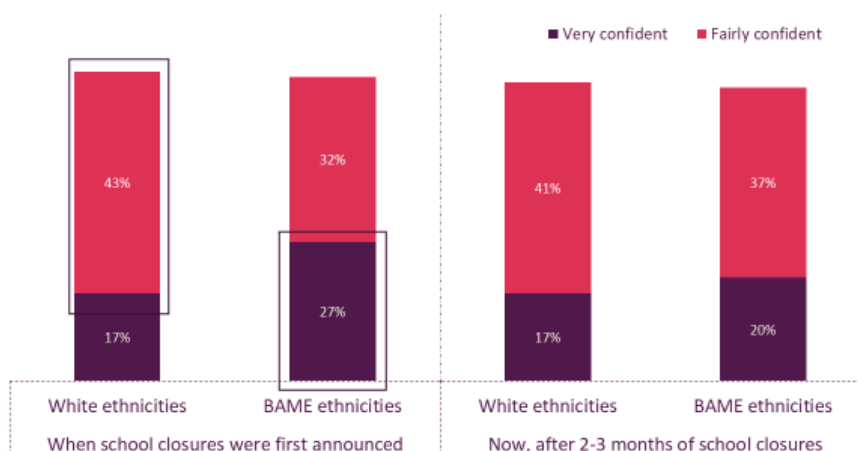Parents from BAME backgrounds likelier to feel very confident initially, declining two months later

Figure 13: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Parents from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds also reported higher levels of initially feeling very confident at 27%, compared with 17% of White parents. However, like FSM-eligible parents, their confidence also declined to just 20% after a few months of school closures, suggesting some BAME parents have experienced a steeper drop-off in confidence as lockdown progressed. This may again be for the same reasons mentioned above about FSM-eligible and SEND parents. This steep decline in confidence may suggest BAME and FSM-eligible parents may not have had a clear understanding of what supporting their learning meant and may not feel confident in teaching their children, the curriculum, for example (Ismail, 2018).

Parents' engagement and satisfaction

Following on from looking at parents' confidence, Parentkind also looked at parents' engagement and satisfaction with remote learning.

Parent satisfaction

In our 2020 Annual Parent Survey, Parentkind found 82% of parents were either very or quite satisfied with the home learning support received from their child's school. Only 16% of parents who were not satisfied.

Figure 14: Overall, how satisfied have you been with the remote learning provision given by your child's school this term?

	Overall, how satisfied have you been with the remote learning provision given by your child's school this term?		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very satisfied		50.97%	288
2	Quite satisfied		35.04%	198
3	Not very satisfied		8.50%	48
4	Not at all satisfied		3.01%	17
5	Don't know/Not sure		1.77%	10

Overall, how satisfied have you been with the remote learning provision given by your child's school this term?			Response Percent	Response Total
6	N/A - my child is going in to school every day		0.71%	4
			answered	565

Figure 14: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

In February 2021, parents' overall satisfaction with their child's school's provision of remote learning continued to improve – with a slight increase since May 2020 and since the 2020 Annual Parent Survey (Figure 14). Overall, 86% of parents were satisfied with the remote learning provision given by their child's school. 51% of parents were very satisfied and 35% were quite satisfied, compared to 43% and 39% of parents in May 2020, respectively. Only 12% of parents were either not very satisfied or not at all satisfied.

Parental engagement

Figure 15: To what extent are you engaged in your child's learning currently? How does this compare with how engaged you were in your child's learning before lockdown?

Figure 15: Parentkind Coronavirus Parent Survey 3 – July 2020
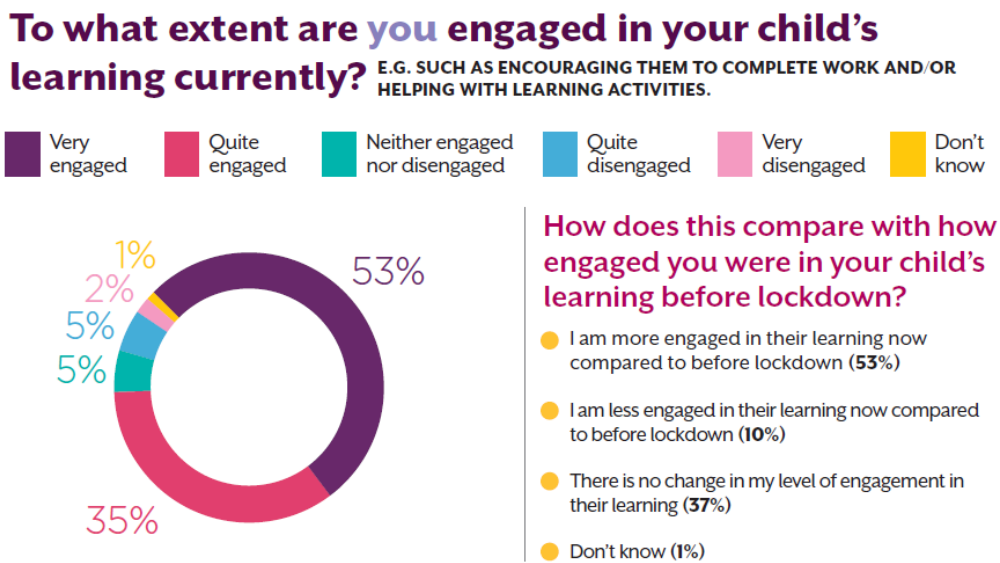
In July 2020, Parentkind found that overall 88% of parents felt engaged in their child's learning. 53% of parents felt very engaged in their child's learning and 35% felt quite engaged (Figure 15).

More than half felt more engaged in their child's learning at that point in July compared to before lockdown (53%), with only 10% less engaged and 37% indicating no change.

Figure 16: Overall, how involved do you feel in your child's school and education?

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

		2018	2019	2020	2021
Average score		6.44	5.91	6.60	**7.13**

Legend: ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020 ■ 2021
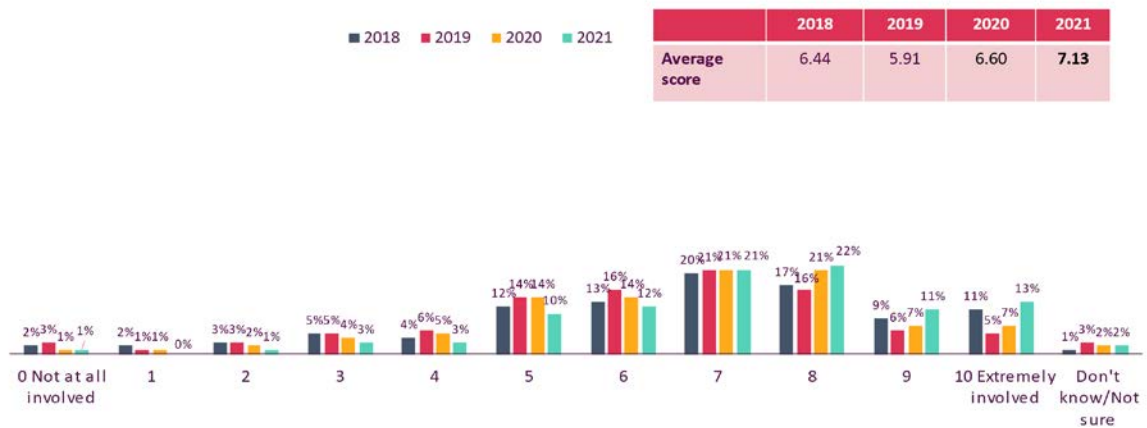
Figure 16: Parent Voice Report 2021

Parentkind's 2021 Parent Voice Report also found that the pandemic had increased parental engagement. When parents were asked how involved they felt, the mean score was 7.13 in 2021 compared to 6.60 in 2020 and 5.91 in 2019. This was the highest mean score ever shown in Parentkind's annual measurement and shows how involved parents have become in their child's learning. Less parents rated their involvement six or less and more parents rated their involvement as nine or more. In 2021, 13% of parents rated their involvement at 10 (extremely involved) compared to 7% the year before.

Figures 17 and 18: Overall sense of involvement in education – by demographic

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

Legend: ■ Mean score

Figure 17: Parent Voice Report 2021

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

Figure 18: Parent Voice Report 2021

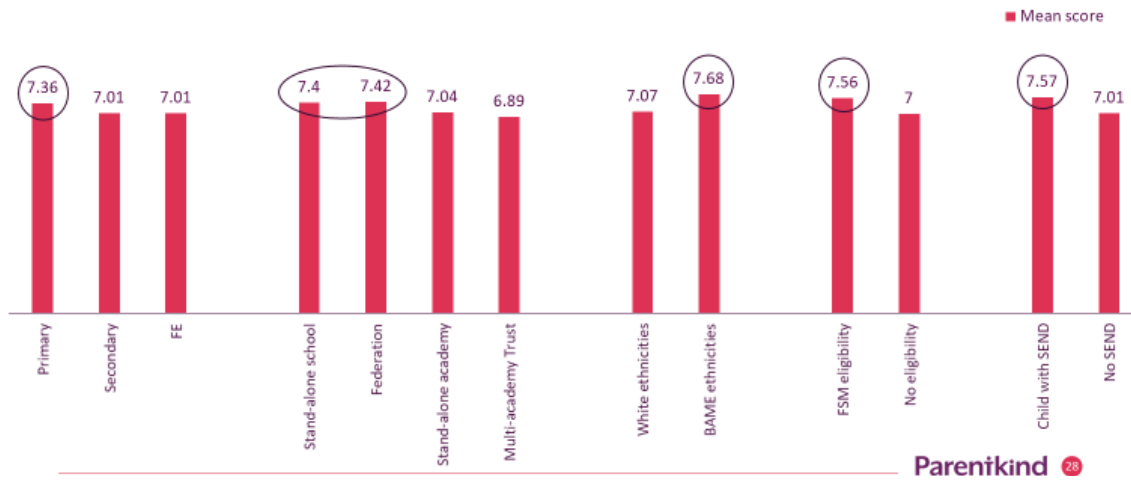Younger parents, ABC1 parents and parents in London were more likely to rate their involvement as higher than other parents. Parents in England (7.14) and Northern Ireland (7.32) also rated their involvement significantly higher than those in Wales (6.92), with Northern Irish parents feeling more involved.

ABC1 parents' mean score was 7.31 compared to C2DE parents' score whose mean involvement rate was 6.92. This suggests that C2DE parents were still more likely to be less involved in their child's education compared to ABC1 parents. However, parents whose children were at a local authority maintained school said they felt more involved compared to those at academies.

Parents from BAME backgrounds (7.68), FSM-eligible parents (7.56) and those with a child with SEND (7.57) also reported a higher sense of involvement. These parents were also much more likely than other parents to both want a say and to feel parents are listened to – demonstrating a higher sense of overall engagement.

As these responses only capture how parents feel as opposed to a clear representation of their daily engagement, it would be of interest to explore how these parents feel involved in their child's education. For instance, SEND parents may naturally need to support their children and thus feel more involved. Immigrant parents tend to have higher expectations of their children in school (Zill, 2020). For these parents, this may be a form of getting involved for them. It could also help to understand why a decline in confidence was seen in lower-income parents and in parents from BAME communities.

Lack of motivation in children

Children's lack of motivation was one of the most common concerns for parents and one which kept appearing in Parentkind's polling and survey results.

Figure 19: To what extent is your child engaged in their learning currently?
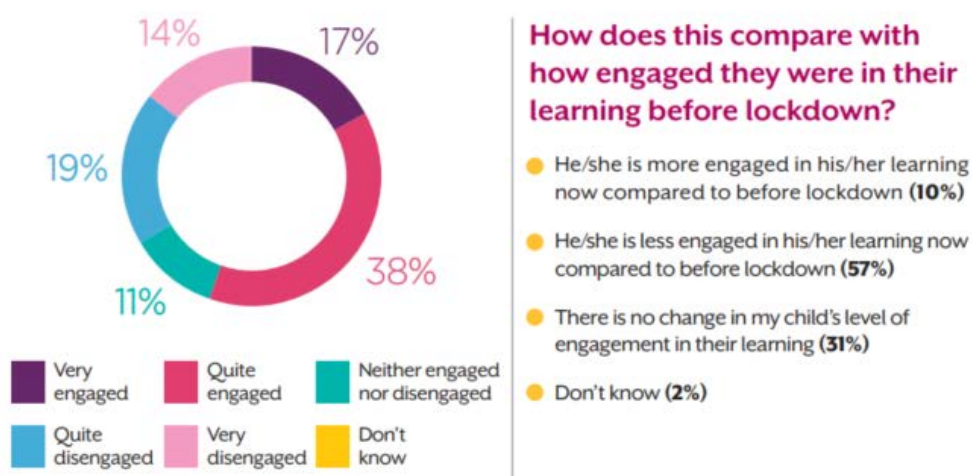

Figure 19: Parentkind Coronavirus Parent Survey 3 – July 2020

In July 2020, Parentkind found that despite the majority of parents feeling more engaged in their child's learning, a third of parents also said that they felt their child was quite or very disengaged with their learning.

More than half of parents (57%) also felt their child was less engaged in their learning in July 2020 compared to before lockdown. 31% of parents said there was no change in their child's level of engagement in their learning and more positively, 55% of parents said their child was very or quite engaged in their learning (Figure 19).

In November 2020, Parentkind asked parents of those that had children absent from school due to Covid-19 if they had continued with their learning at home. 9% of children had followed their normal timetable with at least half of those lessons live and 5% had followed a normal timetable with a few online lessons. 15% of children had followed their normal timetable with work set for every lesson but no online teaching. 22% had work set for some of their lessons and 14% of children had no work set at all.

