



Extended School Day Parent Poll Results (England Only)

July 2021



Parentkind
Bringing together home & school

About Child Poverty Action Group

Child Poverty Action Group works on behalf of the more than one in four children in the UK growing up in poverty. It doesn't have to be like this. We use our understanding of what causes poverty and the impact it has on children's lives to campaign for policies that will prevent and solve poverty – for good. We provide training, advice and information to make sure hard-up families get the financial support they need. We also carry out high profile legal work to establish and protect families' rights. See more at www.cpag.org.uk

About Parentkind

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.

We are the bridge between homes and schools.

- We marry research with first-rate practice that has been proven to work.
- We make sure that the voice of parents is heard in education.
- We represent parent views and interests in discussions with education authorities, agencies, central government and all other interested parties and bodies.
- We work with partners and stakeholders, researchers, teachers, parents, administrators, community partners and others, on parental participation.
- We identify and promote examples of high quality parent-school partnerships and provide resources to support parent participation in education at school and at home.

See more at www.parentkind.org.uk

Summary

This poll by Parentkind and Child Poverty Action Group seeks to understand parents' and carers' views on extending the school day and in particular what approaches they would like to see implemented for their children during the pandemic recovery period. The poll shows that while different families and children have varying needs, there is **a strong appetite from parents for schools to provide a range of activities around the school day**. However, importantly parents and carers indicated that these **activities should be optional** so families can make their own decisions about what would be beneficial to them and their children. To ensure lower income families who might benefit from this provision the most can attend, these **activities must be made free to as many families as possible**. The majority of families claiming benefits told us that any cost could result in their children being unable to attend. The findings also show that **investing in extra-curricular activities can give children in certain households access to new opportunities**. Alongside this some parents and carers reported that **extending the school day would help them to work or work more**. While some parents wanted their children to have access to more academic learning around the school day, it was clear that **the majority of parents didn't want learning to be the sole purpose of extending the school day**.

Recommendations for government

- As part of the forthcoming Spending Review, provide schools with adequate funding so they can develop extra-curricular programmes around the school day that will support pupils and families in their communities.
- Ensure that schools can offer these activities free to as many families as possible so that children in need don't miss out on accessing opportunities because of costs.

The current context

At present, despite a lack of centralised government funding, many schools across England deliver a range of services and activities that go beyond the core function of the school day. This includes activities like breakfast clubs, homework clubs, sport and music lessons. Research shows that, done well, extending provision around the school day can have a number of benefits for children and families and in particular those living on a low income. The benefits include supporting children's development and learning,¹ supporting their mental and physical health and wellbeing² and supporting household finances by offering childcare and allowing parents to work.³ However, not all schools have the funding and capacity to offer families these services, and the schools that do have to rely on a combination of charities and fundraising to prop up these activities. As a result, the provision of these programmes across England is patchy and families often face a postcode lottery around provision depending upon which school they attend.

As part of the government's Covid-19 plans to boost education recovery, there has been ongoing discussion about whether extending the school day or offering additional activities around the school day should form part of the education recovery plan.⁴ Different models and approaches to extending the school day have been suggested and it is within this context that Child Poverty Action Group and Parentkind have joined forces to understand what parents' and carers' views are on this subject and in

¹ M Callanan and others, Out of School Activities During Primary School and KS2 Attainment, Institute of Education, University College London, 2016

² H Carpenter and others, Extended Services Evaluation: end of year one report, Department for Education, 2010

³ H Carpenter and others, Extended Services in Practice: a summary of evaluation evidence for headteachers, Department for Education, 2011

⁴ [School day to be extended under £15bn Covid rescue plan to help children catch up](#), (The Times, June 2021)

particular, what approaches they would like to see implemented for their children during the pandemic recovery period.

The poll findings

Importantly, the vast majority (79%) of parents believe that any extension of the school day should be optional rather than compulsory. This was fairly consistent across primary and secondary parents and among those claiming benefits and those not. We know that family circumstances differ and so having flexibility is important when managing the needs of one's family.

In terms of what an extended school day should look like, **the majority of the parents who responded to our poll said they would be happy for their child's school to extend the day for their child to participate in extra-curricular activities** such as physical activity, art, drama and music, with the most popular of these being physical activity. However, interest in all these activities was lower among secondary parents than primary parents.

This compares with **less than 1 in 3 families who would be happy for their child's day to be extended for additional academic learning.** When asked specifically about the option of extending the day by 30 minutes to provide additional compulsory lessons and teaching, an approach reportedly under consideration by the Secretary of State for Education,⁵ **the majority (56%) of parents and carers stated they were opposed to this idea,** with secondary parents being more opposed than primary parents.

As it has been widely documented that educational inequalities between poorer pupils and their peers have been further compounded during the pandemic,⁶ we wanted to understand more about whether offering activities around the school day would be beneficial for children and families who don't have much money.

Over **3 in 5 parents** claiming means-tested benefits told us that offering extra-curricular activities around the school day such as sport, music and art, would **give their children access to opportunities that might otherwise be difficult for them to provide.** In addition, nearly **2 in 5** of these families said **these activities around the school day would allow them or their partner to work or work more.** Primary school parents were much more likely to say this provision would help them to work than secondary school parents.

70% of families claiming means-tested benefits told us **their child would be less likely to attend extra-curricular activities around the school day if they had to pay for them,** this went down to 37% for those not claiming benefits. Crucially, we know that many families claiming benefits are not currently eligible for free school meals despite living below the poverty line or on a low income.⁷ Free school meals eligibility is often used as a threshold for offering free or subsidised before and after-school provision, and other types of support, but this presents clear challenges for ineligible families.

Primary school parents were more likely to say they'd be happy to make a financial contribution towards extra-curricular activities around the school day, possibly because it provides a more affordable childcare option which isn't then required when children are in secondary school. However, only **a small number of families on means-tested benefits said they would be happy to pay for these activities.**

⁵ [Extending school day 'right thing to do', says Boris Johnson](#) (The Guardian, July 2021)

⁶ [The Cost of Learning in Lockdown](#), (CPAG, June 2020)

⁷ [Expanding eligibility for free school meals in England](#) (CPAG December 2020)

Methodology

A short online survey, promoted to parents in England via social media, was active between 16th and 29th June 2021. Parents were asked to complete the questions with their eldest child in mind. 888 parents completed the survey. 61% of parents responded with a primary school child and 31% with a secondary school child. 16% of respondents are claiming, or are in the process of applying for, means-tested benefits.

Please note the number of responses for 'Claiming benefits' and 'Not claiming benefits' totals 838 and not 888 as this breakdown excludes don't knows and prefer not to says.

Thank you

Parentkind and Child Poverty Action Group would like to thank all the participants who gave up their time to take part in this poll. Your views are important to us and we will do our best to advocate for change based on what you've shared.