In February 2021, Parentkind found that 36% of parents were struggling to motivate their children to do their school work. This was one of the top three challenges, alongside managing child's health and wellbeing and juggling work and schooling.

A view from parents in March 2020 highlights parents' concerns:

"Falling behind, missing something important that I can't teach and not being able to catch up"

"Lack of motivation whilst he is off"

"They'll struggle and stress about the school work rather than just do what they need to do to get through this".

"Worry as to what he is losing out on not being in the classroom and getting him back on track when he eventually goes back to school. Lack of motivation whilst he is off and also when he goes back".

"A lack of daily structure, isolation from peers and teachers, boredom, unable to self-motivate. I have a teenage boy who doesn't self-motivate well"

A combination of school and parents would need to identify which pupils struggle to self-motivate and work would need to take place to ensure they are engaged when learning at home.

Parents' mental health

In March 2020, during the first lockdown, many parents told Parentkind about higher levels of stress and worry. The state of mental health was a huge concern for many parents throughout the pandemic:

"It's very stressful, I'm not sure how well we will hope with home schooling three children of such different abilities."

"It will affect my mental health and my confidence plus put a strain on our relationship".

"It's going to be a big impact on me as a parent. It's going to be a struggle to get the children to work every day and therefore cause arguments and stress. I also will need to work from home and this is going to be impossible to do along with teaching my children and making sure they exercise. The situation is impossible and depressing".

"I am concerned for my mental health. It is a lot for parents to juggle".

"More stress I think .... Add in the change and upset to their routine, their worries, fears and uncertainties and then add in spending a lot of indoor time together and it's a recipe for real mental health impact on us all."

Other parents, however, thought that home schooling would have little to no impact on them or on their mental health:

"Not a lot as they can stay at home by themselves while I go to work as they are 14 and 15 years old".

"No impact on me personally, I just hope I can do as good a job as the teachers do".

"Hopefully none I'll try and enjoy this and not get stressed".

Some parents also thought that school closures would have a positive impact on them and their families:

"Home schooling was not something I ever planned to do. However, as I am now unemployed, I hope it will bring us closer as a family. I also hope to learn things I missed out on at school – alongside the children".

"Getting a greater bond with my children and having family time learning together".

"Hopefully make me a better parent and get to know my kids again".

In May 2020, parents were asked how they were coping with the different arrangements for their child/children's schooling.

Our results showed that 67% of parents were coping well (24% very well and 43% quite well). 25% of parents responded 'so-so' and 8% of parents said that they were not coping at all or not very well.

31% of parents found supporting home learning was better than they thought it would be, 55% thought it was as expected and 11% thought it was worse than expected.

Figure 20: How are you coping with the different arrangements for your child/children's schooling? (By region)

	England	NI	Wales
Very Well	24%	23%	27%
Quite well	43%	42%	43%
So-so	25%	26%	22%
Not at all/not very well	8%	9%	8%

Figure 20: Coronavirus: Second Parent Survey Results – May 2020

Parents in Wales seemed to cope better than parents in England and Northern Ireland (Figure 20). Parents in Northern Ireland found it harder to cope, although only by a small margin.

Figure 21: As a parent, to what extent has your own mental health and well-being been affected by the current arrangements for your child's schooling?

As a parent, to what extent has your own mental health and well-being been affected by the current arrangements for your child's schooling?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Large positive impact		20%	114
2	Small positive impact		11%	63
3	No impact		23%	128
4	Small negative impact		27.79%	157
5	Large negative impact		16.46%	93
6	Don't know/prefer not to say		1.77%	10
			answered	565

Figure 21: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

In February 2021, Parentkind asked:

'As a parent, to what extent has your own mental health and well-being been affected by the current arrangements for your child's schooling?'

31% of parents said the arrangements at the time had had some sort of positive impact, 23% said they had had no impact. 44% of parents, however, said the arrangements had had either a small negative impact or large negative impact on their mental health.

Support received from school

In November 2020, Parentkind asked parents whether their child was getting the support they needed from school to catch up on the face to face learning missed while schools were closed in the spring and summer terms.

Figure 22: To what extent is your child getting the support they need from school to catch up on the face to face learning missed last spring and summer?
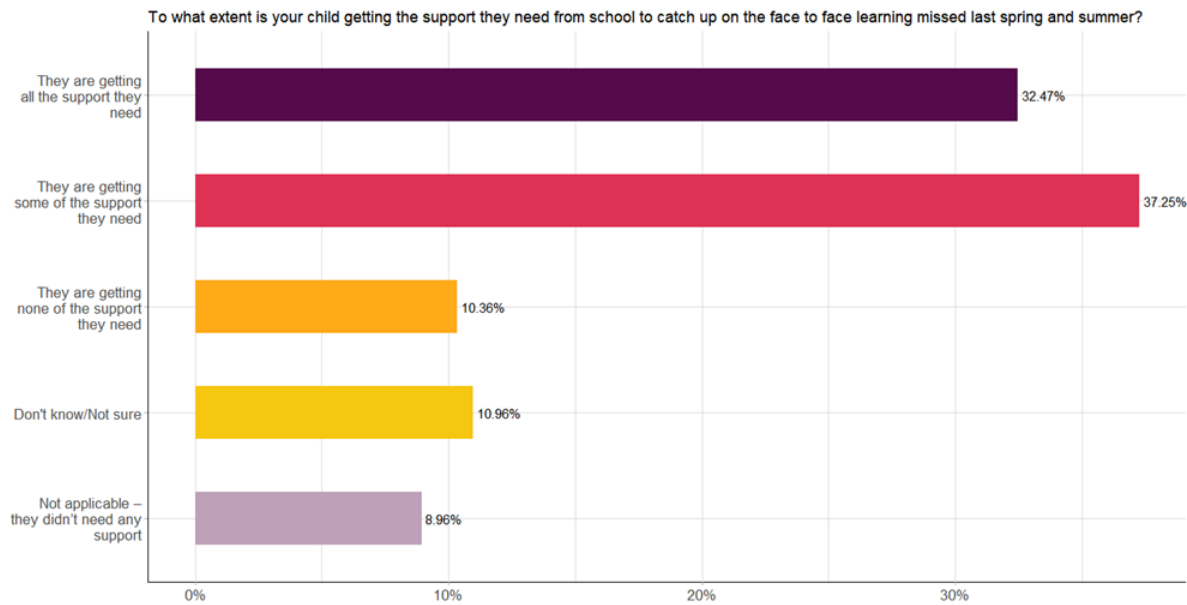

To what extent is your child getting the support they need from school to catch up on the face to face learning missed last spring and summer?

- They are getting all the support they need — 32.47%
- They are getting some of the support they need — 37.25%
- They are getting none of the support they need — 10.36%
- Don't know/Not sure — 10.96%
- Not applicable – they didn't need any support — 8.96%

Figure 22: 4th Parent Coronavirus Survey results – England Only – November 2020

Overall, 69% of parents felt their child was receiving some form of support from the school. 32% of parents said their children were receiving all the support they needed and 37% were receiving some of the support they needed. 10% of parents felt they were getting none of the support required.

Figure 23: As a parent, how would you rate the level of support you have been given by your child's school to assist your child's learning at home?

As a parent, how would you rate the level of support you have been given by your child's school to assist your child's learning at home?

- Very good — 40.9%
- Good — 28.0%
- Fair — 19.3%
- Poor — 6.3%
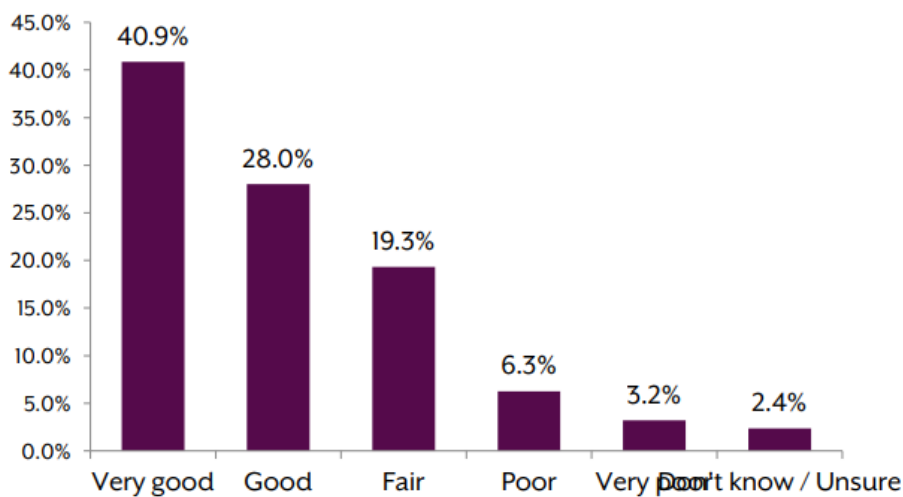- Very poor — 3.2%
- Don't know / Unsure — 2.4%

Figure 23: Parent Poll: School Closures England Only Results - January 2021

In January 2021, 69% of parents reported that the level of support they had been given by their child's school to assist their child's learning at home was either very good (41%) or good (28%). 19% rated the support fair, whilst 6% rated it poor and 3% rated it very poor.

Parents of a child with SEND were less positive about the support they had been offered, compared to parents of children without SEND - 43% of parents without SEND rated the support they had received as very good compared to only 30% of parents of a child with SEND. 18% of parents of a child with SEND rated the support poor or very poor compared to only 8% of non-SEND parents.

Figure 24: As a parent, how would you rate the level of support you have been given by your child's school to assist your child's learning at home? (By type of school)

Q2. As a parent, how would you rate the level of support you have been given by your child's school to assist your child's learning at home?		
	State	**Independent**
Very good	40.0%	56.0%
Good	28.1%	27.0%
Fair	20.0%	12.0%
Poor	6.5%	2.0%
Very poor	3.3%	3.0%
Don't know / Unsure	2.0%	0.0%
N =	1429	100

Figure 24: Parent Poll: School Closures England Only Results - January 2021

Parentkind also found that independent school parents were more likely to rate the level of support received more positively – 56% of independent school parents responded 'very good' compared with 40% of state school parents. 20% of state school parents were more likely to report the support they received as 'fair' compared to only 12% of independent school parents and 10% of state school parents rated the support poor or very poor compared to only 5% of independent school parents.

A study by YouGov, found that 40% of C2DE parents were more likely to report that they have found helping their children with schoolwork difficult compared with 35% of ABC1 parents. The study also found that there are differences in the levels of support ABC1 and C2DE parents have received from their child's school. For example, two thirds of ABC1 parents with kids of school-age (66%) said they had received general guidance and support for home-schooling, such as information packs and having access to teachers compared to only 51% of C2DE parents. It also found that there was a huge difference in teachers sharing useful resources (75% of ABC1 parents vs 63% of C2DE parents) and providing set homework (61% of ABC1 vs 52% of C2DE). In all questions asked, ABC1 parents were more likely to say they had received better support (Nolsoe, 2020). A further study by the Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) also found that disadvantaged groups got less support from schools and had more loss of contact with schools and teachers (OCED, 2021).

Support must be given to all parents, with a particular focus on those parents who need it most and those who may not feel as comfortable or confident reaching out to teachers or supporting their children at home.

Positives of remote learning

In February 2021, Parentkind found that the top three positives for parents with the first half term remote learning arrangements were being more aware of what their child was learning, having alternative options to engage with their child's teacher (i.e. virtual parents evening) and being provided with learning resources that helped them engage with their child's learning.

Figure 25: Have there been any positives to come out of the current learning arrangements for your child's education for you as a parent?

	Have there been any positives to come out of the current learning arrangements for your child's education for you as a parent? (If there haven't please tick that option)		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I am more aware of what my child is learning		64%	358
2	I have alternative options to engage with my child's teacher, e.g. virtual parents' evenings		34%	187
3	I have been provided with learning resources that can help me engage in my child's learning and topics		28%	154
4	I have better communication with my child's school		28%	151
5	I have frequent check ins with my child's teacher on how they are doing		22%	123
6	Other (please specify):		12%	69
7	No, there have been no positives for me		15%	86
			answered	558
			skipped	7

Figure 25: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

Other unprompted positives were:

- Their child prefers learning at home (10 parents)
- More time spent with child and family (9 parents)
- Their child being able to work at own pace (8 parents)
- Flexibility to learn other things (3 parents)
- Improvements in their child's mental health (3 parents)

Parents told Parentkind:

"My child is making more progress as [he] can go over the work at his own pace"

"My child is happier at home, she has school anxiety and low attendance, she has logged into every single lesson during both lockdowns, so it is a lot less stressful"

"I feel more connected with my child and can immediately support any learning difficulty"

"More time with my child"

"The school did not do enough in the first lockdown but plans for future home learning are much improved"

"Excellent remote learning"

"Online learning very well set up"

As is clear, there were both positive and negative experiences associated with home learning throughout the pandemic – it has presented many challenges, but also many opportunities, and most importantly, parents feel more engaged than ever before.

5. The home learning environment

Children are shaped by their 'home learning environment'. The home learning environment consists of the physical characteristics of the home, but also the quality of the learning support children receive from their parents or caregivers. Even before the pandemic, studies showed that the home learning environment is a key predictor of a child's future success.

It describes the range of behaviours, attitudes, aspirations and of parental participation. Middle and upper-income children tend to have a more 'language-rich' home learning environment compared to lower-income children, putting children from lower-income families at a disadvantage right from the start of their educational years (Gov.uk, 2018).

Research has found that the following key behaviours are important predictors of children's later educational attainment and considered an 'index' of the early home learning environment:

- Reading, sharing books and going to the library
- Going out on visits
- Playing with print (letters and numbers)
- Singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Drawing and painting (making meaningful marks) (Melhuish, 2010).

Studying the home learning environment and supporting lower-income parents and families, who are less likely to have the suitable home learning environment needed (Montacute, 2022), to help better their home learning environment can moderate the impact of socioeconomic background on such families (Palmer-Crew and Clark, 2021). Throughout the pandemic, understanding parents' and children's home learning environment was crucial to Parentkind.

Technology and resources

In 2020, Parentkind asked parents if they had access to particular devices and resources at home:

- 71% of parents said their child had access to a laptop/PC with internet access during school hours.
- 32% said their child had to share a laptop/PC with internet access with another person in the household.
- 72% of parents said their child had access to a printer at home.
- 86% of parents said their child had access to the stationary they need to complete their school work.
- 1% had none of the above.

Figure 26: Does your child have access to a device with internet access which they can use for remote learning?

Does your child have access to a device with internet access which they can use for remote learning?
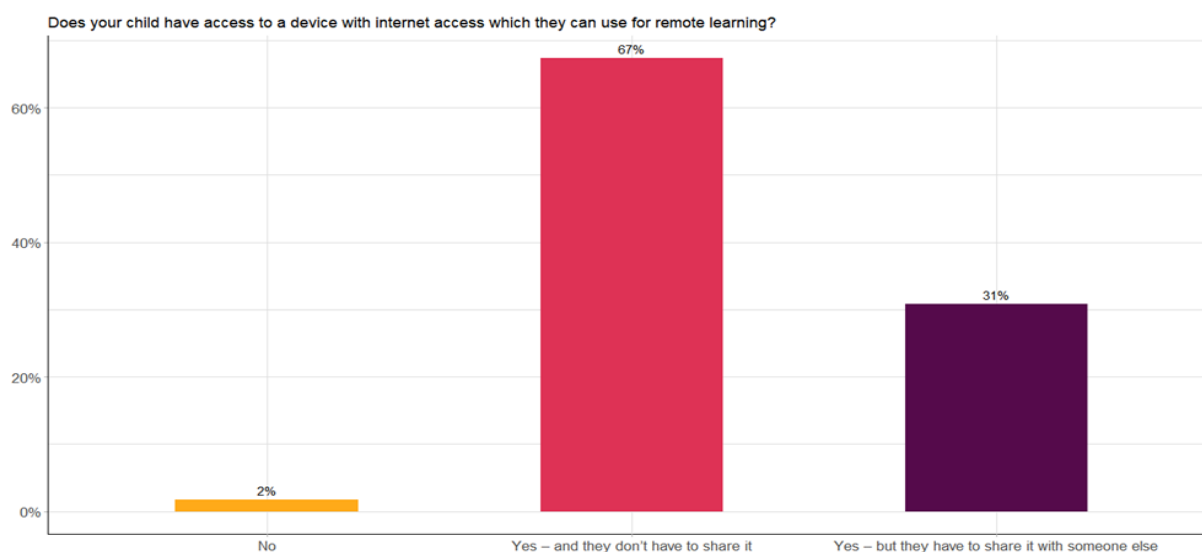
Figure 26: 4ᵗʰ Parent Coronavirus Survey Results – England Only - November 2020

In November 2020, similar results were found. The only result which stood out that in November was that 67% of parents said their child had access to a digital device that they did not have to share compared to 71% in July. There was a slight decrease, however this may be because different parents answered the two surveys.

Figure 27: Does your child have access to any of the following at home to support their remote learning?

Does your child have access to any of the following at home to support their remote learning? (Tick all that apply)	Response Percent
The stationery they need to complete school work	93.2%
A quiet space to study	82.3%
A printer	80.9%
None of the above	2.4%
Prefer not to say	0.4%

Figure 27: 4ᵗʰ Parent Coronavirus Survey Results – England Only - November 2020

A higher number of parents in November said their children had access to the stationary they needed to complete their schoolwork (93%) compared to 81% of parents in July 2020 – an increase of 12%. There was also an increase in the number of parents who said their child had access to a printer in November 2020. For instance, in November only 19% of children did not have access to a printer compared to 28% in July.

In November 2020, parents were asked if children had a quiet place to study – an essential aspect of a home learning environment. Results showed that 82% of children had a quiet place to study, suggesting that 18% of children did not.

Figure 28: What type of device do/would they use most often to access remote learning?
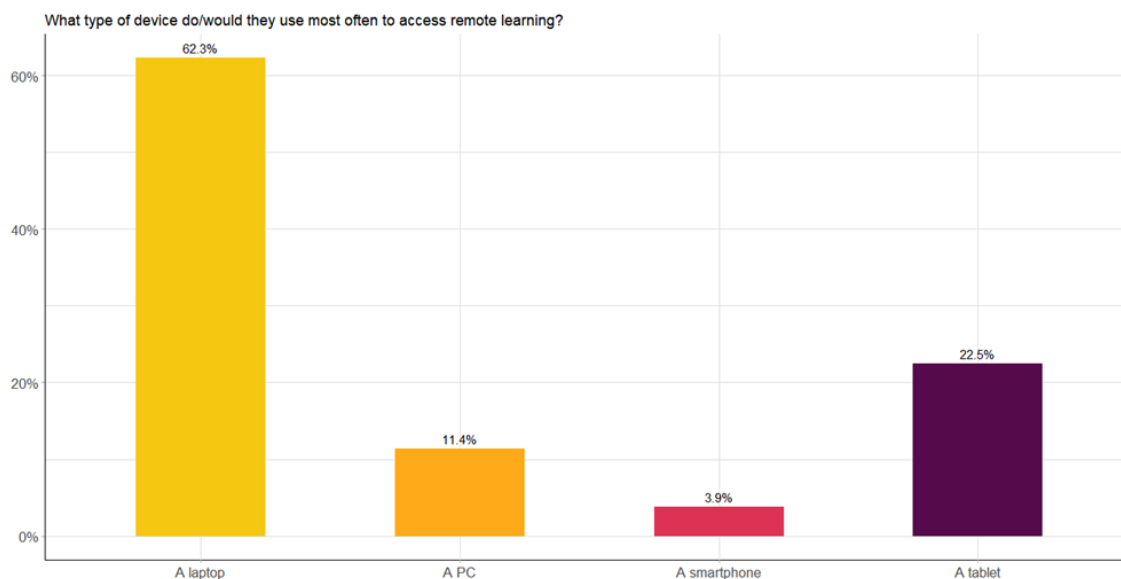

Figure 28: 4th Parent Coronavirus Survey Results – England Only - November 2020

Parentkind also asked parents what device type their children often used to access remote learning (Figure 31). 62% of parents said their child used a laptop, 23% a tablet, 11% a PC and 4% a smartphone.

In February 2021, Parentkind asked parents if their children had access to the resources listed below (Figure 29):

Figure 29: Does your child have access to any of the following to support their remote learning?

	Does your child have access to any of the following at home to support their remote learning? (Tick all that apply)		Response Percent	Response Total
1	A printer		82.12%	464
2	A digital device with internet connection		97.52%	551
3	A quiet space to study		79.12%	447
4	The stationery they need to complete school work		89.03%	503
5	Printed resources, such as textbooks and workbooks		55.75%	315
6	None of the above		0.71%	4
7	Prefer not to say		0.00%	0
			answered	565

Figure 29: Parent Poll Results (England Only): Remote Learning in First Half Term - February 2021

There was an increase in the number of parents responding and saying their child had a digital device with internet connection (98%) – although in this survey parents were not asked what device they were using. There was also a decrease in the number of parents who said their children had a quiet place to study (79%) and in the stationary needed to complete their school work (89%). Only 56% of parents said their children had access to printed resources, such as textbooks and workbooks.

The digital divide

Although some of these figures may seem quite high and promising (i.e. 98% of children having a digital device with internet connection in February 2021) it is important to consider that there is still a large proportion of children who do not have access to the right technological devices needed or the working space necessary – and that there are other factors which need to be considered behind these results, for example the proportion of children using smartphones at home.

In November 2020, Parentkind found that 2% of children had access to no device and 31% of children were still sharing devices. The Sutton Trust (2020) also found that at the beginning of the pandemic only 5% of teachers in state schools said that all their students had access to an appropriate device for remote learning, compared to 54% in private schools. 35% of parents from the lowest incomes did not have access to sufficient devices suitable for home learning compared to only 11% of households with the highest income. They also found that in 2020 just over a third of parents with children aged 5-16 said their child did not have access to a computer, laptop, or tablet to access the internet at home (Montacute, 2020). This makes it increasingly difficult for parents with more than one child to support their child's learning and means children will be missing out on learning time whilst their sibling uses the home computer, naturally putting them behind their peers.

Parentkind found that 18% of parents said their child did not have a quiet place to study and 4% of children were still using a smartphone in November 2020. A smartphone is not an adequate device for a child to learn from – they do not have access to the correct technological programmes, are unable to research properly or easily use mutable tabs for study. Naturally, children using smartphones are more likely to come from more disadvantaged backgrounds who are not able to afford a laptop or a PC.

Given that throughout the pandemic, the most used resource mentioned by parents was 'worksheets to print at home' (61% of parents), consideration must be given to what the other 28% of children were doing to access these sheets. Parentkind found that parents in Northern Ireland were the only parents who said that they had received printed worksheets from school – and even then, this will put them at a disadvantage compared to children who have access to necessary programmes on technological devices at home.

The decrease seen in printer and stationary access suggests that lower-income parents have had to spend money on resources for their children to learn at home. The Resolution Foundation (2021) found that over a third of low-income families with children had increased their spending in 2020 and that by September 2020, 39% of families with children in the lowest income quintile were seeing their finances squeezed compared to pre-pandemic. This included spending money on food, energy and remote schooling, for example, buying a laptop or arranging for internet access (Brewer and Patrick, 2020; Howes et al., 2020).

Parentkind has no evidence to suggest that the parents who responded to its surveys received support from their schools or the government, which means most parents would have needed to take on the financial burden of these resources with no support. This could have a huge impact on the financial situation of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, at a time which may have already been very financially difficult for lower-income families. For example, the OCED (2021) found that temporary layoffs were more common in lower status occupations and loss of income was concentrated among low income groups throughout the pandemic. The Child Poverty Action Group (2020) also found that a lot of low-income families missed out on government support schemes because their employer refused to furlough them or because they had only recently become self-employed (Howes et al., 2020).

Furthermore, when parents were asked in Parentkind's 2021 Parent Voice Report about the financial cost of their child going to school, and to identify costs which were of particular concern, technology was the third highest response, after uniforms and trips. 20% of parents rated technology in their top 3 cost concerns, up from 14% when the same question was asked in 2019.

Figure 30: US: Share of households with children in school with Internet connection always available for education purposes – by level of education and by race (OCED, 2021)
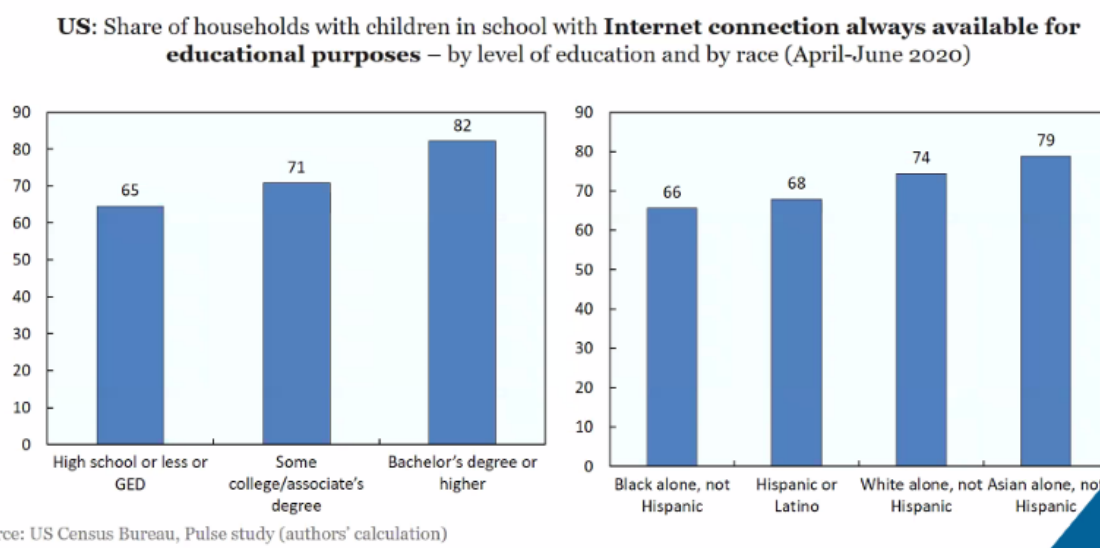
US: Share of households with children in school with **Internet connection always available for educational purposes** – by level of education and by race (April-June 2020)

Source: US Census Bureau, Pulse study (authors' calculation)

Figure 30: OCED (2021)

Aside from resources, other research has found that disadvantaged families had more difficulty with devices and connectivity (OECD, 2021). Figure 30 shows the share of households with children in school with internet connection always available for educational purposes in the US. It found that those parents with a bachelor's degree or higher had the highest internet connectivity and those parents who were only high-school educated had the least. The same findings were found for white parents compared to Black and Hispanic/Latino parents.

Given learning at home is so heavily reliant on technology, children who do not have the correct devices will be far behind their peers and the digital divide will only continue to widen. A poll by the Sutton Trust and Public First also found that throughout the pandemic, children from lower-income families were more likely to have had nothing spent on their home education (60%) compared to children from middle-income households (45%). 31% of parents with the lowest incomes had not been able to spend anything on their child's learning from home since September 2020, while 29% of parents on higher incomes had spent more than £100 (Montacute and Cullinane, 2021). Another poll by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that inequalities between the two rounds of school closures improved because poorer children had improved access to online learning resources and to the technology needed to access them (although it worsened again outside the periods of school closures where children had less access to school provisions) (Cattan et al., 2021).

Two parents told Parentkind:

"The school are doing the best job possible with the staffing and resources they have. Government should be providing more money at this time to enable even better remote learning to be achieved."

"Every child in school had a tablet as a policy before COVID-19. This is purchased by parents on a payment plan or subsidised for families on low incomes. It has been invaluable and the forward thinking of the school meant they could easily convert to online teaching. It would be a good model for other schools. The communication from the leadership team was also excellent. Timely, honest, straightforward."

Yes, they need technology, but what else?

Aside from accessing the technology lower-income families need, there are other factors that need to be taken into consideration. First of all, even with technology, there continues to be a divide. Children from middle-income families have their families to help support their learning at home – children from lower-income families often do not. Studies show that middle-income children do better at school because of the involvement of their parents in their child's education, for example by reading to their children or attending meetings with teachers (De Fraja, Oliveira and Zanchi, 2010). A US study of 10,000 teenagers also found that "family social capital" was a much stronger predictor of 18-year-olds'

educational attainment than a number of measures of school quality (Dufur, Parcel and Troutman, 2012).The real divide lays here.

A further study by LSE found that parents in the bottom 20% of income distribution were less likely to be spending time on schoolwork throughout the pandemic compared to those in the middle 60% and the top 20%. The bottom 20% of children were less likely to be doing learning at home. The study found the same results when looking at children from state schools and independent schools and in FSM and non-FSM-eligible parents – the divides are persistent irrespective of how they are measured. It also found that only 5% of children in the bottom 20% had access to paid tuition, compared to 15% in the top 20% and 9% in the middle 60% (Eyles, 2021). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) found similar results – children from better-off families were spending 30% more time on home learning than those from poorer families (Andrew et al., 2020).

The pandemic has also exacerbated other risk factors that children have been increasingly exposed to in the home, such as:

- Risks of domestic violence
- Physical abuse
- Other material circumstances of living in poverty such as poor housing, lack of food, overcrowding and inadequate resources
- Limited access to outside space and reduced access to support services (Moss et al., 2021).
- Poor nutrition
- Poor physical health and development of children due to the restricted access to outdoor space some lower-income families may have.

As we learn to live with Covid-19 and in a world where technology is the new normal, it is essential to ensure that children, particularly those from lower-income families, have the home learning environment, material resources and the support they need. Lower-income parents must also be fully equipped to support their children, to ensure lower-income children do not fall further behind their peers.

6. Parent approaches to empower and improve outcomes using home-learning

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen positive support for home learning – including increased parental engagement, confidence and support for a child's learning. There are ways in which parents can help to empower and improve educational outcomes for their children – and this will be particularly vital in helping those children who may have fallen behind their peers in their education, or have particularly struggled throughout the pandemic. In this section, we have explored barriers to engagement, what resources parents have found useful throughout the pandemic and their priorities for the future to help support their children with learning at home.

Barriers to engagement

To help parents support their children, it is important to firstly understand parents' barriers to engagement with their schools. In its 2021 Parent Voice Report, Parentkind questioned parents about what barriers they faced when engaging in their child's education and what barriers stopped them contributing to their child's school. Although these are not directly comparable to parents' experiences and barriers throughout the pandemic, it helps provide some context as to why parents may feel hesitant about getting involved in their child's education.

Figure 31: Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school?
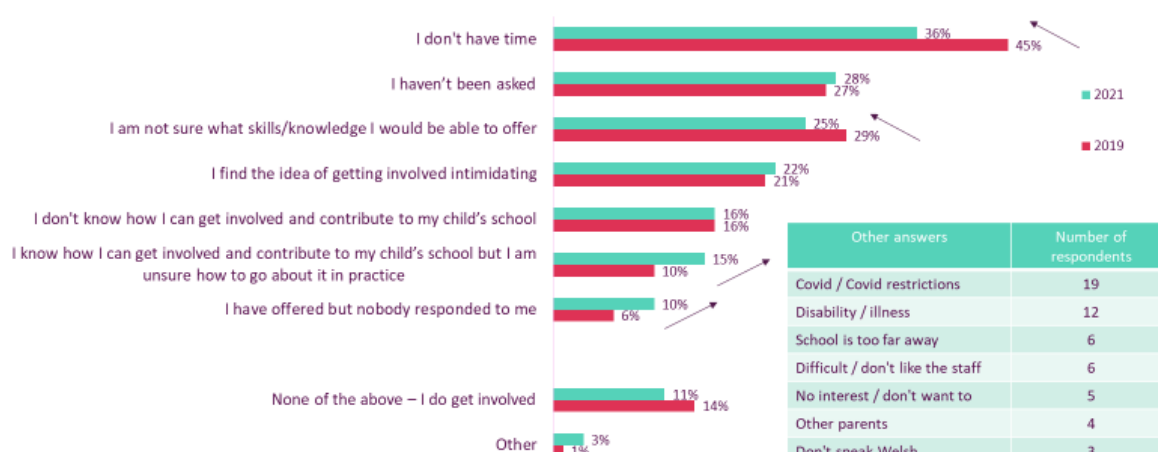

Figure 31: Parent Voice Report 2021

The top barrier for parents remained lack of time at over a third (36%), followed by not being asked (28%), being unsure about what they had to offer (25%) and finding the idea of getting involved intimidating (22%).

Time has dropped in importance since 2019 (down by 45%) which could be a result of changes to working patterns following the pandemic, including furlough and more parents working from home. This is extremely encouraging as it is the only barrier to engagement that schools are unable to influence. Not knowing what they have to offer has also dropped slightly (from 29% to 25%).

Two barriers have increased since 2019 – and these barriers are ones that schools will need to help mitigate - knowing how to get involved but being unsure about how to go about it (15% up from 10%) and having offered but no one responded (10% up from 6%). The rest of the barriers have remained fairly consistent since 2019 (not being asked, finding it intimidating, not knowing how to get involved).

Figure 32: Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school? (By social grade)
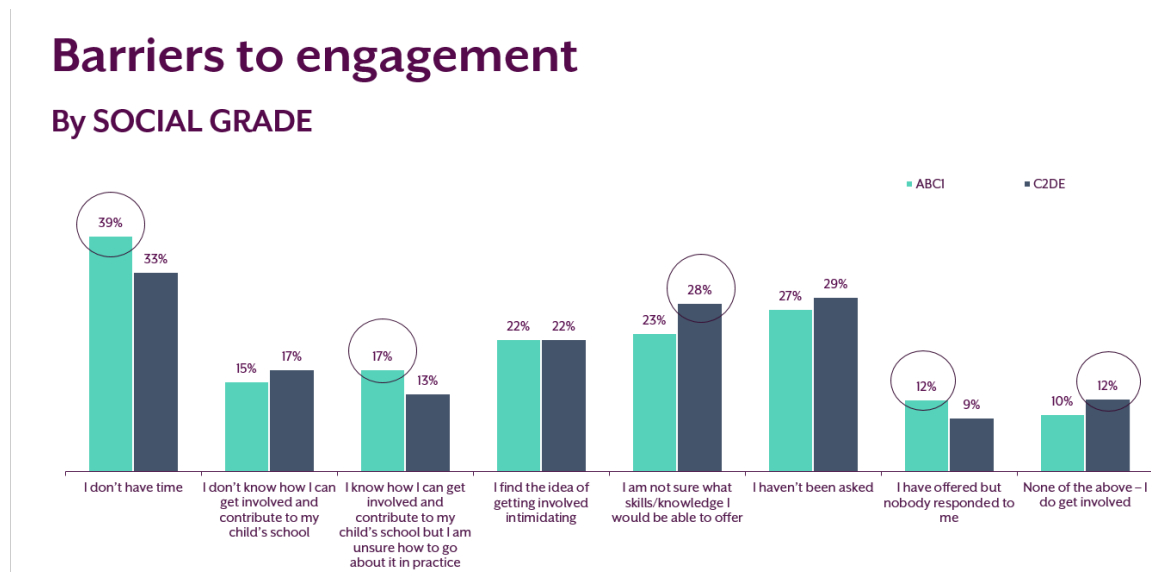
Barriers to engagement

By SOCIAL GRADE

■ ABC1   ■ C2DE

	I don't have time	I don't know how I can get involved and contribute to my child's school	I know how I can get involved and contribute to my child's school but I am unsure how to go about it in practice	I find the idea of getting involved intimidating	I am not sure what skills/knowledge I would be able to offer	I haven't been asked	I have offered but nobody responded to me	None of the above – I do get involved
ABC1	39%	15%	17%	22%	23%	27%	12%	10%
C2DE	33%	17%	13%	22%	28%	29%	9%	12%

Figure 32: Parent Voice Report 2021

Parentkind's results showed C2DE parents were more likely to answer that they don't know how to get involved and contribute to their child's school (17%) compared to ABC1 parents (15%) and that they were not sure what skills/knowledge they would have to offer (28%) compared to only 23% of ABC1 parents. 29% of C2DE parents also said they hadn't been asked compared to 27% of ABC1 parents.

33% of C2DE parents also answered that they do not have time (33%), although this was also the highest response from ABC1 parents (39%).

Interestingly, CD2E parents were also more like to answer 'none of the above – I do get involved' (12%).

Figure 33: Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school? (By SEND experience)
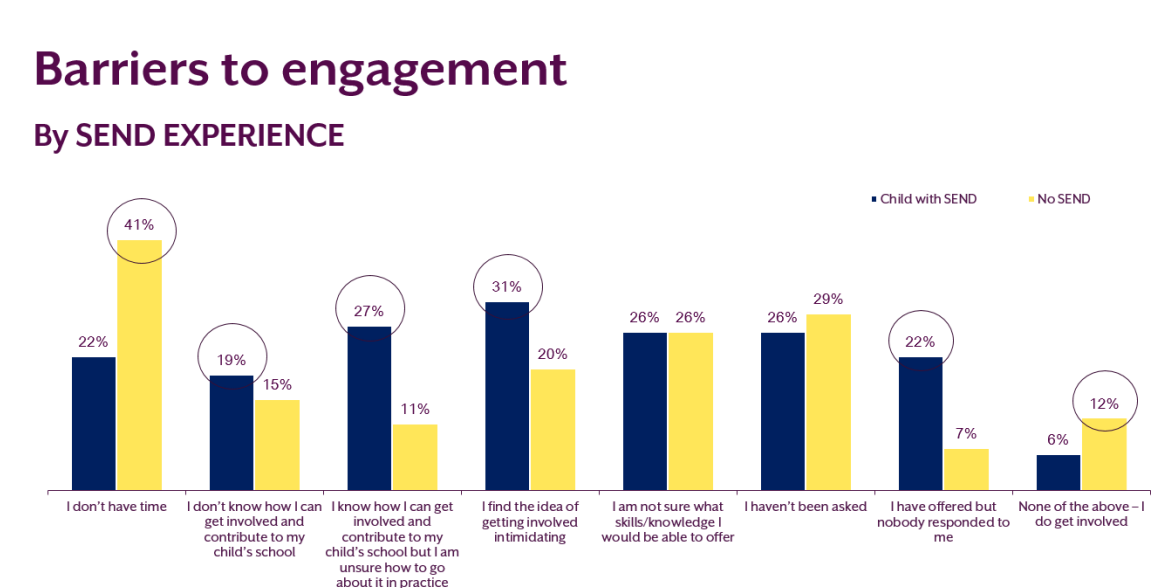
Barriers to engagement

By SEND EXPERIENCE

■ Child with SEND   ■ No SEND

	I don't have time	I don't know how I can get involved and contribute to my child's school	I know how I can get involved and contribute to my child's school but I am unsure how to go about it in practice	I find the idea of getting involved intimidating	I am not sure what skills/knowledge I would be able to offer	I haven't been asked	I have offered but nobody responded to me	None of the above – I do get involved
Child with SEND	22%	19%	27%	31%	26%	26%	22%	6%
No SEND	41%	15%	11%	20%	26%	29%	7%	12%

Figure 33: Parent Voice Report 2021

SEND parents were more likely to find the idea of getting involved intimidating (31% compared to only 20% non-SEND parents) and to have offered but have had no response (22% vs 7% of non-SEND parents). They were also more likely to not know how to get involved (19% compared to 15%) and to know how to get involved but being unsure about how to go about it in practice (27% compared to 11% of non-SEND parents).

Figure 34: Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school? (By ethnicity)
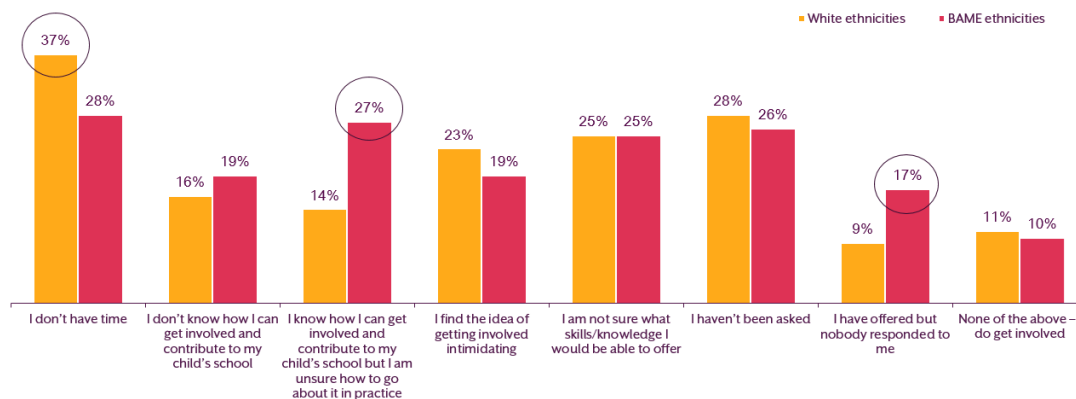

Figure 34: Parent Voice Report 2021

BAME parents were more likely to answer 'I have offered but nobody responded to me' (17% compared to 9% of white parents). BAME parents were also more likely to answer 'I know how I can get involved and contribute to my child's school but I am unsure how to go about it in practice' (27%) compared to only 14% of white parents. 19% of BAME parents were also likely to say they did not know how to get involved compared to 16% of white parents.

Figure 35: Which of the following statements (if any) best describes the barriers to getting involved with and contributing to your child's school? (By FSM eligibility)
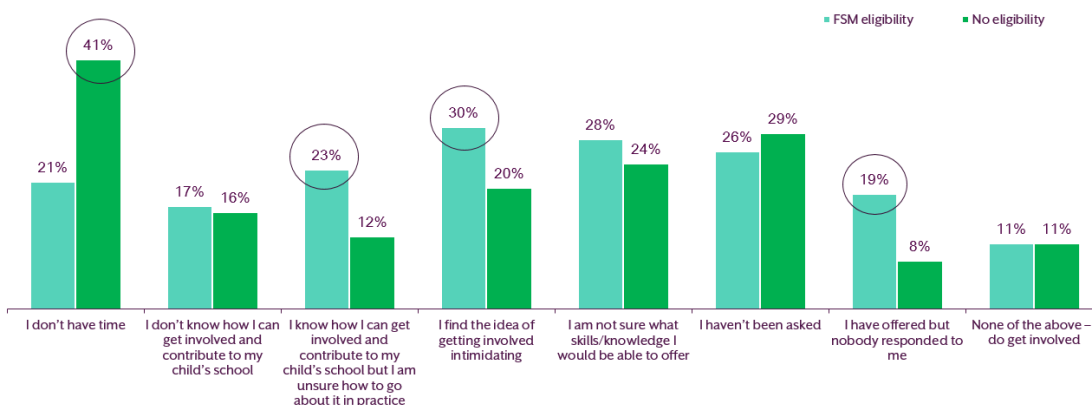

Figure 35: Parent Voice Report 2021

FSM-eligible parents on the other hand were more likely to respond 'I find the idea of getting involved intimidating'. 30% of FSM-eligible parents selected this response compared to only 20% of non-FSM-eligible parents. Interestingly, 22% of both ABC1 and C2DE parents also selected this response. White parents responded that they were more likely to feel intimidated.

Lack of time was the biggest barrier for FSM-eligible parents (41%) compared to non FSM-eligible parents (21%). This is similar to what we have seen in C2DE parents and BAME parents – the biggest barrier for both was lack of time. This may be because these parents (particular C2DE and non-FSM-eligible parents) are more likely to spend more time working, and have less-time to get involved in school activities, and in turn, may have less time to support their child's education. For instance, the Office for National Statistics (2020) found that lower-income households spent more time working outside their home. Research has also found that working mothers are particularly affected by difficulties fitting in with home learning as a 'third shift' after work and domestic responsibilities (Hayley-Lock and Posey-Maddox, 2015).

FSM-eligible parents were also more likely to answer that they know how to get involved and contribute to their child's school but were unsure about how to go about it in practice (23%) compared to 12% of non-eligible parents.

19% of FSM-eligible parents also responded I have offered but nobody responded to me, compared to 8% of non-FSM-eligible parents. This was a trend seen across BAME, FSM-eligible and C2DE parents. Studies have shown that discrimination and language problems and other factors related to cultural differences are mentioned by parents as barriers to getting involved in their child's schools (Ismail, 2018). Another study by the U.S Department of Education which looked at over 10,000 teachers, students and parents found that there are sharp contrasts in how Maths and English teachers communicate with parents who come from different racial, ethnic and immigrant backgrounds. This also trickled down to parents' English proficiency, family socioeconomic status and other racial and immigration factors when teachers were questioned about their communications with parents around homework, behaviour and student accomplishments. Teachers were less likely to contact these students about academic successes and less likely to reach out to parents they perceived as uninvolved or uninterested – however, the study found this was linked to teachers' unconscious bias that these parents were apathetic towards their child's education. The study suggests that schools must help teachers understand these racial stereotypes and the disparities that they can lead to (Cherng, 2016).

Learning Wales (2016) found that some other barriers to parental engagement included:

- Time pressures of family life
- Complicated family circumstances/structure, such as separations or new partners
- Language barriers between home and school
- Families may be overwhelmed by other issues, such as poverty, caring responsibilities, health problems, general anxiety or post-natal depression
- Geography and physical barriers, reliance on public transport, physical barriers for those with disabilities or health problems
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of a lack of knowledge or skills e.g. low literacy
- Fear of being judged by other parents/carers or staff e.g. being seen to 'need help' or fear of being seen as a 'bad parent/carer'.
- Feeling they do not fit in with the dominant middle-class culture of the school
- Suspicion and mistrust: parents believing they will not be listened to and taken seriously by the school.
- Lack of material resources available within families (Dauber and Epstein, 1993).

Although these are not directly comparable to barriers to supporting learning at home, they help to provide context on what affects parents' involvement in schools.

Resources parents found useful in the pandemic

Parentkind was keen to find out what resources parents found most useful throughout the pandemic in an attempt to see how parents can use remote learning to improve social mobility and the achievement gap.

In May 2020, Parentkind asked parents what support/resources they thought would be most helpful from their child's school. The top 5 responses were:

1) Live online classes (45%)
2) Direct communication between child and their teachers (43%)
3) Video clips to explain subject matter (43%)
4) Feedback from teachers on work completed (41%)
5) Reassurances about learning expectations during school closures (40%)

Parents were also asked what support they were already receiving from their school:

1) Worksheets to print out at home (61%)
2) Direct communication between child and their teachers (46%)
3) Feedback from teachers on work completed (45%)
4) Reassurances about learning expectations during school closures (42%)
5) Activities that support my child's wellbeing (40%)

Parents in Northern Ireland were the only parents who said they were receiving hard copies of worksheets throughout the pandemic (36% of parents). Printed worksheets is an essential resource for parents who cannot afford printers and their associated running costs.

Figure 36: What, if anything, would you like to see done differently now compared with last spring and summer's arrangements for learning at home?

What, if anything, would you like to see done differently now compared with last spring and summer's arrangements for learning at home?	Would like more	Same as before	Would like less	Don't know/Not sure	N/A
Volume of work set	34%	50%	9%	3%	3%
Instruction/teaching given to support work set	65%	29%	1%	1%	3%
Number of live online lessons provided by the school	65%	19%	5%	3%	8%
Number of recorded lessons/video clips provided by the school	62%	23%	4%	4%	7%
Feedback to my child on work completed	68%	27%	1%	2%	3%
Activities that support my child's wellbeing	58%	33%	2%	2%	5%

Figure 36: 4th Parent Coronavirus Survey Results – England Only - November 2020

Similar results were found in November 2020. When asked what differences parents would like to see in terms of remote learning now compared with last spring and summer's arrangements, Parentkind found:

- 68% of parents answered their child receiving feedback on work completed
- 65% continued to ask for more online live lessons
- 65% asked for more instruction/teaching given to support the work set
- 62.5% asked for more recorded lessons/video clips provided by the school
- 34% of parents said they would want a higher volume of work set.

Parentkind's results suggest parents were most keen for feedback and instruction/teaching from teachers, live online classes and recorded video clips.

Figure 37: How satisfied are you with various aspects of learning support given?

How satisfied are you with various aspects of learning support given?

Support given to your child by their school in this most recent half term

Legend:
- Very satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Not at all satisfied
- Don't know N/A

Aspect	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
Volume of work set for my child by their school	21%	34%	14%	16%	13%
Variety of work set by my child's school	23%	34%	14%	15%	12%
Educational level of work set for my child by school	22%	36%	14%	15%	12%
Instruction/teaching given to support work set by my child's school	19%	25%	13%	19%	21%
Number of live online lessons provided by the school	10%	10%	9%	11%	42%
Number of recorded lessons/video clips provided by the school to give instructions/explain topics to your child	14%	18%	11%	15%	31%
Engaging children in activities beyond academic learning (e.g. assemblies)	13%	17%	17%	16%	28%
Availability/frequency of teachers to check-in in person with my child	20%	21%	11%	17%	27%
Feedback to my child on work completed	21%	24%	12%	16%	22%
Availability of activities that support my child's well being	17%	24%	18%	17%	21%

Figure 37: Parentkind Coronavirus Parent Survey 3 – July 2020

In July 2020, Parentkind found that parents were most dissatisfied with the number of online live lessons provided (53% dissatisfied and only 20% satisfied). 46% were also dissatisfied with the number of recorded video clips and 40% were dissatisfied with the instruction/teaching given to support work set.

This form of support would significantly improve the support parents receive and the quality of home learning parents can provide their children. It would particularly benefit parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or immigrant parents, who have been found to not have the knowledge of the curriculum that other parents do (Ismail, 2018). This would help parents get clarification on what exactly they need to do to support their child's learning. For example, research shows that engaging in learning activities in the home is most effective when it is in line with the instructions and teaching children receive at school (Crosnoe, 2012). It would also help take the pressure off parents, helping them feel more reassured that their child is being taught correctly. As seen earlier, this was a concern seen in Parentkind's open-text responses.

However, research by Teacher Tapp (2020) has shown that teachers in schools with the highest proportion of students eligible for free school meals were least likely to say they could broadcast a lesson for their class to access (47%) or that they could accept work remotely from their class (73%). Similarly, 69% of private school teachers felt prepared to do video lessons compared to only 40% of state school teachers. The Sutton Trust also found that in 2020 86% of private schools were using online lessons compared to only 50% of state schools (Montacute, 2021). There are stark differences in the levels of support more advantaged schools are able to provide which needs to be mitigated in order for parents and children to access the support they need, particularly for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Parentkind's Annual Parent Survey 2020 continued to show positive support for home-learning and parents wanting to be more involved.

Figure 38: To what extent are the following things important for you to do as a parent in order to support your child's education?
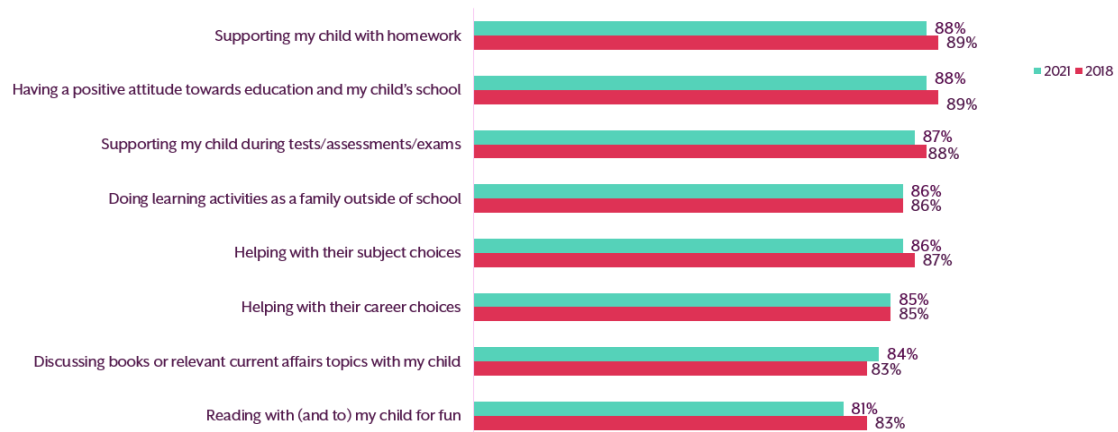
Supporting children's education

Trend data

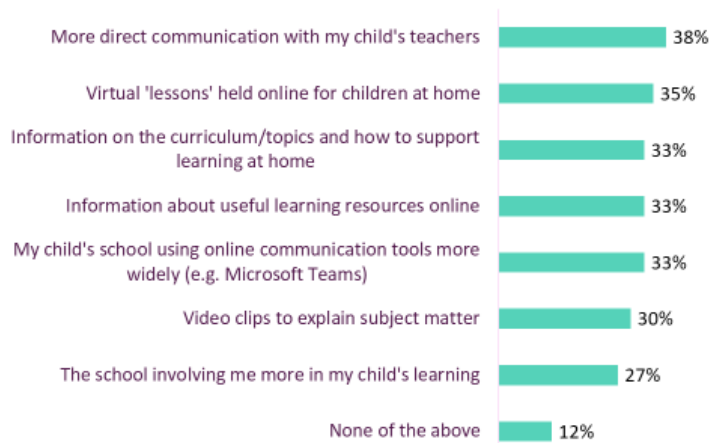|	2021	2018
Supporting my child with homework	88%	89%
Having a positive attitude towards education and my child's school	88%	89%
Supporting my child during tests/assessments/exams	87%	88%
Doing learning activities as a family outside of school	86%	86%
Helping with their subject choices	86%	87%
Helping with their career choices	85%	85%
Discussing books or relevant current affairs topics with my child	84%	83%
Reading with (and to) my child for fun	81%	83%

Figure 38: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Parentkind found that the priorities which were rated 'very important' by over half of parents were (Figure 38):

- Homework support
- A positive attitude towards education and the child's school
- Supporting the child during tests.

Learning activities together, helping with subject choices, helping with careers choices and discussing relevant books/current affairs were also very important for parents. 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 parents (51%). Encouragingly, discussing books or relevant current affairs topics with children was voted higher when compared to our 2018 Annual Parent Survey. This was the only topic that received more responses than in 2018.

Figure 39: The period of school closures and supported learning at home has brought enormous challenges, [however] some schools have been able to use new tools, technologies or approaches in order to adapt during this crisis. Would you like to see any of the following expanded when schools return to normal?

Main priorities for expanding tools and approaches are more direct contact with teachers and virtual lessons

Category	Percentage
More direct communication with my child's teachers	38%
Virtual 'lessons' held online for children at home	35%
Information on the curriculum/topics and how to support learning at home	33%
Information about useful learning resources online	33%
My child's school using online communication tools more widely (e.g. Microsoft Teams)	33%
Video clips to explain subject matter	30%
The school involving me more in my child's learning	27%
None of the above	12%

Figure 39: Annual Parent Survey 2020

In its 2020 Annual Parent Survey, Parentkind asked parents if they would like to see any of the new tools, technologies, or approaches introduced or expanded during school closures when schools returned to normal. Around a third of parents would like to see information about useful learning resources online, video clips to explain subject matter and their child's school using online communication tools, such as MS Teams, more widely. 27% of parents also wanted schools to involve them more in their child's learning. Parentkind's May 2020 Coronavirus Survey reflected the same priorities, as seen earlier, suggesting strong support for this among parents.

Parent priorities by demographic

In Parentkind's 2020 Annual Parent Survey, parents' views were analysed by demographic and highlighted some interesting contrasts.

Figure 40: The period of school closures and supported learning at home has brought enormous challenges, [however] some schools have been able to use new tools, technologies or approaches in order to adapt during this crisis. Would you like to see any of the following expanded when schools return to normal? (By social grade)

Priorities for expanding current tools/approaches

By SOCIAL GRADE
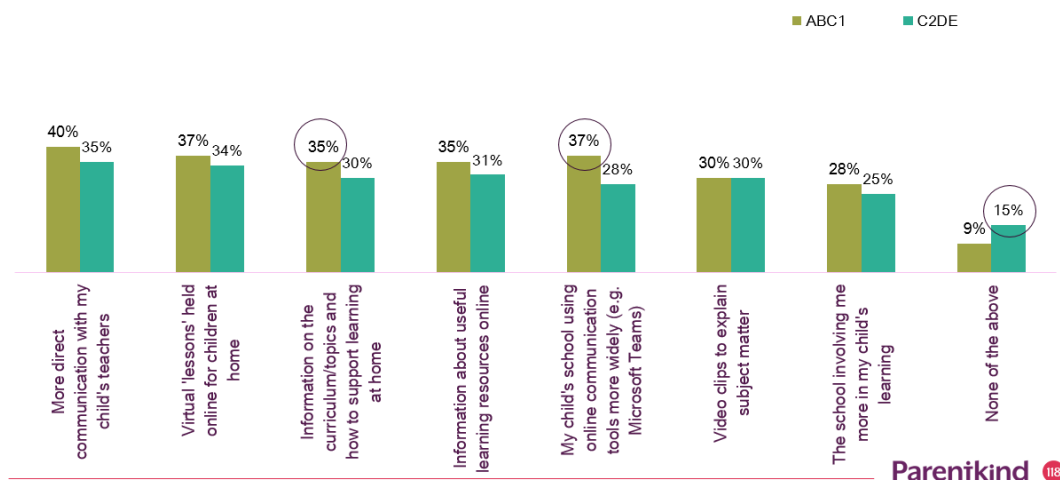
Figure 40: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Middle-income parents were more likely than lower-income parents to want more information on curriculum topics and how to support home learning (35% vs 30%) and for their child's school to use more online communication tools such as MS teams (37% vs 28%).

When asked if they would like to see any of the new tools, technologies or approaches expanded when schools returned to normal, C2DE parents were likelier to select 'none of the above' at 15% compared with 9% of more affluent respondents. The same response rate was found for video clips to explain subject matter (30%) in both groups (Figure 40).

The biggest difference in both groups, and where ABC1 parents were much more keen, was around information on the curriculum/topics and how to support learning at home, and schools using more online communication tools more widely e.g. Microsoft Teams, where these were a priority for ABC1 parents.

ABC1 parents/parents with more education tend to be more digitally advantaged, as they use a wider range of devices to go online and are therefore much more likely to feel more comfortable with online tools (Zhang and Livingstone, 2019). Lower-income parents are more likely to be less technologically advantaged and may not feel confident using these resources (Pensiero et al., 2021). For example, a study by LSE found that 24% of parents with a postgraduate degree had used wearable devices (Apple Watch, FitBit etc.) during the past month, compared to only 6% of parents with only secondary school education. The same barriers were found for Black parents or parents of a child with SEND (Zhang and Livingstone, 2019).

Information on the curriculum was also a higher priority for ABC1 parents – demonstrating that lower-income parents may be less likely to engage with the curriculum and its importance for their children's learning. A study on second-generation students from a Somali background in Finland showed that because the education system is so different, Somali parents do not have the knowledge that native parents take for granted, which leads to Somali parents not knowing when to intervene or what to be

aware of. The study also found that a student's mother, who despite knowing how to speak good Finnish, hesitated to attend school meetings and other activities because she felt uncomfortable about being engaged in something she struggled to understand (Ismail, 2018).

A parent told Parentkind:

"I would have liked to see a clear plan of which parts of last year's curriculum they were going over again and how this overlaps or links in with this year's curriculum".

The only priority in which both groups of parents were aligned on was on receiving more video clips to explain subject matter. As we have seen, lower-income parents are more likely to have less knowledge on the curriculum and video-clips to explain subject matter would be highly beneficial for these parents to support their children.

C2DE parents were also more likely to respond 'none of the above' to the priorities compared to ABC1 parents. It is likely that a lack of time for lower-income parents is a huge factor in this response. Poorer parents by default feel and may need to work longer or unsociable hours to support their families than middle-income parents (ONS, 2020). Although the first stage of the pandemic is over, we are now going through a significant cost-of-living squeeze that will affect many families living on low incomes. The Joseph Roundtree Foundation (2022) found that poorer families may need to spend more than half of their income on energy and that it would amount to 18% of the average income for lower-income families compared to 6% for the average income of a middle-income family. A further study by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (2022) found that low-income families are faced with more uncertainties about how they can make ends meet with increasing living costs particularly as they are not getting the kind of support from the government that helped them survive the pandemic. This may further impact the time lower-income parents have to support their children at home if they need to work more to make ends meet.

There is also a need to investigate and research why 12% of all parents are selecting 'none of the above' as their response, particularly for the lower-income parents who responded this way. There may be underlying financial reasons, for example, such as not having the confidence to teach their children, the understanding of English or of the curriculum, as we saw in the study of Somali parents in Finland, or simply time constraints. Further research would help understand if there is anything schools, communities or the government can do to help change this perception on home learning. It is essential, as it may widen the learning gap between more affluent and less-affluent pupils, if the more affluent pupils continue to receive learning at home support, but other disadvantaged pupils do not (The Sutton Trust, 2021).

The link between BAME parents and low incomes

Figure 41: The period of school closures and supported learning at home has brought enormous challenges, [however] some schools have been able to use new tools, technologies or approaches in order to adapt during this crisis. Would you like to see any of the following expanded when schools return to normal? (By ethnicity)

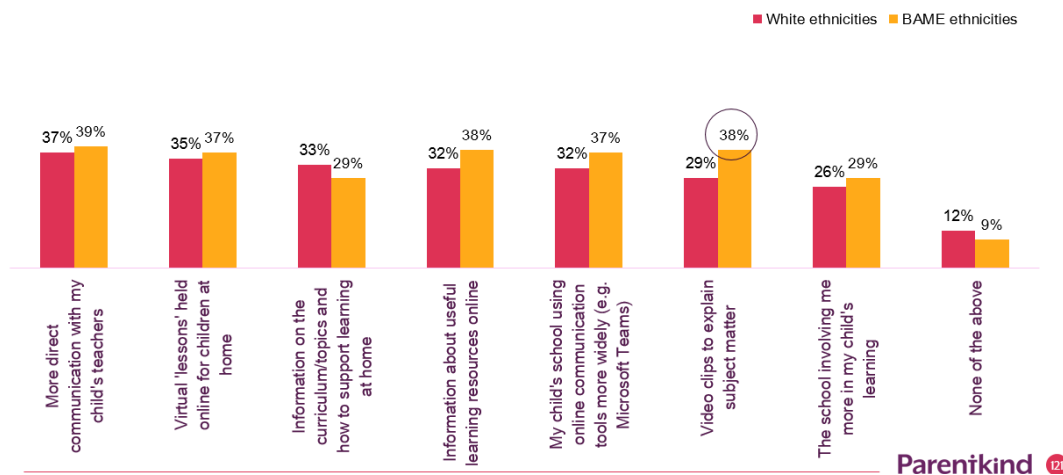## Priorities for expanding current tools/approaches
By ETHNICITY

Figure 41: Annual Parent Survey 2020

More video clips explaining subject matter were a high priority for BAME parents (38%) compared to white parents (29%) and this is where Parentkind saw the biggest diference between both groups. White parents' priority was more likely to be information on the curriculum and how to support learning at home. BAME parents were also more likely to want online communication tools (37% vs 32%) and information about useful learning resources online (38% vs 32%).

This again, is similar to what was seen between ABC1 and C2DE parents – ABC1 were more likely to rank information on the curriculum as their priority and one of C2DE parents' priorities was recorded video clips. These results may be due to the correlation that exists between race and low income. In 2018, a race audit carried out by the UK government for example, found that unemployment rates for black and asian households were double the rates of white households, and in work ethnic minorities are paid 18% less than white colleagues (this gap also widens as black workers achieve more qualifications). People from BAME communities are also more likely to experience poverty and homelessness, do less well at school and be unemployed (Mental Health Foundation, 2021).

Interestingly, white parents were more likely to rank 'none of the above' (12%) compared to 9% of BAME parents. This may be because BAME parents tend to have higher expectations of their children, as seen earlier. Many come from different backgrounds of struggle and want their child to succeed and so may use this as an opportunity to help support their child (Ismail, 2018).

Knowledge priorities for the future

Parentkind then asked parents a variety of questions around their priorities for future learning. Understanding the kind of knowledge and planning that schools could provide for parents to support them in the event of future outbreaks, or similar circumstances further in the future, was one key area.

Figure 42: Looking back at the challenges that have come up during school closures, which of the following would you wish to know more about in case a similar situation were to arise in the future?

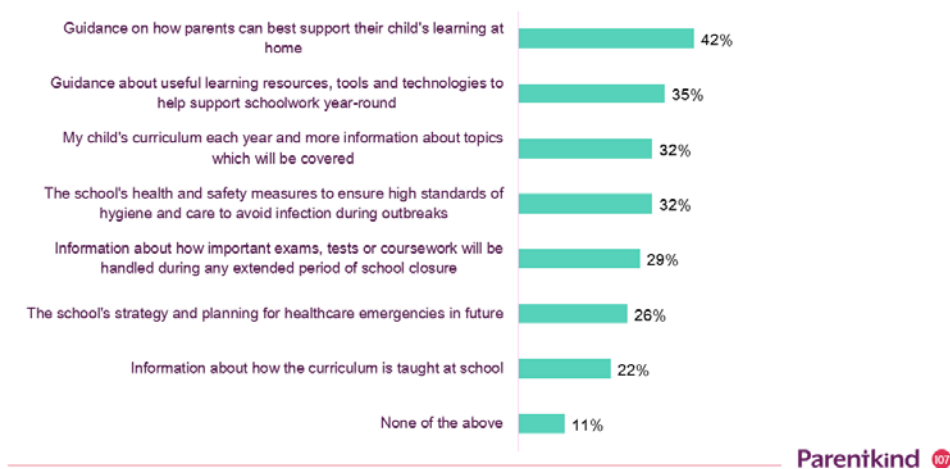## Knowledge priorities for any future closures

Figure 42: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Parents were most keen to know more about how they can best support their child's learning at home (42%). 35% of parents also answered guidance about useful learning resources, tools and tech demonstrating the importance of parents feeling fully resourced to support their children. 32% answered more about the curriculum and 22% answered how the curriculum is taught at school.

Figure 43: Looking back at the challenges that have come up during school closures, which of the following would you wish to know more about in case a similar situation were to arise in the future? (By ethnicity)

Knowledge priorities for any future closures
By ETHNICITY
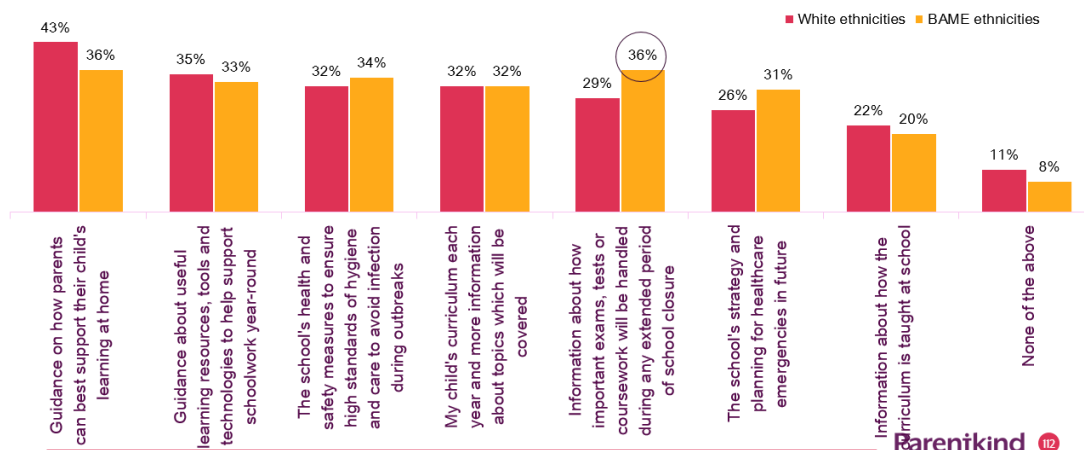
Figure 43: Annual Parent Survey 2020

BAME parents were more likely to want information about exams and testing (36%) compared to 29% of white parents. This was a joint priority along with guidance on home learning. This suggests that BAME parents were more concerned about the attainment of their children. White parents were more likely to want guidance on how parents can best support their child's learning at home (43%) compared to

BAME parents (36%) and guidance on useful learning resources, tools and technologies to help support schoolwork year-round (35% vs 33%).

Figure 44: Looking back at the challenges that have come up during school closures, which of the following would you wish to know more about in case a similar situation were to arise in the future? (By social grade)

Knowledge priorities for any future closures
By SOCIAL GRADE
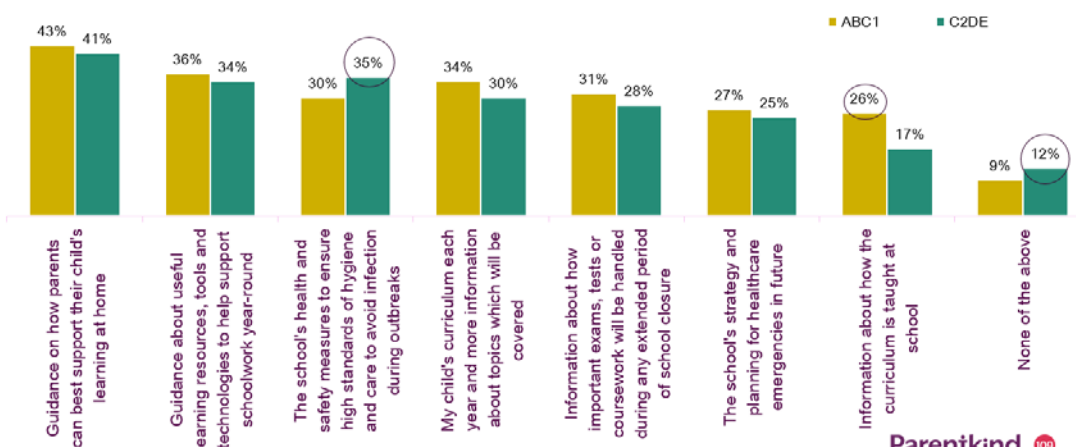
Sample: 1500 parents in England (1,200), Northern Ireland (100) and Wales (200) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents by social grade: ABC1 (795), C2DE (705)
Question: Looking back at the challenges that have come up during school closures, which of the following areas would you wish to know more about in case a similar situation were to arise in the future?

Figure 44: Annual Parent Survey 2020

The only knowledge priority for C2DE parents which was higher than that of ABC1 parents was 'wanting more knowledge on the school's health and safety measures to ensure high standards of hygiene and care to avoid infection during outbreaks' (35% vs 30%). The rest were more priorities for ABC1 parents as seen in Figure 44. The priority in which we saw the most difference was again information about how the curriculum is taught at school, where this was a priority for 26% of ABC1 parents compared to 17% of C2DE parents. C2DE parents were also more likely to select 'none of the above' (12% vs 9%).

Knowledge priorities for any future closures

By FSM ELIGIBILITY
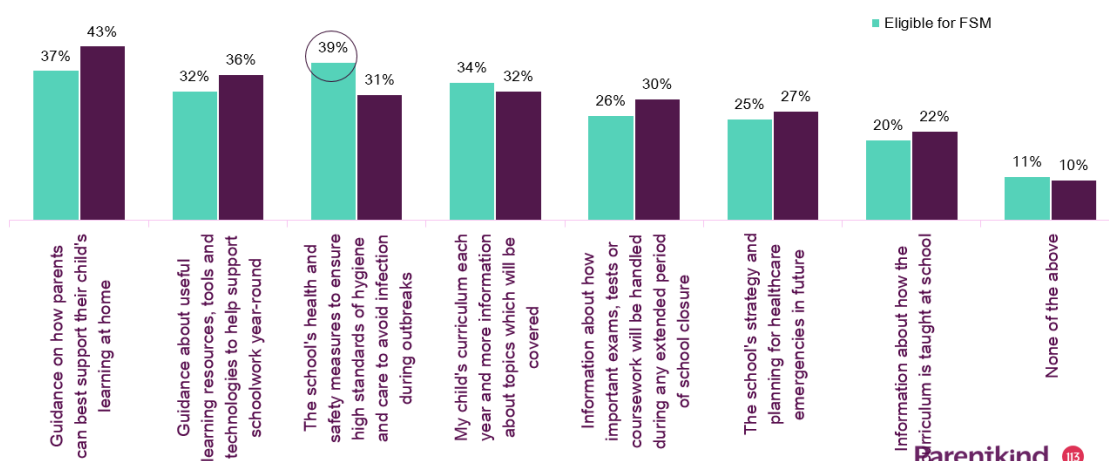
Figure 45: Annual Parent Survey 2020

Parentkind found similar results for FSM-eligible parents, who shared the same priority as C2DE parents (wanting more knowledge on the school's health and safety measures to ensure high standards of hygiene and care to avoid infection during outbreaks). Interestingly, wanting more information on their child's curriculum each year and more information about topics which will be covered was also a higher priority for FSM-eligible parents compared to non-eligible parents (albeit only by 2%). This is encouraging as it shows FSM-eligible parents are more engaged and willing to learn about the curriculum, which will only have a positive impact on their children and the attainment gap that exists.

Parentkind's February 2021 Survey asked parents what would be helpful to improve their confidence in supporting their child's learning at home. The majority of parents (80%) continued to be confident in supporting their child's learning at home and found similar priorities to those mentioned above. Parents said that other ways to improve parents' confidence further would be:

- o More live lessons
- o Better explanations of work being set
- o More feedback
- o More flexibility to work set and timings

Other comments, based on the 150 open responses received included:

- *a better knowledge of the subject matter*
- *more books*
- *learning set at the child's level*
- *less talk of children being behind in their learning*
- *less screen time*
- *more support from school/teachers and more information about what is being taught*

"A video explaining how to do/support the tasks for the parents. I often have to work out the requirements/answers before I can teach/explain it to my child."

"More feedback from the school, so I knew how my kids were doing."

"A more flexible and dynamic timetable that supports the ability to teach two children/curriculums without the pressure to hand things in by a daily am/pm deadline."

Parental expectations for future involvement

Parents were asked what their expectations for future involvement in their child's schooling was.

Figure 46: Earlier on we asked you to rate how involved you felt in your child's school and education. When schools return to normal do you think your level of involvement will change compared to before?

Almost a third want greater involvement in their child's school and education when schools reopen
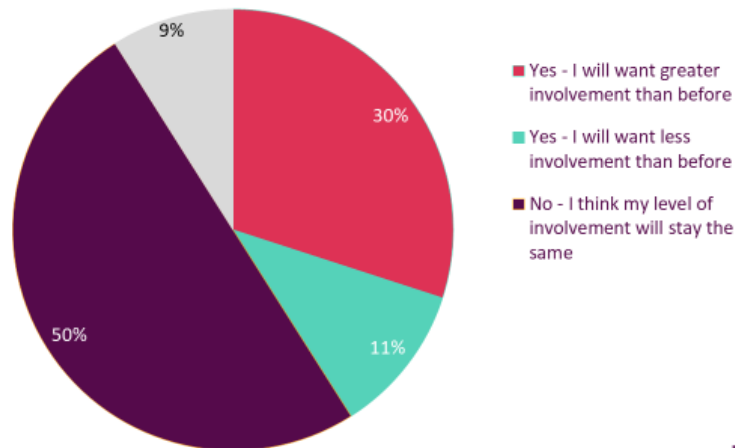
Sample: 1500 parents in England (1,200), Northern Ireland (100) and Wales (200) who have children aged 4-18 in state school
Base: All respondents
Question: Earlier on we asked you to rate how involved you felt in your child's school and education... When schools return to normal do you think your level of involvement will change compared to before?

Figure 46: Annual Parent Survey 2020

50% of parents thought it would be the same, 41% expected change and 9% did not know. 30% expected greater involvement than before and only 11% expected less than before. This is hugely positive and has really highlighted the positives the pandemic has had despite the challenges faced. Parents are keener than ever to get involved in their child's education.

Figure 47: You have indicated that you expect your level of involvement to change when schools return to normal. Can you tell us a little more about how you think your role in your child's learning might change?

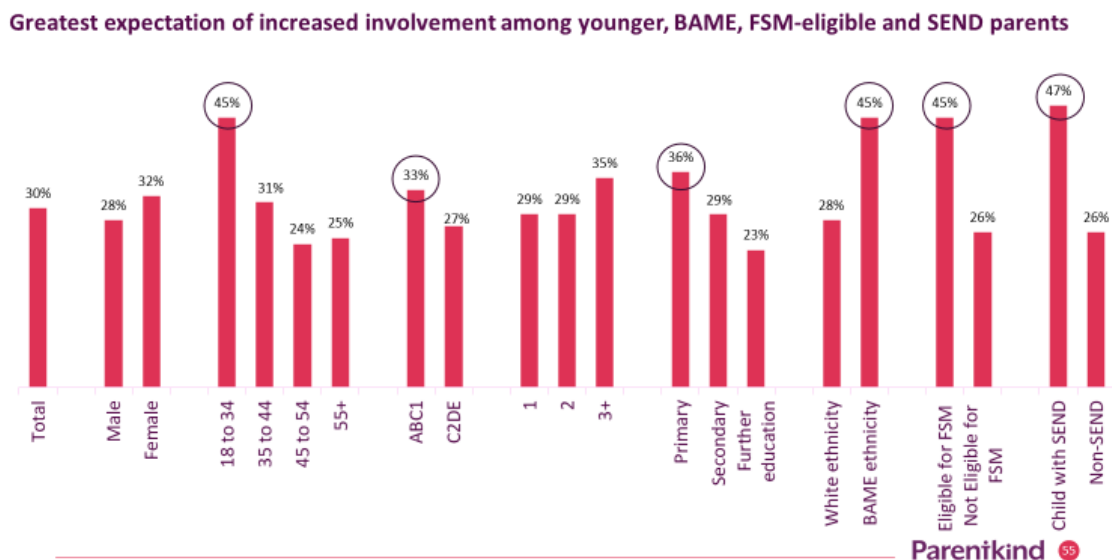## Ways parents expect involvement might change
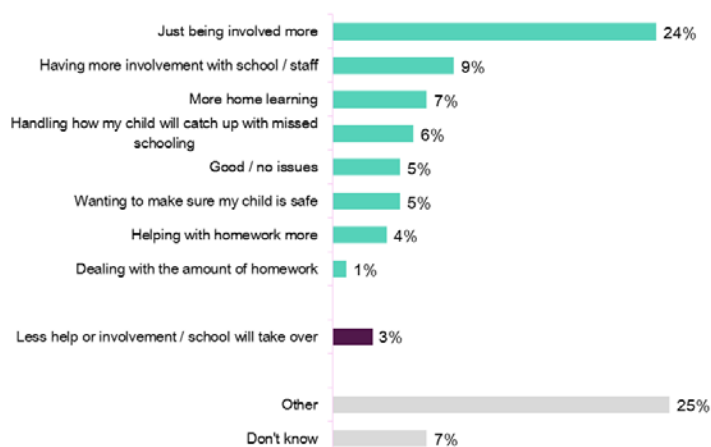
Figure 47: Annual Parent Survey 2020

We asked parents to elaborate on this and the most common themes were:

- Expecting to simply be involved more (24%)
- To have more involvement with school and staff (9%)
- To do more home learning (7%)
- To engage over how their child would catch up on missed schooling (6%)
- Helping with homework more (4%)

Figure 48: Earlier on we asked you to rate how involved you felt in your child's school and education. When schools return to normal do you think your level of involvement will change compared to before? (By parent demographic)

Figure 48: Annual Parent Survey 2020

The groups of parents who are already more likely to be engaged are also more likely to want greater involvement in the future. Almost half of parents from BAME backgrounds, parents who are eligible for free school meals or who are aged 18-34 (45% in all cases) want greater involvement. Parentkind found the same in ABC1 social grades (33% vs 27% of C2DE parents) and parents of primary school children (36%).

However, interestingly, parents from BAME backgrounds, those with children eligible for FSM or those parenting a child with SEND were also likelier expect to have *less* involvement with their child's education. They were also less likely to expect their involvement would stay the same once things returned to normal. For example, parents without FSM eligibility and those not parenting a child with SEND were likelier to expect involvement to remain at the same level compared with less than a third of FSM-eligible or SEND parents.

52% of parents with White ethnicity expected their involvement to stay the same while only 32% of parents from a BAME background did. Studies show that white, middle-income parents were already more likely to spend more time home-schooling their children before the pandemic and preparing their children for educational success (Montacute and Cullinane, 2021).

Expectations for future involvement with schooling

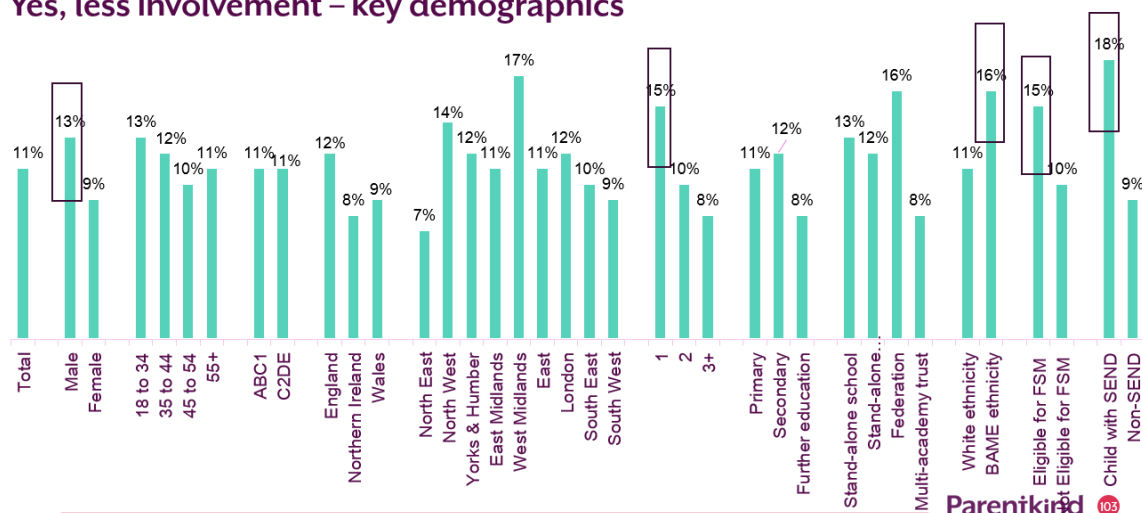### Yes, less involvement – key demographics

Figure 49: Annual Parent Survey 2020

However, this expectation for less involvement may be because the period of home-learning may have been more stressful for BAME, FSM-eligible and SEND parents – as we saw in reported levels of confidence, and they may therefore trust their teachers more than themselves. For instance, a study by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) found that helping with homework can be a source of stress for parents and many parents want to help but feel unable to (BECTA, 2010). The Sutton Trust (2021) also found that 28% of parents on low incomes found the experience of home learning at the time of research more difficult, compared to only 15% of those on higher incomes (Montacute and Cullinane, 2021). Parents may also have more to worry about now – such as catching up on financial losses and supporting children with their disabilities, as shown earlier. For instance, the Sutton Trust found that as a result of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, many more families were facing challenges which indirectly impacted attainment, such as increased poverty and food insecurity (Montacute, 2020).

Overall, priorities for supporting home learning remained fairly consistent across the different demographics and groups, suggesting that the majority of these innovations would be welcome for all parents. These priorities should be used to encourage further home learning. Further research would, however, be useful to understand the disparities in certain priorities by parent demographic.

7. Community support

Research has found that schools who have high levels of community support from parental involvement and other programmes increase student attendance, grades, achievements and lead to fewer behaviour issues, along with positive attitudes towards schools and homework. The pandemic has given us an opportunity to increase community support and parental engagement. Throughout the pandemic, parents have had a flavour of home learning and Parentkind's research has shown that parents are more engaged than ever in their child's education and willing to learn and support their children with home learning. This said, it will only happen, if they are given the resources and training they need to do this. Parent, school and community relationships are essential.

Community support will be a crucial opportunity to attempt to ameliorate and overcome the challenges we have found that parents have faced with home-learning. For example, technology courses may be needed to help lower-income parents in particular make better use of technology to help them support their children effectively. These courses can be delivered in the community, in an environment with like-minded parents and one in which parents may feel more comfortable in.

Parentkind research also showed that middle-income parents and FSM-eligible parents wanted more information on the curriculum. School-based workshops explaining the basic concepts of the curriculum and the UK education system would be useful to help parents (lower-income and immigrant parents in particular) understand what their child needs to learn or achieve. This could be delivered either by teachers or in the community. It would be highly beneficial for parents, helping them become more integrated in their child's learning at home. It would also be interesting to understand what parents' understanding of the curriculum was – in order to help teachers and schools better support parents and their children.

Other workshops could also include lessons or courses which teach parents about different subjects. For example, a review of 16 interventions including 1,340 families which was aimed at encouraging parent-child reading as a route to increasing child's literacy, found that teaching parents specific activities and approaches was more effective than simply encouraging parents to hear their children read (Senechal and Young, 2008). This was more beneficial for 'at-risk' families (Smees and Sammons, 2018).

It is also sadly clear that the pandemic and the experience of home learning took a toll on some parents' mental health. Research has also shown that parents with SEND, parents from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and BAME backgrounds are more likely to have increased mental health problems (Marquis, McGrail and Hayes, 2019). These parents may find it difficult to speak about mental health due to the increased struggle and adversities they are used to facing, and often do not even consider that their mental health may have been affected. There is also increased stigma around mental health and cultural barriers exist, meaning that mental health issues may not be recognised or seen as important or appropriate for open discussion (Rethink Mental Health Illness, 2021).

Setting up parent support groups which discuss things ranging from mental health, to advice on supporting learning at home, or for simple informal chats where parents can share ideas would be a great way for parents to feel more positive about supporting their children and their learning. For example, Parentkind's SEND and Coronavirus Parent Survey found that the majority of parents of children with SEND sought support, information and resources during lockdown from other parents. This included friends (54%), through social media (45%) and through support groups (26%).

Support groups may also encourage parents to feel more comfortable feeding back to schools – if schools provide comfortable places for parents to do so. Parents could share feedback on their experience of home learning and teachers could further understand what support parents and their children need. This would be important for those parents who feel they want to get involved in their school community but have told us they do not feel listened to.

Other examples of community events which could help engage parents in their child's learning include:

- A buddy system where parents from the community who are eager to come into school bring in parents who want to come in but are not at ease or confident enough to come alone (Campbell 2011)
- Parenting classes, including childcare to encourage parents to attend

- Theme days or weeks that involve external agencies that might encourage parental involvement (ibid.)
- Community spaces where parents are invited to attend courses and workshops run by the school and external providers (ibid.)
- Family learning, where parents and their children learn new skills such as gaining language, literacy, and maths skills and/or parenting skills and other practical knowledge. Research has shown this is effective in supporting families from disadvantaged backgrounds (Education Scotland, 2016).
- Workshops that focus on curriculum enrichment, careers guidance, ethnic and cultural awareness and other essential topics parents feel they need (Parentkind, 2019)
- 'Breakfast clubs' or foodbanks which include families and encourage parental participation – nutrition is essential to helping children and their parents in supporting home learning (ibid.)
- Language tuition for those who may not feel comfortable speaking English

School community support must, however, be inclusive. Parentkind's report has also shown that parents from different cultural backgrounds and from lower socio-economic backgrounds may feel intimidated or uncomfortable attending school events or getting involved in their child's education. Organising links to different community events which include faith-based community groups or religious institutions and different cultural groups may help parents feel more comfortable getting involved in community events. Language ambassadors and links to community leaders who can support parents from different linguistic, ethnic and religious groups have also shown to be successful (Parentkind, 2019). Research shows that having a link to people in the community that parents know locally provides a way of gaining trust and building relationships with parents (National College for Learning in Schools and Children's services, 2010). The better the outreach to the local community, the more likely schools are to attract different cultural and ethnic organisations and parent communities who may not have feel comfortable engaging to help support parents and their children and this is vital in transforming parent attitudes.

The pandemic has shown us the importance of the community and how essential schools are in building communities. When schools closed, we heard stories about teachers who visited their students' home and provided food for parents whose children were dependent on school meals to survive. Schools were, and are, the main source of support parents are familiar with – and schools knew the children and families who were most in need. By working in communities, we can help to improve parental engagement and target those families and children who need it most. Schools cannot be expected to do this on their own, however, and if we want to implement these ideas and get schools to further support parents and their community, adequate funding is needed. There is a burden on schools to constantly provide – and this is where communities come in, with adequate funding, we can help ameliorate the differences that set different children apart and reduce the social mobility and attainment gap.

8. Further research

Parentkind's research throughout the pandemic has taught us a lot about how parents felt throughout the pandemic and around supporting learning at home. However, in order to better understand how parents are currently feeling about supporting learning at home, further research, split by different demographics, is needed. Parentkind was only able to investigate research by different demographics in its Annual Parent Surveys.

As discussed throughout the report, it would be helpful to now understand:

- Whether parents continue to support home learning now and how they are doing this.
- Whether parents can still support home learning whilst juggling their working life - with a particular focus on the financial implications for lower-income parents (particularly given the increase in cost of living), working patterns, working from home and/or returning to the office, time constraints and employer flexibility.
- Why some parents did or do not feel confident in supporting home learning.
- Whether parents feel they have an appropriate learning environment and the resources/technology they need to support home learning.
- Differences to current engagement by parent demographic.
- Current barriers to supporting home-learning.
- Parental courses and learning, such as technology and curriculum courses, and how we can use the community to support this as we move on from the pandemic.

11. Conclusion

The pandemic has highlighted a digital divide and a structural problem with our education system. In the UK, we have free education at the point of use. However, an essential question is to what extent is education free if there are children out there who cannot study at home because they don't have the devices and material resources they need. Even when we have accounted for technology, resources and an appropriate home learning environment, there is still a social divide between parents. We need an education system that addresses all these different challenges and which ensures everyone has access to equal opportunities. The changing narrative must address this.

Parentkind's report found that experiences of remote-learning were mixed. It has, however, picked up on key points which need to be addressed, should parents be expected to continue to support home learning in a new world.

Firstly, in a world where technology is the new normal, innovative technological opportunities for teaching and learning must be accessible for all parents. It is in the nature of socio-economic disadvantage that parents in these circumstances are less adept at using the resources and the technology that the government may have provided correctly (Zhang and Livingstone, 2019). Policy makers and schools must recognise that digital inequalities exist and act to ameliorate these by providing the necessary economic and social support to parents, particularly those of more disadvantaged backgrounds.

All children must have an appropriate home learning environment. Support must be given to parents who cannot afford a suitable device for learning at home or who cannot easily meet the additional costs associated with this (internet bills, internet connection, mobile phone data bills and the expenses of running a printer at home). Better guidance for parents on using the IT resources provided would be highly valuable for parents who struggle with technological literacy.

Targeted and inclusive interventions are necessary if we want home learning to help end educational inequalities. Parent-school communication, conveying information and building relationships based on an understanding of family circumstances is essential. This may include, for example, speaking to parents about the best time and method to meet them or designing homework and home-learning tasks with their circumstances in mind (Parentkind, 2019). Further pressure on parents to ensure they support home learning, without an understanding of family circumstances, may be a pressure too far in a world where we are living with the financial impacts of the pandemic and where meeting everyday living costs is becoming a bigger issue.

Although many parents coped well with supporting learning at home, there were a number of parents whose mental health was negatively impacted. Extra support and conversations around mental health is needed, particularly for those parents whose communities see mental health as a stigma.

Parentkind research showed that only one in 10 parents (11%) experienced no barriers to getting involved and contributing to their child's education. The barriers mentioned all share an element of uncertainty or intimidation and parent groups feeling like they have not been listened to despite offering. Schools must bear these barriers in mind and minimise them as much as possible – particularly if they want to get more a diverse representation of parents involved.

Other aspects which need to be further investigated include why BAME and FSM-eligible parents' confidence in home learning decreased throughout the pandemic; why some parents do not feel listened to or supported by schools and why BAME, FSM-eligible and SEND parents expected to have less involvement with their child's education. Without looking to answer these questions, we risk an incomplete understanding of the situation.

Improving the support we provide parents is vital if we want to use parental engagement to help improve social mobility, ensure children do not fall further behind in their education and close the achievement and attainment gap that exists between poorer children and their more affluent peers. Dufur, Parcel and Troutman (2012) found that pupils at weaker schools, who came from homes where parents were more involved in their child's education, performed better in tests than children at better schools whose parents were less involved. Active engagement with their child's academic life was key to attainment levels. The IFS (2021) found that 25% of parents think their child will take at least a school year

to catch up on lost learning and 7% think their child will never catch up. This highlights the importance of providing parents with the support mentioned, particularly for those parents who we have seen may feel uncomfortable coming forward.

Although parental experiences of home learning were mixed and more research is needed to understand parents' views around supporting home learning now, this report shows some promising and encouraging results. In July 2020, for example, Parentkind found that more than two thirds of parents wanted to see the government provide minimum standards of home learning provision that all schools should be expected to meet. Only 17% of parents were against this idea. There was clearly support and a desire for schools to provide all students, and parents themselves, with appropriate teaching and support and equipping parents for the role they may need to play in supporting their child's education to get back on track at home.

This does, however, need to come with appropriate funding, support and resources for children, parents and schools. The Nuffield Foundation (2022) found that while parenting programmes can improve outcomes for children, these programmes are less likely to succeed if they are not done in conjunction with action to reduce pressure on families, such as reducing poverty. There is a role for schools, parents and the community, but also for the government to play in further supporting learning at home and involving parents in decision making at all critical stages. This forms part of Parentkind's three policy solutions:

- **Parent participation in schools:** Parentkind wants to see high-quality parent participation take centre stage in schools, and for it to be embedded in accordance with the principles set out in Parentkind's Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools.
- **Parent consultation in schools:** Parentkind wants every school to consult more effectively with parents, enabling parents to discuss, make decisions about, review and feedback on their children's education.
- **Parent consultation at the local, regional and national levels:** Parentkind wants the Department for Education in England and the devolved assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland to establish processes for formally consulting with parents about children's education.

Nonetheless, the research shows that parents are more engaged than ever, and although there are still a lot of issues to consider and overcome, we should take this as a huge opportunity. We are one step closer to reimagining education, getting parents more involved, supporting the families that need it most and helping to close the attainment gap.

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